PARTNERS FOR ACCESS TO JUSTICE GUINEA

Established in 1989, PartnersGlobal is an international non-governmental organization that works through a global network to transform conflict, strengthen democratic institutions, and achieve sustainable development. With the support of the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement, PartnersGlobal and Conakry-based partners, CECIDE and COGINATA, are implementing the Partners for Access to Justice project to support the justice reform process led by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) of Guinea. The program aims to establish Justice Houses throughout different regions of Guinea in order to provide access to justice in communities, particularly in remote rural areas with vulnerable and marginalized populations.

In 2015, the Guinean government adopted the 2015-2019 Justice Reform Strategy. This initiative, which partly focuses on human rights and access to justice, has the specific objective of bringing justice closer to litigants by implementing a judicial system based on the concept of Justice de Proximité (in French) or Local Access to Justice. The project aims to increase community knowledge and educate citizens on their legal rights by strengthening the institutional sustainability of the Justice Houses and the capacity of the program’s leadership, in turn allowing citizen to increase their confidence in the justice system.

Three fully equipped and operational Justice Houses were established in Kindia, Kankan, and Labé, and within a period of three months (January to March 2019), the Justice Houses took a total of 125 cases, only one of which had to be referred to a court. Rates of citizen engagement have remained consistently high since opening, and staff have been active in raising awareness in the communities.
The last training for Justice Houses personnel introduced two well-respected expert trainers and high-ranking officials from Senegal Ministry of Justice to Guinean Justice House personnel on alternative dispute resolution (ADR) techniques. The training was attended by the staff of the three Justice Houses (Maisons de Justice) located in Kindia, Kankan, and Labé as well as representatives from the local prosecutor’s office.

Staff expressed a desire to receive more training so they could better serve clients. The Senegalese trainers’ willingness to continue supporting the Guinean Justice Houses through additional training and advising on strategies and operations will be valuable over the houses’ long-term operation. This support may help solidify adequate Ministry of Justice buy-in and secure necessary financial support.

Two key community groups—the women of the Kindia market and the Kindia driver’s association—expressed their commitment to use the Justice Houses for dispute resolution. In Kindia, many individuals also seek legal advice or come by with questions about how the Justice House works. In Kankan and Labé, court authorities, religious authorities and NGOs expressed their support and commitment to the Justice Houses. This kind of community buy-in is crucial to creating sustainable and effective justice houses in each locality.

In establishing the Justice Houses, the project worked within the institutional legal framework of the MoJ therefore securing their personnel and political support. This elicited their cooperation in renovating and equipping the Justice Houses, designing the mediator-conciliator’s manual, training members of the three coordinating committees and the Justice House staff. The MoJ’s support also assures that the Justice Houses will continue functioning under MoJ authority after the project period ends. This foundation can be used by the MoJ in future efforts to build additional Justice Houses.

RECIENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Justice Houses became operational this year and are now offering mediation and conciliation services.
- The consortium conducted trainings for the nine Justice House staff and the three prosecutors of Labe, Kindia and Kankan on alternative dispute resolution (ADR) techniques:
- Justice House staff undertook public sensitization events in Kindia, Kankan, and Labé;
- The team inventoried and distributed equipment to the Kindia, Kankan, and Labé Justice Houses

Collaboration with Senegal

Commitment from local groups

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