



GREATER ACCESS TO DEFENSE AND JUSTICE IN KANO STATE



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.

Located in the North-West of Nigeria, Kano State is the economic hub of Northern Nigeria. With high poverty rates, few public defense lawyers, expensive legal fees, and a lack of knowledge of available resources, citizens are often unable to access fair legal representation. Funded by the **U.S. Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL)**, **Partners** is working closely with Partners West Africa Nigeria (PWAN), the Democratic Action Group, and our strategic partner **New-Rule LLC** to provide effective legal aid, rights-based education, case data collection and management through the development of a Case Management System (CMS), and increase access to justice for Kano's indigent community. Together with stakeholders at the community, local, state, national, and international levels, the Greater Access to Defense and Justice in Kano State (GADJET) project engages multiple judicial actors to increase coordination within Kano's justice system, attempt wider criminal justice reform, and work for the sustainability of Kano's first-ever Public Defenders Office (PDO).

Since the GADJET program launched the PDO in June 2017, it has assisted hundreds of accused persons in need of legal aid and recorded several high-profile successes. Early on, the PDO won a groundbreaking case involving the rape of a 6-month old child. The first case of its kind in Kano, the ruling in favor of a minor established a strong legal precedent for future child rights cases. The team also conducts regular community outreach to ensure citizens are sensitized on their rights and understand how to access the services of the legal aid office.

With the project in its final year, a major focus is the sustainability of the PDO and guaranteeing a smooth transition from a donor-funded project to a permanent and self-sustaining business unit within Partners West Africa Nigeria. To do so, the **PartnersGlobal** team has worked hand-in-hand with Partners West Africa Nigeria and PDO staff in a months-long participatory process to jointly develop a Sustainability Roadmap.

KANO PDO: BY THE NUMBERS

**12 LAWYERS ON
STAFF**



**568 CASES
TAKEN ON**



**29 AWARENESS
RAISING EVENTS**



IMPACT

“Everyone knew Idris was innocent, even the prison staff,” said Rashida Bashir, a Senior Paralegal and lawyer at the PDO in Kano State. Rashida was assigned the case of Idris Nuhu, a 35-year-old male detainee in Kurmawa Correctional Centre. Idris was in pre-trial detention for seven years due to accusations of involvement in armed robbery. During those seven years, he was never granted a formal court arraignment or appearance. Unfortunately, this set of circumstances is not uncommon in Kano. Nearly 80% of Nigerians detained in Kano State correctional centres face extremely prolonged periods of pre-trial detention.

Idris Nuhu’s case was one of the PDO’s first pre-trial detention cases. The PDO discovered that during his detention, Idris was forbidden from speaking with his family members or informing them of his status, preventing any opportunity to receive legal advice.

The lawyers took immediate action and submitted a formal cause of action in the form of a Fundamental Human Rights enforcement to the Kano State High Court. The complaint characterized Idris’ detention as a violation of his right to personal liberty, fair trial, and freedom of movement under the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Once the claim was submitted, the Honorable Chief Judge of the High Court agreed to hear Idris’ case and found that Idris was arrested merely of suspicion with no evidence to justify his sentencing. Just three and a half months after the PDO filed the complaint, Idris was released from the correctional centre and reunited with his family.

“It was very emotional watching him leave the correctional centre and seeing him take his first breath of fresh air and steps as a free man,” Rashida recalled, a smile spreading across her face. The office’s involvement in this case changed Idris’ life.

Beyond addressing individual cases, the office continues to change the way the justice system functions in Kano, showing the profound positive impact of a strong public defense. Having access to a reliable and fair public defense through legal aid is changing lives and addressing the challenges facing the justice system. Pre-trial detention rates and unfair sentencing practices are decreasing; and citizens, particularly the most vulnerable, are finally gaining access to justice.