

## PARALEGAL PROGRAMME SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

### **Part A: Organizational Information**

1. Name of Organization:  
Civil Resource Development and Documentation Centre (CIRDDOC) Nigeria
2. What is your organizations ultimate goal  
Our goal is to have a society in which human rights is guaranteed for both men and women on the basis of equality and non-discrimination.
3. When did your organization start paralegal training?  
1999.
4. How has paralegal training promoted your organizational goals?  
The trained paralegals have provided access to justice to women who otherwise would not have been able to afford it. That way they are assisted to enforce their human rights through mediation, litigation or negotiation.

### **Part B: Profile of paralegals and the cases they deal with**

1. How many paralegals have you trained since you started?  
82 paralegals have been trained so far.
2. How many are:  
Male      39  
Female    43
3. What are the basic educational qualifications of paralegals trained so far?  
WAEC and above.
4. Are the paralegals paid?

Yes X

No (Some of them)

5. If yes, by whom?

By the HBF Legal Aid Project

6. How much do they earn on the average?

N3,000 – N5,000 per month

7. If No, why not?

Many of them are not paid because of funding constraints. They are volunteers but they are complaining

8. Give a general overview of the types of cases that the paralegals working with or trained by your organization has received and successfully resolved (You do not need to give details of the cases)

Matrimonial Causes – Marriage, Divorce and Succession

Landlord and Tenant

Domestic violence

Widowhood and Inheritance issues

Bail processes

Legal drafting of simple documents

Child abuse

Criminal cases – assault, malicious damage, rape and sexual assault etc.

9. How many cases has your paralegals received?

Over 300.

10. How many have been successfully resolved?

Over 150.

11. On a scale of 1 -5 with 1 being the highest can you rank the types of cases that the paralegals receive –

- Family matters (2)
- Gender based violence (1)
- Conflicts with traditional/cultural authorities (3)
- Conflicts with government (5)
- Others (4)

12. How many of these cases were directly related to women?

Over 80% as a policy.

### **Part C: Impact of Paralegal Programme**

1. How accessible are the paralegals to the general public?

Very accessible. Their presence is felt on a daily basis in the 15 Community Information Centres spread across three states – Anambra, Enugu and Ebonyi states. Many work in their communities and some run Paralegal clinics in their communities and within their CBOs. One of them, a nurse, run her clinic during her weekly anti-natal clinic days.

2. What has been the impact of the paralegal programme on beneficiaries? Please give a summary which includes statistics and exemplary cases.

Paralegals have been one of the channels through which the CIRDDOC legal aid programme receives cases for litigation. At least twenty divorce cases have been successfully undertaken and the women awarded their due in the marriages. Over 25 widows have been restored to their matrimonial homes and the estate of their husbands taken from them, restored to them. Bail has been secured for people who have been unlawfully detained by police. The presence of the paralegals in the communities have been a source of confidence to the members and has actually put the police on notice that it is no longer business as usual. Number of arrests in some communities such as Akpofu in Nkanu LGA of Enugu state dropped considerably.

Many cases were resolved through mediation and negotiation and in some cases mere legal advice had solved the problem and stopped further abuse of rights. Marital problems have been resolved and agreements signed even where separation resulted.

3. Have you carried out awareness creation exercises to promote the activities of paralegals? If yes, how did you do this? If NO, how have you created awareness on the existence of the paralegal scheme?

Awareness creation is through the Civic educators who facilitate monthly sessions at their village meetings. They inform community members of services available at the centres which include the Paralegal services. CIRDDOC holds rallies in communities where the centres exist and people get to know of the existence of the Paralegals. Fliers have also been distributed and announcements made at churches and village meetings.

4. What has been the wider role of paralegals in their community?

The wider role of the paralegals is to provide free legal services that include legal advice, counseling, mediation, negotiation services, legal drafting of simple documents like affidavits, case referrals to Headquarters Legal department, legal educators, mobilisation.

5. What has been the reaction of administrative and judicial authorities to your paralegal program:

They are:

- a. Supportive
- b. Against
- c. Other (Please Explain) - there was initial resistance but more acceptability now.

## **Part D: Sustainability of Paralegal Programme**

### 1. How can sustainability be secured for the paralegal programme?

The mere fact of training a paralegal is in itself a huge achievement in the sense that one human person has been equipped with skills, even if it's utilized within the persons small family unit or community. If the paralegal is an influential person e.g. a traditional ruler or a priest or priest's wife who run counseling programmes for their faithfuls, the skills will be put to work in these situations even without anyone thinking of paying salaries. We recommend therefore that the project is continued but in selecting participants, people who hold positions of authority and who can apply their skills in their individual work should be given preference. Other examples are secretaries, presidents or other officers of CBOs who are permanent members of the CBOs and whose services can be accessed by other members and their families and friends.

This is without prejudice to a number of them that should remain on the payroll of NGOs who can access funding for those programmes. In the case of the HBF project, where Community Information Centres have been set up, and the paralegals run their clinics within these centres, arrangements are underway to reach agreements with Town Unions and other organizations in the communities to play more involving roles in the centres and begin to plan towards taking over the management and sustenance of the centres. This is going to be a gradual process. In the meantime, HBF should continue its support for the programme.

### 2. How can the Paralegal work be professionalized and institutionalized?

By discussing with universities and Tertiary institutions to integrate paralegal studies in their curricula as certificate courses. The position in the UK and the USA could be explored and best practices adopted. In the US, it is a course in the higher institutions and the Paralegals work in law firms as legal assistants as well with NGOs to provide free legal services after graduation.

## **Part E: Networking**

1. Are you aware of any other organizations that are engaged in paralegal training activities in the states where you work? If yes, please give details and contact addresses where possible

WACOL

Umuezebi street, New haven Enugu

2. Do you network with other organizations on paralegal activities? If yes, How? If No, Why not?

We network with other organization doing paralegal work. We have trained colleagues who wish to start the scheme such as CWSI and WRAPA in Abuja. We have also served as resource persons in the training of their paralegals and have shared our training Manual with them also.

3. Do their programs complement your activities and that of other organizations in this field or do they duplicate existing efforts?

Question of duplication of efforts does not arise as work that needs to be done in that area is very vast and huge, yet only very NGOs are involved in the area. In the rural areas, rarely do lawyers set up practices and the presence of paralegals is a big relief to such communities. Their programmes merely complement activities of our own organization. The more paralegals that are training the more beneficial to the rural communities.

4. What areas do you think cooperation is necessary?
  - a. Training X

- b. Production of materials X
- c. Research
- d. Others (Pls Specify) Service provision

5. Which possibilities exist for networking with government and other legal or educational institutions?

Right now, apart from networking with the police, I don't recall any other form networking with government. This is because government views NGOs with suspicion. It will be useful to discuss with the legal aid council for such possible cooperation. The Council is understaffed, yet there is so much work to be done in providing legal services and representation for indigent particularly those awaiting trial in prisons. If an arrangement can be worked out whereby paralegals offer their services on contract to the Council. Discussions may be opened with the Nigeria Bar Association to introduce the idea of using paralegals as legal secretaries in the firms who can prepare initial documents for the cases for them as is done in the USA.

#### **Section F: General Comments**

1. Is it possible to increase the broader impact of the paralegal work? If yes, How?

Yes by creating wide awareness of the benefits of paralegals to communities. Traditional rulers are known to run mini-courts in their palaces and their decisions are final in most cases. They can be targeted through their State Councils or organizations to impress on them the need to acquire the knowledge and skills to appreciate the implications of the legal actions they take. If it is made a policy at that level, the impact will be broader. Our experience has shown that training traditional rulers or their secretaries has made a big impact on their communities.

2. Recommendation on the way forward for paralegal activities in Nigeria?

It should be professionalized and institutionalized.