Security, Justice and Social Development Bulletin

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HIGHLIGHT

This month’s newsletter focuses more on inmates successful passing of the West African Examination Council (WAEC), Enhancing Diligent and High Quality Prosecution in Abuja, Nigeria and PRAWA’s campaign against Illicit drugs and drug abuse. Also in this newsletter is a Final Communiqué of the 15th Extra – Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights and other issues. Happy reading,
Patrick, a 24-year-old indigene of Calabar, Cross River State, adds that he wants to put the past behind him, and develop himself. Hence, he studied hard and passed the WAEC exams in flying colours. He had five credits. Patrick, who is serving a five-year jail term for conspiracy in a robbery case, which began on March 5, 2010 and will terminate on November 9, 2015, notes that despite having one more year to spend in jail, he has a great destiny ahead of him. “Making such results while here has made me realize I can still make it in life. It has taught me, I should never give up. I have also got closer to God while in this place,” he says. The head teacher of the school, a Principal Inspector of Prisons, Mr. Ayodele Obarewo, explains how the inmates have been performing. “It is a voluntary school, and there are two classes—the beginners’ class and the examination class. In the latter, we have 40 inmates already, and they are showing great interest and enthusiasm in the lessons,” he notes.

The Deputy Controller of Prisons, Mr. Emmanuel Bamidele disclosed that the key objective of the “Rehabilitation, Restoration and Reintegration” (3Rs) programme of Nigeria prison is to provide education opportunities for the inmates so that they can be useful to themselves and the society whenever they regained freedom. When they finally regained their freedom they can seek admission into any university of their choice, since they are awaiting trial” the deputy controller said. He explained that out of the 1,761 inmates in the prison, 186 are convicted while 1,575 are awaiting trial for upwards of between five and 13 years.

People who hold the view that nothing good can come out of prisoners may begin to think otherwise. At least, the performance of some inmates of the Ikoyi Prisons, Lagos in the last November/December, 2013 General Certificate of Examination (GCE) is enough indication that Nigeria Prisons, in a way, are also centres of reformation.

Indeed, with no fewer than 102 inmates of the prisons participating in the examinations and 48 of them posting outstanding results, some stakeholders note that there is still hope for jailbirds in the country. Findings show that while a few of the 48 prisoners scored distinction in their papers, others got at least five credits which is the minimum requirement for securing university admission in the country.

For example, while Bamidele Oluwafemi with examination number 5258888705, obtained three distinctions and five credits, including English and Mathematics, Bassey Ekpo, with registration number 528888904 got five distinctions and two credits. One of the outstanding inmates, Mr. Edet Patrick, explains the drive behind his success story. He says, “Even though I am an inmate here, I still hope to go back to school. I still look forward to going to the university to study Computer Engineering. Besides teaching us to work hard, the authorities here established a special school where we prepare for external examinations.”

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Rights (the Court). She also reported on other meetings held, including: the meeting with Commissioner of Political Affairs; with European Union; with the Assistant Secretary – General for Human Rights of the United Nations; the Vice-President of the Pan-African Parliament; the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Benin; and the International Federation for Human Rights, all of which took place between 24 to 31 January 2014 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The Chairperson recalled that during the Second joint Annual Meeting of the Commission and the Court in July 2013, the two Institutions had agreed to request the AU Policy Organs to declare 2016 the “African Year of Human Rights” (Project 2016). She reported that this request was endorsed by the Executive Council through decision EX.CL/824 (XXIV), with the rider that focus should be on the rights of women, since 2016 had already been slated as a year in which the continent would celebrate Africa’s achievements in the area of women’s rights.

The Chair personal so reported on the proposed road map for the implementation of Project 2016, which includes the requirement for the nomination of representatives to be part of the Project 2016 Committee, following which the Commission nominated Honourable Commissioner Pansy Tlakula; Honourable Commissioner Soyata Maiga and Honourable Commissioner Lucy Asuagbor to be members of the Committee, with Honourable Commissioner Soyata Maiga designated as the Commission’s focal point for the Project.

Furthermore, the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) of the African Union Commission (AUC) and the Court, made a joint proposal to establish a Pan-African Institute for Human and Peoples’ Rights, and indicated the necessity for the Commission to participate in the initiative. In that regard, the commission nominated three (3) Commissioners to be members of the Committee established by the Court and the DPA, to enable the Commission participate in the process.

Members nominated by the Commission include:
- Honourable Commissioner Reine Alapini-Gansou;
- Honourable Commissioner Maya Sahli-Fadel;
- Honourable Commissioner Lawrence Murugu Mute.

The Commission was briefed about the level of preparedness of its upcoming 55th Ordinary Session in the Republic of Angola, following a pre – mission undertaken by the Secretary-General.

Culled from Penal Reform International: http://www.penalreform.org

The advanced copy of the report of the third Intergovernmental Expert Group Meeting held in Vienna on 25-28 March 2014 on the revision of the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners is now available. According to Penal Reform International, the report is being tabled at the 23rd session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (Crime Commission) in May 2014.

In its seventh paragraph, the report notes that 'in view of the complexity of the issues discussed and the number and variety of proposals submitted to the Secretariat, the meeting considered several rules for revision in the nine areas identified, and achieved consensus on some of those it.'

It recommends that the Crime Commission should consider: Extending the Expert Group’s mandate so that it can continue its work;

Affirming that the revision of the Standard Minimum Rules is a time-intensive exercise of crucial importance and that a suitable time frame would be helpful in achieving an outcome of suitable quality;

Appealing to Member States to promote the participation of prison administration experts and practitioners in addition to other relevant experts in their delegations;

Acknowledging the contribution made by intergovernmental organizations and civil society and recommend that they should continue to be actively involved in the process;

Reiterating that any changes to the Standard Minimum Rules should not lower any of the existing standards, but should improve them so that they reflect the recent advances in correctional science and good practice

The report gives a summary of the meeting’s deliberations including the outcome of the text agreed to specific Rules and those discussed but not yet agreed.


Why Prison Isn’t Working For Women

Culled from the Guardian: http://www.theguardian.com

It’s a weekday morning, and in a packed lecture theatre in central London, author and consultant Stephanie Covington is telling about 100 people who work in Britain’s jails why prisons fail to rehabilitate women. Along with other prison campaigners, Covington believes something must be done about the fact that eight in 10 women behind bars have been convicted of a non-violent offence and yet, once incarcerated, one in two will reoffend within a year. Locking up a mother or caregiver will also hugely increase the risk of the children having mental health problems or getting caught up in the criminal justice system themselves, she adds.

Covington believes that, in an ideal world, only a handful of women – those who are truly dangerous – would be incarcerated. If changing policy on imprisoning women who pose no threat to society is a long-term goal, however, Covington’s UK workshops aim to reduce the damage done by prison by teaching frontline staff about the benefits of what she about the number of journalists being killed. 2012 was the country deadliest year on record with the National Union of Journalists (NUSOJ) recording the killing of 18 journalists. Also impinging on freedom of expression is the country’s lack of access to information law, institutionalised attacks on NUSOJ, and the existence of various laws criminalizing freedom of expression, including criminal defamation in the penal code of Somalia.

On 29th March 2014 Sky FM editor and news presenter Nuradin Hassan was detained and is currently being held without charge. His detention is believed to be related to a report about a British advisor to the Prime Minister, whose passport went missing, disrupting their travel plans. According to reports, authorities claimed that the report contained misleading information and questioned Nuradin about the source of his information.

ACHPR’s call for Somali Authorities to investigate and bring to justice perpetrators of the killing of media workers and other violations of journalists’ rights, cease attacks on National Union of Somali Journalists, guarantee unions of independence and to remember their international obligations to respect the rights to life, freedom of expression, and freedom of association and assembly. Journalism is not a crime and media workers have the right to do their job without constant threats to their life and liberty.

Final Communiqué of the 15th Extra – Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights

The African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights (the Commission) held its 15th Extra-Ordinary Session, from 7 to 14 March 2014, in Banjul, The Gambia; which was convened to deal with Communications and other outstanding matters.

The Session was opened by the Vice-Chairperson of the Commission and Acting Chairperson, Honourable Commissioner Mohamed Béchir Khalfallah with the assistance of Honourable Commissioner Reine Alapini-Gansou, the Acting Vice-Chairperson.

Though Honourable Commissioner Kayitesi Zainabo Sylvie, Chairperson of the Commission joined the Session on the second day due to unavailability of flight connections, and subsequently chaired the rest of the Session.

The Session was attended by the following Commissioners:

- Honourable Commissioner Kayitesi Zainabo Sylvie;
- Honourable Commissioner Mohamed Béchir Khalfallah;
- Honourable Commissioner Reine Alapini-Gansou;
- Honourable Commissioner Pansy Tiakula
- Honourable Commissioner YeungKam John Yeung SikYuen;
- Honourable Commissioner Soyata Maiga;
- Honourable Commissioner Lucy Asuagbor;
- Honourable Commissioner Med Kaggwa;
- Honourable Commissioner Maya Sahli-Fadel;
- Honourable Commissioner Pacifique Manirakiza
- Honourable Commissioner Lawrence Murugu Mute.

Honourable Commissioner Kayitesi Zainabo Sylvie, briefed Members of the Commission on the outcome of the meetings of the African Union (AU) Policy Organs, and the Fifth Meeting of the Bureau of the Commission and the African Court on Human and Peoples’
INTERNATIONAL NEWS

AFEX Welcomes ACHPR Resolution on Media Attacks in Somalia

The African Freedom of Expression Exchange (AFEX) welcomes the African on Human Right and People’s Rights’ (ACHPR) resolution addressing the continual attacks on media workers in Somalia.

Resolution 264: Resolution on Attacks Against Journalists and Media Practitioners in the Federal Republic of Somalia was passed at the ACHPR meeting at its 15th Extraordinary Session held in Banjul, The Gambia, on 7–14 March 2014.

In the Resolution, the ACHPR “strongly condemns the serious violations of the right to life committed against journalists and media practitioners” and appeals for “the immediate cessation of harassment and intimidation aimed at independent media organisations” in Somalia. The ACHPR expressed particular concern for the targeting of the National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ) which has been facing numerous restrictions and intimidations including negative labeling, persecutions and the physical harassment and intimidation of its members.

In the Reporters Without Borders 2014 Press Freedom Index Somalia ranked 176th out of 180 countries in 2012. ACHPR released a similar resolution expressing deep concern internationally, he explained that a person’s socio-economic background or past to should not be the major determinant of his or her future. He went further by encouraging the participants to learn the lessons the past must have presented and use it instead to build a better future for themselves. In conclusion, he declared the workshop open and expressed the desire for fruitful, rewarding and life-changing discussions as products of the activity.

After the Keynote Address, the first workshop session was anchored by Pharm. Nonso Maduka (PRAWA) who discussed the Implication of Substance Abuse on the Future of the Youths. He began his presentation by identifying three major drugs- Alcohol, Cigarette and Marijuana- which he referred to as the gateway drugs. He explained that he refers to them as gateway drugs because they usually lay the foundation for the consumption of various illicit drugs. Within the limited time available, he explained the psychological and physiological impacts of these drugs on both men and women at various stages of their lives. Using his own life experiences, he also addressed several questions on challenges faced by the participants on the consumption and impacts of these substances.

The second session of the workshop tagged: Drugs to Wealth was anchored by Ambassador Sunny Ikhioya who sought to encourage the spirit of entrepreneurship among those present. He explained to them that being agents of development within their communities can only be possible with the realization and effective application of their various skills and talents. He discussed the need for determination and self improvement and also explained that it is important for every individual to not only discover that which they are passionate about but also pursue it. In conclusion, he emphasized on the need for ingenuity, hard-work and patience as one strives for success in any endeavor.

The Empowerment Workshop was concluded by the sharing of life experiences by former drug users and cultists, as well as a vote of thanks by the Baale of the Dongo Community.

Covington is in Britain at the invitation of the Women at Risk coalition, a group of experts including academics, psychologists and criminologists intent on making society more aware of the needs of the women who get caught up in the criminal justice system. At present, she says, prisons are run on the basis that the women inside them are “bad” and that “kicking off” or disruptive behavior is controllable on their part. The truth is that almost all female prisoners are trauma victims, says Covington, and if they were handled with that in mind, prisons would become far safer for everyone inside them.

Compared with women in the general population, says Covington – a Californian psychologist who works with the National Institute of Corrections in Washington DC, and who became aware of the issues around women in jail after a prison warden attended one of her trauma conferences – women in custody are five times more likely to have a mental health problem, and almost eight in 10 exhibit some level of psychological disturbance on admission. One in three have suffered sexual abuse, and more than one in two have suffered domestic violence; half have attempted suicide at some point in their lives. “And going into prison re-traumatises them – so basically, we are amplifying or compounding their problems,” she says.

“Taking as the default that you’re dealing with a woman who is suffering from post-traumatic stress syndrome makes perfect sense, because the chances are very high that you are what that means is working hard not to trigger trauma in a woman: understanding how she might feel when male officers are with her or go behind her, for example, because that might take her back to situations where she was abused.”

One prison that has adopted Covington’s trauma-centred approach is Framingham Institution for Women in Massachusetts, whose successes she cites in her presentation to UK prison staff. The changes at Framingham over the past few years, says Covington, have been pivotal. “There’s been a 46% drop in crisis situations, and the number of prisoners on days when they’re having to be watched constantly because of fears over their mental health is down by a third. There’s been a 20% drop in transfers to psychiatric hospitals, and a 15% drop in self-harm.”

And Framingham is safer for everyone, she says: inmate-on-staff assaults are down by 62%, inmate-on-inmate assaults by 54%, and inmate-on-inmate fights by 46%.

Most of the women in the criminal justice system have suffered trauma almost unimaginable to the rest of us. Covington says: “Understanding that trauma, and changing the prison experience to reflect an understanding of it, could give these women the first break they’ve ever had – and that could really change them, and we’ll all reap the rewards.”
UPCOMING EVENTS

Marking 20 Years of PRAWA’S Existence

A lot has been done but there is need to do more”

These words echoed in the room as various criminal justice sector stakeholders gathered on 20th March 2014 at De Ritz Hotel, Ikeja G.R.A, Lagos State-Nigeria to review PRAWA’s achievements and critically analyze the development of the Nigerian Criminal Justice system in the past two decades.

The Prisoners Rehabilitation and Welfare Action (PRAWA) was established on 16th December 1994 with the aim of achieving specifically what it name entails. However, over the years, recognizing the root causes of the challenges faced in ensuring the effective rehabilitation of incarcerated persons, the organization developed into an entity whose objectives revolved around promoting institutional reforms in formal and informal sector for Access to justice, rehabilitation, and social development of prisoners, ex-prisoners, torture victim and youth at risk.

The year 2014 marks two decades of PRAWA’s efforts in pushing the boundary of criminal justice reform in Africa through collaboration with other sector stakeholders. At first, the organization’s administrative headquarters was located in Lagos State, but in 2006 it was moved to Enugu State. Hence, it was only fitting that the celebration of its 20th anniversary officially kicked off in Lagos with a Media Chief Executive and Stakeholders’ Roundtable.

The Roundtable commenced with the Nigerian National Anthem and opening prayers after which Mr. Olayinka Lawal, the Deputy Executive Director of PRAWA introduced the PRAWA Board of Directors and participants. He welcomed everyone present and explained that in order to mark its 20th anniversary; the organization has scheduled various events, one of which was the Stakeholders conference/roundtable.

Upon conclusion, he invited the Chairman of the PRAWA Board of Directors, H.E. Sir Gabriel Toby, to deliver his Welcome Address. Sir Gabriel Toby once again welcomed all and pointed out the aim of the Media Chief Executive / Stakeholders’ Roundtable was to flag off the PRAWA 20th Anniversary Celebration as well as provide an opportunity for reflection on the work of PRAWA over the years. The Roundtable was also expected to provide the necessary environment for the review of the current challenges in the justice and security sector, the implication of such challenges to Nigeria’s development as well as the identification of priorities for future engagement.

The vision statement of PRAWA speaks of the desire for the emergence of “a humane and secure society that corrects and empowers to prevent crime, violence and torture”. Influenced by this, he underscored that task of promoting and ensuring the development of a secure and humane society can only be effectively achieved through multi-agency involvement, partnership and support aimed at facilitating crime prevention.

He emphasized that when crime, violence or torture is committed it has implications on the victims, their family members, the community and the offender or perpetrator. There is need for people to be concerned about crime and violence prevention, the treatment of incarcerated persons, the rate of recidivism and how best to work with prisoners, ex-prisoners and their significant others to promote their effective reintegration in the com-

TRAINING

Taking Drug Abuse Awareness to the Ibeju Lekki Communities of Lagos State, Nigeria

In today’s world, the scourge of drug abuse or drug addiction has become highly worrisome. The consequence of such addiction, abuse, trafficking or even cultivation can be devastating; especially as facts continuously note the disturbing level of vulnerability to such substances among youths. More Nigerian youths are becoming drug addicts as Nigeria gradually graduates from a drug consuming nation to a drug producing one. A number of recent studies suggest that almost all Nigerian youths experiment with drugs at some point, particularly alcohol and nicotine.

Despite the efforts of various federal and state government agencies to fight the menace of illicit drugs production and consumption, more young people are being recruited daily by drug barons to serve as couriers just as many more are increasingly becoming addicted to assorted drugs. Sadly, the fight against drug addiction within the Nigerian society is believed to be further compounded by the various socio-economic challenges facing the youths, especially unemployment, deteriorating family values, peer pressure, among others. These factors increase their level of vulnerability to several vices transforming them from agents of positive change within their communities to instruments of violence and crime.

Guided by the desire to bring an end to this societal menace, as well as empower youths as possible agents of development in Nigeria, Salimo-Wits Foundation, the Divine Treasurers and PRAWA held a Youth Empowerment Workshop on 11th April 2014 for the nine (9) communities of Ibeju Lekki, Lagos State, Nigeria.

The workshop which took place in Dongo Community had 133 youths from Dongo and the other eight (8) Ibeju-Lekki Communities in attendance. It commenced with an opening prayer, the Nigerian National Anthem, as well as a keynote address by the president/ founder of the Salimo-Wits Foundation and Divine Treasurers, Ambassador Dan Ekoko.

After welcoming everyone present, Ambassador Dan Ekoko began his Address with a definition of the term, ‘youth’. According to him, in 1998, the United Nations predicted that the number of young people who would grow to more than 1.2 billion in 2010. Currently, half of the world’s population is under the age of 25. In Nigeria, one third of the population comprises of young people between the ages of 10 and 24.

He opined that the youths are the greatest assets of any country as well as the engine room of growth and development. Using the Bible as a reference point, he explained that different stages in life have their different challenges and Drug abuse happens to be one of the challenges faced by the youths. Drug abuse is a shared problem around the world and has been described as a scourge and one of the chief distracters of Nigerian youths in their pursuit of relevance, success, impact and greatness in life.

He explained that when a person has no vision or personal goals, drug abuse become almost inevitable. He further emphasized that a person’s youth should not be spent on reckless, unproductive and wasteful activities. It should not be for indulging in alcohol consumption, cigarette and marijuana smoking, cult activities or several other anti-social behaviors. Instead it should be a time for planning, dreaming, aspiring and strategizing for a greater future. He asked the young people present where they saw themselves within the society in 5 to 10 years. Citing examples of highly influential people nationally and
programmes for young people who find it hard to even defend their university qualification. He further highlighted the need for collaboration with private sectors and public awareness and re-orientation by the media.

During the roundtable, Mrs. Josephine Obute of the News Agency of Nigeria expressed her concern that the Nigerian Prison Service makes it quite difficult for the media to perform their tasks of public awareness creation by frustrating efforts made towards prison visitation. In response, Mr. Alimi, on behalf of the Prisons Service, extended an open invitation to members of the press interested in visiting the prisons. Mr. Raphael Mbaegu (CLEEN foundation) and

Mr. Emmanuel Amuchi (Nigerian Television Authority) also expressed their dissatisfaction that the Nigerian Police Force was absent at an important event such as this, given that they are further aggravating the problems faced by the criminal justice system through poor investigation, torture and the arrest of innocent people.

After thanking the participants for their wonderful inputs in course of the meeting, Sir Gabriel Toby maintained that one of the things PRAWA wants to achieve is effective partnership with necessary stakeholders. During the Vote of thanks, Ms. Kate Ibeanusi of PRAWA not only agreed with Sir. Toby but also stated that PRAWA will contact everyone present for collaboration and hopes that they will be willing to offer the organization the requested help.

He lamented the state of Nigerian youths, the ever present issues of unemployment, high prevalence of drug abuse, level of violence and lack of life planning skills. Furthermore, he addressed the critical role of the media in mobilizing the general public towards supporting the process of comprehensive and sustainable reform in the society. In his opinion, no society can develop if the outlined issues are not addressed, nor will the future be guaranteed if the tomorrow leaders – the youths- are not encouraged to take none criminal and non-violent path. In conclusion, he thanked everyone present and added that the celebration of the work of PRAWA in the past 20 years is a celebration for all, especially the stakeholders for whose work and support he was grateful.

At the end of Sir Gabriel Toby’s Welcome Address, the Executive Director of PRAWA- Dr. Uju Agomoh- discussed the topic: 20 Years of Promoting Reforms in the Prison, Justice and Development Sector: The PRAWA story.

She began her presentation by acknowledging that it was indeed a great joy and significance to be asked to reflect on 20 years of PRAWA’s existence. After expressing her gratitude to everyone present, she said that the organization’s work in the past 20 years in this sector underline certain areas in need of discussion. She questioned the achievements within the sector especially when awaiting trials inmates account for over 70% (and in some cases over 80%) of the total inmate population in Nigeria. She added that the youths who are supposed to be the future of the nation, account for about 50-90% of prison inmates in Nigeria. With about 2/3 of ex-prisoners re-offending, the highlighted issues are further worsened by the existing high level of recidivism which places a question mark on the efficiency of society’s way of processing offenders. She also bemoaned the prevalence of torture and violence but added that even in the midst of all these there are still reasons for stakeholders within the criminal justice sector to celebrate. Reminiscing, she stated that formerly, little or no free hand was given to NGOs within the prison sector but now many government agencies are even extending invitation to NGOs as partners in the process of development.

While discussing PRAWA’s growth over the years, she stated that to date, the organization has visited over 150 prisons and intervened in over 39 countries. PRAWA has moved from having only two staff members to the present staff strength of over 30. She provided an overview of PRAWA’s projects including the Prison Intervention in Africa (PRIA) which is being implemented in six African countries (Nigeria, Kenya, Zambia, Burundi, Rwanda and Democratic Republic of Congo). She added that the organization has a strong interface with the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights with a designated desk at the office of the Special Rapporteur on Prisons and Places of Detention- a feat yet to be achieved by any NGO.

She explained that although PRAWA started by focusing on prisons, over the years it saw the need to expand its intervention to the Ministry of Justice, Judiciary, Police, among others. This was influenced by the highly dependent relationship existing between the various organs of the criminal justice sector. So far the organization has produced four documentaries, a 13-episode drama documentary on torture prevention, and interventions for over 30,000 prison officers in the PRIA countries, Ghana and Sierra Leone. She
added that a Case Management System has been piloted in two states in Nigeria (Enugu and Abuja) and currently it is being developed in Abuja for Ministry of Justice, Police, Judiciary, FCT High Court, Suleja prison, Gwagwalada prisons, among others- the very first of its kind.

The actions of officers within the Nigerian Prisons Service are governed by the Prisons Standing Order which until last year, many officers didn’t have copies. However, in 2013, PRAWA printed at least 20,000 copies of the revised Standing Orders and made it available to all senior prison officers. Also for the first time, the organization developed the prisoners’ handbook in major Nigerian languages to ensure that every inmate is aware of his or her rights. Furthermore, in Kenya, Zambia and Burundi, PRAWA developed a draft rehabilitation policy for their prisons services.

Even though a lot has been done, she still believes that more still has to be done and the organization still seeks to do more through its three program areas: Social Development and Research, and Prevention and Documentation and R&D. Furthermore, she added that the organization to introduce Alternatives to Violence Programmes in West Africa, the organization has also gone ahead to engage Nigerian youths on the issue, as well as issues of illegal Migration and drug abuse with over 3,850 people reached on its drug abuse campaign in prisons located in Edo, Delta, Cross River, Akwa Ibom and Rivers State.

While citing the Centenary celebration of the Sierra Leonean Prisons Service as an example, she explained that there is need for the society to consider issues relating to the efficiency of prisons as important security issues. Concluding, she emphasized that when the society addresses such issues, it is indeed promoting development.

Dr. Agomoh’s speech was followed by a panel discussion on ‘Strengthening Justice, Security and Development Work’ anchored by two members of the PRAWA Board of Directors-Dr. Fidelis Ndeh Che and Prof. Chiso Okafor. Dr. Fidelis Ndeh-Che presented a private sector perspective on the issue. He expressed his opinion that development functions should not be regarded as a task meant only for the government because there is no such thing as government in isolation. Government is an entity made up of the people. Since businesses and investments can only grow and succeed in safe environments, one cannot deny the fact that such safety can only be achieved through effective collaboration between the private and public sectors aimed at strengthening security and justice in the society.

Prof. Okafor approached the subject as both an educator and a business person. She highly emphasized on the quality of education and information the younger generation are exposed to. Using research findings, she buttressed the point that every individual’s action is highly influenced by what he or she is taught. For her, violence and certain vices are celebrated within the Nigerian society, and the average Nigerian youth automatically has the belief that his or her value as a person is dependent on their financial status. This belief system does nothing more but encourage ‘get rich quick’ schemes among young people while undermining the importance of hard-work. Upon conclusion, she added that in order for these issues to be adequately addressed, there is need to look at belief systems in the society that provide fertile grounds for the development of certain vices and misconceptions. Every individual was also asked to carry out self examination on ways in which he or she has encouraged violence in the society. One can never underestimate the importance of addressing unemployment, inadequate quality of education at every level especially when considered in the light of their long term ramifications.

In the course of the panel discussion, participants were given the opportunity to make inputs. Contributions made include the fact that there has been a dysfunction of the society with the condoning of violence. Although there has always been crime in the Nigerian society, the current rate at which it is perpetrated has become highly disturbing. It was argued that Faith Based Organizations and traditional societies were not doing enough in terms of condemning the illegal actions by politicians; hence, the need for re-orientation of the society through community-based awareness. Representing the Attorney General of Lagos State, Mrs. Ngoaba Utomi- Director at the Directorate of Citizens Rights explained that the private sector still has a lot to do in the area of reducing unemployment by investing in cottage industries especially in agriculture, using soft loans from the governments.

The second panel discussion focused on identifying priorities for future engagement and partnerships among PRAWA stakeholders. Contributing stakeholders include: the Nigerian Prison Service, The Ministry of Justice, The Media and Youths. Representing the Controller of Prisons-Lagos State Command, Mr. Abdul Rasheed Alimi expressed his concern that truly there has been an erosion of our societal values especially when one considers the high number of young people in Nigerian prisons. That notwithstanding, he expressed their appreciation to PRAWA for its work within the criminal justice system in the past two decades.

Representing the Officer In charge of Ikoyi Prisons, Mr. Alu Ogbonanya Alu presented a paper outlining areas of collaboration for future intervention between PRAWA and several authorities for further development of the penal sector. His proposal was divided into three component areas: Interventions to be provided before conviction, after sentencing and upon release from incarceration. He added that the proposal was prepared by the prison inmates and implored the management of PRAWA to make sure that the proposal is acted upon by the relevant authorities.

On behalf of the Lagos State Ministry of Justice, Mrs. Utomi thanked PRAWA for its twenty years of service and added that while discussing the issue of serving humanity, all hands must be on deck. She added that Lagos State has undergone several reforms in the criminal justice sector including the criminal code law, establishment of government agencies like the Office of the Public Defender, Citizen Mediation Centre, among others. Furthermore, she stated that the Chief Justice of Lagos State is highly passionate about prison decongestion; however, there is a serious gap in rehabilitation and training for both inmates and ex-prisoners. As a result of this, she suggested that the Faith Based Organizations should be invited to provide pro-bono services where necessary.

The Assistant Director- Prosecutions, Lagos State Ministry of Justice, Mr. Babajide Martins highlighted the need for the decentralization of prisons, community based advocacy, and introduction of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) necessary for database management systems for finger prints and picture identification of Awaiting trial persons. He felt all these were necessary to stoke the flames of reform with the penal system. He further underscored the need for the government to explore the issue of prison privatization which has proven quite effective in several other countries. He also informed everyone present that the recently passed Freedom of Information Bill can be a very useful tool in the hands of the media to hold the government accountable within the society.

While Mr. Dele Bodunde of the News Agency of Nigeria focused on the need for relaxed bail conditions as a way of decongesting prisons, as well as the inculcation of crime prevention education in the curriculum of secondary schools; Mr. Igunanya Igboke of PRAWA spoke on behalf of Nigerian youths. Mr. Igboke explained that there is no way to fight crime without going back to the roots and starting with the family unit. He reiterated the role Faith Based Organizations could play as well as the need for skill acquisition