

## Human Rights Organisations in Nigeria

### Report

This series is an initiative launched by the Danish Centre for Human Rights (DCHR). It presents a selection of evaluations of DCHR's partnership programmes conducted since 1995. The intention of the series is to promote transparency and to contribute to the lessons learnt in the field of human rights and democratization. The evaluators focus on a number of key questions of general relevance in the evaluation of human rights programmes, including:

- To what extent is the management of partnership institutions characterized by high levels of integrity, professionalism and commitment and how does this influence the institutions' ability to make an impact on human rights?
- Have the local institutions, civil society or the state in the field of human rights established cross sector cooperation as is envisaged and encouraged in the programme design?
- To what extent have the organisations gained sustainability in terms of organisational strength and fundraising skills?

The series will hopefully be a source of insight and inspiration for others committed to the promotion and protection of human rights and democratic values.

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4. to promote coordination between voluntary organisations and assist them in their work with human rights;
5. to support and extend Nordic and other international co-operation in the field of human rights.



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Evaluations and Reviews of Partnership Programmes - No 16

### Report

## Human Rights Organisations in Nigeria

**HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANISATIONS IN NIGERIA -  
AN APPRAISAL REPORT ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS NGO COMMUNITY IN  
NIGERIA**

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## Message from the Director

The Danish Centre for Human Rights (DCHR) initiated its partnership programmes with democratic governments, universities and NGO's in developing countries at the beginning of the nineties. Until then, DCHR had conducted analyses of the human rights situation in different regions. Though the analyses were met with both interest and acknowledgement, the question arose as to how to apply the principles in practice. How could structures and organisations be established for human rights to become an active part of society?

The question was indeed a challenging one. In Denmark, the development of a democracy had been fundamentally different from the situation found in many of the newly established democracies in developing countries. DCHR could therefore merely provide fragments of a pattern but no fully fledged solutions. As a result of this, an open and experimenting dialogue was effected between DCHR and local partners.

The initiation of DCHR partnership programmes took place at a time where the international human rights environment was shifting its focus and a new agenda was fostered. This agenda has three leading principles:

The first principle is the implementation of human rights. The UN World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993 endorsed the historically unique Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action which focuses on international and national implementation mechanisms. As from the signing of the UN World Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, the emphasis had primarily been on the establishment and consolidation of international norms and conventions. The Vienna Declaration represents an international landmark in terms of translating these norms into practice.

The second principle is the active role that human rights can play in the prevention of conflicts. New conflict patterns have arisen since 1989,

and there is a need for stable solutions in especially the African and European regions. One of the prime concerns is how the principle of non-discrimination, and tolerance in general, can be implemented and sustained. This is of fundamental importance to the ongoing developments in for instance the Balkans and Rwanda. A major reason for the escalation of problems in these areas is the absence of a dialogue between different groupings in society. A central objective is therefore to provide the settings for such a dialogue to emerge and be sustained. This objective forms part of a Nordic approach focussing on the establishment of a dialogue between ethnic groups and between governmental authorities and civil society. The interplay between human rights and conflict prevention is an area which requires further development.

The third principle is that of local ownership. The partners define the problems to be addressed and the strategies to be applied, and they spearhead the actual implementation on the ground. The DCHR serves as a source of ideas and inspiration and acts as a sparring partner.

Finally it should be stressed that Danida's willingness to support DCHR's work financially as well as the availability of expertise from a range of Danish key institutions to act as resource persons on DCHR's partnership programmes have been of ultimate value. DCHR has benefited from expertise provided by public institutions, including ministries, the police and prison service, courts, the Ombudsman, universities, and independent institutions such as NGOs, the educational establishment, lawyers and journalists. These assisting measures have been an essential prerequisite for the work of DCHR and its partners for the past decade.

*Morten Kjarum, Director, March 2001*

## Foreword

At the beginning of the 1990s the Danish Centre for Human Rights (DCHR) initiated partnership programmes in two regions, namely Southern Africa and the Baltic Sea States. Since 1996, DCHR has expanded its regional involvement. Today, the project portfolio of the Centre encompasses thirty countries in Central Europe, the Baltic Sea States and CIS countries, the Balkans, Africa, Asia and Central America.

One of the common denominators of these programmes is that they fall under the rubric of democracy and human rights and the implementation of Danish development policy objectives (Danida programme countries, FRESTA and assistance to Central and Eastern Europe).

Initially DCHR's strategy was to capacitate civil society organisations. In some of the new democracies where NGOs were virtually non existing, DCHR assisted in building up sectoral programmes for the support of NGOs. In 1993, DCHR broadened its programmes in order to include the state and independent institutions financed by the public sector. Such a holistic approach was deemed necessary since all three sectors - the state, independent institutions and NGOs - constitute major actors in establishing and securing a dynamic and interactive democracy.

During 1998, DCHR aligned its partnership programmes with the Centre's own strategic plan, focussing on capacity building and a number of target groups in the field of human rights and the rule of law. Target groups comprise parliaments, the state administration, courts, ombudsmen, national human rights institutions, universities, educational institutions, civil society and intergovernmental organisations.

The methodological approach includes coaching, strategic planning, programme development in accordance with the logical framework

approach, institutional development and capacity building in the fields of management and administration.

Monitoring, reviews and evaluations form an integral part of establishing sound partnership programmes. The evaluations are conducted by external and independent consultants who have the sole responsibility for drafting the reports and the conclusions. In most evaluations, consultants are seconded by the DCHR project manager in charge of the programmes together with local experts in order to ensure that relevant information is retrieved, including non-documented communication. In addition, it is of the utmost importance that the wealth of information that is gathered during the evaluations, but which is not necessarily included in the reports, remains with those who are responsible for the programmes.

DCHR intends to publish as many of the evaluations as possible. However, evaluations which contain confidential information or which are mainly administrative capacity assessments and do not focus on the implementation of activities, will not be published.

The evaluations of DCHR's partnership programmes have proven that vision, planning, management, administration and profound professionalism in the field of human rights are essential prerequisites for performance and the ability to achieve results. In this respect, human rights institutions do not differ from other institutions.

When considering the favourable evaluations, these programmes tend to share a number of characteristics: i) ownership of the programmes is in the hands of the partner institutions; ii) managers possess a high level of integrity and professionalism and are committed to develop skills in the fields of human rights and institution building; iii) the institutions are developing proper administrative practices, including financial control; iv) it is fairly impossible to raise funds locally; v) there is a high degree of DCHR involvement and impact on the levels of institution building

and training in human rights standards; and vi) cooperation between state institutions and civil society organisations contributes constructively to the protection and promotion of human rights, for instance, in terms of legal drafting and law reform initiatives.

In the evaluation of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, which was commissioned by SIDA and carried out by the Nordic Africa Institute in conjunction with a Swedish university, the evaluators commented on "the Danish model". In their view, this model implies a high degree of DCHR involvement and coaching but without DCHR taking charge of the process or the results. However, according to other evaluators DCHR tends, at times, to be too involved. The evaluations will assist us in maintaining the best possible balance.

In principle, DCHR does not station DCHR project managers or consultants in partnership institutions. Furthermore, cooperation is only sought with local organisations or institutions. Capacity building of partnership institutions and local human rights resource bases is thus highly prioritized, primarily by means of training and regular coaching provided by DCHR project managers and consultants.

The fact that DCHR is not involved in the daily management of partnership institutions ensures that the responsibility for decision-making and implementation lies solely with the institutions. The partners are thus responsible for their own successes and mistakes. It should be noted, however, that there is a considerable degree of professional capacity in several of the countries in which DCHR is engaged even though these countries are poor in terms of GNP.

Although most human rights institutions in developing countries and the new democracies find it difficult to raise local funds, some have successfully managed to attract co-funding from other international donors. DCHR has therefore gradually withdrawn its funding from some

programmes after the institutions have been consolidated and other donors have taken over.

The DCHR has initiated a study on human rights indicators the purpose of which is to provide DCHR project managers, partners as well as external stakeholders in Denmark and in the countries where we work, with assessment tools which allow international comparison in terms of processes of democratisation and compliance with fundamental rights.

By continuing to develop these concepts, it is our hope that the study along with the present series of evaluations will contribute to the further consolidation of DCHR's work and be a source of inspiration to others.

*Birgit Lindsnæs, Director of Project Department, March 2001*

## **About the Report: Human Rights Organisations in Nigeria**

The human rights NGO community in Nigeria has grown significantly in the past three years. With the end of a decade of military dictatorship and the establishment of democratic civilian rule in 1999, the role of human rights NGOs has changed. During the years of military dictatorship, many NGOs focussed their activities on the provision of legal assistance and litigation, legislative advocacy, human rights monitoring and research as well as public awareness activities. The activities of these NGOs were the basis of the pro-democracy movement in Nigeria between 1995 and 1999. Since then, NGOs have diversified their activities to include not only civil rights advocacy but also economic and social rights advocacy. However, the restoration of democracy in Nigeria has posed new challenges for the NGO community. Despite the obvious gains of democratization and political liberalization, human rights NGOs in Nigeria are increasingly confronted with new sets of challenges - diminishing international interest and funding, lack of government support, a growing public distance towards human rights issues and the task of how to forge working relations with the new democratic institutions.

Since the mid 1990's, the Danish Centre for Human Rights (DCHR) has been involved in a number of activities. Representatives from Nigerian human rights organisations have frequently been participating in courses and research partnerships in Denmark. In 1997, the DCHR in collaboration with the non-governmental organisation Civil Liberties Organisation, the National Human Rights Commission and the National Judicial Institute of Nigeria started an on-going programme of human rights training sessions targeting magistrates in Nigeria.

## About the Report

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Against this background, the DCHR decided to carry out an appraisal of the NGO human rights community in Nigeria, in particular in Lagos and Abuja.

The appraisal was conducted by a Nigerian consultant based in Canada who was assisted by a team from the DCHR. The present report is the outcome of this initiative.

The report gives a comprehensive picture of the NGO community in the identified regions by mapping out their mandate, programme areas and activities, organisational structure, funding and resource base. Additionally, the report includes chapters on the approaches of the NGOs towards advocacy and networking, both domestically and internationally. Finally, the report includes a description of more than fifteen national human rights NGOs and state institutions and their contact details such as telephone numbers, fax numbers, e-mail addresses and web-sites.

The report is expected to constitute a useful and informative tool for anyone with an interest in the present status of the Nigerian human rights community.

*Ivan M. Nielsen*      *Thomas Trier Hansen*  
*Project Manager*      *Assistant Project Manager*

# Report

## Preface

This study is an appraisal of the human rights NGO community in Nigeria within the context of recent socio-political developments in the country. It focuses on two strategic geographical areas - Lagos and Abuja. The restoration of democratic civilian rule in Nigeria in 1999 after a long period of military dictatorship has led to significant changes in the NGO community. For one, the restoration of democracy in the country has created new political conditions under which NGOs have had to operate. Despite the obvious gains of democratisation and political liberalization, human rights organisations in Nigeria are increasingly confronted with new sets of challenges. These include: diminishing domestic and external funding as most donors focus more on supporting state programmes rather than NGO activities; a lack of adequate support from the state; a growing public distance towards human rights issues and the imperative task of repositioning NGO mandates and agendas to meet the demands of human rights work in a democratic dispensation. Central to this has been the challenge of how to forge working relations with new democratic institutions. These, and other contemporary issues that affect the human rights NGO community are the subjects of this report.

In focusing on human rights organizations in Abuja and Lagos, this appraisal study places special emphasis on the mandate of these organisations, the fields of rights they cover, their programmes and activities and their overall capacity. It also examines NGO experiences in collaborating among themselves and co-operating with other regional and international organizations, as well as relevant state institutions. Special attention is placed on examining how human rights organisations in Nigeria have sought to adapt to the peculiarities of working in a democratic environment.



## The Objective of the Study

This report is an examination of selected NGOs with a view to identifying the current conditions, challenges and directions of the human rights NGO community in Nigeria. It is not intended to be an inventory of all the human rights NGOs in Nigeria or the many issues associated with their work. The justification for focusing on Lagos and Abuja in this study is not far fetched. Since the rise of human rights NGO activism in Nigeria in the 1980s, Lagos, the former capital city and the main hub of commercial activity in the country, has played host to most of the major human rights NGOs in the country. It was the centre of concerted campaigns by NGOs against human rights abuses during the years of military rule. Lagos still remains the operating base for many human rights organisations in the country. On the other hand, Abuja, with its status as the present federal capital, is the seat of government and hosts many human rights related state institutions such as the National Human Rights Commission, the Police headquarters, the Ministry of Women Affairs, the Public Complaints Commission and the Anti-Corruption Commission. Consequently, an increasing number of human rights NGOs are emerging in Abuja or establishing branch offices in the city.

Against this background, this appraisal study seeks to offer information about Lagos as a major centre of human right activism and a traditional focus of human rights organisations, and Abuja as an emerging human rights focal point outside Lagos. Significant attention has over the years been given to Lagos-based organisations. The human rights community in Abuja on the other hand, is relatively new and not much has been done to study their operations. For this reason, this report pays particular attention to the peculiar situations under which human rights organisations in Abuja operate. The inclusion of Lagos in this study provides a basis for comparative assessments of the activities of human

rights organisations in two distinct geographical and socio-economic areas of the country.

There are a number of studies that have been recently undertaken with the aim of either reviewing the status of democratic institutions in Nigeria or evaluating human rights NGOs in Nigeria as part of a broader study of human rights organisations in Africa.<sup>1</sup> These studies have been useful in understanding the state of human rights NGO activism in Nigeria. The new perspective that this study offers in its comparative focus on Lagos and Abuja, is the emphasis on how human rights NGOs in both areas are repositioning themselves to meet the challenges of working in a democratic environment and consolidating the gains won through past activism. This is particularly relevant because with the establishment of democratic rule in the country, human rights organizations are increasingly faced with the need to engage in constructive partnership with democratic institutions such as the legislature and the judiciary. It has become necessary for Human Rights NGOs to delve into new areas of human rights work such as policy advocacy and legislative lobbying that were not accorded much attention during the years of campaigning against military dictatorship. This study therefore places emphasis on the peculiar conditions which human rights NGOs have had to confront in the post-authoritarian dispensation.

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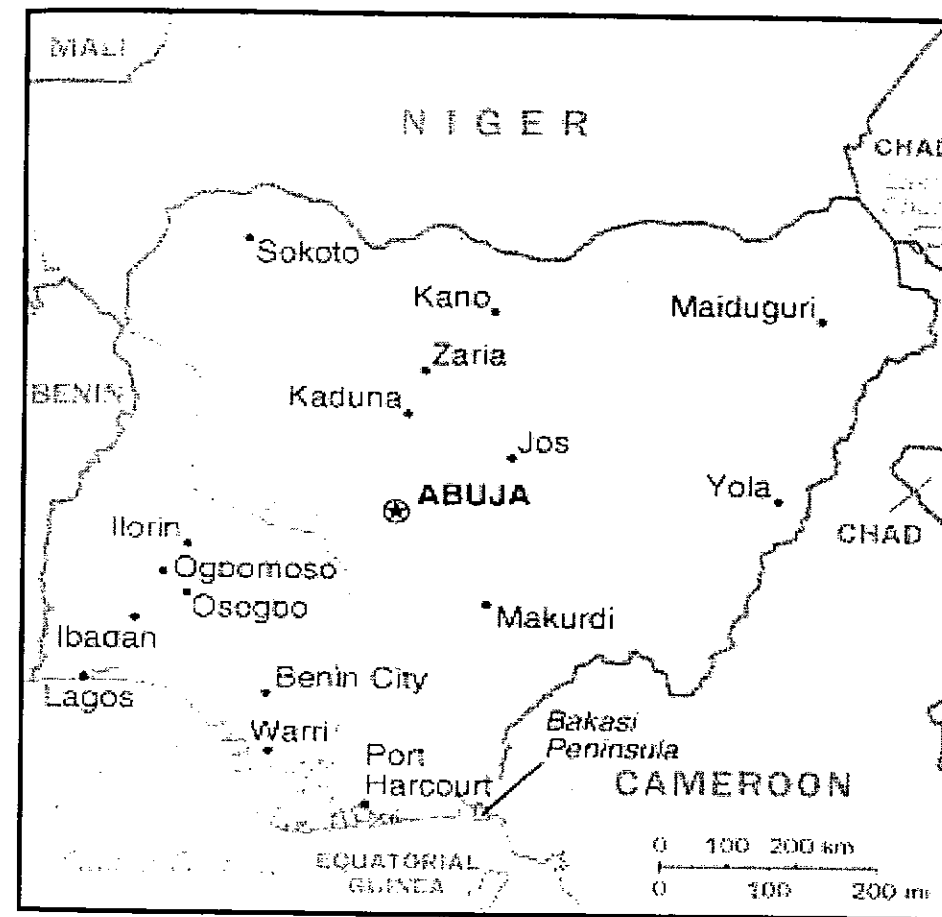
<sup>1</sup> See for example, The Swedish NGO Foundation for Human Rights Report on Nongovernmental Organisations in Sub Saharan Africa (with a section on Nigerian NGOs) and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) Report on Democracy in Nigeria. International Human Rights Internship Program & Swedish NGO Foundation for Human Rights, *Nongovernmental Organisations in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Washington, D.C). 1994, published online at: <http://hciwww.unige.ch/humanrts/africa/toe.htm> and International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), *Democracy in Nigeria: Continuing Dialogue(s) for Nation-Building*, Stockholm, 2000.

## Organisations included in the Study

Although this appraisal study focuses primarily on Non Governmental Organisations with an explicit human rights mandate, it also includes organisations that focus on human rights as part of a larger development or pro-democracy mandate. In selecting the NGOs included in this report, attention was paid to ensuring that the selected NGOs represented the spread in mandates and areas of activities of these organisations. These broadly include civil and political rights advocacy, economic and social rights advocacy, woman and children's rights advocacy and media rights advocacy. The aim of this report is to identify some of the contemporary issues confronting human rights organisations in these various spheres of human rights work and how these organisations have addressed them. The object is to come up with a broad overview of current trends and patterns in the organizational frameworks and activities of human rights NGOs in the country, based on consultations and dialogue with them.

This report is expected to be useful to a wide range of readers. It is expected to be a useful resource and informative tool for the human rights community at large, government officials, policy makers and anyone interested in the present status of the human rights in Nigeria. In an era of growing international interest in the democratic transition experience in Nigeria, it is also hoped that this report will help the international community in better understanding the human rights NGO sector in Nigeria and assist donors in effectively directing their support towards it.

## Map of Nigeria



Source: Perry-Castaneda Library Map Collection

## List of Abbreviations

ACDR	African Centre for Development Research
AFRIGOV	African Centre for Democratic Governance
BAOBAB	Baobab for Woman's Rights
CAPP	Community Action for Popular Participation
CD	Campaign for Democracy
CDD	Centre for Democracy and Development
CDHR	Committee for the Defence of Human Rights
CECODEC	Centre for Development and Civic Education
CFS	Centre for Free Speech
CIRDDOC	Civil Resource Development and Documentation Centre
CLO	Civil Liberties Organisation
CRC	Civil Rights Concern
CRP	Constitutional Rights Project
DA	Democratic Alternative
EMIROAF	Ethnic Minority Rights Organisation of Africa
GADA	Gender Advancement and Development Action
GRAF	Grassroots Awareness Forum

## Human Rights Organisations in Nigeria

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HRA	Human Rights Africa
HRM	Human Rights Monitor
HURLAWS	Human Rights Law Service
IHRHL	Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law
LHR	League for Human Rights
LRRDC	Legal Research and Resource Development Centre
MOSOP	Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People
MRA	Media Rights Agenda
NADL	National Association of Democratic Lawyers
NCWS	National Council of Women Societies
ND-HERO	Niger Delta Human Rights and Environmental Rescue Organisation
NHRC	National Human Rights Commission
NJ	Network for Justice
PRAWA	Prisoners Rights and Welfare Action
PRODEM	Project Democracy
SERAC	Social and Economic Rights Action Centre
SRI	Shelter Rights Initiative
SWEWP	Society for the Welfare of Women Prisoners

## List of Abbreviations

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TMG	Transition Monitoring Group
UAD	United Action for Democracy
UDD	Universal Defenders of Democracy
WIN	Women in Nigeria
WJP	Women Justice Programme
WRAPA	Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative

## **Chapter 1: Nigeria: Background to the Human Rights Community**

Nigeria has a long tradition of human rights activism. Since 1960 when the country gained independence from British colonial rule, concerned individuals including lawyers, journalists, trade unionists and members of religious organizations have worked to put human rights and civil liberties on the national agenda. Their human rights activism on individual and collective levels has spawned the various phases of civilian and military rule. However, the most significant developments in the conditions of human rights in the country have been the direct result of the experience of military rule.

### **Independence and the Bill of Rights**

One significant political development in Nigeria at independence was the formal introduction of guaranteed rights into the constitution. The bill of rights that was included in the independence constitution of 1960 was the country's first constitutional provision for human rights. The new bill of rights was based partly on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, partly on applicable English common law principles inherited from the colonial legal system and partly on the recommendations of a Commission on Minority Rights, which recommended its inclusion in the constitution as a safeguard against the suppression of minority ethnic groups by the dominant groups.

Although political independence and the introduction of bill of rights offered the first concrete step in the direction of the constitutional guarantees of fundamental rights and freedoms in Nigeria, there remained

significant limitations on the protection of these rights in the post-independence political dispensation. Many restrictive colonial laws and policies that limited individual rights and liberties remained in force after independence. Some of these laws included the Official Secret Act of 1962 and the Sedition Offences Act, which became a convenient tool with which the ruling regime sought to suppress opposition and dissent.

In 1962, a political crisis engulfed parts of the country and this raised the most serious human rights concerns after independence. A state of emergency was declared in the Western Region of the country in 1962 following the political crisis. This resulted in a spate of human rights violations. A minority government, in spite of public protestations, sat tight in power sustaining its hold by widespread rigging of elections, the intimidation of political opponents and the harassment of the press and the judiciary. As reminiscent of colonial rule, coercive and repressive legislation were widely employed to sustain political control. Laws like the Emergency Powers (General) Regulations, the Emergency Powers (Requisition) Regulations and the Emergency Powers (Protected Places) Regulations of 1962, gave the police and other security agents unlimited powers to summarily arrest and detain persons who were considered threats to public order and security. Thus, the inauguration of democratic constitutional rule and an indigenous representative government at independence did not necessarily usher in the anticipated advances in the general conditions of individual rights and liberties in the country.

### **Military Intervention in Governance**

In 1966, Nigeria witnessed its first military intervention in government. In spite of its initial pledge to guarantee fundamental rights, the authoritarian character of the military regime had negative effects on the

conditions of Human rights in the country. Soon after the first military intervention, the Constitution (Suspension and Modification) Decree was promulgated. This decree effectively abrogated democratic constitutional rule in the country. With this decree, much of the powers that had been separated under the constitutional democratic dispensation between the various arms of government were vested in one body of military officers known as the Supreme Military Council, headed by the military head of state. The outbreak of the Nigerian civil war in 1968 provided further excuse for the introduction of more repressive laws by the military regime. The rights to fair hearing, free movement and personal liberty hitherto guaranteed in the constitution were further limited by such war-time laws as the Armed Forces and Police (Special Powers) Decree which conferred special powers of arrest and detention on the Inspector General of Police or the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces. Throughout this phase of military dictatorship between 1966 and 1979, there were no significant organizational platforms for human rights advocacy. Human rights activism was limited to the efforts of labour and students' unions and the individual efforts a few social critics.

In 1976, the military regime inaugurated a transition programme in an attempt to restore democratic rule to the country. A draft constitution was introduced and elections were held under it, leading to the reestablishment of democratic civilian rule in 1979. However, the new civilian regime lasted for only five years before it was again overthrown by the military in 1985 based on allegations of corruption, mismanagement and electoral fraud against the civilian regime. This began the second phase of military dictatorship, which lasted for over a decade and witnessed the rule of successive military regimes in the country.

### **The Rise of NGO Activism**

The second phase of military dictatorship in Nigeria between 1985 and 1998 was particularly characterized by authoritarian and arbitrary rule, widespread human rights violations and little consideration for the rule of law. Although the country had been under military dictatorship for the greater part of its independent history, the repression and human rights violations that characterized this phase of military rule provided the impetus for an upsurge of human rights NGO activism in the country. Some of the earliest NGOs that emerged during this era were Civil Liberties Organisation (CLO), Constitutional Rights Project (CRP), and the Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (CDHR). The main objective of these organisations was to provide a platform on which civil society could hold the military government accountable for its human rights record as well as increase public awareness about human rights issues in the country.<sup>2</sup>

During the 1980s, these organizations also took on the task of monitoring abuse of human rights, educating the public about their rights under national and international laws and making recommendations to the government about how to improve the protection of human rights. There also emerged organisations, which though not primarily concerned with human rights advocacy, included human rights issues as part of a broader community advocacy agenda. For example, Women in Nigeria (WIN), an organisation of women groups formed in 1983 with the primary purpose of organising women towards improving their conditions of living, has been involved in women and children rights work at national and state levels.

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<sup>2</sup> Civil Liberties Organisation, *Annual Report 1994*, p. 7

The 1990s was a particularly challenging period for human rights organizations in Nigeria. The military government headed by General Ibrahim Babangida annulled the results of a presidential election, which would have brought the country back to democratic civilian rule. The election was widely perceived as being generally free and fair and its annulment created widespread disaffection and social unrests in the country. General Babangida was subsequently forced to step down and an interim government made up of civilian and military officials was put in place. This interim government was expected to usher in a transition towards full democratic civilian rule. However, in November 1993, the Defence Minister of the Interim National Government, General Sani Abacha forced the interim government to resign, effectively staging the seventh military coup d'etat since Nigeria's independence. The regime banned all political meetings and associations and sacked the civilian governments already put in place at the state and local government levels. No timetable was set for the return to civilian rule. The widely acclaimed winner of the presidential election, Chief M.K.O Abiola was arrested and detained for declaring himself the president.

Under these circumstances of political instability and social tension, the human rights community realized that to be effective in their campaign for human rights and democracy in the country, there was a need for them to cooperate, coordinate their activities and pool their collective efforts towards their goals. This need led to the formation in 1992, of the Campaign for Democracy (CD), an umbrella organisation for 42 human rights organisations and pressure groups working for the enthronement of democracy in Nigeria. The declared objective of the CD included the campaign for the termination of military rule, the campaign for the right of Nigerians to choose their government and the promotion of fundamental human rights and the rule of law in the country.



Throughout the period of political crisis, the human rights community banded together under the CD, which called for national strikes and demonstrations against the government under very repressive conditions. Human rights abuses during this period were widespread. They included ethnically based attacks, killing of demonstrators, arbitrary arrests and detentions of activists and journalists, and interference with freedom of expression and association. The Nigerian press, which is known for being outspoken came under intense attack from government authorities and security agencies leading to the closure of several press organisations.

Abuses by members of the police and security forces were also persistent throughout this period. There were frequently reported and documented cases of harassment and extra-judicial killings by law enforcement officers.<sup>3</sup> In particular, abuses took place against the Ogoni people, a minority ethnic group in the oil-producing Niger delta region. The Ogoni had become vocal and prominent in protesting the destruction of their land and culture by multinational oil companies working in the area and Nigerian military forces assigned to protect the interest of these companies. As a result, hundreds of Ogoni were killed in attacks believed to be sanctioned by state authorities. The Ogoni leader and environmental rights activist Ken Saro Wiwa was executed after a trial by a tribunal that was characterized by irregularities.<sup>4</sup> Throughout this period of military dictatorship, human rights organisations came together to form the

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<sup>3</sup> See Human Rights Watch Newsletter, *Democracy Derailed, Hundreds Arrested and Press Muzzled in the Aftermath of the Election Annulment*, (New York, HRW, 1993).

<sup>4</sup> Human Rights Watch, *The Ogoni Crisis A Case-Study of Military Repression in Southeastern Nigeria*. (New York, HRW, 1995); Civil Liberties Organisation, *Annual Report on Human Rights in Nigeria*. (Lagos, CLO, 1995); Amnesty International, *Nigeria: Time to End Contempt for Human Rights*. (London, 1996).

United Action for Democracy (UAD), which mobilized civil society groups to protest the human rights abuses of the military regime and to challenge General Abacha's plan to succeed himself as a civilian president. The UAD like the Campaign for Democracy (CD) provided a platform on which the Nigerian human rights community advanced a united front in their campaign for the termination of military dictatorship, the protection of human rights and the restoration of democratic rule in the country.

### Transition to Democracy

The sudden death of General Sani Abacha in 1998 marked a significant change in the political development of Nigeria. Soon after Abacha's death, his successor General Abdulsalami Abubakar released a new democratic transition plan. The highlight of the plan was that an elected president would be sworn in, in May 1999. The new leader also pledged to take the nation on a path of political and economic reform. Subsequently, a number of political prisoners were released although many others, including Chief M.K.O Abiola, the acclaimed winner of the annulled 1993 elections remained in detention. He eventually died in detention under uncertain circumstances.

In February 1999, presidential elections were held as part of the new democratic transition programme. Olusegun Obasanjo, a former military ruler who had overseen the transfer of power from the military to democratic civilian rule in 1979, won the presidential election. On May 29, 1999, Obasanjo took over power from General Abubakar thus re-establishing democratic civilian rule in Nigeria after over a decade of military dictatorship. The human rights NGO community played an important role in the transition process, which led to the establishment of

democratic civilian rule in the country. Under the auspices of the Transition Monitoring Group (TMG), human rights organisations became central to monitoring and evaluating the electoral process.

The Transition Monitoring Group (TMG) is a coalition of 63 human rights and other civil society organisations that monitored and reported on the 1999 elections in Nigeria. The TMG was formally accredited by the national electoral body, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to monitor the elections nationwide. The TMG subsequently issued a comprehensive report on the conduct of the elections. Although some sections within civil society were initially opposed to participating in any elections conducted by the military, the TMG was able to influence public opinion and to lead the network of support for elections in Nigeria. It was able to mobilize public interest in the election, provide civic education, and educate people about how to vote.<sup>5</sup>

Since the inauguration of democratic rule, Nigeria has witnessed significant social, political and economic reforms. Although cases of human rights violations are still reported, the new government has pledged a commitment to promoting democratic values, protecting human rights and upholding the rule of law. The human rights NGO community in Nigeria is also repositioning itself towards meeting the challenges of working in a democratic dispensation. With the end of military dictatorship and the establishment of democratic rule, the role of human rights NGOs has changed. During the years of military dictatorship, many NGOs focused their activities on campaigns against state violations of human rights pitting them in opposition to the

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<sup>5</sup> *Report of the Transition Monitoring Group on the Presidential Election*, (Lagos March, 1999).

government. Many organisations focused on human rights and pro-democracy campaigns, the provision of legal assistance and public interest litigation, human rights monitoring and research as well as public awareness activities. These activities of human rights groups were the basis of the pro-democracy movement in Nigeria in the 1980s and 1990s leading up to the establishment of democratic civilian rule in 1999.

With the establishment of democracy in Nigeria, human rights organisations now have a more conducive environment to carry out their work. They are now generally able to undertake their activities free from the repression and restrictions that characterized the era of military rule. This improvement in political conditions has attracted some international human rights and pro-democracy NGOs into the country. Some of these organisations like the International Human Rights Law Group, National Democratic Institute (NDI), Human Rights Watch and the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) have established offices in Nigeria or are in the process of doing so. Many of these organisations seek to support Nigeria's democratic transition programme by strengthening local civil society groups and democratic institutions.

In spite of these gains however, the restoration of democracy in Nigeria has also posed new challenges for the human rights NGO community. Despite the obvious gains of democratisation and political liberalization, human rights NGOs in Nigeria are increasingly confronted with new sets of challenges - diminishing funding and capacity, a lack of adequate government support, a growing public distance towards human rights issues and the task of how to forge working relations with the new democratic institutions. The implications that these challenges pose for the human rights NGOs community and the strategies that NGOs have fashioned to address them are some of the issues examined in the succeeding parts of this report.

## **Chapter 2: NGO Mandates, Programmes and Organisational Structures**

Since the 1980s, Nigerian human rights organizations have adopted various approaches to their work. The scope of their activities has varied with the realities of the various political and social dispensations under which they have had to operate. While some NGOs have a specific and closely defined mandate such as working on women's rights, most have mandates that are much broader and more vaguely defined. The various organizations can be grouped under six broad categories - civil and political rights advocacy, economic and social rights advocacy, environmental rights advocacy, minority rights advocacy, gender and children's rights advocacy and media rights advocacy. Although some groups may have one of these categories as their primary focus, many often combine all these interests in their human rights agenda.

### **Mandates and Programmes**

The first group of human rights NGOs in the country such as Civil Liberties Organization (CLO), Constitutional Rights Project (CRP), The Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (CDHR) and the National Association of Democratic Lawyers (NADL) tended to focus in their formative years, mainly in civil and political rights advocacy, public interest litigation and human rights campaigns. The reason for this is not far fetched. In an era of military dictatorship and repression, many of these organisations saw the immediate challenge as the campaign for the end of military dictatorship and the establishment of democratic constitutional rule. Another possible reason for the emphasis on civil and political rights advocacy was the significant involvement in human rights

initiatives, of lawyers, journalists and other professionals whose interests and activities tend to be substantially affected by infringements of civil rights. Some other early organizations such as Women in Nigeria (WIN) and Human Rights Africa (HRA) were more involved in human rights monitoring, documentation and raising public awareness through conferences, seminars and workshops.

In the 1990s, there was a significant growth in the number of human rights NGOs in the country and the scope of their operations. This was because of the persistence of human rights abuses under military rule and partly because of the success recorded by the earlier human rights organizations in their work. Human rights NGOs began to emerge with mandates focused on more specific agendas such as economic and social rights, media rights, minority rights, issues of law enforcement and gender rights. The established NGOs also tended to broaden their programmes and activities to include issues of economic, social rights and gender rights. Some of the organizations that emerged during this period include:

- Campaign for Democracy (CD), an umbrella body of human rights organisations and pressure groups established in 1992. The CD's activities centres mainly on campaigns for the enthronement of democracy and the rule of law in Nigeria.
- Legal Research and Resource Development Centre (LRRDC), established in 1993 with a focus on human rights documentation and research and public enlightenment campaigns on human rights issues.
- Media Rights Agenda (MRA), established in 1994 with a mandate to promote press freedom and the rights of media practitioners in the country.
- Human Rights Monitor (HRM), established in 1994 and based in the Northern city of Kaduna, with a broad mandate to campaign for human rights in the country.

- Universal Defenders of Democracy (UDD), established in 1992 and involved in public interest litigation and campaigns against human rights abuses.
- Women Justice Programme (WJP), established in 1994. Involved in litigation and campaign against repressive laws and policies, and in particular, practices that discriminate against women and children.
- Shelter Rights Initiative (SRI), established in 1995 with a focus on the right to adequate housing.
- Ethnic Minority Rights Organisation of Africa (EMIROAF) and the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP). MOSOP was founded in 1990 under the leadership of Ken Saro Wiwa and out of it EMIROAF was formed. Although EMIROAF was formed with a broad mandate to campaign for minority rights in Africa, much of its activities have focused on protesting the destruction of Ogoni land by multinational oil companies operating in the area with the protection of the military government.

With a few exceptions, most of these NGOs are based in Lagos, with much of their programmes focused on the Southern part of the country. Many of these organisations are involved in a wide variety of human rights work including human rights campaigns, monitoring, research and documentation. A number of them also organise seminars and conferences on human rights issues and publish situation reports. For most part however, their activities tend to focus on the monitoring and documentation of civil rights violations across the country.

The mid-1990s witnessed the emergence of more human rights organisations with varied mandates. These include organisations with explicit human rights mandates and other organisations that include human rights as part of a broader pro-democracy or development agenda. Some of these organisations include: Human Rights Law Services

(HURILAWS). Centre for Law enforcement Education (CLEEN), United Action for Democracy (UAD), Democratic Alternative (DA), Women Justice Programme (WJP), Centre for Free Speech (CFS), BAOBAB for Women's Rights, Centre for Development and Civic Education (CECODEC), Access to Justice and Prisoners Rights and Welfare Action (PRAWA). Other NGOs like Social and Economic Rights Action Centre (SERAC) and Project Democracy (PRODEM) have emerged more recently.

An important trend in the development of human rights NGOs in Nigeria since the mid-1990s has been the diversification of the mandates and areas of focus of human rights activism. In the 1980s almost all the major human rights organisations were based in Lagos. By the 1990s however, many NGOs had begun to operate from other states in the country. Some of these organisations have fashioned their mandates and programmes to suite the peculiar human rights issues in their communities of operation. For instance, the Community Action for Popular Participation (CAPP), an NGO based in Abuja with a focus on the northern states, has directed much of its activities towards raising public awareness and interest in human rights advocacy, which has been a peculiar challenge confronting human rights work in the northern parts of the country. Other NGOs like the Social and Economic Rights Action Centre (SERAC) have also emerged with a more explicit focus of economic and social rights, marking a shift from the emphasis on civil and political rights advocacy that characterized NGO activism in the 1980s.

Some other NGOs that have emerged with a focus on areas outside Lagos include: Centre for Human Rights Research and Development (CHRRD) based in Ibadan, Women for Democracy and Leadership (WDL) based in Ibadan, Society for the Welfare of Women Prisoners (SWEWP) based in Enugu, African Centre for Democratic Governance (AFRIGOV) based in

Jos, Network for Justice (NJ) based in Kaduna, Institute for Human Rights and Humanitarian Law (IHRHL) based in Port Harcourt and Civil Rights Concern (CRC) based in Enugu. Many of these NGOs have been actively involved in raising the level of human rights campaigns and advocacy in their respective areas of operation. However, the development of some of the newer NGOs has been impeded by the absence of clearly defined goals and objectives and inadequate recourse base. Some organisations have a tendency to take on and a wide range of issues encompassing a lot more than they can effectively handle.

With the reestablishment of democratic rule and the inauguration of a number of democratic institutions of government in the capital city, Abuja, a noticeable trend within the NGO community is that a number of organizations have begun to shift the focus of their activities from Lagos to Abuja. Some organizations have established branch offices in Abuja with specific programmes and mandates aimed at responding to the new realities of democratic rule. For instance, the Constitutional Rights Project (CRP) has opened an office in Abuja dedicated to its Legislative Reform and Advocacy Programme. The National Council For Women's Societies (NCWS) has also moved its national headquarters from Lagos to Abuja. A related trend is the emergence of NGOs with headquarters in Abuja. Some of these NGOs include Community Action for Popular Participation (CAPP), Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA) and the African Centre for Development Research (ACDR).

In the areas of human rights campaign, advocacy and education, NGOs have made considerable impacts on the public attitudes towards human rights issues and the general conditions of human rights in Nigeria. There are few human rights organisations that aim at providing specialist skills and resources to address specific human rights work such as public

interest litigation, medical and forensic investigation and environmental impact assessment. For instance, Human Rights Law Service (HURILAWS) aims at providing specialist human rights and public interest law services in the country.<sup>6</sup> Other NGOs like Prisoners Rights and Welfare Action (PRAWA) and the Society for the Welfare of Women Prisoners (SWEWP) based in Enugu also aim at providing specialized legal and medical services to prisoners. However, limited resources and training constrain the realization of the full potential of these initiatives.

### Organisational Structures

A number of established human rights groups in Nigeria have over the years, created clearly defined organisational and institutional structures to support their activities. Typically, the organisational structure of these NGOs consists of an Advisory Board or a Board of Directors and a secretariat headed by an Executive Director who oversees the day to day running of the organisation. In most cases, the specific organisational and staff structure of NGOs is determined by the nature of their activities. However, some organisations, particularly the newer NGOs still lack adequate organisational and staff base. They lack the full complement of staff support necessary to effectively run an NGO such as trained programme staff, staff attorneys and researchers. This is one of the major constraints observed in relation to the operations of human rights NGOs in Nigeria. Related to this is the inadequate involvement in human rights work, of required professionals such as social workers, medical professionals, forensic experts and economists who have the expertise

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<sup>6</sup> Olisa Agbakoba, Uche Emelonye and Wilfred Mamah. *Legal and Judicial Sector Reform in Nigeria*. (Lagos, The Human Rights Law Service, 2000), p. iv.

that NGOs need to be able to monitor and report effectively on human rights abuses. In most cases, this is due to funding constraints.

Another limitation that has been identified in the organisation of some human rights groups is the lack of transparency and participatory opportunities in their internal decision making processes. Although some NGOs have taken initiatives to democratise and make their internal decision-making process more transparent, there remain significant organisational constraints in this regard. In some organisations the decision making process tends to be narrow with the head of the organisation being the sole decision maker. There is also a relative absence of women in prominent positions within human rights NGOs with the exception of organisations specifically dedicated to women's rights issues. It is however generally acknowledged that to be effective in their human rights work across the broad spectrum of the society, NGOs must do more to integrate women into leadership roles within their organisational structures.

Most human rights organisations in Nigeria are not open to public membership. The Civil Liberties Organisation (CLO) stands out as one of the few NGOs that are member-based.<sup>7</sup> It was however observed in the course of this study that there is a relatively higher ratio of member-based NGOs in Abuja than in Lagos.<sup>8</sup> NGO officials explain this trend in terms of the administrative and logistical difficulties involved in organising a

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<sup>7</sup> Member-based organisations like CLO are finding it increasingly difficult to maintain their membership base. For instance, CLO was unable to hold its annual member congress for the year 2000 mainly due to lack of funds.

<sup>8</sup> Among the organisations open to public membership in Abuja are: Community Action for Popular Participation (CAPP), Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA) and the National Council for Women Societies (NCWS).

membership-based organisation. Membership based organisations have to take up additional administrative responsibilities like registering members, coordinating the activities of their branches and holding regular congresses. Since all these activities require funds, only a few NGOs with strong financial base can afford to undertake them, more so as donors are often not willing to support these kinds of administrative work. Yet, many human rights workers agree that public membership can strengthen the grassroots support enjoyed by NGOs.

One way by which human rights organisations have attempted to get around this problem is to form networks with other member-based organisations such as the students' unions, labour unions and community associations. For instance, Project Democracy collaborates with a network of students' unions in Universities across the country to carry out some of its projects.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, the Legal Research and Resource Development Centre (LRRDC) though not a member based organisation, organises a Human Rights Club that is open for public membership and presently has over 5000 members spread across the country. The idea behind the establishment of the Human Rights Club is to increase the capacity of individuals to recognise and promote human rights within their own communities. Since its establishment, the human rights club has grown significantly and presently operates in some Nigerian schools.

One obvious feature of both the organisation and activities of human rights NGOs is the tendency towards urban-rural split. Most groups are based in towns, often in the capital city of the states in which they operate. Yet, a vast section of the country's population live in rural areas where incidents of culture-based human rights violations are most

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<sup>9</sup> Interview with Osaze-Lanre Ehonwa, Executive Director, Project Democracy at the office of Project Democracy, Lagos, 14 December, 2000.

widespread. The result is that human rights NGOs have made much less impact in addressing human rights issues that affect rural populations than they have been in addressing urban issues. However, there is a growing awareness of this limitation within the NGO community and a number of organizations have taken steps to create branch networks in rural areas and undertake projects that focus on some of the human rights issues that affect rural populations.

## **Chapter 3: Projects and Activities**

The growth and achievements of the human rights movement in Nigeria in a short space of time have been remarkable. The activities of human rights NGOs have had a major impact not only on the conditions of rights and liberties but also on the role of civil society in Nigeria's socio-political development. Significant advances have been made by NGOs in the use of domestic, regional and international standards and mechanisms for various aspects of human rights work. Although the activities of human rights NGOs vary in nature and scope, they can be categorized under six broad headings - human rights campaigns, education and documentation; legal aid and human rights litigation; media rights and press freedom; women's rights and penal reforms. To these categories may be added two emerging but important areas of NGO activities - legislative lobbying and policy advocacy, and projects aimed at encouraging grassroots participation in the governance as well as promoting transparency and accountability in governance. This chapter examines some of the core areas of activities of human rights NGOs. Legislative lobbying and policy advocacy, which has become a major aspect of NGO activities since the establishment of democracy, is examined in greater detail in the next chapter.

### **Human Rights Campaign**

One aspect of human rights work in which NGOs in Nigeria have had the most obvious impact is in the area of human rights campaigns and education. Human rights organisations have been hugely successful in raising both local and international awareness of human rights issues in Nigeria through campaigns projects and educational programmes. Since the 1980s human rights organisations have undertaken various campaigns



either in protest against specific state violations of human rights or to highlight the general human rights conditions in the country.

One prominent instance of this is the campaign of human rights organisations under the auspices of the Campaign for Democracy (CD) against human rights abuses under military dictatorship. Another NGO coalition, United Action for Democracy (UAD) was actively involved in the campaign against the plan by the former military ruler General Sani Abacha to succeed himself as a civilian president. In both cases, human rights NGOs were able to mobilize the public and other civil society groups in protest and civil resistance against military dictatorship. Individual Human rights NGOs have also undertaken campaigns against specific cases of human rights violations such as the irregular trial and conviction of a number of soldiers and civilians alleged to have taken part in coup plot against the government in 1997 and the widespread environmental rights abuses in the oil-producing communities of the Niger Delta.

Economic and social rights issues have received relatively less attention in the campaign and educational activities of human rights NGOs. However, these issues have begun to attract more attentions within the NGO community. NGOs such as Shelter Rights Initiative (SRI) and Social and Economic Rights Action Centre (SERAC) have undertaken campaign projects in collaboration with other civil society groups such as the labour unions and local community groups specifically to promote economic and social rights issues.

### Human Rights Education

Human rights NGOs have made significant progress in the area of human rights education and enlightenment in the country. As part of their human rights education programmes, many organisations organise workshops, seminars and conferences on human rights issues. Some organisations like Civil Liberties Organisation and Constitutional Rights Project publish comprehensive annual reports on the state of human rights in Nigeria. These annual reports have become important benchmarks for evaluating the human rights conditions in the country. Some other organisations publish specialized reports, journals, magazines and newsletters on human rights issues. The Legal Research and Resource Development Centre (LRRDC), an NGO dedicated primarily to human rights research, has worked to introduce human rights education into the school curriculum in the country. Under its "Street Law Project", it has collaborated with the Lagos State Government to ensure that human rights education is entrenched in the state's school curriculum. Similarly, the Centre for Law Enforcement Education (CLEEN) and the Constitutional Rights Project (CRP) have produced radio programmes to educate the public and promote an awareness of human rights issues.

### Documentation

In terms of documentation, many human rights NGOs possess some form of documentation resource facility both for documenting their own investigations and as resource centres serving the NGO community and the public. Most of the established NGOs have well stocked libraries of human rights literature while others have limited collections of resource materials. Some NGOs have emerged as specialised documentation centres for the human rights community as a whole. One of these is the

Legal Research and Resource Development Centre (LRRDC) established in 1990. Part of the LRRDC's mandate is to act as a catalyst in the promotion of human rights education through research, documentation and the exchange of human rights related resources.

### Legal Aid and Human Rights Litigation

Many NGOs provide free legal assistance on human rights to the general public or to specific target groups. While some organisations have a few staff lawyers or retain consultant lawyers to provide legal aid, others have more elaborate legal aid and law reform programmes. For instance, the Civil Liberties Organisation (CLO) has a programme called the Legal Assistance Network (LANE). Under this programme, the CLO has trained over 2500 lawyers in human rights litigation. It has also undertaken in collaboration with the Danish Centre for Human Rights, the National Human Rights Commission and the National Judicial Institute, the training of over 200 lower court judges in human rights jurisprudence under its "Administration of Justice Programme". Human Rights Law Services (HURILAWS) has been working towards reforming the civil procedure rules operational in the Nigerian legal system and has produced comprehensive proposals for the reform of these rules to ensure the expeditious handling of cases in the courts.<sup>10</sup>

In terms of human rights litigation, some NGOs have been quite effective in making use of domestic, regional and international human rights standards in promoting human rights in the country. Typically, they

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<sup>10</sup> See Olisa Agbakoba and Emaka Asuzu, *Model Civil Procedure Rules Proposed for Adoption by the High Courts in Nigeria*, (Lagos, Human Rights Law Service, n.d).

analyse national laws and practices, comparing them to the standards set internationally or regionally and call for reform of the laws and practices to bring them into compliance with these standards. In some cases, these regional and international standards have been used in human rights litigation. Civil Liberties Organisation (CLO), the National Association of Democratic Lawyers (NADL), Human Rights Law Service (HURILAWS) and Constitutional Rights Project (CRP) have been particularly effective in this regard. CLO and CRP have employed their experience and familiarity with regional and international human rights standards in submitting complaints or counter-reports to government reports to the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. In a number of test cases, Olisa Agbakoba, the Senior Counsel of HURILAWS has challenged the constitutionality of the death penalty and brought to public attention, the human rights issues involved in cases of prisoners awaiting the death penalty, who have been incarcerated for unduly long periods, some as long as 34 years.<sup>11</sup>

With the establishment of democratic rule, human rights organisations have remained active in the areas of legal aid and human rights litigation.

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<sup>11</sup> In the case of Peter Nemi v. the State, the plaintiff was convicted for armed robbery and sentenced to death in 1986. Appeals to the Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court in 1990 and 1994 were dismissed but at the Supreme Court, Nemi's counsel, Olisa Agbakoba, raised a novel argument that on constitutional grounds, the prolonged delay in execution of a sentence which resulted in Nemi's incarceration for 11 years on death row, constituted inhuman and degrading punishment prohibited by the Nigerian constitution and the African Charter on Human and People's Rights. The Supreme Court declined to hear new evidence in support of the argument. However, in a landmark decision, the Court of Appeal declared that condemned prisoners enjoyed fundamental rights in as much way as every other citizen. Interview with Wilfred Mamah, Legal Officer, Human Rights Law Service at the HURILAWS office, Lagos, 14 December 2000. Also Human Rights Law Service (HURILAWS), *1999 Annual Report*, Lagos, 2000, p. 13.

A number of NGOs are involved in monitoring the activities of the Human Rights Violations Investigation Commission (Oputa Commission). The Commission is a body shaped after the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission and is charged with the responsibility of publicly hearing and investigating cases of human rights violation in Nigeria since the 1970s. It is also mandated to recommend cases for prosecution and recommend the award of compensation to victims of human rights abuses. Some human rights organisations like the CLO have assisted complainants in preparing their petitions to the Commission.

Although most human rights NGOs in Nigeria provide legal advice and assistance, the demand far exceeds existing capacity, particularly in rural areas. The number of staff counsels available for case litigation is often inadequate in meeting the many requests for legal assistance from the public. Some NGOs like Civil Liberties Organisation (CLO), Constitutional Rights Project (CRP) and Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA) have sought to address this problem by creating a network of volunteer lawyers to assist in its human rights litigations. These initiatives, though useful, have been met with limited success mainly because of inadequate volunteer lawyers. Some other NGOs that do not have the capacity to retain lawyers for their legal aid programmes have established working arrangements where they recommend cases requiring legal attention to other NGOs.

### **Media Rights and Press Freedom**

Although there are a number of human rights NGOs with specific media rights mandates, most human rights organisations are involved in promoting media rights and press freedom. This was particularly so

during the years of military dictatorship when independent media organisations were subjected to harassment and repression. Under the regimes of General Ibrahim Babangida and General Sani Abacha, a number of newspapers were closed down for being critical to the government. Journalists and other media practitioners were routinely arrested and detained under a decree that gave the military authorities wide powers of arrest and detention. This drove some press organisations to operate underground. The harassment of the press served to bring the issue of media rights and press freedom more into the focus of human rights activism in the country.

Human rights organisations concerned with media rights such as Media Rights Agenda (MRA) and Centre for Free Speech (CFS) have made significant progress in promoting the rights of media practitioners through campaigns, workshops and seminars as well as research and documentation on press freedom. These activities have sometimes led to reforms in state policies. For instance, the campaigns by human rights NGOs against repressive press laws enacted under military rule led to the abrogation of the Newspaper Registration Decree 43 of 1999, which placed stiff restrictions on the operations of the press in the country. Human rights NGOs are also involved in the publication of specialized reports aimed at promoting press freedom. For instance, CFS has published a handbook on human rights education for Nigerian journalists while MRA publishes a regular magazine that monitors human rights issues as they affect the media.

Some NGOs provide specialized training and legal assistance to journalists, writers and their professional unions. Under its "Litigation Project", Media Rights Agenda provides legal assistance and support for journalists who are arrested and detained, unfairly dismissed from their work, harassed and intimidated or whose rights have been violated. The

organisation has also undertaken litigation of broad issues relating to the freedom of expression as well as promoting media freedom through the judicial process. Similarly, Civil Liberties Organisation under its "Media and Governance Programme" has trained over 700 journalists in human rights reporting. All these programmes have served to further strengthen and empower the Nigeria press which is renowned for its outspokenness.

### **Women's Rights**

A number of organisations have been involved in promoting the general welfare of women in Nigeria for a long time. The National Council for Women's Societies (NCWS), which was established in 1958, has been active in women's rights issues as part of its broader agenda of promoting the welfare of Nigerian women. However, women rights advocacy within the context of the contemporary human rights movement in Nigeria only became prominent in the last two decades. Since the 1980s, a number of women-oriented NGOs have done much to put the rights of women on the national agenda. Some of these organisations include Women in Nigeria (WIN), Project Alert on Violence Against Women (PROALERT), Baobab for Women's Rights, Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA) and the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA).

Most NGOs oriented towards women's rights adopt a three-pronged approach, which focus on the rights of women within social, political and cultural contexts. Their work has done much to highlight the marginal roles to which women have been relegated in the society and specifically in governance. The activities of these NGOs have also focused on the many cultural and religious practices that tend to violate the rights of women and girl children across the country. Practices such as Female

Genital Mutilation, child marriages and funeral rites that discriminate against women have been given particular attention by these organisations. Project Alert on Violence Against Women has collaborated with Baobab for Women's Rights to advocate for the rights of women under Sharia (Islamic) law. Project Alert has also engaged in extensive media monitoring of reports on violence against women in Nigeria. On its part, Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA) has instituted a number of court cases to seek redress on behalf of women victims of human rights abuses. These cases include matrimonial cases involving wife battering, harmful traditional practices that inflict physical and psychological trauma on women and civil rights matters involving the property rights of women.

Apart from the activities of NGOs working primarily for women's rights, many other NGOs have put in place programmes intended to address social and cultural practices that violate the rights of women. The CLO for instance, has undertaken education projects on the legal status of women and their reproductive rights. The concerted campaigns of human rights organisations has led to a growing awareness of women rights issues both within official and public circles. The activities of these organisations and other women's groups were partly responsible for the recent decision by the government to create a special ministry dedicated to women's affairs at both the national and state levels of government.

### **Penal Reform**

The prison system in Nigeria has been identified as one of the institutions where the gravest and most widespread human rights violations occur. One report, quoting a former political prisoner describes it as "a fertile

ground for persistent and all pervasive violation of human rights".<sup>12</sup> Even government authorities have long acknowledged the deplorable conditions of the country's 174 prisons and the estimated 45,000 to 50,000 people held in them.<sup>13</sup> A vast majority of those in prisons are persons awaiting trial who have not been convicted any offence.

Given these realities, many human rights organisations have made penal reform and the rights of prisoners a major part of their work. Through campaigns, monitoring, investigation, and documentation, human rights NGOs have worked to address the persistent and pervasive incidents of human rights violation in the prisons. They focus on such issues as the torture of prisoners, the overcrowding of prison cells, the lack of adequate medical services to prison inmates and the generally deplorable sanitary conditions in most prisons. For instance, Civil Liberties Organisation (CLO) has undertaken a major prison monitoring and reform project resulting in the publication of *Behind the Wall* (1991), a comprehensive report on prison conditions in Nigeria and *Prisoners in the Shadows* (1993), a report on women and children in five Nigerian prisons.

Within the last few years, NGOs have emerged dedicated specifically to addressing issues of prisoner's rights and penal reforms in Nigeria. One of such organisations, Prisoners Rights and Welfare Action (PRAWA) has undertaken a number of projects aimed at sensitising government and

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<sup>12</sup> Civil Liberties Organisation. *Annual Report on the State of Human Rights in Nigeria 1998*. (Lagos: CLO, 1999), p. 98

<sup>13</sup> The Guardian Newspaper of Thursday, January 11, 2001 reports that Minister of State for Internal Affairs, Dr. Mohammed Shata had expressed concern over the 45,000 inmates in Nigerian prisons. He was further reported to have appealed to the police and the judiciary to help decongest the prisons.

the public to the deplorable human rights conditions in the prison. As part of this initiative, PRAWA in collaboration with some state institutions and other NGOs recently organised a workshop on "Alternatives to Imprisonment in Nigeria". Another organisation dedicated to penal reform is the Society for the Welfare of Women Prisoners (SWEWP). This organisation operates a number of prison programmes covering the eastern states of Abia, Anambra, Enugu and Imo. The organization works to provide free legal aid to indigent women prisoners and facilitate their release where they have been wrongly imprisoned. To coordinate their various activities, NGOs working for the rights of prisoners have come together to form the National Coalition on Penal Reform. This coalition has provided a platform for human rights organisations to exchange ideas and collaborate on projects aimed at improving the human rights conditions within the Nigerian prison system.

### Transparency and Accountability in Governance

Apart from its deplorable human rights record, a related hallmark of the years of military dictatorship in Nigeria was the entrenchment of state corruption and the lack of transparency and accountability in governance. Such was the scale of corruption in the country that Transparency International in its 1998 "Corruption Perception Index" rated Nigeria along with Indonesia as the most corrupt nations in the world.<sup>14</sup> Corruption and the lack of transparency in governance is therefore one of the issues that has attracted the attention of both the government and civil society groups. Since the establishment of democratic rule in the country, the government has focused on ways of addressing the problem of corruption in the country. This has led to the enactment of an Anti-

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<sup>14</sup> *International Herald Tribune*, (September 23, 1998), pp. 13 and 14

Corruption Law by the National Assembly and the formation of an Anti-Corruption Commission to investigate allegations of corruption brought against government officials.

On their part, human rights NGOs have focused on the issues of corruption, transparency and accountability in governance both from a human rights perspective and within the context of strengthening democracy. Corruption and the lack of transparency and accountability in governance are seen as human rights issues insofar as they threaten the country's fledgling democracy and make it impossible for government to adequately provide for the basic social and economic rights of the people. For this reason, a number of human rights NGOs were actively involved in lobbying for the passage of the Anti-corruption bill at the National Assembly. The Civil Liberties Organisation (CLO) organised public forums to facilitate public participation in the process of making the Anti-Corruption Bill. This was in furtherance of the organisation's "Governance and Democracy Project" which focuses on corruption in the public sector. Transparency in Nigeria (TIN) in collaboration with a number of NGOs has also been involved in campaigning and lobbying for a "Zero Corruption Bill" and a code of conduct and ethics for public officials, to complement the provisions of the Anti-Corruption law.

Similarly, under its "Accountability in Governance Project", Community Action for Popular Participation (CAPP) in collaboration with the John Hopkins University and USAID has organised a series of activities aimed at encouraging accountability at the local levels of government. These activities include organising workshops on popular participation in governance for members of community based organisations and local government officials. The aim is to provide a platform for ordinary people to influence the daily working of government in their communities. CAPP has also facilitated seminars on accountability in

local government areas in Abuja and a number of states in the northern part of the country. All these activities have served to put transparency and accountability in governance more prominently on the human rights agenda in the country.

### **Grassroots Participation**

With the inauguration of democratic rule, there have been more opportunities for ordinary people to choose their leaders and influence the terms under which they are governed. However, the democratic space is still dominated by the urban-based elites. Grassroots participation in government, though recognized as important to sustaining democracy has not been fully achieved. Against this background, a number of NGOs have directed their activities towards the grassroots by focussing on local government councils and rural community groups. One NGO that has been at the forefront of this initiative is the Community Action for Popular Participation (CAPP) based in Abuja.

CAPP has been involved in organising community and town hall meeting aimed at promoting grassroots democracy and good governance in local communities in some Northern states. The organisation has particularly worked with local groups to campaign for the rights of the indigenous people of Abuja. The creation of Abuja as the new capital of Nigeria in 1967, led to the dislocation of the indigenous communities of the area who were not been adequately resettled or compensated. CAAP has organised workshops for these indigenous communities in the Federal Capital Territory (Abuja) and facilitated the organisation of indigenous groups to demand for their rights to resettlement and adequate compensation. In these campaigns, CAPP employs the participatory

rights provisions in the International Bill of Rights and the African Charter on Human and People's Rights.

Other organisations have undertaken or outlined projects aimed specifically at reaching local communities. The Centre for Law Enforcement Education (CLEEN) in collaboration with the Nigeria Police has undertaken various projects aimed at enhancing police/community relations. It has also facilitated the establishment of police/community forums in various parts of the country. Similarly, the Centre for Free Speech (CFS) is working towards establishing rural based radio stations as a way of reaching the grassroots. Also in the efforts to reach the grassroots, there has been a particular focus on rural women, with a number of NGOs working to provide them with the tools and skills necessary to ensure their effective participation in the democratic process. Organisations such as the Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA) and Women in Nigeria (WIN) have initiated a number of projects in rural areas to provide local women with adult literacy classes, vocational skills training, legal counselling and transit shelter.

## Chapter 4: Legislative and Policy Advocacy

An important aspect of the activities of human rights NGOs in Nigeria since the inauguration of democratic rule has been the focus on legislative and policy advocacy. With the establishment of democracy, NGOs have had to reposition themselves to address the peculiarities of democratic governance. Many NGOs acknowledge that "the days of military rule with its attendant crude violation of human rights are over" and that the present challenge facing civil society is strengthening and consolidating on the gains that past activism have yielded.<sup>15</sup> In the light of this, many NGOs have developed new and innovative programmes aimed at legislative advocacy, influencing state policies and consolidating the gains of democracy. One example of this is Civil Liberties Organisation (CLO), which has changed its "Democracy Action Project" to "Governance and Democracy Project". Similarly, new NGOs like Project Democracy (PD) have emerged with the specific mandate of promoting and consolidating democratic values in Nigeria.

### Legislative Advocacy at the National Level

A number of NGOs have put in place legislative lobbying and advocacy programmes aimed at the National Assembly and other democratic institutions. Most of these programmes are intended to positively influence the legislature in areas of human rights related legislation. Some of the NGOs that have put forward legislative advocacy

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<sup>15</sup> Constitutional Rights Project. *Assembly Watch*, CRP Newsletter, (Vol. 1, No. 1, June 2000), p. 1

programmes include: Constitutional Rights Project (CRP), Civil Liberties Organisation (CLO), Human Rights Law Services (HURILAWS), Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), Baobab for Women's Human Rights, Gender Advancement and Development Action (GADA), Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), Niger Delta Human Rights and Environmental Rescue Organisation (ND-HERO), Civil Resource Development and Documentation Centre (CIRDDOC), Media Rights Agenda (MRA), Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law (IHRHL), Community Action for Popular Participation (CAPP), Network for Justice (NJ) and the League for Human Rights (LHR). The legislative advocacy programme undertaken by many of these organizations involves advocating and lobbying for the reform or repeal of existing repressive laws as well as training legislators in the understanding of the constitution and human rights.

HURILAWS' legislative advocacy agenda involves preparing draft human rights related legislation and securing their enactment through bi-partisan initiatives at the National and State Assemblies. CDD's agenda, which includes legislative lobbying and monitoring, is rooted within the framework of its programme on democratic consolidation in Nigeria. Baobab's agenda includes raising the gender awareness of legislators and working with women legislators to push for legislation that protect the rights of women. Similarly, GADA's agenda involves working to transform Nigeria's laws, culture and social attitudes to be more gender sensitive. ND-HERO's agenda is primarily focused on the Niger Delta region. It involves lobbying for environmental protection laws and other legislation to protect oil-producing communities in the Niger Delta.

Media Rights Agenda (MRA) has been involved in lobbying the National Assembly for the introduction of legislation on "Access of Information". The proposed legislation is the product of the collaborative efforts of a

number of NGOs and the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) with inputs from Article 19 (the London-based International Centre Against Censorship). It is intended to ensure that members of the public have a right of access to government information thereby ensuring transparency in governance. Similarly, the Centre for Free Speech (CFS) has presented a proposed mass media bill to the National Assembly. The bill seeks the amendment of some sections of the constitution concerned with media rights and press freedom.

As part of its legislative advocacy programme, Community Action for Popular Participation (CAPP) has been working for a review of the law establishing the Public Complaints Commission, which is Nigeria's ombudsman institution. The Public Complaints Commission was established in 1975 with a mandate to ensure the rectification of human rights violations occasioned by administrative acts within the public sector. However, under the period of military dictatorship, the Commission lost its independence and became less accessible and accountable to the public. In order to reposition the Commission, CAPP has been lobbying for an amendment of the law establishing the Commission in order to guarantee its independence, financial autonomy and representative composition.

In a similar initiative, Human Rights Law Service (HURILAWS) is working to secure Nigeria's ratification and the incorporation into its domestic laws, of the international instruments establishing the African Court on Human and People's Rights and the International Criminal Court. HURILAWS has also made proposals to the National Assembly on the enactment of legislation to incorporate selected international human rights treaties into Nigerian law. These include the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on



the Rights on the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women.

Regarding women's rights, WRAPA has made representations to the National Assembly on the repeal of specific laws that violate the rights of women. The organisation is also working with some female legislators to propose a bill on domestic violence and other issues that affect the rights of women. As a result of this and the efforts of a number of other NGOs, the National Assembly is considering a bill to outlaw the practice of Female Genital Mutilation. The House of Assembly in some states like Edo state has already passed laws banning the practice of Female Genital Mutilation.

Apart from legislative advocacy, NGOs have also undertaken projects aimed at supporting the legislature in the discharge of its constitutional responsibilities. Constitutional Rights Project (CRP) has been involved in organising a legislative internship programme consisting of the training of law graduates on human rights legislative advocacy and the placement of selected participants at the training workshop, as interns with federal law makers. On its part, the Community Action for Popular Participation (CAPP) is working in collaboration with the International human Rights Law Group to publish a quarterly newsletter Legislative Mandate, which provides comparative information and analysis of national issues.

There has been some external support for local NGOs in their legislative advocacy work. Many donors have demonstrated a willingness to fund NGO projects aimed at strengthening the new democratic institutions. Some international NGOs have supported local NGOs in providing specialized training in legislative advocacy to human rights workers. In one of such training programmes, a number of human rights from Nigeria undertook a tour of the United States in June 2000. The tour was aimed at

exposing Nigerian activist to the experience of legislative advocacy in the United States. Similar study tours have been organised to South Africa and some European countries.

### **Legislative Advocacy at the State and Local Government Levels**

While most human rights organisations have focused their legislative advocacy programmes at the national level, some NGOs have directed their activities at the state and local government levels. One example of this is the League for Human Rights (LHR), which has been involved in sponsoring draft legislation to both the Plateau State House of Assembly and the National Assembly on environmental degradation in the middle belt region of Nigeria. The Civil Resource Development and Documentation Centre (CIRDDOC) has also undertaken projects to build capacity and provide a resource base for the legislative houses in the eastern states of Anambra, Enugu and Imo States. Human Rights Monitor (HRM) has worked in the Northern part of the country for the reform of the area court system and the review of the Penal Code. It has also organized workshops for civil society groups on media strategies in legislative advocacy campaigns. In addition, Network for Justice's has been involved in sponsoring bills to the National Assembly and some State Assemblies to foster constitutional separation of powers and the autonomy of the local tiers of government.

What is evident from these developments is that human rights NGOs in Nigeria have, by their legislative advocacy programmes, responded quite well to the challenges of human rights work in the new democratic dispensation. Much work however remains to be done. Many NGOs still lack adequate training to make them effective in their legislative

advocacy programmes. There is also the tendency for NGOs to concentrate on legislative and policy advocacy at the national level to the relative neglect of the local tiers of government. There remains a need for human rights NGOs to broaden the scope of their activities to engage not only the legislative arms of government but also other state institutions involved in policy making at both the national and local levels.

## Chapter 5: Networking and Alliances

Human Rights NGOs in Nigeria have over the years developed a tradition of working together to promote human rights. NGOs have built networks and forged alliances for specific human rights causes. The most noteworthy examples of these are the formation of broad NGO coalitions such as the Campaign for Democracy (CD) and the United Action for Democracy (UAD) formed to campaign against human rights violations during the years of military dictatorship and to advocate for the restoration of democratic rule. More recently, human rights NGOs and other civil society groups came together under the Transition Monitoring Group (TMG) to monitor the electoral process leading up to the transition to democratic civilian rule in 1999. In these and other cases, human rights NGOs have demonstrated a commitment to cooperating and networking for the cause of promoting human rights and democracy in the country.

### Networking among NGOs

Apart from broad coalitions such as the Campaign for Democracy, United Action for Democracy and the Transition Monitoring Group, human rights NGOs have forged networks and alliances to address particular human rights issues. One of such coalitions is the Citizen's Forum for Constitutional Reform. This is a coalition of civil society organisations committed to ensuring participatory approaches to constitutional reform in Nigeria. The forum has held colloquiums on such constitutional rights issues as Citizenship and Residency Rights, Federalism, Social and Economic Rights and the Freedom of Association.

Similar NGO coalitions include Social Alert Network - Nigeria, which is a coalition of NGOs working for social and economic rights. The coalition, which is an arm of Social Alert, a global network based in Brussels, provides a platform for NGOs to exchange ideas on their various projects on social and economic rights advocacy. Like Social Alert, the Development Information Network (DEVNET) is a network of NGOs established to facilitate information sharing among them. A similar coalition, the National NGO Coalition on Penal Reform was established in 1997 as an umbrella body for NGOs working on the rights and welfare of prisoners and towards penal reforms in the country. There is also a national NGO coalition on legislative advocacy and a national Network of NGOs (Nigeria Network of NGOs) with a secretariat in Lagos. NGO coalitions have not been limited to Lagos based organisations. The Civil Society Organisations' Forum is a coalition of Abuja-based NGOs working to empower civil society. The organisation provides a forum for NGOs in Abuja to interact and exchange ideas on how to promote human rights, democracy and good governance. The forum also aims at providing a platform for Abuja based NGOs to develop contacts with state institutions in Abuja.

In a similar effort at coalition-building, a group of 22 NGOs with support from the United States Agency for International Development's Office of Transition Initiatives (USAID/OTI) recently formed the Network on Police Reforms in Nigeria (NOPRIN). The network aims at identifying issues for reforms in the Nigerian Police Force and providing opportunities for civil society input into the police reform process. The network also aims at working with the Police Affairs Ministry, the Nigerian Police Force, the National Assembly and other stake holders to facilitate police reform in the country.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> *Law Enforcement Review*, July-September, 2000, p. 38.

Human Rights organisations have also forged coalitions with other civil society organisations such as the National Labour Congress (NLC) and the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ). Media Rights Agenda (MRA) and Civil Liberties Organisation (CLO) have collaborated with the Nigerian Union of Journalist in lobbying for legislation on Access to Information. The Centre for Free Speech (CFS) has also undertaken various collaborative projects with the Nigerian Union of Journalists. The National Council for Women Societies (NCWS) and other women NGOs have collaborated with the National Association of Women Journalists (NAWOJ) and the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) in mobilizing women towards human rights advocacy and sensitising the public to issues of women's rights.

### Alliances with State Institutions

Human Rights NGOs in Nigeria have been collaborating with state institutions even under the difficult years of military rule. With the establishment of democracy however, there has been a renewed impetus towards such cooperation. Under military rule, many human rights NGOs and pro-democracy groups were reluctant to work with state institutions. The justified fear was that such cooperation might compromise their independence and make them subject to state influence and manipulation. However, a number of NGOs were able to cooperate with government agencies on specific projects. For instance, Civil Liberties Organisation has since 1997 collaborated with the National Human Rights Commission and the National Judicial Institute on a project for the training of lower court judges. The Centre for Law Enforcement Education (CLEEN) and Constitutional Rights Project (CRP) have undertaken similar projects with the National Human Rights Commission and the Police on the training of law enforcement officers on human

rights issues. CRP has also collaborated with the National Judicial Institute (NJI) on a project for the training of Judges on the provisions of the Human Rights Enforcement Rules in the Nigerian legal system.

Since the establishment of democracy, more NGOs have established working relations with government institutions such as the National Assembly and specifically, the Senate and House of Representative Committees on Human Rights. A number of human rights NGOs in collaboration with the National Human Rights Commission and the National Assembly Committees on Human Rights have organised public hearings on human rights in Abuja. Such public hearings are aimed at getting inputs from civil society groups and the public on topical human rights issues. The hearings have also provided opportunities for some NGOs to make representations on human rights issues to the National Assembly through its Human Rights Committees.<sup>17</sup>

In the area of women's rights, a number of NGOs involved with women's rights advocacy have undertaken collaborative projects with the Ministry of Women Affairs and other relevant state agencies. Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA) has been involved in collaborative research projects on the rights of girl-children with the National Human Rights Commission and some national Universities. There has been similar cooperation between NGOs working for penal reforms such as Prisoners Rights and Welfare Action (PRAWA) and the Prison authorities

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<sup>17</sup> Interview with Senator Adeseye Ogunlewe, Vice Chairman of the Senate Committee on Human Rights at the National Assembly Complex, Abuja, December 6, 2000.

NGOs and state institutions have also worked together at the state and local government levels. For instance, in 1999 the Ministry of Justice in Lagos state collaborated with a number of human rights organisations and other civil society groups in the formation of the Directorate for Citizens Rights. The Directorate, which includes the Office of the Public Defender, is an independent ombudsman-like institution charged with investigating public complaints of human rights abuses in the state. On their part, state agencies and institutions have become more open to working with human rights NGOs. A number of NGOs have been nominated to represent the interest of civil society in government committees. One example of this is the appointment of Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA) into the National Consultative Committee on the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

#### **Alliances with Regional and International Organisations**

Over the years, human rights organisations in Nigeria have established extensive contacts and alliances with international organisations. Many Nigerian NGOs have undertaken collaborative projects with international organisations based mainly in Europe and North America. For instance, Centre for Free Speech (CFS) has collaborated with the New York based Committee for the Protection of Journalists (CPJ) on a number of projects, while Media Rights Agenda (MRA) has worked with Article 19, the London-based International Centre Against Censorship. Several Nigerian human rights workers have also undergone training and internship programmes with international organisations, which often forms the basis for more extensive cooperation with these organisations.

Another avenue for cooperation between Nigerian NGOs and their international counterparts are regional and international human rights conferences, seminars and workshops that draw attendees from Nigerian NGOs. These include those organised by the African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies, the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), the International Human Rights Law Group, the African Commission of Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) and the Danish Centre for Human Rights (DCHR). Human Rights Courses organised by the Danish Centre for human rights have drawn a significant number of participants from Nigerian NGOs. Some Nigerian human rights NGOs also belong to international coalitions such as the International Committee on Penal Abolition (ICOPA), which provides a platform for alliances with organisations in other countries that are involved with the rights of prisoners and penal reforms.

At regional and continental levels, human rights NGOs in Nigeria have made efforts to form coalitions with other human rights organizations. In particular, Human Rights Africa (HRA) and the Ethnic Minority Rights Organization of Africa (EMIROF) focus their mandates broadly on human rights issues in the continent. Both organizations have attempted to forge working relations with human rights NGOs with related interests across the continent. Although neither organization has succeeded in making a mark continent-wide, they have taken some significant steps. For instance, Human Rights Africa (HRA) has undertaken a fact-finding mission to Ethiopia and issued a report on the human rights situation in the country.

On its part, the Civil Liberties Organisation (CLO) has created a division within the organization called the African Monitoring Group to increase contact and awareness of human rights developments continent-wide. Other human rights organisations in Nigeria have organised seminars and

workshops for human rights workers, government officials and journalists that draw participants from other human rights organisations within the continent. Some Nigerian NGOs also belong to regional coalitions such as the Women Law and Development in West Africa

(WLDAF), which a regional coalition of civil society organisations with interest in women's rights and welfare.

However, there is room for more collaboration between human rights organisations within the continent and the sub-region. Many NGOs in Nigeria as elsewhere in Africa have more contact and working relations with organisations in Europe and North America than they have with other groups within Africa. One report on human rights organisations in Africa notes that the lack of contact and coordination between human rights organisations in the continent partly lies in the split between francophone and anglophone groups. The report notes that colonial political rivalries perpetuated by post-independence governments reflects on the human rights movement thereby creating a divisiveness that does not augur well for the movement.<sup>18</sup> There is a need for closer links between Nigerian human rights organisations and their counterparts in the rest of the continent. Since human rights groups in the continent deal with similar socio-political and cultural challenges, such links will provide avenues for the exchange of ideas, skills and experiences for human rights workers.

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<sup>18</sup> See International Human Rights Internship Program & Swedish NGO Foundation for Human Rights. *Nongovernmental Organisations in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Washington, D. C).

## Chapter 6: Funding and Resource Base

The activities of human rights NGOs in Nigeria are dependent on funding from a variety of sources. Much of the funds come from external sources. During the years of military rule, a number of donors supported human rights organisations as part of a broad programme to support civil society groups and promote democratic values in the country. With the inauguration of democratic rule, more funders have made human rights central to their funding policies.

### Funders

Most of the funders that have been actively involved in supporting human rights organisations in Nigeria are state institutions in Europe and North America such as the Norwegian Human Rights Fund, USAID/ Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI), European Union, British Council, Department of International Development (DFID), United States Information Service, Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) and the Canadian Fund for Civil Society. Funding for human rights organisations also come from international foundations such as Ford Foundation, Westminster Foundation for Democracy, Macarthur Foundation and Friedrich Naumann Foundation. A number of embassies and High Commissions in the country support the activities of human rights NGOs.

Apart from these traditional funders, international human rights and pro-democracy NGOs have also been actively involved in supporting the activities of human rights organisations. Some of these NGOs include the Swedish NGO Foundation for Human Rights, the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), International Human Rights Law Group and the

Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA), an arm of the Soros Foundation Network, which recently opened its office in Abuja. A considerable part of the funding from these organisations and other funders has been provided to support human rights education, legal aid programmes and civic rights training. Social and economic rights projects and projects involving human rights investigation and monitoring have received much less funding support.

### Funding Constraints

In spite of the support of international donors, the problem of funding remains one of the major constraints that confront human rights organisations and other NGOs in Nigeria. Almost all the organisations visited for this study identified the lack of funds for their activities as the major operational constraints they face. Human Rights workers point out that in spite of the increase in international interest in supporting democracy and strengthening civil society groups in Nigeria, it is becoming increasingly difficult to raise funds for specific human rights projects.<sup>19</sup> Two main reasons account for this. The first reason has to do with the tendency of most international donors to now channel their support more towards state programmes rather than towards NGOs. This has left many NGOs unable to tap on their traditional sources of funding support. This type of situation has become characteristic of the civil society sector in post-authoritarian states undergoing democratic transitions. In the haste to support and strengthen emerging democratic state institutions, donors tend to place less attention on the civil society organisations that they had supported under the past authoritarian

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<sup>19</sup> Interview with Abdul Oroh, Executive Director, Civil Liberties Organisation at the CLO office, Lagos, December 14, 2000.

dispensation. In the case of post-apartheid South Africa for instance, the NGO community witnessed a significant reduction in funding support from traditional donors because many of these donors began to redirect funds towards supporting the government of Nelson Mandela. A similar trend has adversely affected the level of funding support for Nigerian NGOs.

The second reason for the increasing difficulty that NGOs face in funding their activities has to do with lack of local funding support for these organisations. There is very little local funding support for human rights organisations. Although a number of membership-based organisations like Civil Liberties Organisation (CLO) have attempted to explore local funding through membership dues and subscriptions, their efforts have not been very successful. Thus, almost all human rights NGOs regardless of stature or length of operation, face the same problem of donor-dependency, which has a significant impact on the character and programs of human rights organizations.

However, in this course of research for this study, it was observed that Abuja-based NGOs and Lagos-based NGOs tended to approach the issue of inadequate recourses for their activities, from a different perspective. While most Lagos-based NGOs tended to emphasize the lack of funds as their main constraint, Abuja-based organisations tended to emphasize the lack of adequate technical and training support as their major problem. Many Abuja-based NGOs consulted for this study identified technical cooperation with other international NGOs and donor-facilitated training programmes for their staff as some of their greatest resource needs. The reason for this difference in approach to resource constraints may lie partly in the fact that many Abuja-based NGOs are new and have had relatively less opportunities for technical cooperation with other international organisations than their Lagos-based counterparts. Another

reason may lie in the fact that some Abuja-based organisations are membership organisations that are able to tap on local funding for their activities to complement external funding.

The dependence on external funds has raised questions as to how much control NGOs have over their own programmes and agenda. Donor organizations sometimes tie their funds to particular projects that reflect their own interests and policy agendas rather than those of the recipient organizations. The experience with the NGO community in Nigeria is that donor organizations and charities sometimes tend to support groups that advance the purpose they deem appropriate or essential to their home constituencies rather than the immediate needs of the recipient organization. For instance, funders are often more willing to support human rights education and training and other ad hoc projects like conferences, workshops and seminars rather than long-term projects. While workshops and seminars are useful for deliberating on human rights issues, they sometimes need long term follow up projects, for which NGOs often find difficulty in getting funds. Expectedly, NGOs have responded to this trend by tailoring their programmes and activities to coincide with those of donor agencies in order to guarantee further funding. This development has raised concerns about donor-dependence in the human rights movement.

Human rights workers in Nigeria respond to these developments by pointing out that unlike in the West, public awareness within civil society in Nigeria, as in the many parts of Africa, has not yet developed to a level where local support can sustain NGO activities. They claim that NGOs simply have no local charities and benefactors to turn to. Besides, resources do not exist and even where they do, state control over most sectors of public life and its hostility towards human rights NGOs discourages the support that may have come from private and corporate

constituencies. Even under these circumstances, the local private sector in Nigeria is beginning to get more involved in supporting the activities of human rights organisations. One example of this is the United Bank for Africa, which is one of largest banks in the country. In 1999, the bank contributed N3,000,000 (approximately US\$30,000) to Human Rights Law Service (HURLAWS) for its project on reforming court procedures in the Nigerian legal system.<sup>20</sup>

Another constraint that confronts the process of NGO funding in Nigeria is the fact that not all donor agencies are adequately familiar with the local human rights community or have the capacity and experience to identify NGOs that can perform. The result is that some NGOs with limited management experience and administrative capacity are provided with extensive funds that are not effectively channelled towards the designated projects. In some cases, this creates a situation of financial dependency in the NGOs instead of encouraging them to strengthen their institutional capacities.<sup>21</sup> To address these and other limitations of the funding process, a number of funding agencies have established forums such as the "Inter Agency Forum" to coordinate their funding activities in the country and ensure the proper disbursement of grants.

There is a need for donor organisations, to re-evaluate their funding policies towards the NGO sector. More emphasis needs to be placed on providing technical assistance and training support to build the capacities of local organisations. A recent trend has been for donor organisations, particularly donor NGOs, to open their own offices in the country and

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<sup>20</sup> Human Rights Law Services. *Annual Report for 1999*. (Lagos, 2000), p. 21.

<sup>21</sup> Bolanle Awe. "Non Governmental Organisations and the Development Process in Nigeria", in Legal Research and Resource Development Centre, *Human Rights, Democracy and Development in Nigeria. Vol. 1*, (Lagos, LRRDC, 1999), p. 263-264.



involve themselves directly in a number of projects instead of working through local partner organisations. While this may sometimes be necessary for effective project monitoring, it also tends to sideline local NGOs and reduce their operational capacities. There is a need for donor organisations to give local NGOs more space and opportunities to directly influence the process of human rights reform in the country.

In a bid to address these and other issues that affect the process of funding the civil society sector in Nigeria, a number of NGOs have promoted the establishment of a National Endowment for Democracy modelled after the National Development Fund in South Africa and the United States National Endowment Fund. The endowment, which may receive funding from the state and international donors, is expected to provide coordination and long-term support for the activities of civil society organisations in sustaining democracy in Nigeria.

Although human rights organisations in Nigeria like most NGOs in other developing countries are likely to continue to be dependent on foreign funding, there is a need for them to diversify their funding base and in particular, explore local and alternative sources of funding for their activities. Under the present democratic dispensation in which human rights organisations are no longer necessarily seen as opponents of the state that should be avoided, the local private sector is likely to become more disposed to supporting the activities of these NGOs. NGOs should explore these new funding opportunities, which the liberal democratic environment in the country provides. There is also a need for human rights groups to develop ways to facilitate both domestic and external funding without compromising their own mandates and programmes.

## Chapter 7: Prospects for the Human Rights NGO Community

Human rights NGOs have made significant impacts on the political and social development of Nigeria, particularly in the last two decades. Their activities have placed human rights firmly on the national agenda and created unprecedented domestic and international awareness of the conditions of human rights and civil liberties in the country. The activities of human rights organisations during the years of military dictatorship were greatly instrumental to the establishment of democracy in Nigeria. Under the present democratic dispensation, human rights NGOs continue to play vital roles both as partners with the government in sustaining democracy and as watchdogs, monitoring the excesses and abuses of the state.

The activities of human rights NGOs have also been significant in strengthening and empowering civil society in the country. It is generally acknowledged that the emergence of a virile civil society sector is important to the sustenance of democracy. Human rights groups with their experience in organisation and popular advocacy have been able to provide the foundation for the emergence of a viable civil society sector in the country. Their activities in the areas of human rights campaigns and monitoring, legislative lobbying and policy advocacy have been an impetus for the effective involvement of civil society groups in the process of governance.

However, in spite of the significant achievements of human rights NGOs in Nigeria, there are a number of constraints in their operation that continue to demand attention. One of these is the fact that the approach to human rights activism in Nigeria has tended to be elitist and urban-

centred. Although efforts have been made by a number of NGOs to reach out to the grassroots and rural populations, their success in this direction has been limited. Most NGOs are still based in urban areas and run by elites in a country where a vast section of the population live in rural areas. Much work needs to be done by human rights groups to mobilize rural populations towards broadening the base support for human rights activism in the country. There is a need for NGOs to entrench participatory modes of operation, diversify their activities to address specific local problems, and build their capacities within the communities where they work.

A related limitation of the human rights movement in Nigeria is the relative absence of women in principal positions within human rights organisations. This is of course, with the notable exception of NGOs dedicated to women's rights. This trend seems to pervade all sectors of public life and is not peculiar to the human rights movement. In the present government, there are only three female senators out of a total of 90 senators in the Senate and there are only six female ministers out of a total of 46 ministers in the government.<sup>22</sup> This situation is not limited to government. In a recent survey on the role of women in the mass media, the Centre for Free Speech (CFS) noted that there are very few women occupying major editorial positions in the country.<sup>23</sup> Much therefore remains to be done in terms of promoting women's participation both within the human rights movement and generally in governance.

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<sup>22</sup> This reflects the composition of the government as at January, 2000.

<sup>23</sup> Interview with Tunde Olakunle. Programme Officer, Centre for Free Speech, at the CFS office, Lagos. 14 December 2000.

NGOs also need to address the issue of overwhelming donor dependence discussed in the preceding chapter. Human rights groups must work to diversify their resource base in order to ensure the sustainability of their activities. Domestic sources of funding should be more vigorously explored. On their part, donor organisations need to constantly review their funding policies to meet the changing realities and demands of the civil society sector in the country. More efforts should be placed on building the capacities of local NGOs through the provision of technical assistance and training support. Rather than being directly involved in drawing up programs and implementing projects within the country, donors should focus more on providing local NGOs with resources, training, and technical support to effectively undertake these project. This approach will serve to progressively reduce donor dependence and make local NGOs more relevant to the process of human rights reform in the country.

Finally, there is a need for NGOs to establish self-evaluation and monitoring mechanisms to ensure transparent accounting and management style. This will serve to enhance their legitimacy and credibility. NGOs must also work to establish networks, sustain the ones already established and coordinate their activities to avoid duplication of efforts and ensure efficiency. The experience of human rights activism in Nigeria has shown that campaigns and activities of human rights groups have been most effective when groups forge alliances and networks to pursue specific goals. NGOs can continue to adopt this strategy to address projects on policy advocacy, legislative lobbying and other peculiarities of human rights work in the democratic dispensation.

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## Appendices

## **Appendix 1: Individuals Interviewed**

Agomoh, Uju. Executive Director, Prisoners Rights and Welfare Action (PRAWA). Lagos

Akinbode, Olusola. Project Coordinator, Legal Research Resource Development Centre (LRRDC), Lagos.

Akpan, Naomi. Programme Officer, Constitutional Rights Project (CRP), Lagos.

Alkali, Ibrahim Hamidu. Director of Research, National Judicial Institute (NJI), Abuja.

Awonusi, Iyabo. Administrative Secretary, Centre for Free Speech (CFS), Lagos

Bello, Bukhari. Executive Secretary, National Human Rights Commission (NHRC). Abuja.

Ehonwa, Osaze-Lanre. Executive Director, Project Democracy (PRODEM). Lagos.

Ezeazu, Emma. Executive Director, Community Action for Popular Participation (CAPP), Abuja.

Ibrahim, Jibrin. Nigeria Program Director, International Human Rights Law Group (IHR LG), Lagos.

Madugu, Hauwa (Chief Mrs). Co-ordinator, Grassroots Awareness Forum (GRAF) and National Vice President, National Council of Women Societies, Abuja.

Mahdi, Saudatu Shehu (Mrs). Secretary General, Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA), Abuja.

Mamah, Wilfred. Legal Officer, Human Rights Legal Services (HURLAWS), Lagos.

Musa, Ibrahim Auwal. Consultant, Community Action for Popular Participation (CAPP), Abuja.

Nwanguma, Okechukwu. Head, Police Project, Civil Liberties Organisation (CLO), Lagos.

Nwankwo, Clement. Executive Director, Constitutional Rights Project (CRP), Lagos.

Onobhayedo, Albert. University Lecturer and Human Rights Research Consultant, Edo State University, Ekpoma.

Ogunlewe, Adeseye (Senator). Vice Chairman, Senate Committee on Human Rights, National Assembly, Abuja.

Ojeme, Bukola. Staff Reporter, The Comet Newspaper, Abuja.

Okosun, Mary. Program Officer, Civil Liberties Organisation (CLO), Lagos.

Okoye, Fabian. Program Officer, International Human Rights Law Group (IHLG), Abuja.

Okpara, Tony. Program Officer, Centre for Law Enforcement Education (CLEEN), Lagos.

Olakunle, Tunde. Programme Officer, Centre for Free Speech (CFS), Lagos.

Omagbon, Frank. Senior Reporter, Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN), Gwagwalada, Abuja.

Ope Agbe, M. A. (Hon. Justice). Administrator, National Judicial Institute (NJI), Abuja.

Oroh, Abdul. Executive Director, Civil Liberties Organisation (CLO), Lagos.

Osakwe, Bridget. Programme Officer, Project Alert on Violence Against Women (PROALERT), Lagos.

Sajoh, Ahmad. Personal Assistant to the National President, National Council of Women Societies (NCWS), NCWS Headquarters, Wuse - Abuja.

Unaji, Adams. Administrative Officer, Civil Liberties Organisation (CLO), Lagos.

Usman, Sani. Chief Research Officer, National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), Abuja.

Yusuf, J. O. President, African Centre for Development Research (ACDR), Abuja.

## **Appendix 2: Project Process and Methodology**

The research study was undertaken in Nigeria from November 28 to December 14, 2000. The methodology adopted in the study consisted mainly of personal interviews, documentary research and the administration of questionnaires. The study also involved on the spot assessment and observation of activities of the human rights organizations in both areas of study - Lagos and Abuja.

Because the study was intended as a broad appraisal of the status of human rights NGO community in the country rather than an evaluation of individual organizations, certain categories of NGOs and respondents were targeted for consultation and interviews. The object was to consult a cross section of NGOs that would reflect a general overview of the state of the human rights NGO community. In all, 25 human rights NGOs and state institutions in Lagos and Abuja were visited or consulted for this study. About 40 individuals comprising mainly of NGO workers and government officials were interviewed. Not all the respondents could however be listed in the appendix because of requests by some respondents that they would prefer not be quoted.

The responses by NGOs and individuals consulted for this study were quite positive. Many NGOs were open to discussing their activities especially when it was made clear to them that the study is not intended to be an evaluation of their respective NGOs. Most human rights workers interviewed were also forthcoming with relevant information. In some cases, the researcher and project managers were invited to attend on-going seminars and workshops organised by the NGOs. This provided opportunities for the researcher to get more insights into the activities of such organisations.



Although this study is primarily concerned with human rights NGOs, state institutions and officials involved with human rights organisations were also consulted and interviewed. The included interview sessions with senators and officials of the National assembly, the Senate Committee on Human Rights, the National Judicial Institute, the Police, Prisons, Ministry of Women Affairs and the press. These consultations proved to be useful in providing official perspectives into issues of human rights and the activities of human rights NGOs.

### **Appendix 3: Human Rights NGO's and State Institutions Consulted**

(With organisational profiles based on information provided by the respective organisations)

#### **LAGOS**

##### **Civil Liberties Organisation (CLO)**

13 Soji Adepegba Close, Off Allen Avenue

Tel: 01-7746694, 4939325. Fax: 01-4939324

E-Mail: clo@clo.org.ng

Website: <http://www.clo.org.ng>

The Civil Liberties Organisation (CLO) was established in 1987 and is one of Nigeria's earliest and largest human rights organizations. It was set up primarily for the protection, promotion and expansion of human rights and civil liberties in Nigeria in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the African Charter of human and people's rights and the Nigerian constitution. The organization engages in human rights litigation, human rights education and networking with other human rights organizations. It organizes workshops, seminars and conferences on human rights issues and has published a variety of human rights reports on police brutality, military decrees, government impunity, the death penalty and prison conditions. It also publishes annual reports on the human rights situation in Nigeria. The CLO is a membership organisation with an extensive network of branches throughout Nigeria.

**Constitutional Rights Project (CRP)**

5. Abiona Close, Off Falolu Road Surulere, Lagos

Tel: 01-5848498, 5843041, Fax: 01-5848571

E-Mail: crplagos@crp.org.ng

Website: <http://www.crp.org.ng>

The Constitutional Rights Project (CRP) was established in 1990. Its mandates include ensuring that Nigerian human rights legislation conforms to international standards as well as monitoring institutions whose activities impact on the rights of citizens. The organisation also provides legal assistance to victims of human rights abuses. CRP focuses on strengthening and promoting the independence of the judiciary and other democratic institutions in Nigeria. It litigates human rights cases, conducts campaigns, seminars and publishes regular human rights reports. The organization operates offices in Lagos, Owerri and Abuja.

**Centre for Law Enforcement Education (CLEEN)**

1 Afolabi Aina Street

P. M. B 15456

Ikeja, Lagos.

Tel: 01-493 3195, Fax: 01-4935338

E-mail: [Cleen@cleen.org](mailto:Cleen@cleen.org)

Website: [kabissa.org/cleen](http://kabissa.org/cleen)

The Centre for Law Enforcement Education (CLEEN) was established in 1996 with a mandate to assist in the reorientation of law enforcement agencies in Nigeria, particularly the police and prison service with a value system that places the highest premium on the right to life, personal security and integrity. CLEEN works to educate civil society on its basic rights in relation to these agencies. These goals are pursued through research and publication, human rights education and community empowerment programmes.

**Project Alert on Violence Against Women (PROALERT)**

1 Afolabi Aina Street

P. M. B 15456

Ikeja, Lagos.

Tel: 01-493 3195, Fax: 01-4935338

E-Mail: [proalert@proalert.org](mailto:proalert@proalert.org)

Website: [kabissa.org/proalert](http://kabissa.org/proalert)

Project Alert on Violence Against Women (PROALERT) was formed in 1998. Its primary mandate is to document and provide information on violence against women and render support services to female victims of violence. The various projects of Project Alert are executed under three main programme areas - the research and documentation programme, the human rights education and monitoring programme and the support services programme. The organization publishes a quarterly newsletter and reports on activities aimed at eliminating violence against women.

**Human Rights Legal Services (HURILAWS)**

34 Creek Road, Apapa, Lagos

Tel: 5878706; 587876, Fax: 01- 5876876

E-Mail: [Olisa@rct.nig.com](mailto:Olisa@rct.nig.com).

HURILAWS is an NGO dedicated to the provision of specialist human rights and public interest law services in Nigeria. It focuses on social action litigation, legislative advocacy and legal assistance. Its goals include the establishment of human rights legal standards and the advancement of human rights through "high impact cases". The organisation works to advance the application of international legal instruments on human rights in Nigerian law and facilitate collaboration with national and international NGOs to promote good governance through law in Africa.

**Legal Research and Resource Development Centre (LRRDC)**

386 Murtala Mohammed Way

Yaba, P. O Box 75242

Victoria Island

Lagos, Nigeria.

Tel: 01-862097/ 2880694

Fax: 01-862097/ 2880694/ 261045

E-Mail: lrrdc@alpha.linkserve.com

The LRRDC was set up in 1990 with a mandate to promote the recognition and respect for human rights by means of education through research, teaching, exchange of ideas and the development of human resources. The Centre's research falls into four major categories: law as a tool for development; women's needs in the developing world; human rights education; and access to legal services. The Centre publishes legal awareness materials on domestic laws aimed at rural communities, government officials and schools. It also maintains a human rights library and a documentation centre. The organization is affiliated to the International Commission of Jurists based in Geneva.

**Project Democracy (PRODEM)**

9, Bayo Shodipo Street, Off Afisman Drive

Anifowoshe, Ikeja,

Lagos

E-Mail: pdprodem@hotmail.com

Project Democracy was established in March 2000. The organization works to advance the development of a democratic culture and democratic structures in Nigeria. Project Democracy's mandate includes working for the promotion of democracy, the rule of law and related institutions and values. It also monitors the practices and policies of political institutions for conformity with the basic principles of democracy and good governance.

**ABUJA - NGOS**

**Community Action for Popular Participation (CAPP)**

Plot 556A, Borno Street, Area 10,

P. O Box 6533

Gairki, Abuja.

Tel/ Fax: 09-2346780, E-mail:

CAPP was established in Abuja in 1993 with a mandate to develop and enhance popular structures at the community levels to ensure the right of the people to take part in governance. The organisation works to promote democratic norms and human rights within local communities as well as promote community and grassroots perspective in national development policies. It engages in human rights campaigns, monitoring, research and documentation. CAPP is a membership organization with branches in five states in the Northern part of Nigeria.

**National Council for Women Societies (NCWS)**

Plot 559C, Area 11, Garki

P. O Box 8784, Wuse, Abuja

Tel: 09-3143740/ 42/ 43

Fax: 09-3143761

Founded in 1958, the NCWS is one of the oldest women's organisations in Nigeria. It is a federation of women's groups with a mandate to promote the welfare of women in the country. The NCWS works to put issues of women's rights, welfare and participation in governance, on the nation agenda. The organisation has a comprehensive network of affiliate member organisation across the country. It holds regular national congresses and delegate conventions at which member organisations and societies are represented.

**Women in Nigeria (WIN)**

National Headquarters  
NUJ Secretariat  
Area 11  
Garki - Abuja

"Women in Nigeria" is a national organization set up in 1983. Its mandate is to organize and improve the condition of Nigerian women in all areas. It has a national network of branches, members and officials spread across the country. WIN organizes conferences on women's issues, produces publications and sponsors campaigns on issues affecting women. It also has a legal assistance programme for indigent women.

**Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA)**

Plot 792, Wuse II  
Abuja  
Tel: 09-4131438, 4131676  
Fax: 09-4132932  
E-mail:

WRAPA was established in Abuja in March 2000 with a mandate to promote the rights and welfare of women. The organisation engages in human rights advocacy and mobilisation for the promotion of women rights through human rights monitoring and documentation, the provision of free legal aid to women and the pursuit of women support programmes. WRAPA is a membership organisation open to both men and women. The organisation has branches across the country.

**African Centre for Development Research (ACDR)**

BS 107 Banex Plaza  
Plot 750 Aminu Kano Crescent  
Wuse II, Garki - Abuja  
Tel: 09-4132905

E-Mail: yussef@infoweb.abs.net

The ACDR is a development research organisation dedicated to studying the problems of social and economic development in Africa and other developing countries. It aims at contributing to peace efforts and conflict resolution in Africa as well as promoting the training of people on the ideas of good governance. Although the organisation is primarily a development oriented NGO, it focuses on human rights issues as part of its development mandate

**International Human Rights Law Group**

17B Mississippi Street  
Maitama  
Abuja  
09-4134152 - 55

E-Mail: lawgroup@skannet.com

The international Human Rights Law Group is an NGO engaged in human rights advocacy, litigation and training around the world. Its Nigeria office was set up in Abuja in March 2000. Its mission is to support and help empower advocates to expand the scope of human rights protection. The organisation also seeks to promote broad participation in creating more effective human rights standards and procedures at the national, regional and international levels. The Law Group focuses its work on four main areas - empowerment projects, International Advocacy and Litigation, Women's rights Advocacy Programs and Rule of Law Programs.

## Human Rights NGO's and State Institutions Consulted

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### **ABUJA - STATE INSTITUTIONS**

#### **National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)**

Plot 800 Blantyre Street  
Wuse II, P.M.B 444  
Garki-Abuja

#### **National Judicial Institute (NJI)**

c/o Supreme Court Complex  
P.M.B 5060  
Wuse - Abuja  
Tel: 09-2347785

#### **Senate Committee on Human Rights**

National Assembly Complex  
Abuja

#### **Ministry of Women Affairs**

National Centre for Women Development  
Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Development  
Better Life Street, Central Area,  
Abuja

#### **Ministry of Police affairs**

Federal Secretariat Complex  
Shehu Shagari Way  
Abuja

### **Evaluations and Reviews of Partnership Programmes The Danish Centre for Human Rights**

- No. 1. DITSHWANELO - Centre for Human Rights, Botswana
- No. 2. The Legal Information Centre, Estonia
- No. 3. The Lithuanian Centre for Human Rights
- No. 4. Rationalisation and Transformation of the Ministry of Justice, South Africa
- No. 5. - Establishment of Human Rights Courses, University of Malawi  
- Strengthening of the Ombudsman Institution, Malawi  
- Strengthening of Human Rights NGOs, Malawi
- No. 6. The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights
- No. 7. The Uganda Human Rights Education and Documentation Centre
- No. 8. Support to Human Rights and Democracy 1995 - 1999, Lesotho
- No. 9. Programme de Renforcement des Compétences et des Capacités Nigériennes en Matière de Droits de l'Homme.
- No.10 - Establishing a Human Rights Resource Centre in Malawi  
- Strengthening of the Ombudsman Institution, Malawi.
- No.11 Human Rights Office Tuzla, Bosnia-Herzegovina.
- No. 12 Review of Children's Rights Training in Nepal.
- No. 13 Albania Human Rights Sector Review, March 1999.
- No. 14 Judicial Defenders in Rwanda, Rwanda.
- No. 15 Human Rights Courses 1995-1999.
- No. 16 Human Rights Organisations in Nigeria

*The following reports are expected to be published in 2001:*

- Strengthening the Core Activities and Secretariat of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, Phase I, 1996 - July 2000
- The Position of the Malawi Human Rights Resource Centre (MHRRC) as a Newly Registered Local NGO
- Strategic Planning for the Justice Sector, Guatemala
- Project Assessment Report, Cambodia
- Support for the National Legal Aid Agency of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam
- DCHR Research Partnership Programme
- DCHR Human Rights Officer Programme
- Human Rights Capacity Measures, Phase 1, Mozambique