

ACHIEVEMENT OF THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE, SOKOTO **FROM 2007-DATE**

The Ministry being a service Ministry provides Legal Services to both the Executive and legislative arms of the Government. It has six departments: Public Prosecutions, Civil Litigations, Legal Drafting, Citizens Rights, Public Trustee and Administration and Finance. The Ministry also has three Parastatals: Rent Tribunal, College for Legal and Islamic Studies, and law reform Commission.

RENT TRIBUNAL

Before 2007, the rent tribunal did not work as it should, there were many cases pending undecided which brought untold hardship to both landlords and tenants alike. However, with the advent of the present administration in 2007, the law pertaining to Rent Tribunal was revised and a new chairman and members were appointed. This translated into speedy hearing of cases which have been greatly reduced. So far, the tribunal has treated and disposed 120 cases.

LAW REFORM COMMISSION:

This commission is headed by the Chairman. Its main function is to revise our laws most which are outdated. The last law revision in Sokoto State was done in 1996 but efforts are being made to conduct law revision before the end of 2010.

COLLEGE FOR LEGAL AND ISLAMIC STUDIES

The College was established by Edict no. 43 of 1981 with the main aim of providing middle level manpower for the judiciary and organizing in-service training for middle level judiciary officers. The College is headed by a principal and has 21 lecturers. From inception to date, the college has been on a temporary site but the present administration has provided a permanent site at Wamakko town and the **sum of N600,000,000** has been earmarked in this year's budget for the developing of site.

STAFF WELFARE AND INCENTIVE

In November 2009, the Salary and allowances of staff of the Judiciary and State counsels were increased by the state government on the advice of the Hon. Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice. The last increment was done in 1994 which was nothing to write home about compared to what is obtained in neighboring states. In April 2008, security allowance and mechanical allowance was introduced while loans for purchase of generating sets and motor vehicles were provided to the Chief Judge, the Grand Khadi, all the Judges of the state

High Court and all the Khadis of the State Shari'a Court of Appeal. Outfit allowances for state Counsel were approved up to 50% of annual basic salary.

FIDA BRANCH LUNCHED

Also in 2008, a branch of the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) was inaugurated in Sokoto State with the assistance of the Ministry of Justice. one of the functions of FIDA is to assist Women and children particularly in legal matters and other related matters.

SOKOTO DIVISION OF THE COURT OF APPEAL

The Ministry also encouraged the establishment of the Sokoto Division of the Court of Appeal in May 2009. Hitherto litigants had to go all the way to Kaduna to file their appeals, with all the attendant risks and inconveniences. The Court of Appeal, Sokoto hears appeal from Kebbi, Zamfara and Sokoto States. The Establishment of the Court also in no small measure boosted law practice and administration of justice generally in these 3 states.

WELFARE OF STATE COUNSEL

Beside increment of Salary and outfit allowances for state counsel during this period two brand new Peugeot 307 vehicles were purchased for their use. Payment of annual practicing fees by the Ministry is now made before the end of January of every year.

SOKOTO HOSTS NBA

The Ministry also in May 2009, assisted in hosting the Second Quarter National Executive Committee meeting of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) in Sokoto about 250 delegates from 88 branches of the Association were in attendance.

The Ministry assisted the Nigerian Bar Association, Sokoto Branch in securing a Bus as donation from the state Government.

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR STATE COUNSELS

Previously State Counsel did not attend any course and the last State Counsel to attend a course was the Attorney-General himself in 1995 when he was a state Counsel. But from 2007-date all our lawyers have attended one course or the other. Five of them are studying for their Masters Degree in Law (LLM) in various institutions in this country.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC PROSECUTION

This department is the centre of the Ministry and all state counsel are assigned cases from this department. It principally deals with criminal cases which are capital in nature and other serious offences which carry heavy punishment. It also handles motions and offers legal advice and prosecutions for armed robbery, Culpable homicide, rape as well as lesser offences such as Road Traffic Offences. The department has since May 2007 received 95 Criminals Cases which it filed before the state High court. Out of these cases, 32 cases have been disposed of by either conviction sentence to death, imprisonment, fine or discharge while the rest are pending at various stages of prosecution in court. The department received 126 motions for bail, out of which 100 were disposed of while the rest are still pending before the respective courts they were assigned to. It also received about 99 duplicate case diaries from State C.I.D. for vetting and legal advice all of which were treated and sent back to State C.I.D. About 80 cases were recommended for charges and 19 termination. Similarly the department received 18 appeal cases out of which 12 have been disposed of while the rest are pending. The department also relates with prison authorities over issues of decongestion of Prisons to ensure prompt prosecution of those awaiting trial and release of minor offenders.

CIVIL LITIGATION DEPARTMENT

This department deals with civil cases between individuals and the state Government in courts both within and outside the state. It is also responsible for the drafting of contract agreements for the State Government. It offers legal advice to the state Government, Ministries, Parastatals, and the general public. Between 2007 and 2010 the department drafted 2,770 contract agreements. 52 cases were received and are pending before the state and Federal High Courts. So far 31 cases have been disposed off. ~~The Court of Appeal Sokoto and Supreme Court Abuja. 11 cases have been disposed off.~~ We have 18 cases at the Court of Appeal Sokoto and supreme court Abuja, 11 cases have been disposed off. At the Panel for Recovery of Public Funds and Properties, 51 cases have been filed and are receiving attention. Judgments have been delivered in most cases and some of the cases pending are at defense stage. Recently the Panel delivered judgment against P.W. Nigeria Limited where the company was ordered to refund the sum of 57 Million to the State Government.

LEGAL DRAFTING DEPARTMENT

This department is charged with the responsibility of drafting bills, legal notices, vetting of gazettes before printed, and other legal instruments in the state. During the years under review, many laws and legal notices were drafted by the department. Some of these are:

1. A Law to provide for Recovery of Public Funds and Property of Sokoto State Government.
2. A Law to provide for the establishment of Sokoto State House of Assembly Service Commission.
3. Sokoto State Board of Internal Revenue Law.
4. Supplementary Appropriation Law.
5. Local Government Consolidation Law.

Some of the legal notices are:

- i. Appropriation warrant
- ii. Commission of inquiry (grant of powers to detain persons) order.
- iii. Commission of inquiry (amendment) order]

Some laws are yet to be passed such as:

- i. Sokoto State Agency for the Control of Aids Law
- ii. Sokoto State Emergency Management Agency.

In our effort to ensure that all our laws are gazetted up to date, the department has made a comprehensive compilation of all the existing laws and subsidiary legislations with a view to submitting same to the government Printer, Sokoto for gazetting.

2007/2009 APPROPRIATION LAW

Public Officers Emoluments Amendment Law, State Contributory Pension Law, Attahiru Bafarawa Institute for Qur'an and General Studies Amendment Law, Local Government Amendment Law.

LEGAL NOTICES

Appropriation Warrant, Attorney-General Appointment order, Head of Service Appointment order, Secretary to the State Government Appointment order, proclamation to dissolve the Fifth Session of State House of Assembly, Proclamation to hold the first session of the Sixth Assembly of the State House of Assembly, Appointment of members of Law Reform Commission, Appointment of Primary School Staff Pension Board, Appointment of Members of Local Government Service Commission, Appointment of Members of Pilgrims Welfare Agency, Appointment of Local Government Caretaker Committee Chairmen, Commissioners Appointment order.