

AGENTS FOR CITIZEN-DRIVEN TRANSFORMATION

Agents for Citizen-driven Transformation (ACT) works with civil society organisations (CSOs) to enable them to be credible and effective drivers of change in Nigeria's development.

Our work focuses on the following areas:

- Strengthening the system of civil society organisations, networks, and coalitions to improve their internal, external, and programmatic capabilities.
- Providing a platform for multi-stakeholder dialogue for an improved and effective regulatory environment for the operation of CSOs in Nigeria.

The programme works with CSOs in 10 states selected across the six geo-political zones in the country: Adamawa, Borno, Edo, Enugu, the federal capital territory (FCT), Kano, Lagos, Plateau, Rivers and Sokoto.

We also focus on providing a platform for multi-stakeholder dialogue for an improved, effective, and inclusive regulatory environment for the operation of the CSO in Nigeria. This work is implemented across the 36 states and the FCT.

The four-year programme (2019 – 2023) is funded by the European Union and implemented by the British Council.



C-BIGS leads fight against cholera in the FCT. Source: ACT

Funded by the
European Union



Implemented by
the British Council



KEY ACTIVITIES

This newsletter highlights the key activities undertaken by the programme in May to July 2022.

Summary of key activities include:

CSO system strengthening:

- ACT grantee leads in the fight against cholera in FCT communities
- ACT peer learning platform boosts CSOs collaboration
- CDPs strategise to sustain capacity strengthening of CSOs
- LOCE adopt rights-based approach for inclusive education in Rivers state
- SISDEV initiates electoral violence mitigation system in River state
- Women and girls trained on digital literacy in River state
- GYE deploys advocacy & fundraising skills to improve community school in Plateau state
- ACT partners receive grant to train rural women on digital marketing
- CSO radio interactive programme launched

CSO regulatory environment:

- New CSO-media collaboration in FCT

CSO campaign:

- Civic Action, Sustainable Communities

CSO SYSTEM STRENGTHENING

ACT grantee leads fight against cholera in FCT

A grantee of the Agents for Citizen-driven Transformation (ACT) Programme, the Community-Based Initiative for Growth and Sustainability (C-BIGS), has improved sanitation and hygiene practices in the Zuba and Pyakasa communities in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) of Nigeria. This has helped to reduce the spread of cholera from about 81 reported cases and three deaths in 2021 to zero cases in 2022.

C-BIGS received a grant from the ACT programme in 2021 with the objective of improving sanitation and hygiene practices in these communities. C-BIGS embarked on advocacy,

community visits, sensitisation, training, modelling of hygiene best practices and water treatment, as well as supporting a national plan for the control of cholera.

At the end-of-project dissemination event held in August 2022, the Executive Director of C-BIGS, Seyi Olagundoye, reported that the project directly reached at least 500 households with the distribution of water purification tablets (aqua tabs). Indirectly, 5,000 people are benefitting from public water sources that have been monitored and made safe. The project brought about increased collaboration between the community and the environmental and health workers.

The Village Head of Angwa-Pada village in Zuba, Barau Haruna Zuba, commended the work of C-BIGS in his community. He said, "C-BIGS used a community-responsive approach to working with us and respected our timings before scheduling meetings and advocacy visits. These are some of the soft skills that have enabled them to succeed in improving the hygiene and sanitation practices in our community and bringing the number of cholera cases to zero in 2022."

As a sustainability strategy, volunteers from Zuba and Pyakasa communities are committed to giving continuity to the sensitisation activities to ensure the communities do not backslide on the hygiene and sanitation practices.

"The work that C-BIGS has done has helped us relate with environmental and health workers in a better way. We have come to embrace the fact that we are now working together to improve the health of our people."

Uche Micah, Beneficiary



C-BIGS educating community members on water and sanitation project. Source: C-BIGS

ACT peer learning platform boosts CSO collaboration in Edo state

The Agents for Citizen-Driven Transformation (ACT) programme peer learning platform is part of the programme design to enhance the culture of lesson sharing and collaboration for improved competence and sustainable practices amongst civil society partners. Following the launch of the platform in Edo state in February 2022, it is helping to enhance the ability of CSOs to work together in the state.

Twenty CSOs were selected by the programme to support their capacity for system strengthening and collaboration; the selection was based on a needs assessment conducted in 2020. One of the approaches adopted by the programme to address identified capacity gaps was to encourage and support CSO groups of not more than six members to work collaboratively in their location. The CSO groups meet every four to six weeks to share knowledge on performance or challenges to generate new ways of performing better or addressing challenges as organisations.

The use of the peer learning platform (aka PLP) is becoming a strong practice among CSO partners as they see the benefits of discussing issues as peers. The CSOs have taken ownership of the process with little technical support from the ACT programme. In addition, individual CSOs no longer work in isolation but have grown to trust one another due to the opportunities provided through the platforms.

Peer influencing is another positive result. At least 12 CSOs in Edo state have been influenced to register for and receive certificates from the Special Control Unit Against Money Laundering (SCUML), which is responsible for the supervision, monitoring, and regulation of non-financial institutions. Similarly, 16 CSO partners are now registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission.

"The peer learning sessions have been of immense benefit. We have learned how to get our tax clearance through idea sharing with a sister CSO."

Dr Chinedu Samuel, Executive Director of the Initiative for the development of the Next Generation

CDPs strategise to sustain capacity strengthening of CSOs

The Agents for Citizen-Driven Transformation (ACT) programme continues to strengthen the capacity development providers (CDPs) to enable them to become a credible source for the continuation of CSO capacity strengthening after the life cycle of the programme. To achieve this goal, a one-day learning event was organised by ACT and exposed the CDPs to Promoting Local Response Capacity and Partnership (PLRCAP), an initiative of the International Non-Governmental Organisation (INGO) forum. The event, held in Abuja on 26th July 2022, helped to create linkages between the CDPs and the INGO and to map out strategies for collaboration.

At the end of the event, both CDPs and the INGO agreed to hold regular webinars where CSOs are exposed to thematic learning points to help them deliver sustainable results. They also plan to create a database of capacity development providers and form a Community of Practice to further strengthen member organisations for sustainable development.

CDPs represented at the event include Clones house, Centre for Information Technology and Development, Aminu Kano Centre for Democratic Research and Training, Mambayya House, The Education Partnership Centre, Tom Associates, American University of Nigeria, Yola and the Centre for Management and Documentation.



iCentra demonstrates how their support for capacity development is tailored to the needs of CSOs. Source ACT

LOCE adopts rights-based approach for inclusive education in Rivers state

The Lifeline Organisation for Children Empowerment (LOCE), with support from the ACT programme, is implementing a project on collaborative advocacy for inclusive education and equal opportunity for children with disabilities in Rivers state. The project is necessary due to the neglect and segregation of persons with special needs, especially children of school age.

To enhance the conditions of children with disability, LOCE inaugurated the Rivers State Inclusive Education Alliance, a platform comprising stakeholders and representatives from CSOs, faith-based organisations, religious bodies, government agencies, and the media to champion inclusive education.

The Alliance is the first of its kind and currently engaging the Rivers State House of Assembly and the Committee on Disability Matters to facilitate legislation for inclusive education for children with special needs. As part of its mandate, the Alliance has commenced the review and awareness creation of several policies.

The pioneer members of the Alliance are the Rivers State Ministry of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation, the Ministry of Women Affairs, the Ministry of Education, the Child Protection Network, the International Federation of Women Lawyers, the media (the Nigerian Television Authority and Rhythm 93.7 FM), CSOs, private sector providers of special and inclusive education, and the Association of Orphans and Vulnerable Children (Port Harcourt Chapter).

“My engagement on this project is an eye-opener. I now understand that education should be given in an inclusive setting where those who are physically challenged and those who are not can learn side-by-side.”

Udeme Mathias, visually impaired counselling psychologist

Women and girls trained on digital literacy in Rivers state

Talklove Africa Foundation (TAF), with support from the ACT Programme, is promoting the adoption of digital skills amongst women and girls in the Rumunduru community in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers state. The project, which is aimed at enhancing the adoption of digital technology for 30 businesswomen and girls, will bridge the digital gap amongst businesswomen in rural areas. Helping businesses go digital became necessary because during the lockdown in 2020 as many businesses that had not deployed digital solutions shut down, affecting the sources of livelihoods of the owners.

To select the community and individuals who would benefit from the digital skills support, TAF carried out a comprehensive needs assessment and stakeholder mapping. After the selection, the organisation held over 15 training sessions on digital literacy for businesswomen and girls in the community. Beneficiaries were trained on the fundamentals of digital literacy; digital devices and computers; operating systems; networks and internet. As a result, 28 beneficiaries have profiled their businesses online through the creation of social media pages. Some of the online platforms used include Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Google Business.

For sustainability, the online publicity and radio jingles were created to raise awareness about the Initiative and led to the establishment of a publicity partnership with a commercial

bank. The bank committed to, and has provided, point-of-sale machines to interested beneficiaries to facilitate business transactions and growth.

“After the training on the use of productivity tools to sell products online, I reached out to my friends through the post I made on my WhatsApp status. I got sales orders after applying the knowledge I learnt.”

Perpetua Ekwunazor, training beneficiary

SISDEV initiates electoral violence mitigation system in Rivers state

The Support Initiative for Sustainable Development (SISDEV), with support from the ACT Programme, is implementing a project titled: “Enhance Community Peace and Abate Electoral Violence, through Local Conflict Mitigation in Rivers State, Nigeria.” Due to the risks of violence associated with the upcoming elections in Nigeria, the project aims to strengthen community grievances management structures, enhance inclusive and accountable leadership, and foster peace, stability and reconciliation that will lead to non-violent, free, and fair electoral processes in the communities. The project will be carried out in the Asari-toru and Degema LGAs of Rivers state.

To achieve the objectives of the project, SISDEV partnered with over 10 national, state, and local security agencies, such as the Department of State Services, the Nigerian Security & Civil Defence Corps, and local vigilantes. The organisation has also partnered with other relevant agencies, including National Orientation Agency, to promote peaceful conduct before, during and after election engagements, and reduce electoral violence in the LGAs.

SISDEV set up an Early Warning and Early Response (EWER) system to track and report early signs and potential indicators of violence, to prevent and mitigate crime electoral violence from happening. The system comprises of selected community leaders, women leaders, youths, and heads of partner security agencies. In addition to organising training on the EWER, the members were trained on peacebuilding, conflict management, and the mitigation of electoral violence.

“If there is any time our LGA (Asari-Toru) needs this project, it is now. The risk of violence, disunity and insecurity in our community is high. It is the worst during the election period, which has already started.”

Paramount Ruler of Abalama community, His Royal Highness, King Big Tom

GYE advocates for fundraising to improve community schools

Unsafe schools have been a major factor that has discouraged parents and guardians from enrolling their children and wards in schools. In the Gangare community, the youth forum identified this setback through feedback from parents and guardians and took steps to fundraise and secure their school. The Gangare Youth Forum (GYF), an ACT CSO partner, participated in capacity development activities organised by the programme, and is deploying these skills to improve their community school.

The first activity addressed perimeter fencing at the Government Secondary School. The school was unsafe, truancy was at its peak among students, and the building was in danger of being encroached upon. To address these challenges, GYF made advocacy visits to elected representatives of the area, calling for prompt action to protect the school. In addition, the organisation received a fund (NGN 200,000) from the Board of Trustees, 10 bags of cement and 900 bricks from the State House of Assembly member representing Jos Northwest constituency, Hon. Esther Dosu. All construction activities were carried out through direct labour by community members.

The Mai-Anguwan (Ward Head) in Gangare, Mallam Usman Guda, acknowledged the recent efforts of the organisation namely, provision of boreholes and scholarships to indigent children before the fencing project.

According to the Chairman of GYF, Salisu Shehu, the organisation has been in existence for almost 20 years. However, they recently started proactive and affirmative action after receiving capacity development support from the ACT programme. Becoming more aware of its role and taking proactive steps on community affairs has made the organisation an entry point for other interventions. The organisation received walking aids for five persons with disabilities identified in the community, from Vision and Restoration, Plateau State Chapter. About 100 children in Plateau state will potentially benefit from the efforts and the number will increase as schools reopen for a new session.

“Becoming more aware of our role and taking proactive steps on community affairs has made us an entry point for other community interventions.”

Salisu Shehu, Chairman, GYF

ACT CSO partners receive grant to empower women in digital marketing

The Islamic Counselling Initiatives of Nigeria (ICIN), an ACT CSO partner, has been awarded a grant of US\$9,999 from Urgent Action Fund – Africa (UAF-Africa) to support the empowerment of rural women. Having participated in several capacity strengthening support initiatives organised by ACT, ICIN became conversant with the modalities of applying for funds for community development and deployed the skills in their application. The grant aims to increase women’s skills in digital marketing, empower them to have a voice and participate in the digital economy and advocate for the financial inclusion of women, and promote women’s rights to resources and capital. The organisation emerged through a competitive application process and a reference from ACT, which enhanced its chances for success.

“We express profound gratitude for the training on proposal writing that improved our skills and other strategic skills for the team. Our partnership with ACT has improved our mandate and visibility with our partners.”

Hajiya Fatima Suleiman, Executive Director, ICIN

CSO radio interactive programme launched in four states

The Agents for Citizen-driven Transformation (ACT) programme launched a civic society advocacy radio programme with Nigeria Info. The radio programme is designed to strengthen the voice and help create awareness about the role and impact of the work of CSOs in Nigeria. It will feature the CSOs currently working with the programme across ten states.

The programme kick-started on 19th of July in four locations and on the following stations: Nigeria Info (Abuja, Lagos, Port Harcourt), and Arewa Radio (Kano). The programme has continued for six weeks and has engaged the positively public about various aspects of the ACT programme. A strength of the programme is that CSO partners are featured as guests on the live show and have the opportunity to respond to questions from the public using local examples from their states.

CSO partners have had the opportunity to share their work and the impact of the ACT programme on their organisations with millions of Nigerians across the airwaves. This opportunity has boosted visibility for individual CSOs and collectively as a sector.

“After my appearance on the radio programme, I have received several calls from other CSOs asking for my organisation to mentor them.”

Aremu Samuel Adeniyi



Source: ACT

CSO REGULATORY ENVIROMENT

New CSO-media collaboration in FCT

In line with ACT’s communication and visibility strategy, the programme facilitated a roundtable discussion between media practitioners and CSOs in the FCT. The aim was to review joint action plans developed by CSOs and the media, towards raising awareness and increasing the visibility of CSO interventions in the FCT, and to agree on how those plans will

be taken forward. The CSO and media participants also reviewed current regulatory frameworks and the issues that require media engagement. They mapped out ways for working collaboratively and reporting on issues around the CSO regulatory environment.

“ACT has played a major role in facilitating synergies between CSOs and the media.”

Emmanuel Ogbeche, Chairman, FCT Council, Nigerian Union of Journalists

NEW ACT CAMPAIGN

Civic Action, Sustainable Communities

ACT has launched a new campaign, Civic Action, Sustainable Communities, to showcase how CSOs are positively contributing to local development issues.

The campaign aims to provide a platform for CSOs to collectively share experiences, learning and impact.

It focuses on the following themes:

- Strengthening the system of civil society organisations, networks, and coalitions to improve their internal, external, and programmatic capabilities.
- The impact of CSOs in communities
- Gender and social inclusion
- Sexual and gender-based violence
- CSO regulatory environment

Over 600 Nigerian CSOs are already participating.

Find out more: <https://www.civicactionng.org>



FACTS & FIGURES:

(May 2019-July 2022)

Number of CSOs benefiting from capacity strengthening

203

Number of trainings delivered

180+

States covered by ACT

10

OTHER ACTIVITIES COMPLETED WITHIN THIS PERIOD

- Continued support to the Policy and Advocacy Centre on the grant action: “Civil Society Legislative Engagement Project”
- Continued support to the Federal Inland Revenue Service, the Pension Commission, and the Special Control Unit Against Money Laundry on improving CSO compliance regulations
- Continued support to the Corporate Affairs Commission to develop and install an online financial account filing system
- Ongoing coaching sessions in Kano, Sokoto, Adamawa, Rivers, Enugu, Borno, and Edo states
- Cross-state regional reflection sessions for FCT and Kano CSOs
- Peer learning sessions for Lagos state CSOs
- Grants onboarding sessions for consortium grantees from Enugu, Rivers, and Borno states

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

- Capacity Development Support to CSOs in Adamawa State.
- Ongoing Coaching Sessions in Rivers State.
- Peer Learning Session for Plateau CSOs.
- CSO Regulatory Framework Compliance Training for Sokoto CSOs.
- Continued support to the Policy and Advocacy Centre (PLAC) on the grant action, “Civil Society Legislative Engagement Project”.
- Continued Support to Federal Inland Revenues Service (FIRS), Pension Commission (PenCom), and Special Control Unit Against Money Laundry (SCUML) on Improving CSOs Compliance to SCUML, PenCom and FIRS Regulations
- Technical Committee on Civil Society Self-Regulation to Develop and Facilitate Voluntary Adoption of “Model” Self-Regulatory Framework at the National and Sub-National Levels.
- National Conference on improving the regulatory environment for civil society operations in Nigeria

Find out more

Agents for Citizen-Driven Transformation (ACT)
ACT@ng.britishcouncil.org
www.justice-security.ng

Key contacts:

National Programme Manager: Damilare Babalola (Damilare.Babalola@ng.britishcouncil.org)
Operations Manager: Maxwell Anyaegbu (Maxwell.Anyaegbu@ng.britishcouncil.org)