

# 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 five-year programme (2019-2024) is funded by the European Union and implemented by the British Council.

## KEY ACTIVITIES

This newsletter highlights the key activities undertaken by the programme in August to October 2023.

Summary of key activities include:

### CSO system strengthening:

- Kebetkache leads advocacy on gender and climate action
- Vision Athletics Foundation raises mental health awareness in Rivers state
- NCAA wins grant to improve livelihoods in Enugu
- WOCSSED and VOCL support children in underserved communities
- CSOs empower vulnerable people with vocational skills in Edo state

### CSO regulatory environment:

- Sustaining public benefits from CSO collaboration and enabling regulation

### CSO spotlight:

- Pastoral Resolve

## CSO SYSTEM STRENGTHENING

### Kebetkache leads advocacy on gender and climate action

The [Kebetkache Women's Development and Resource Centre](#) (KWDRC) organised the first Women's Climate Assembly in Port Harcourt in Rivers state. The event aimed to promote and unite African women on gender and climate action. It builds on findings from a study on 'Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation', financed by an ACT consortium grant.

A [2021 report](#) from the United Nations Framework Convention (UNFCCC) on climate change highlighted the unique vulnerability of African women to climate crises due to their frontline exposure, as well as the burdens they face, particularly in contexts of poverty and gender inequality.

In response to this challenge, Kebetkache partnered with WoMin African Alliance to organise the assembly. The event not only aimed to bring women's perspectives to the forefront but also to amplify their voices, shed light on the gendered impacts of the climate crises, and propose alternative development approaches.



Kebetkache Women Development and Resource Centre Rivers state. Source: KWDRC

Funded by the  
European Union



Implemented by  
the British Council



The success of the first assembly led to the organisation of a second assembly held in Lagos in September. Women from over 11 countries were convened to create a pan-African position on the climate catastrophe and African climate justice.

The conference steering committee drafted and presented a collective declaration of demands. KWDRC organised a webinar where women from the Niger Delta region discussed the loss of livelihoods caused by the climate crisis and the activities of oil exploration in their areas. They shared various scenarios and case studies that highlighted the exclusion and marginalisation of women in the design and implementation of climate change policies.

KWDRC plays a crucial role in addressing climate change by increasing women's knowledge, strengthening their efforts, and proposing development alternatives that are women centred. Their goal is to put forward alternatives that enable people to lead dignified lives with better incomes and access to public services, adapt to a rapidly warming climate, and protect nature while upholding its right to exist in a reciprocal relationship with humans.

**“The strength of women climate assemblies is in their commitment to leaving no one behind. It’s about ensuring the most vulnerable are not only part of the conversation but also the solution.”**

Josiane Yebi Boyo, participant, Côte d'Ivoire

**“We are determined to send a strong message to governments across West and Central Africa, united in our call for climate justice, reparations and development alternatives.”**

Emem Okon, Executive Director, Kebetkache Women's Development and Resource Centre



Participants at the 2<sup>nd</sup> African Women's Climate Assembly in Lagos. Source: KWDRC

## Vision Athletics Foundation raises awareness on mental health in Rivers

Vision Athletics Foundation (VAF) – an ACT partner – was awarded an ACT consortium grant to undertake research on: 'Mental Health Awareness of Orphans and Vulnerable Children, Youths and Community Leaders' in Rivers state.

Mental health is a pressing concern affecting the youth in the Niger Delta region. According to [ResearchGate](#), a challenge

has been the scarcity of data and a shortage of neuro-psychiatric facilities to facilitate well-informed decision-making on the issue. The shortage of reliable data leaves the relevant authorities devoid of essential information required for effective interventions.

VAF embarked on this research to delve into the prevalence and perceptions of mental health issues in Rivers state. The research used surveys, focus group discussions, and desk reviews in five local government areas (LGAs): Obio-akpor, Okirika, Eleme, Port Harcourt, and Oyigbo. The research in these LGAs was undertaken by ACT consortium members.

The study revealed that depression is the most common type of mental health illness identified by citizens, and the key causes are poverty (95%), drug misuse (94%), and childhood maltreatment (93%).

The research also highlighted that there are misconceptions about mental health difficulties, with some people believing that these challenges are exclusive to the Western world, while others ascribe them to spiritual causes. A key recommendation is the need to dispel these misconceptions with an awareness campaign.

**"Mental health conditions go beyond madness as popularly believed. There is need to create more awareness on the various forms of mental health conditions and clarify misconceptions surrounding mental health."**

Enyinnaya Okezie, Executive Director, VAF

## NCAA wins grants to improve livelihoods in Enugu state

The Affirmative Action Initiative for Women (NCAA) has secured funding for a project aimed at improving the income and livelihoods of women and girls affected by flooding in the Anambra and Bayelsa states. NCAA – a consortium of more than 20 NGOs dedicated to women's rights – leveraged the knowledge gained from ACT training to win the grant.

The two-year project (from March 2023 to December 2024) aims to improve women's participation in public life and politics. The project is being implemented in several locations. In Bayelsa, the Global Care Rescue Mission is leading the initiative in Ayamassa, Agoro, and Tamogbene. In Anambra, the Hope Givers Initiative is delivering the project in Ebenebe, Awka North, and Ossamala.

NCAA advocated to local governments, communities and the states to continue the project and signed an MOU to guarantee the project's long-term impact.

These initiatives have already empowered 163 rural women and girls with entrepreneurship skills to launch and run their own small businesses. A cooperative organisation has also registered 60 women and girls in the chosen project villages, with assistance from the State Ministry of Women Affairs and microfinance organisations.

The NCAA's programme is a step in the right direction to empower women and advocate for their rights. It also serves as an example of the benefits that cooperation between organisations can have on local communities.

## WOCSED and VOICI support children in underserved communities

The Women's Centre for Self-Empowerment and Development (WOCSED) is a new CSO under the ACT programme. It is currently working with Voice of Children International (VOICI) – another ACT partner – to seek funding for rural development projects. These programmes are designed to assist children from underprivileged neighbourhoods who have been unable to go to school due to financial constraints.

Both CSOs are using the knowledge and relationships gained through the ACT programme's training. They have embraced the use of digital tools for data collection and have established digital policies and regulations to keep pace with evolving technologies and emerging digital challenges.

In commemoration of the 2023 International Day of Peace – an annual day observed by the United Nations as call to action promote peace – WOCSED engaged students in Anambra state secondary schools in discussions on peace and conflict resolution and the role of students.

**“The poor and vulnerable are always on the radar of both organisations. It's our passion to raise funds to support poor school children.”**

Onyeka Obi, Executive Director, WOCSED

## CSOs empower vulnerable people with vocational skills in Edo state

### Smile Africa International

Smile Africa International (SAIYDI) – an ACT grantee – trained 50 women in Benin City. The women were identified through a community mapping exercise conducted in 2022. Among these women were people living with HIV, rehabilitated from drug use, and former sex workers.

Vocational training was offered in fashion design, catering, hairdressing, and make-up artistry. The four-month training programme concluded with an exhibition and graduation ceremony in March 2023. Trainees were provided with starter packs to kick start their trades.

**“I would like to thank ACT for this support. It has improved my livelihood.”**

Mercy Uwadiae, beneficiary

### Christabel Otueroro Foundation

The Christabel Otueroro Foundation (COF) – an ACT grantee – has positively impacted the lives of 50 vulnerable women in the Ikpoba Okha and Oredo LGAs. The group of women was identified through community sensitisation efforts to raise awareness about GBV to prevent incidents, and provide essential support services (psychosocial, medical, and legal).

The women benefited from a four-month training programme in Benin City. Upon the successful completion of the program in 2023, graduates were equipped with starter packs, which included sewing machines, locally made ovens/mixers, hair dryers, washing basins, makeup toolkit boxes, and ring lights.

## The Global Women for Quality and Sustainable Development Initiatives

The Global Women for Quality and Sustainable Development Initiatives (GWSD) – an ACT grantee – has positively impacted the lives of 25 survivors of GBV in the Oredo, Ovia Northeast, and Ikpoba Okha LGAs of Edo state.

This six-month intervention was made possible through an ACT programme grant in 2022, which was aimed at preventing GBV. It supported the CSO to raise awareness about GBV, provide protection services, and enhance livelihood opportunities for survivors.

The beneficiaries were identified through a community sensitisation and livelihood needs assessment. Some survivors received financial rewards, while others received job training. After completing their programme, the participants received starter kits to put their new skills into practice.

GWSD established partnerships with various stakeholders to conduct the project, including: the State Ministry of Social Development and Gender Issues; the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP); and women's rights organisations: the Child Protection Network (CPN), the Confederation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), the Vivian Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC), and other CSOs.

This collaborative effort ensured that survivors benefited from a multitude of different support services, further strengthening the impact of GWSD's intervention.

**“A very big thank you for this intervention. It has given me a new life. I now make a small income to support myself and my family.”**

Miracle Ebubechiuzoma, beneficiary

## CSO REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT

### Sustaining public benefit from CSO collaboration and enabling regulation

The Steering Committee on Civil Society Regulatory Environment – in collaboration with the ACT programme – is planning the second National Conference on the operational environment of civil society in Nigeria in November 2023.

Civil society plays a critical role in the development and growth of any society. In Nigeria, CSOs have made significant contributions to advocacy, social welfare, and public policy reforms. However, as observed at the first CSO National Conference in 2022, the operational environment for CSOs in Nigeria has been challenging, with numerous legal and regulatory barriers that impede their effectiveness.

The National Conference will bring together various actors from the civil society sector, government (regulatory agencies, legislators, etc.), donors, and other stakeholders to discuss the progress that has been achieved to ease the regulatory environment. The event will also provide the opportunity for CSOs working with the ACT programme to collaborate and dialogue with policymakers and the government to address issues that impact the civil space in Nigeria.

**2023**  
NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON  
CIVIL SOCIETY OPERATIONAL  
ENVIRONMENT IN NIGERIA

**SAVE THE DATE**

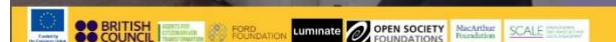
**DAYS**  
**COMING 30 SOON**

**8- 9 NOV**  
9:00AM- 5:00PM

**VIA ZOOM**  
**ABUJA, NIGERIA**

**Theme:**  
“SUSTAINING  
PUBLIC BENEFIT  
FROM CSOs  
THROUGH  
COLLABORATION  
AND ENABLING  
REGULATION”

Logos at the bottom: European Union, BRITISH COUNCIL, FORD FOUNDATION, Luminate, OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS, MacArthur Foundation, SCALE





## CSO SPOTLIGHT:

### Pastoral Resolve (PARE): Working to improve community livelihoods



Established in 1999, the Pastoral Resolve (PARE) is a non-profit organisation that works to improve education and health for nomadic girls and boys and improve community livelihoods. PARE works in all parts of Nigeria, particularly in those areas with higher levels of pastoralists concentrations.

Pastoralism – the practice of livestock herding between grazing sites – is a vital economic activity and livelihood for millions of people in many parts of Nigeria. Yet it is also becoming increasingly enmeshed in violent conflict as a result of climate, environmental and other changes. Pastoralists, farming communities, authorities and security forces alike are adapting their livelihoods and strategies in the face of these developments.

PARE is a membership organisation with a nine member Board of Trustees headed by a President with 138 members and about 200 registered Local Pastoral Associations. The vision is to be a leading NGO devoted to nurture the pastoralists, rural communities and disadvantaged peoples' aspirations for change, from their life of subsistence to that of a truly fulfilling, peaceful, pleasant one that manifest the beauty and greatness of nature.

#### Strengthening organisational skills

As an ACT partner, PARE has benefited from a series of ACT capacity strengthening activities: project management cycle, gender & social inclusion, fundraising, research skills and analysis, and advocacy. These new skills are helping PARE to improve its organisational effectiveness.

We asked PARE how ACT support has helped to strengthen capacity within the organisation:

- "ACT has ignited a change process that will go a long way in redefining the narratives of education in these districts. Positive change has come to stay."
- "PARE is pleased to report that many things have changed since our engagement with the ACT programme, primarily in the areas of project implementation and organisational effectiveness."
- "As a result of the training and mentorship support received, we updated our internal control systems to promote transparency and accountability. We are now using internet banking which has increased the speed and accuracy of our financial transactions and reduced delays."
- "Before, our project implementation was carried out directly by project staff. Now a diverse set of individuals and groups are involved. This has increased the chances of project ownership and sustainability."

#### Community trust is increasing in PARE's abilities

As a result of these newfound skills and increased organisational effectiveness, PARE is gaining more credibility with local stakeholders. For example in Adamawa, the Song Local Government Education Authority (LGEA) has committed to fund and sustain six skill acquisition centres initiated by PARE. While the LGEA will provide funding and oversight, the centres will remain under the management of PARE and its CBO partners.

#### For more information:

Facebook [PARE Adamawa](#)

LinkedIn: <https://ng.linkedin.com/company/the-pastoral-resolve>

Twitter [@pareadamawa](#)

Instagram [@pareadamawa](#)

## FACTS & FIGURES:

(May 2019 – Oct 2023)

Number of CSOs benefiting from capacity strengthening

202

Number of trainings delivered

175

States covered by ACT

10

## OTHER ACTIVITIES COMPLETED WITHIN THIS PERIOD

- Onboarding/technical session for 10 CSOs for replication of ACT capacity development initiatives through coaching and mentoring grant for 30 non-ACT CSO across states
- Meeting with Caritas Nigeria to discuss further opportunities for sustainability of learning and capacity development support to CSOs
- Continued support to capacity development providers to host a monthly webinar series for CSOs
- Support to the technical working group on the development of a code of corporate governance for NGOs
- Meeting with CAC, PENCOM, FIRS and SCUML on progress of mainstreaming gender and social inclusion
- Meeting and continued support to the National Technical Committee on civil society legislative engagement
- Continued support to the CSO Accountability and Transparency Initiative

## UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

- Reflection session on consortium grants with CSOs in Plateau state
- Continued support to 10 CSOs for stepping down capacity development received from ACT to 30 CSOs across 10 states through coaching and mentoring
- Further engagement with the Murmushi pilot for setting up a virtual CSO peer hub to respond to feedback and finalise plan for support
- Support to the coordination meeting of the learning management system capacity development providers towards sustainability of learning and capacity development for CSOs
- Support to Technical Working Group on the development of Code of Corporate Governance for not-for-profit organisations
- Continued support to the National Technical Committee on Civil Society Legislative Engagement
- Continued support to the CSO Accountability and Transparency Initiative

### Find out more

**Agents for Citizen-Driven Transformation (ACT)**

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