

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.

ACT is implemented nationwide, with work currently underway in Lagos, Kano, Abuja, FCT, Adamawa, Edo, Rivers, Sokoto, and others.

The four-year programme (2019 – 2023) 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 February to April 2021.

Summary of key activities include:

CSO system strengthening:

- Strengthening media and communication skills for CSOs
- Strengthening proposal writing skills for CSOs
- Promoting gender equality and social inclusion
- Intensifying capacity development training for CSOs
- Training on effective advocacy for 20 CSOs in Edo state

CSO regulatory environment:

- Raising awareness of the CAMA 2020 CSO regulations

CSO SYSTEM STRENGTHENING

Strengthening media and communication skills for CSOs

On February 1-5, the Agents for Citizen-driven Transformation (ACT) Programme organised a workshop for 12 CSOs in Sokoto state to strengthen their media and communication skills. The training aimed to deepen their knowledge in the development and application of strategic communications, media engagement principles, effective program design and implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.

The training also highlighted the use of innovative technologies, including social media. It explored how CSOs can integrate social media into their communication strategies to reach communication goals and to engage with audiences more effectively. Popular platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter can be used as advocacy tools to support greater citizen participation, disseminate timely information, and improve transparency, governance and accountability of organisations. CSOs were also trained on how to communicate and build partnerships with the media to promote their work.

The sessions were delivered virtually (via Microsoft Teams) using a participatory approach in the form of group discussions and tasks. Some of the modules included communications in development, media engagement and management, digital media for social change, and social behaviour change communication.



Participants at the training program for CSOs on proposal writing for fundraising activities. Source: ACT

CSOs play a key role in improving the lives of many citizens at the grassroots level. Often their efforts are not visible enough nor accurately reported. Effective media engagement can provide key insights and inform the public of their interventions.

Strengthening proposal writing skills for CSOs

In response to the growing need for CSOs to mobilise resources for improved service delivery, the Agents for Citizen-driven Transformation (ACT) Programme conducted a three-day training in Lagos state for 16 CSO partners working across different sectors.

Organisations in attendance included: BudgIT Foundation, the Centre for Citizens with Disabilities, LEAP Africa, the Nigeria Network of NGOs, SERAP, Women's Rights and Health Project, Women Arise for Change Initiative, amongst others.

Participants were taught key fundraising and resource mobilisation principles, including proposal and grant writing skills, with an emphasis on responding to European Union funding opportunities. They were also trained on the steps to building stronger donor relations.

The training focused on presentations, small group discussions and feedback sessions. Direct interactions between participants were encouraged and enabled them to learn from each other's experiences.

At the end of the session, participants agreed to apply *knowledge* acquired from the *training* by conducting a 'step-down' training in their respective organisations.

"The timing of this fundraising activity is very strategic and reflects a well-thought planning process."

Akingbade Tope Olatidoye, M & E Officer, the Institute for Media and Society

Promoting gender equality and social inclusion

From February 23-25, the Agents for Citizen-driven Transformation (ACT) Programme trained 19 CSOs on gender and social inclusion mainstreaming in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. The three-day training introduced participants to the principles of gender & social inclusion (GSI) and processes to integrate GSI into their activities.

With the widening of gender and social disparities in Nigeria – across wealth, health, and every other socio-political determinant in the country – CSOs are accelerating their efforts in advocating for increased representation and voices for excluded groups in policy and decision-making. This involves making gender perspectives – what women and men do and what resources and decision-making processes they have access to – more central to the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of their activities.

To deepen their knowledge of key concepts and stay-up to date on policies and trends, the CSOs created a WhatsApp group to share relevant information and documents such as the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Bill 2018; the National Policy on Albinism in Nigeria; and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol.

Following the training, five CSOs developed a GSI mainstreaming action plan tailored to the needs of their respective organisations. Each CSO made written commitments to be more gender-responsive in their interventions and to continue to advocate for marginalised groups, including persons with disabilities and women and girls.

ACT prioritises gender equality as a cross-cutting issue and works to mainstream this in line with the European Union Gender Action Plan (2016) and Nigeria's National Gender Policy (2006).

"I used to think we had done a lot when it came to the inclusion policy. I now realise that I am also guilty of excluding persons with disabilities and plan on correcting it."

Participant

Intensifying capacity development for CSOs

From March 16-18, the Agents for Citizen-driven Transformation (ACT) Programme hosted a training on project cycle management (PCM) for 19 CSO partners in Abuja. The objective was to increase the understanding of PCM in the context of international development; to understand each phase of the project cycle; to be able to plan, implement and monitor projects effectively; to develop tools for immediate adaptation and application in their own projects; and to mainstream gender and social inclusion across the project cycle.

Following several ACT capacity training programmes, four beneficiary civil society organisations have submitted applications for financial support from international donors. All the participating organisations have expanded their knowledge of sexual and reproductive health and can represent the special needs of young people more effectively and are confident that they can deliver appropriately on their social mandate.

Training on effective advocacy for 20 CSOs in Edo state

The Agents for Citizen-driven Transformation (ACT) Programme organised a training for 20 CSOs on advocacy skills using a rights-based approach. The three-day training held from April 12-14 was delivered by Dora Oleka, a CSO expert and lawyer.

The participants were drawn from a variety of interest groups, including women, children, youth, immigration, community development, and persons with disabilities. Each organisation was represented by two members of staff including Executive Directors and top management. Each organisation pledged to apply learnings from the training to their everyday activities.

The same CSOs had previously participated in the ACT organisational capacity assessment and action planning processes.

"The training was a huge eye-opener. I can't wait to adopt what I have learned in implementing subsequent projects in my organisation."

CSO representative, Edo state

CSO REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT

Raising awareness of the CAMA 2020 CSO regulations

The Companies and Allied Matter Act (CAMA) 2020 was enacted in January 2021. Since then, a key challenge has been that many civil society organisations (CSOs) are not conversant with the provisions of the new law.

Against this backdrop, the Agents for Citizen-driven Transformation (ACT) Programme in collaboration with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) organised a Q&A session for CSOs on the implementation of the CAMA 2020. The forum, held on February 24, enabled CSOs and the CAC to engage and discuss in-depth the principles and provisions of the new law, especially as it pertains to NGO regulations under which CSOs are categorised.

The interactive event was conducted via Zoom with a total of 299 participants in attendance including representatives of CSOs, government, academia, the donor community, and media (from within and outside Nigeria).

The event featured CAC senior officials, including the Directors of Board Secretariat and Compliance, ICT & Registry Department, who addressed questions from CSOs—ranging from the penalty of long-term defaulters to validating registered organisations on the CAC's portal.

The session provided insights into the various and relevant aspects of the CAMA 2020 for CSOs such as how to change the name of incorporated trustees; how to remove and appoint trustees; the new clauses added to the new CAMA; and compliance requirements. The forum provided more opportunities for CSOs to engage and dialogue with the CAC on the law.

ACT will collaborate further with the CAC to develop and provide guidance notes for CSOs that will include detailed responses on a range of matters related to the CAMA 2020.

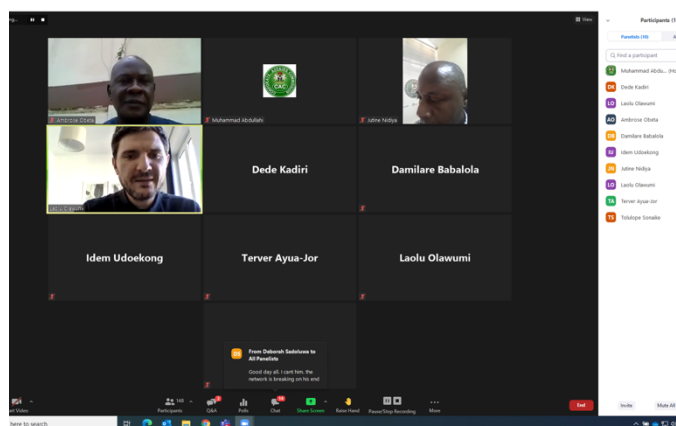
The virtual event is part of ACT and the CAC's collaborative efforts to strengthen the civil society regulatory environment through effective and efficient implementation of the relevant parts of the CAMA 2020 across the country.

“The interaction was very useful and educational. The presenters did a very good job.”

Peter Nwadishi, CSO representative, United Against Poverty Charity Organisation

“The European Union supports CSOs across the world to ensure they are operating in an environment that is conducive.”

Clement Boutillier, Head of Democracy, Governance and Migration Section at the EU Delegation to Nigeria and ECOWAS



Participants at the virtual webinar on CAMA 2000. Source: ACT

FACTS & FIGURES:

(May 2019-February 2021)

Number of CSOs benefiting from ACT capacity strengthening initiatives

145+

Number of trainings delivered

31

States covered by ACT

7

OTHER ACTIVITIES COMPLETED WITHIN THIS PERIOD

- Resource mobilisation and fundraising training for CSOs
- Civil society network accountability and governance
- Coaching and mentoring support to CSO Sokoto and Kano states
- Validate data collection instruments - synthesis analysis / mapping of civil society regulatory frameworks

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

- Political economy analysis research in Enugu, Anambra, Kwara and Plateau
- Coaching and mentoring for emerging and developing CSOs in FCT, Lagos and Kano
- Meeting with the Ministry of Finance Budget and National Planning on NGO database initiative
- Training of media organisations on ACT key thematic areas
- Radio programmes on civil society regulatory issues

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)