

# 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.

We work 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.



Staff from the D-Ability Initiative trained women and people living with disabilities. 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 February to April 2023.

Summary of key activities include:

### CSO system strengthening:

- The D-Ability Initiative empowers deaf women and girls in Rivers State
- CEHRD increases response to SGBV in Rivers State
- VEANI empowered 100 women and girls in Rivers State
- ACT grantee empowers SGBV survivors in Sokoto State
- ACT consortium partners promote community voter awareness in Plateau State
- IPC prioritises community road construction advocacy.
- YouthRise developed digital platform to combat SGBV
- Plateau State Women now involved in decision-making in Kanke LGA

### CSO spotlight:

- Women Rights and Health Project (WRAHP)

## CSO SYSTEM STRENGTHENING

### The D-Ability Initiative empowers deaf women and girls in Rivers State

Thirty deaf women and girls have been set on a path to financial independence by ACT grantee, Dehat Ability Support Initiative (D-Ability Initiative). The CSO is on a quest to improve the livelihood of women and people living with disabilities (PWD) in Rivers State.

Women and girls with hearing disabilities in the state are often marginalised and live in extreme poverty. They often find it difficult to earn a living due to lack of life-sustaining skills that are exacerbated by discrimination and stigmatisation.

To remedy this, the D-Ability Initiative embarked on a six-month tailoring skill acquisition programme. The beneficiaries were equipped and trained on various fashion design and tailoring skills in order to make them self-sufficient entrepreneurs. The women and girls had no prior knowledge of tailoring or fashion design.

The beneficiaries demonstrated their new skills by displaying their designs at their graduation ceremony. As a long-term strategy, the women and girls have been organised into a cooperative society. Plans are ongoing to set up an industrial hub for the deaf women and PWDs in the state.



Deaf women and girls benefit from empowerment programme in Rivers State. Source ACT

**“This programme has opened our eyes. We now see our daughter interacting with people and learning fast. Because of the way she performed in this training, we have enrolled her in university.”**

D. Felix Nte, mother of a beneficiary

## CEHRD increases response to SGBV in Rivers State

The Centre for Environment and Human Rights Development (CEHRD) has educated and empowered women, girls, boys, people with disabilities (PWDs), and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in three LGAs of River State: Tai, Eleme, and Port Harcourt.

SGBV affects women and girls ten times more than men, according to baseline research in the Niger Delta. Domestic violence accounts for the vast majority of SGBV events reported.

To address this, the CEHRD initiated a programme to train institutions (such as the police, social welfare and health care providers) on SGBV prevention and response methods. It also promoted awareness of the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) law as a suitable legal tool for reducing SGBV in the state.

The CEHRD worked to combat the culture of violence against women and girls through broad initiatives such as community-level engagements, information sharing through customised training manuals and IEC materials, community dialogues and reflections, school and government engagements, workshops, town hall meetings, and trainings.

The actions of the CEHRD raised awareness of the Rivers State VAPP Law. Over 5,000 people were contacted through the media. Pro-social and non-violent values and behaviours were promoted.

Commitment to policy and action were secured by Rivers State ministries, departments, and agencies to minimise SGBV and foster a culture of gender equality.

The CEHRD established a toll-free line for people to report SGBV cases and established a mediation hub so that beneficiaries have access to preventative and corrective services and resources. The project also constituted a network for the response and prevention of SGBV, which comprises of service providers such as police, religious, legal institutions, and local community monitoring groups in three LGAs. The networks are working independently and serve as sustainability for the project.



CEHRD raising awareness about the Violence Against Person's Prohibition Law. Source: ACT

**“This project has shown me that judicious implementation and massive awareness of the Rivers State VAPP Law through collaboration and partnerships are sure ways of reducing SGBV cases and promote trust and confidence from the society.”**

Josiah Chijindu Egbilika, Advocacy Officer, CEHRD

## VEANI empowers 100 women and girls in Rivers State

Studies have shown that women and girls are disproportionately affected by socio-economic challenges. This limits their involvement in viable economic opportunities and exposes them to sexual and gender-based violence.

With support from the ACT programme, the Voice of River Widows and the Girl Child Initiative embarked on a project to economically empower rural women and girls through mechanised garri production and marketing. One hundred women and girls from four different communities in the Abua-Odual LGA were trained for two days. This was followed by six months of mentorship on the basic operations of garri production machines, packaging, branding, and effective marketing of their produce.

Through this initiative, the beneficiaries were empowered to become self-reliant and set on the path to financial independence. Some of the beneficiaries are now producing packaged products called “garri crisps” in different flavours to generate more income for their household.

To ensure the sustainability of the project and enhance access to loans for beneficiaries, they were organised into a cooperative society, which was registered with the Nigeria Cooperative Society: the Women and Girls Care Multipurpose Cooperative Society Limited (under the Nigeria Cooperative ACT 2004, as amended).



Branded garri crisps. Source: ACT

**“As a school dropout, with this knowledge gained from the training of mechanised garri production and marketing, I am going to produce garri and make money so I can go back to complete my education.”**

Onyani Martins, beneficiary

## ACT consortium partners promote community voter awareness in Plateau State

The Plateau State Justice Development and Peace Commission (JDPC) has raised awareness about the dangers of voter apathy. It mobilised community members to collect their Permanent Voters Card (PVCs) ahead of the 2023 elections. This increased the number of PVCs collected by 85 percent in Plateau State.

JDPC is a CSO working to promote social justice through human development and peace initiatives. The CSO received a grant from the ACT programme to promote good governance for inclusive peaceful communities in two communities each of Mangu, Kanke, and Kanam LGAs.

In consortium with ACT, JDPC carried out a series of advocacy, community visits, sensitisation, and trainings for selected community stakeholders in the LGAs, who then developed an action plan to step down the knowledge gained.

Representatives from 86 polling units across the selected communities, the women's groups, youths, development associations, traditional heads, religious bodies, district stakeholders, representative of political parties, aspirants, local government council representatives, the National Orientation Agency (Mangu LGA), house of assembly member Mangu South, persons with disabilities, and the Community Respite Team were among the stakeholders reached.

The stakeholder groups formed a volunteer group known as the Community Respite Team (CRT) to help in the sustainability and promotion of good governance for inclusive peaceful communities. Among the 50 direct beneficiaries are PWDs, security personnel, women's and men's groups, youth, the National Union of Road Transport Worker, the Christian Association of Nigeria, Jama'atu Nasril Islam, the Local Emergency Preparedness and Response Team, security, religious organisations, trade unions, community leaders, and traditional leaders.

**“We appreciate the team for conducting this activity. It will go a long way in easing the work of sensitising the masses.”**

Julie, INEC desk officer

## ACT grantee empowers SGBV survivors in Sokoto State

The Initiative for Youth Support and Re-orientation (i4Youth) - a CSO working to improve the social welfare of vulnerable groups - has implemented the Second Chance Education and Entrepreneurship Support Project to address the psycho-social issues of SGBV. Survivors from six local government areas (Yabo, Bodinga, Sokoto North, Sokoto South, Gwadabawa and Wurno) benefited from the initiative.

Due to the growing number of SGBV cases in the state, i4Youth conceived the project to help in the reintegration of survivors back to the society and address the rising number of school dropouts.

The project was implemented on a quarterly basis carrying out activities such as providing financial literacy, basic numeracy, and entrepreneurship skills trainings to survivors. This enabled the beneficiaries to acquire basic education and vocational skills.

To date, a total of 300 youth groups, community-based organisations and other community structures have been trained on issues, perspectives, challenges, and best practices for tackling the SGBV. Two hundred and forty survivors (40 each drawn from the six LGAs) were selected from an existing database of GBV survivors in the state. They were trained on reintegration including psychosocial support and livelihood/skill acquisitions for them to be self-dependent/reliant and become useful members of their communities.

In addition, 217 survivors are currently undergoing financial literacy, numeracy, and entrepreneurship skills training at designated centres in the six LGAs. At the end of the training, over 200 GBV survivors will be certified by the State Agency for Mass Education and placed at appropriate levels to continue their educational pursuits. Additionally, vocational trade based cooperative societies will be established and registered to facilitate easy access to credit facilities and other forms of support for sustainability beyond the funding cycle of the ACT programme.

**“The trainings, mentoring, coaching and peer learning platforms offered by ACT have significantly transformed our organisation and helped us to successfully implement the Second Chance Education Project.”**

Dr Ibrahim Kangiwa, Executive Director, i4Youth

## IPC prioritises community road construction advocacy

Media and civil society actors play an important role in fostering good governance through engagement with duty bearers (elected representatives or appointed government officials) for improved public service delivery, especially for grassroots communities in Lagos State.

The International Press Centre (IPC), a grantee of the ACT programme, is dedicated to building media capacities for

democracy and development. It is delivering a project aimed at building a strategic partnerships between the media, civil society actors, community stakeholders, and duty bearers at the local/state levels.

IPC is advancing citizen-focused democratic governance by solving specific identified problems in communities across three LGAs in Lagos. It is using media-driven strategies and partnerships with local civil society actors to “interface and engage duty bearers for improved responsiveness and accelerated attention to infrastructural development and service delivery on prioritised community-driven governance initiatives”.

As a result of this intervention, community members including women, youths, PWDs, traditional leaders, religious leaders, and market women were able to engage with the Chairman of Ikorodu North LCDA. This led to the construction and rehabilitation of several roads across the political wards, including a bridge linking the Agbede and Odonguyan communities.

A high point of feedback for inclusive participation in Ikorodu is the emergence of a focal platform known as the ‘Ambassador for Good Governance’ with the mandate of democratic engagement. The platform is dedicated to organising and mobilising communities within the Ikorodu LCDA for targeted engagement with duty-bearers.

**“The training gave us the required skills to advocate for projects in our community. It has yielded results.”**

Funke Adedotun

## Plateau State women now involved in decision-making in Kanke LGA

Women now participate in governance and drive peace processes in the Kankee LGA in Plateau State through the support of an ACT grantee’s community engagement for governance project.

The women in the Community Respite Team (CRT) and the steering committee in Amper Community of Kanke LGA appealed to the District Head (Ngolong Npar) of Amper Nde, Emmanuel Jatau, to consider the inclusion of women representatives in his council to enable them to contribute their quota in the community’s decision-making process.

Expressing his delight and support for the initiative, the District Head, Caleb Kaye Lukolm, Head of Gungji Nde said it is a welcome and timely development, because today, the efforts of men, women, and persons with disabilities are needed to move any society forward. Women representation as stakeholders in the council of Amper District will afford them opportunity to play an advisory role especially on matters that affect them, the youth, and children in the community as they are the custodians of the family.

The Social Justice and Human Development for Peace Initiative (JDPC) Consortium implemented the project. It aims to reduce violence, conflict and enhance good and participatory governance through citizen engagement and peace driven processes in six communities (Dengi, Gar, Amper, Kabwir, Kereng, and Mangu Town of Kanam, Kanke, and Mangu LGAs). This has created an enabling environment for right holders to identify, develop, prioritise, and communicate their developmental needs and make demands from their duty bearers and stakeholders.

Similarly, an outcome of JDPC’s advocacy is a call for action by Durepmwa, a PWD who mobilised her community members to rebuild a broken well to improve access to safe drinking water. The Councillor (representing the Kabwir-Pada Ward), Honourary Hannatu Bawa, commended the achievements of the JDPC Consortium, especially the inclusion of persons with disabilities who are usually not carried along in community activities.

**“This has shown us that persons with disabilities are equally important in every community. We must encourage persons with disabilities to contribute to community development initiatives.”**

Hon. Hannatu Bawa, Councillor, Kabwir-Pada

## YouthRise developed digital platform to combat SGBV

Youth Rise Nigeria, one of the CSO partners working with the ACT programme, has offered access to information and youth-friendly services on drug use and the management of gender-based violence (GBV) in four area councils in the Federal Capital Territory, Amac, Kwali, Gwagwalada, and Kuje.

The initiative responded to an upsurge in gender-based violence, particularly among drug-addicted youth. Youth Rise Nigeria (YRN) launched a project in 2021 to improve the reach, inclusion, and service provision in responding to drug use and GBV among young people through digital technology and the community-based system, as well as setup pathways to services for drug use treatment and gender-based violence management, including post-care and access to justice.

Advocacy, sensitisation, and training were conducted by YRN, including the mapping of youth-friendly facilities and support centres for drug use and GBV management. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) were designed to manage drug usage and GBV. The Capacity building benefited 80 community-based psychosocial Counsellors and 12 gender champions across the four area councils.

Furthermore, an interactive website (Headspace Naija) was created to exchange information about drug use and GBV, as well as case reporting and referrals. In addition, the team ensured that incidences of GBV and substance abuse recorded on the website received timely and adequate replies.

Some cases were referred to medical facilities, others to police stations for domestic violence, and others to the Youth Rise Drop-in Centre for sexually transmitted infection syndromic management, nutritional help, and so on.

So far, 640 cases have been documented on the Headspace Naija website. Gender clinics and support groups have been attended by almost 480 young people (180 males and 300 females).

Youth Rise Nigeria operates a community-based drop-in treatment centre in Abuja for young people who use drugs, particularly teenage girls, and young women, as a sustainability strategy. By integrating a webpage (i.e., Headspace Naija) in capacity building and referral to health and support centres, the online platform is thus being used to sustain the project's gains.



**“A lot of our men see wife-beating as normal due to some of our cultural practices. But with this training, I am now better informed and will take this learning beyond my home.”**

Idris, beneficiary

## CSO SPOTLIGHT: WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND HEALTH PROJECT

**The Women's Rights and Health Project (WRAHP) is an innovative women and community-focused not for profit organisation registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission. The CSO is based in Ebonyi in Edo State.**

WRAHP's vision is to see a just society where the dignity of women, young people and communities are respected, and they enjoy sound health and maximise their potentials. The CSO focuses on the promotion of gender equality, sexual reproductive health, and rights of women and girls including those with disabilities. It uses a rights-based approach to improve women's and community health and development by equipping, mobilising and actively engaging community members as agents of social change through information sharing, capacity building and advocacy.

WRAHP is an ACT CSO partner. The organisation has benefited from a series of capacity strengthening activities, including project management, gender & social inclusion, human resource management, project cycle management, and more.

Recently, WRAHP has put some of these new skills into practice. New ways of working are starting to benefit the organisation. WRAHP has put 13 internal policies in place, through the support of the ACT programme.

**“Prior to teaming up with ACT, we lacked proficiency in several fields. We were unfamiliar with project cycle management and the advantages of integrating social inclusion. We encountered obstacles in securing funds for our organisation. Although we had a human resources policy in place, it was not efficiently implemented, leading to subpar personnel management and inadequate performance.”** Bose Ironsi, WRAHP

Since WRAHP received training from ACT, the organisation has reported several positive changes. Some include implementing new skills into daily activities, gaining a better understanding of stakeholders at different levels (international, state, local government areas, and the communities), inclusion of people with disabilities into projects, and having clear programming targets.



WRAHP has been awarded two grants from the African Women's Development Fund for working with persons living with Disability in Lagos and Ebonyi state. In addition to raising funds, WRAHP has expanded its scope to other local government areas and increased the reporting of SGBV in the state.

**“We want to appreciate WRAHP for the opportunity. The workshop opened our eyes to things we were oblivious of and give attention to reshaping our organisation, setting the structure, and getting the necessary certifications.”**

Kehinde Thompson, Director, Renaissance Foundation for Peacebuilders

**“WRAHP encouraged us to be very bold and speak out. If anyone is being harassed sexually, they encourage us to speak out and be confident in life experiences, especially on issues related to sexual and gender-based violence.”**

Student, Mafoluku Senior Grammar School

For more information: Website: [www.wrahp.com](http://www.wrahp.com); Instagram: @wrahpnigeria

## FACTS & FIGURES:

(May 2019-January 2022)

Number of CSOs benefiting from capacity strengthening

**203**

Number of trainings delivered

**174+**

States covered by ACT

**10**

## OTHER ACTIVITIES COMPLETED WITHIN THIS PERIOD

- Coaching sessions in Borno and Adamawa states
- Political and economic analysis training for Plateau, Enugu, and Borno CSOs
- Grants onboarding session for consortium grantees from Enugu, Rivers, and Borno, Plateau, Kano, and Adamawa states
- Continued support to the Policy and Advocacy Centre on the 'Civil Society Legislative Engagement' project
- Continued support on improving CSO compliance with the Federal Inland Revenues Service, the Pension Commission, and the Special Control Unit Against Money Laundering
- Continued support to the Corporate Affairs Commission to develop and install online financial accounts filing system

## UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

- Support to the Technical Working Group on the development of a Code of Corporate Governance for non-profit organisations
- ACT technical session to review component Y5 cost workplan
- ACT TAC and CSAG consultative meeting
- Support to the harmonisation of CSO registration procedures at subnational levels in Nigeria
- Meeting with the Chairs of the Senate and House Committee on CSOs to discuss reactivating the Civil Society Organisation Liaising Office in the National Assembly
- Continued support to Food Basket Foundation International on the establishment of the CSO regulatory platform to encourage regulatory compliance.
- Continued Support to the National 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

### Find out more

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