

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.



Participants at the ACT training in Kano state. Source ACT

KEY ACTIVITIES

This newsletter highlights the key activities undertaken by the programme in February to April 2022.

Summary of key activities include:

CSO system strengthening:

- CSO mobilised community support for the construction of new classrooms in Kano state
- Media and CSOs collaborate effectively in Kano state
- Entrepreneurship skills for hearing-impaired women and girls in Rivers state
- Collaboration with media and CSOs in Plateau state
- ACT's tailor-made intervention transforms CSO partner in Plateau state
- Gender equality and social inclusion checklist adopted for CSO audit
- Peer learning improving CSO collaboration in Edo state
- ACT CSO established women-support-women group in Enugu state

CSO regulatory environment:

- ACT trains partner CSOs/networks on regulatory frameworks and compliance

CSO SYSTEM STRENGTHENING

CSO mobilised community support for the construction of new classrooms in Kano state

As part of the broader support to civil society organisations (CSOs), networks, and community-based organisations (CBOs), ACT has granted financial support to eligible organisations that are active in the European Union focal sectors to strengthen their capacity to engage effectively and influence development in specific sector areas.

Kano Education Volunteers (KEV) is one of the beneficiaries of in Kano state. The grant has enabled KEV to strengthen its advocacy strategies and embark on initiatives that directly benefit the community. One of such initiatives is the project titled "House to House sensitisation on importance of Education".

The project aimed at sensitising the community on the importance of education, especially for the girl child. It also

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targeted the renovation of schools with sanitation facilities to improve the quality of education in five wards of the Ungogo Local Government Area (LGA) in Kano state.

As part of the sensitisation exercise, KEV organised a townhall meeting in the Munchika village and led the community on an advocacy visit to the Chairman of the State Universal Basic Education Board. During the visit, the plight and situation of the community school was discussed. As a result, the Chairman gave approval for the construction of block of classrooms in the community school.

The grant enables CSOs to respond to sectoral issues in their respective states and to demonstrate their increased capacity, while contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in Nigeria. The KEV advocacy has paid off with the construction of eight new blocks of classrooms in the Munchika local government areas of Kano State.

Once established, the new facilities will expand the school's capacity to teach girls, older children as well as reduce the distance that students are required to travel to get to school.

"After Kano Education Volunteers sensitised the community on the importance of education, they led us to table our issue to the SUBEB Chairman who approved the construction of a block of classrooms for our community school without delay."

Saleh Ibrahim, representing the District Head of Munchika Ward, Ungogo LGA, Kano State



The ongoing school construction project in Munchika village.
Source ACT

Media and CSOs collaborate effectively in Kano state

CSOs play a critical role in the realisation of the sustainable development goals and are the voices of citizens at local, national, and international levels. However, their participation in policy processes can be weak and often come into conflict with bureaucratic procedures of government on one hand and the fast-paced environment of the media on the other hand.

Addressing the need for a balance, ACT supported a one-day roundtable discussion to strengthen the relationship between the media and CSOs in Kano State. The aim was to help them work better together in influencing government policies in the state. As a result of the roundtable discussion, 35 CSOs and media were able to develop an action plan as a guide towards achieving the objective of working together.

Participants identified several priority themes representing issues that confront civil society organisations and media to address in greater detail. They also developed some key recommendations focused on how media and civil society organisations working together at the regional and national level can reclaim and expand civic space.

Four media outfits (two online media, one radio station and one social media page – Facebook) have aired the engagement to the public.

"I sincerely thank ACT for modelling a partnership between the civil society and media to push the boundaries, increase civic space, and demand for accountability from power holders."

Abdulrazaq Alkali, Executive Director, Organisation for Community Civic Engagement

Hearing-impaired women and girls acquire entrepreneurship skills in Rivers state

ACT is supporting Dehat Ability Initiative (D-HAT), a CSO in Rivers State, to improve livelihoods for hearing-impaired women and girls.

The project is expected to train 30 hearing-impaired women and girls for six months in fashion design in the Obio-Akpor Local Government Area (LGA).

At the launch of the project, the Executive Director of Dehat Ability Initiative, Dr Kingdom Nwanyanwu, emphasised that hearing-impaired women and girls in the Obio-Akpor LGA were marginalised and live below the poverty line. He further stated that they find it difficult to earn a living due to lack of life-sustaining skills, exacerbated by discrimination and stigmatisation.

According to him, the hearing-impaired women and girls living with partners or children are not able to contribute financially to their households. Others who live alone or without partners either depend on their friends or parents, leaving them vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse.

One of the beneficiaries, Uche Micah, speaking through an interpreter, expressed dismay at the level of neglect hearing impaired people face in society. She thanked the Dehat Ability Initiative for not neglecting them. A parent to one of the beneficiaries, Jimoh Salaudeen, commended ACT for the life-changing opportunity brought to his household through the empowerment programme. Salaudeen reiterated, "Deaf people are grossly marginalised. The government at all levels should intervene and see how they can improve the wellbeing of deaf people". The training, which is due to last for six months, is a precursor to setting up a tailoring hub where beneficiaries can practice their acquired skills and earn a living as fashion designers.

"After the training, I expect to be self-reliant, sewing clothes for people and making money. I am very happy because this is the first time that this kind of programme is targeted specifically at deaf women, mothers, and girls."

Uche Micah, beneficiary

Collaboration with media and CSOs in Plateau state

ACT supported a one-day roundtable discussion for selected media houses and CSO partners in Plateau State. The event - a follow-up to a training held earlier in the year - brought together 12 personnel from various media outlets and 16 civil society partners. Discussions centred on the roles of the media and CSOs, explored opportunities for collaboration and synergy between media and CSOs. At the end of the event, a communique was jointly issued and agreed to by all partners.

The media affirmed their commitment to be more willing to partner with CSOs through content development, free coverage for human angle stories, and participation at activities that CSOs organise.

In fulfilment of their commitments at the roundtable, the media has made deliberate efforts to come up with programmes targeted at development, credibility, and visibility for CSO partners. Noteworthy are engagements on days like the 2022 World Water Day with theme "Groundwater, making the invisible visible"; the discussion on Peace 90.5 FM focused on making clean and safe water available to the people of Plateau State. In addition, the Global Action Week on Education was aired on Highland FM; presenters and guests at the radio programme called on the government to "Protect Education in Emergency by making schools safe, inclusive, transformative, and affordable".

It is believed that through the cordial engagement and improved relationships between CSOs and the media, broader sectoral policy aspirations would be complemented and sustained, including supporting the implementation of the ACT programme, and increasing reportage of the CSO regulatory framework.

"The media engagement has thrown open a flood door of opportunities for synergy that both the CSOs and media houses never thought was possible but are now enjoying."

Duke Ogbureke, Executive Director, Youth and Adolescents Reflection and Action Centre, Jos, Plateau State

ACT's tailor-made interventions transform CSO partner in Plateau state

The Almanah Rescue Mission (ARM) is a CSO that focuses on vulnerable groups including children, women, and widows. They are beneficiary of ACT's capacity strengthening support on strategy, financial procedures, and proposal development.

The organisation established that with the knowledge gained from ACT coaching support, they were able to respond appropriately to Mennonite Central Committee request for proposal and received a N10million grant to support their project implementation at the Bokkos and Mangu Local Government Areas in Plateau State.

The fund is expected to respond to the Global Fund to address malaria prevention in the Jos North LGA.

ARM, which also received ACT training support on advocacy, confirmed that they have been deploying skills learnt in carrying out advocacy visits to some government agencies in the state and have been contacted by the State Health Pension Board to

assist in creating awareness on a pension scheme in the Shendam LGA for six months.

Gender equality and social inclusion checklist adopted for CSO audit

The African Law Foundation (AFRILAW) is one of the partners working with the ACT programme in Enugu State. AFRILAW envisions a just, secured, peaceful, inclusive, and developed Africa as well as a better world for all. Its mission is to advance the rule of law, human rights, and justice for peaceful, secured, inclusive and sustainable development of the African society.

AfriLaw is a member of the International Land Coalition (ILC), a global alliance of civil society and intergovernmental organisations and the largest regional platform that brings a diverse network of 95 members across 28 countries to work together for people-centred land governance.

In April 2022, AfriLaw was nominated to be part of the committee mandated to audit the ILC Africa Gender Justice Charter for the year 2022. With the aid of the ACT Programme Gender and Social Inclusion checklist, AfriLaw was able to make contributions to the committee's assignment and was granted funds to carry out a gender audit of its organisation.

Since the GESI training, AfriLaw has recruited two male members of staff to balance out the previously all female staffing of the organisation.

"The checklist came in handy and made it easy for us to make solid contributions in the committee."

Chinwike Okereke, Executive Director, African Law Foundation, Enugu State

Peer learning improves CSO collaboration in Edo state

There is a record increase and improvement of CSOs' collaboration in Edo in the last six months due to a Peer Learning platform introduced and supported by the ACT Programme.

The lack of collaboration and coordination among various CSO groups has been a lingering problem within the CSO space in the country, and Edo was not excluded. Many over time have decided to work alone because of a trust deficit. For others, it is a matter of competition without recourse to the benefits of enhancing results through complementary and learning efforts.

In 2021, ACT selected 20 CSOs partners in Edo State to develop their capacity according to the outcomes of a needs assessment that was conducted in 2020. One of the approaches adopted by the programme in addressing capacity gaps, was to encourage and support CSOs groups of not more than six members to meet every 4-6 weeks to either share knowledge on performance or challenges with a view of generating sufficient new ways of performing better or addressing challenges as organisations.

The CSOs are already taking ownership of the process with minimal technical support from ACT. The platform is becoming a strong practice among CSOs partners as they are seeing the benefits of discussing issues as peers.

Twelve of the CSOs partners in Edo have registered for the Special Control Unit Against Money Laundering (SCUML) certificate and have received their certificates. Sixteen CSO partners are now registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission. There has been an upsurge in the way external relation is being managed across the board.

“The peer learning sessions of ACT have been of immense benefit to NEXTGEN. We have learned how to go about getting our tax clearance because of idea sharing with a sister CSO.”

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

CSO establishes ‘women-support-women’ group in Enugu state

As a result of ACT trainings on rights-based advocacy, gender and social inclusion (GESI) in governance, ACT CSO partners working on thematic areas that impact women’s participation in politics.

The Idikacho Women in Governance and Affirmative Action for Women Initiative are partnering with the ACT programme to make politics more inclusive in Enugu state. As part of this initiative, the ‘women-support-women’ platform was established to mentor and engage women to participate in the primaries of the state’s 2023 elections. The platform is a WhatsApp group with over 230 active participants, including over 30 female political aspirants from different parties and political affiliations, women in media, civil society, faith-based organisations, and diaspora.

By 30 April 2022, an increased number of women had purchased tickets for the Senate, House of Representatives, and the Legislature. This led to the need to develop advocacy messages and to engage the State Governor and other stakeholders.

The group paid a courtesy visit to the Executive Governor of Enugu State, His Excellency Rt. Hon. Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi, to appreciate his efforts at including women in the governance structures of the state. The group pointed out that there were many more eligible women aspirants than there had ever been in the history of electioneering in Enugu State. They encouraged the Governor to create an enabling environment for more women to participate actively in the state leadership roles.

The advocacy visit was an impressive opportunity for the group to create a working relationship with the leadership of the state. The women received a commitment from the governor to support those who have the capacity and competence needed for their leadership roles.

CSO REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT

CSOs trained on regulatory frameworks and compliance

A survey conducted by the ACT programme in March 2021 established the level of compliance with legal frameworks amongst civil society organisations (CSOs), networks, and

community-based organisations. The outcome of the survey indicated that about a third of CSOs were compliant with the CAMA law, less than 10 percent of the CSOs were tax compliant, and only 14 percent of the CSOs were compliant with the Anti-Money Laundering and Terrorism Law.

Poor compliance by CSOs with existing regulations can be attributed to a lack of requisite knowledge and information about those regulations and how to navigate them. However, compliance to regulatory frameworks is paramount to sustaining and strengthening CSOs, and to enhance the knowledge and compliance to regulations.

To address these compliance issues, ACT commenced training for CSOs across the 10 states on civil society regulatory frameworks and compliance. The series of training sessions was designed to help CSOs understand the required processes for compliance with the relevant laws and the step-by-step procedures to be adopted to comply with these processes.

The training focused on four major CSO laws/regulations: Companies and Allied Matters, Taxation, Anti-Terrorism and Money Laundering, and Pensions.

ACT worked in collaboration with the Corporate Affairs Commission, the Federal Inland Revenue Service, the Special Control Unit Against Money Laundering and Pension Commission to deliver the training.

The programme is making plans to train CSOs from the remaining 27 states and the capacity development providers. Post-training evaluation data showed that, at the end of the training sessions, participants’ knowledge of compliance requirements improved by 10 percent in Abuja and by 40 percent in Rivers State.

"Achieving effective compliance with local, state, and federal regulations as it affects CSOs cannot be over emphasised. We really appreciate the ACT programme for organising this training which is already making it easier for CSOs to comply with the respective regulatory bodies."

Harry Dandyson, Executive Director, Harmony Centre, Rivers State

FACTS & FIGURES:

(May 2019-April 2022)

Number of CSOs benefiting from capacity strengthening

202

Number of trainings delivered

174+

States covered by ACT

10

OTHER ACTIVITIES COMPLETED WITHIN THIS PERIOD

- Peer learning sessions for CSOs in Adamawa, Edo, Plateau states
- Communications and media engagement training for CSOs in Enugu
- Ongoing coaching sessions in Kano, Sokoto, Adamawa, Rivers, Enugu, Borno, and Edo states
- Continued support to the Policy and Advocacy Centre on the 'Civil Society Legislative Engagement' project

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

- 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 CSOs 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
- Continued support to NNNGO on project to strengthen state civil society networks/coalitions to engage with regulatory frameworks at the sub-national level
- Continued support to the National Technical Committee on civil society self-regulation to develop and facilitate the voluntary adoption of "model" self-regulatory framework

Find out more

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