

# 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.



Massimo De Luca, Head of Cooperation, European Union and the ACT Senior Management Team during the close-out press conference in Abuja. Source ACT

## KEY ACTIVITIES

This newsletter highlights the key activities undertaken by the programme in March to April 2024.

Summary of key activities include:

### CSO system strengthening:

- ACT exit: partners pledge to uphold programme legacy, ensuring lasting impact
- CSO expands external relations to attract new funding and opportunities
- Building the capacity of CSOs in organisational development
- CBOs benefit from coaching in M&E
- Bridging the digital gender gap for girls
- CSOs empower widows with entrepreneurial skills
- ZEERANZA secure two projects from GIZ

### CSO regulatory environment:

- ACT and the National Assembly launch civil society liaison office

## ACT CLOSE-OUT EVENTS

### ACT exit: Partners pledge to uphold programme legacy, ensuring lasting impact

Wrapping up the five-year journey, the Agents for Citizen-driven Transformation (ACT) hosted a deep dive into outcomes and lessons learned across all programme states culminating in Abuja. The focus was on nurturing sustainable outcomes and underscoring a commitment to lasting change.

The dissemination events took place from February 27 to March 27 and were hosted across 9 states (Abuja, Sokoto, Plateau, Borno, Rivers, Edo, Enugu, Lagos, Adamawa, and Kano) and the FCT, to showcase results and lessons learned. States harvested the outcomes and lessons towards sustainable impact and collaboration among partners.

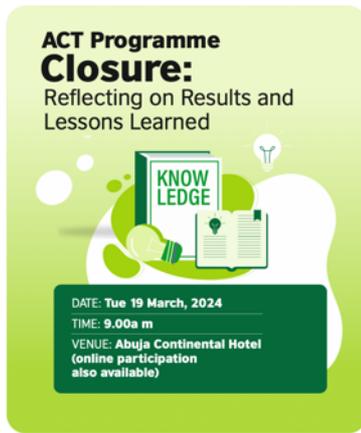
Since 2019, the ACT programme has been implementing innovative actions to strengthen the internal, external, and programmatic approaches of civil society organisations (CSOs), networks, and coalitions in Nigeria. On 14th April 2024, the programme concluded, bringing it to a final close.

Funded by the European Union



Implemented by the British Council





Throughout the life of the programme, ACT employed innovative approaches such as training, coaching, mentoring, peer learning, and small-scale capacity development grants to enhance the capacity and capability of CSOs to function as credible agents of sustainable development in Nigeria. It also provided a platform to strengthen donor coordination on

civil society engagement among international development partners working with CSOs in Nigeria.

The dissemination events brought together government officials and development partners to showcase the successes and impact of the programme and sustainability efforts. The goal was to explore future collaborations between CSOs and government agencies.

### Plateau

In Plateau, the representative of the Director of the National Orientation Agency, Kaneng Tabitha Pam-Hworo, spoke about "Changing Lives, Building Resilient Communities – Collaborative Efforts of State and Non-State Actors Towards a Greater Plateau." She commended ACT for its work in strengthening the capacity of CSOs, enabling them to serve as credible drivers of sustainable development.

### Kano

In Kano, Prof. M.B Shitu highlighted the programme's achievements over the past five years and raised concerns about CSOs having the opportunity to understand their work. He urged CSOs to sustain support from ACT programme, emphasising the importance of sustainability. Al-Mustapha Dahiru (CAC representative) also encouraged all organisations to leverage the programme's work and ensure that registered CSOs file their annual returns before the due date to avoid fines.

### Abuja

The culmination of the dissemination events was the final event in Abuja, which included partners and stakeholders. The event featured a press conference, partner testimonies, a stakeholder panel discussion, a plenary session, and the presentation of awards to CSOs that partnered with the programme in key thematic areas.



Civil society at the close-out event in Abuja. Source: ACT

## CSO SYSTEM STRENGTHENING

### CSO expands external relations to attract new funding and opportunities

The Consumer Advocacy and Empowerment Foundation (CADEF) has significantly expanded its external connections and visibility. This is as a result of ACT capacity development training on fundraising, communication, and media relations, along with tailored media training for journalists and ACT CSOs.

Following its active presence on social media, Consumers International – the membership organisation for consumer groups around the world – took notice of CADEF's activities and invited the CSO to join its coalition as an associate member. This recognition has led to increased opportunities for CADEF, including invitations to join various committees, positioning the organisation to play a vital role in different sectors.

Given its expertise in digital finance and commitment to transparency, CADEF has joined two transformative global initiatives of Consumers International and the project member steering group. This move, effective January 2024, allows CADEF to represent Nigeria in these committees and collaborate with other members, regulators, stakeholders, and decision-makers to ensure consumer protection evolves with changes in financial services. This effort aims to promote financial inclusion and protection for consumers worldwide.

### Building the capacity of CSOs in organisational development

The Civil Society Organisation for Conflict Resolution in Nigeria (CS-CRIN), with ACT support, has leveraged its coaching and mentoring skills to provide hands-on guidance and training to three CSOs on organisational strategy and the mainstreaming of gender and social inclusion.

Recognising that the effectiveness and efficiency of CSOs depend on their organisational development capacity, CS-CRIN embarked on a project called the C-SOD Project. This project aimed to build and strengthen the capacity of three CSOs in Kano state: Positive Pathways Initiatives (PPI), Alkhairi Orphanage and Women Development (AOWD), and Chabeer Dawee Foundation for Community Development (CDF).

The project was conducted over four months (from August to December 2023) and provided CSOs with hands-on coaching and mentoring in organisational development. As a result of this support, CDF and PPI have made significant progress in compliance with various government regulations, such as the Special Control Unit against Money Laundering, the Ministry of Defence Agencies, and the Legal Aid Council of Nigeria.

CDF has also started renovating an office space to provide easy access for persons with disabilities, promoting social inclusion. The organisation has seen an increase in its membership base, with ten new members. The volunteer base has also expanded from five to approximately fifty volunteers, including individuals with disabilities.

Both CDF and PPI have created several concept notes and proposals to international development agencies for project funding.

These opportunities were identified during coaching and mentoring activities. Furthermore, a joint proposal has been developed with the assistance of CS-CRIN.

Overall, the project has worked to improve the capacity and effectiveness of these CSOs in Kano state, highlighting the positive impact of coaching and mentoring in organisational development.

## CBOs benefit from coaching in M&E

With a grant from ACT, the Centre for Environment, Human Rights and Development (CEHRD) has worked to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) capabilities of three community-based organisations (CBOs) in Adamawa state.

Recognising the limitations of one-off training exercises, where skills are not often sustained, this initiative focused on designing tailor-made coaching and mentoring for CBOs.

The three beneficiary CBOs – Access Africa for Rights and Development Initiative, Centre for Rural Enlightenment, Welfare, and Development, and Society for Women and Youth Affair – underwent an intensive four-month coaching programme.

The GROW coaching model was employed, which focuses on goal setting, reality assessment, exploring options (or obstacles), and establishing the will (or way forward).

The CBOs developed M&E policies and frameworks, redesigned attendance registers for gender and social inclusivity, and enhanced skills in proposal writing. The coaching sessions also fostered collaboration, leading to the joint development of a proposal for project funding by all three CBOs.

Peer-to-peer review sessions were integrated to further enhance collaboration among the CBOs. As a result, the CBOs strengthened organisational structures and collaboration efforts, ultimately enhancing the impact in their respective communities.

**“Coaching and mentoring are gateways that lead CSOs beyond just monitoring and evaluation or project reporting to being accountable to donors and constituents.”**

Stella Amanie, Executive Director, SWAYA

## CSOs bridge the digital gender gap for girls in Rivers

The D-Ability Initiative, in collaboration with the United States Government Exchange Alumni Association (USGEAA) in Rivers State, and the Rivers State ICT Department, has launched a Digital Skills training project for underprivileged female students in secondary schools across Rivers State, supported by funding from the United States Mission in Nigeria.

This initiative aimed to bridge the digital gender gap by equipping indigent girls with the skills needed to succeed in the digital age. For a period of six weeks, over 20 girls from the Obio-Akpor Local Government Area participating in training on a range of digital skills, such as front-end web development, digital marketing, digital lifestyle, and graphic design. The selection of beneficiaries was facilitated by school principals and verified by D-Ability and USGEAA.

The project not only provided essential digital skills but also gave laptops to the 10 best-performing girls to support them in launching and advancing their digital careers.

A graduation ceremony marked the official completion of the training programme, where all graduates received certificates, symbolising their achievement and readiness to embark on their new digital career paths.

**“With the successful completion of this very impactful project, we hope to see more future collaborations between D-Ability and the Rivers State Government for the benefit of our youth.”**

Austin Dimkpa, Head of Technical & Operations, ICT Department, Rivers State

## CSOs empower widows with entrepreneurship skills in Rivers state

The Talk Love Africa Foundation (TAF) is an ACT CSO partner that is creating a meaningful impact in Rivers state. Leveraging the digital skills training provided by the ACT programme, TAF initiated the Widows Empowerment Project, to empower widows in rural communities with entrepreneurial skills.

Rivers state faces a significant challenge, with approximately 4.4 million people experiencing poverty (62.4 percent of the total estimated population of 7.47 million). To address this issue, TAF initiated a project aimed at reducing poverty among widows in the Obio-Akpor Local Government Area.

The project focused on equipping vulnerable women with digital entrepreneurial skills and financial resources, empowering them to break the cycle of poverty. With the support of an individual donor, TAF conducted targeted training and skill-building programmes, strengthened the entrepreneurial capabilities of widows, and provided them with the financial means for business success.

The initiative targeted 15 widows aged 50 with training in essential business management skills such as bookkeeping, digital marketing strategies, and customer relations. This training has equipped the participants with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively start and manage their businesses, enabling them to make informed decisions about their finances, thus promoting growth and sustainability.

In addition, TAF provided financial support of thirty thousand naira to each beneficiary after the training. This financial assistance empowered the widows to either start new businesses or expand existing ones, addressing immediate needs, acquiring necessary resources, and investing in their enterprises' growth.

The project not only addressed economic challenges but also contributed to the widows' personal development. The increased confidence and sense of empowerment reported by the beneficiaries confirmed the project's success in achieving its specific objectives, showcasing a holistic approach that went beyond mere monetary aid.

**"Each year, a minimum of 15 widows receive training in bookkeeping and business management, and then provided with financial support to either expand existing businesses or start new ventures. I am consistently amazed by the impressive progress these women achieve."**

Cynthia Obinwanne, Executive Director, TAF

## ZEERANZA secures two project grants from GIZ

The ZEERANZA Support Foundation (ZSF), mentored by ACT partner Murmushi People's Development Foundation (MPDF), has recently secured two project grants from the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ). These projects aim to promote good governance in the Numan LGA in Adamawa state, and provide education to children through Street Child International (SCI) in six LGAs.

ZSF's success in securing these projects can be attributed to the capacity-strengthening support provided by the ACT programme's peer learning sessions.

MPDF utilised the funding it received from ACT to provide comprehensive coaching and mentoring support to three Community Based Organisations (CBOs) in Adamawa state. This support empowered the CSOs to thrive and achieve their missions. The programme was implemented over four months (between August and December 2023) and targeted CSOs in three LGAs: Maraban Mubi, Hong; Mubi-North; and Mubi-South. The CSOs were able to select the areas in which they wanted to develop their capacity.

In addition to its work with ZEERANZA Support Foundation (ZSF), the MPDF also coached the Touch a Heart Society and Economic Right initiatives (TAHSERI) - a CBO in the Mubi-South LGA, on developing a strategic plan. Furthermore, the Assured Better Life (ABLI) - a CSO in Maraban Mubi, Hong, and ZSF in Mubi-North LGA received coaching on project cycle management.

Through the coaching and mentoring sessions provided by MPDF, TAHSERI successfully developed and implemented a five-year strategic plan (2024-2028). This strategic plan provides TAHSERI with a clearer vision, goals, and actionable steps to achieve their mission of making positive and sustainable impacts within their communities of operation, contributing to social, economic, and environmental development.

In addition, the collaboration between the CBOs and CSOs resulted in the unification of all the CBOs with the Network Against Child Trafficking, Abuse, and Labour to improve the effectiveness and impact of their efforts to combat child trafficking, abuse, and labour within Adamawa state.

"The organisation has been rated as the best among its implementing partners. It has secured multiple projects, strengthened its finance capacity, and gained new opportunities."

David Mathew, Programme Manager, Zeeranza

## CSO REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT

### ACT and National Assembly inaugurate civil society liaison office

The Agents programme organised a joint workshop to enhance and strengthen the National Assembly's engagement with CSOs. The goal was to better integrate CSO contributions into the law-making process.

The workshop was held on 16-17 March at the Lagos Continental Hotel and was part of ACT's end-of-programme closeout activities. The event highlighted the importance of partnerships and collaboration between these two vital stakeholder groups.

The workshop brought together a diverse group of participants, including lawmakers, members of the Senate Committee on Diaspora and NGOs, the House of Representatives Committee on CSOs and Development Matters, thought leaders in the civic space, national regulatory agencies, civil society organisations, the donor community, media, and interest groups.

Lucy Pearson, the Country Director of the British Council in Nigeria, delivered a welcoming speech at the workshop. She expressed gratitude to all participants for their commitment to democratic governance and highlighted the workshop's aim of generating valuable insights and recommendations for positive change in Nigeria.

Plenary presentations and panel discussions focused on understanding the policy and regulatory implications for the CSO operational context in Nigeria, delving into critical issues, experiences, challenges, and opportunities related to National Assembly collaboration. The workshop also provided an avenue for donors to engage in discussions on donor support for civil society and perceptions of CSO regulatory frameworks and practices.

A key outcome was the relaunch of the civil society liaison office, which was inaugurated by the Senator Anthony Yaro, (Deputy Chair of the Senate Committee on Diaspora and NGOs), and the Honourable Victor Obuzor (Chairman of the House Committee on Civil Societies and Development Matters).

The event was organised by ACT in collaboration with CATI and the National Assembly. As ACT prepares to exit, the USAID funded Strengthening Civic Advocacy and Legal Engagement (SCALE) programme is committed to providing further support to these efforts.

**"Collaborating with CSOs is paramount in addressing social issues and driving positive change. CSOs serve as honest brokers, bridging gaps in society. However, challenges such as differing priorities, power dynamics, and resource constraints must be acknowledged and addressed to sustain this collaboration."**

Senator Victor Umeh, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Diaspora and Non-Governmental Organisations



ACT programme manager (far left), British Council Country Director in Nigeria (middle), National Assembly members at event in Lagos. Source ACT

# ACT PROGRAMME RESULTS AND LESSONS

As the ACT programme concludes, watch these videos to learn more about the programme's impact and results.



## Results and Lessons Learned



## Capacity Strengthening



## CSO Regulatory Framework

Watch more videos [here](#)

# ACT STORIES OF CHANGE

Watch these videos to meet some of our CSO partners:



To meet more CSOs, watch more videos [here](#)

# ACT RESOURCES

## Toolkits

Developed and published to support continuous CSO capacity development.



## Factsheets

View the factsheets from our ACT programmes.



## Case Studies

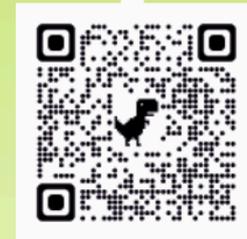
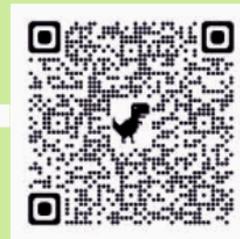
Catalyst for change:  
Nurturing growth in  
CSOs



Fostering a peaceful  
coexistence amongst  
farmers and herders



Breaking chains:  
Combatting drug abuse  
and gender-based  
violence



ACT Programme  
Short Documentary



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[ACT@ng.britishcouncil.org](mailto:ACT@ng.britishcouncil.org)  
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### Find out more

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