

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 Abuja, Adamawa, Edo, Enugu, FCT, Kano, Lagos, Plateau, Rivers, and Sokoto.

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 May to July 2021.

Summary of key activities include:

CSO system strengthening:

- Lagos state civil society organisations trained on data literacy
- CSO in Adamawa & Kano integrate gender and social inclusion
- CSOs trained on project management cycle management in Benin
- CSOs mentored to strengthen their operations
- Support to TAF on Albino rights in the FCT
- Organisational capacity assessments completed for 32 CSOs in Enugu and Plateau states

CSO regulatory environment:

- Self-regulatory framework developed for CSO with ACT support



Participants at a training for CSOs on project cycle management in Edo state. Source: ACT

CSO SYSTEM STRENGTHENING

Lagos state civil society organisations trained on data literacy

Data, in its many forms, can enable civil society organisations (CSOs) to use their resources more efficiently, provide insights to make better decisions, and increase programme efficacy. Despite these benefits, many CSOs do not understand and appreciate the value of data, have limited knowledge of how to work with data, and lack the enthusiasm to incorporate data into their work. Meanwhile, data has the potential to create and sustain positive change, including quantitative evaluations of donor-funded projects. This can only happen if CSOs have both the knowledge and the desire to engage with data.

In May 2021, the Agents for Citizen-driven Transformation (ACT) programme conducted a three-day training on social research and data Analysis for seven CSO partners in Lagos state. The aim was to strengthen their capacity to collect data, organise information, and analyse data using fact and evidence generated from research to improve programme planning, implementation and communication.





Participants at a training for CSOs on data literacy in Lagos state. Source: ACT

Two representatives from each of the following organisations participated in the workshop: BudGIT Foundation, the Educational Co-operation Society (ECS), the Lagos State Civil Society Partnership (LACSOP), the Nigerian Network of NGOs (NNNGO), Women Arise, the Women's Rights and Health Project (WRAPH), and the International Press Centre (IPC).

The sessions were both personal and interactive, ensuring that the participants were engaged throughout the process. CSOs were divided into groups to brainstorm, share experiences, and exchange ideas on how to apply the new skills in practice. Participants gained greater knowledge in areas of social research and data analysis including principles of social surveys, data collection and analysis, field research methods, quantitative data analysis with a statistical package for the social sciences, and qualitative interviewing methods.

Overall, the training has been helpful in providing a holistic view of data collection processes to interested CSOs and in building enthusiasm about data and its purpose. As next steps, some participants agreed to build their data collection capacity internally by conducting a step-down training for staff while others plan to adapt key learnings to their research interventions, and improve data collection and dissemination by collaborating with other CSOs.

"I will put the knowledge gained into use on various data collection instruments, and provide a step-down training to members of my organisation so they can also benefit."

Margaret Chichi Nkire, Lagos Civil Society Participation for Development

CSOs in Kano and Adamawa integrate gender and social inclusion

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) provide platforms to amplify the voices of women, girls, people with disability (PWDs) and other marginalised groups, highlight the importance of their participation in decision-making, and build strategies to address the unique challenges faced by the groups.

The gender and social inclusion (G&SI) component of the Agents for Citizen-driven Transformation (ACT) programme aims to improve G&SI mainstreaming initiatives by CSOs. The programme has been conducting trainings to build the knowledge, skills, and capacity of selected CSOs in mainstreaming G&SI into organisational policies, procedures,

and programmes, to ensure their work is more responsive to the needs and concerns of marginalised groups.

To date, the trainings have taken place in seven of the 10 target states. The most recent training was conducted in May 2021 in Adamawa and Kano states where the participants represented several interest groups, including women, person with disabilities, community development, youth, and immigration.

In Adamawa, 20 CSOs, each represented by two members of staff including executive directors and gender officers, and five community-based organisations participated in the three-day workshop. The sessions were facilitated by Diana Agabi, a G&SI expert, who introduced participants to the concepts of G&SI, disability rights, and the necessary tools to design effective inclusion strategies. A key observation at the training was the marked improvement in female participation at meetings, proving CSOs are making more G&SI considerations and changes.

In Kano, the programme trained a further 23 CSOs. A key outcome was the development of G&SI action plans for each organisation.

"We are grateful to ACT for this support. We will consider gender and social inclusion in all that we do, and work on getting our gender policy in place."

Aisha Gidado, DAWOS Foundation



Participants at the training program for CSOs on gender and social inclusion in Adamawa state. Source: ACT

CSOs trained on project cycle management

Many CSO networks in Nigeria struggle to address major and urgent organisational issues, including weak capacity to plan, implement and monitor development projects. To ensure CSOs operate effectively and professionally, it is critical to arm them with the necessary skills to strengthen their institutional capacity, including management skills.

In its continuous efforts to strengthen the capacity of CSOs, the Agents for Citizen-driven Transformation (ACT) programme trained 20 CSOs on project cycle management (PCM). The most recent took place from 30 June to 2 July 2021 in Benin City in Edo state.

The training was designed based on results of the organisational capacity assessment (OCA) conducted in 2020 to establish the strengths and weaknesses of CSOs.

Prior to the training, most of the participating CSOs had never received PCM training of that quality and scale. According to some CSOs, the lack of PCM knowledge has resulted in limited access to donor funding. And even those who have successfully secured donor funding run the risk of mismanaging the funds due to weak PCM.

"Although I am certified in programme management for development professional (PMD Pro1), this training has introduced me to practical ways of managing projects from inception to a successful conclusion."

Itua Osasunmhen, Programme Director, Willi Johnson Foundation Sabon-gida

CSO in the FCT mentored to strengthen operations

The Agent for Citizen-driven Transformation (ACT) programme provided coaching and mentoring in organisational strategy to three community-based organisations CBOs in the FCT: Community-Based Initiative for Growth and Sustainability (C-Bigs), the Centre for Environment Sustainability and Development Awareness (CEDSA), and the Majesty Foundation.

The training focused on supporting the organisations to develop strategies and policies to guide their operations, and to understand the value of using established strategic planning principles to guide their efforts. An effective strategic plan can be a positive force that drives long-term results — CSOs that have created tactical plans are guided throughout their organisational journey, tend to spend resources wisely, and have a better understanding of strengths and weaknesses.

Following the training, the CBOs drafted five-year strategic plans that include revised objectives, missions and vision statements, and planning and evaluation tools. In addition, changes were made to other organisational policies (gender, human resources) and new policies established (procurement, volunteer) to align with the new strategic plans.

ACT, with support from the European Union, continues to provide institutional capacity strengthening support to CSOs to improve operational systems, including internal systems, programme development and external relations.



Participants at the training program for CBOs on organisational strategy. Source: ACT

"ACT's capacity development support is worth the time. The sessions have been an eye opener and has helped us understand how our organisation is faring. It also has helped my confidence. We now have a strategic plan, new reporting templates, and a better understanding of fundraising, amongst other things."

Seyi Olagundoye, Executive Director, C-Bigs

ACT supports TAF on Albinos rights

The Agents for Citizen-driven Transformation (ACT) programme is working with the Albinos Foundation (TAF) to create awareness about the challenges faced by persons living with disabilities (PWDs). It also enlightens PWDs albinos about their rights and seeks to empower them financially.

With the support of ACT, TAF has restructured its board and now holds quarterly meetings to achieve its objectives. It has also developed a gender policy that covers sexual harassment in the workplace. In addition, a female gender focal person has been appointed to ensure full adherence to TAF's policies. To sustain the impact of ACT interventions, TAF has commenced training of its entire staff and intends to submit applications for grants.

"Through the knowledge gained through ACT support, the foundation has restructured the board and established internal processes. We will ensure that management and staff adhere to the new policies."

The Albinos Foundation

32 CSOs benefit from organisational capacity assessments in Plateau and Enugu states

In June 2021, the Agents for Citizen-driven Transformation (ACT) programme conducted organisational capacity assessments (OCA) for 32 CSOs (15 CSOs in Plateau state and 17 CSOs in Enugu state).

CSOs operating in Nigeria often face challenges with organisational structures and processes, and as a result struggle to emerge as significant drivers of development and reform.

Using a participatory and CSO-led process of assessment, the outcome of the OCA exercise will enable the programme to identify capacity gaps in CSO internal systems and procedures, external relations, and technical competence. Based on the outcome of the assessment, each CSO will agree on a tailored capacity development programme delivered with support from ACT.

With the completion of the OCA for the 32 CSOs in Enugu and Plateau states, the CSOs are now eligible to participate in ACT trainings, mentoring/coaching, and peer-to-peer learning activities.

Since its inception in 2018, ACT has successfully carried out capacity assessments for over 160 CSOs. These CSOs have been benefiting from organisational development support from the ACT programme.

CSO REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT

Self-regulatory framework developed for CSOs with ACT support

Civil society organisations (CSOs) have continued to play a greater role in shaping national policy in Nigeria. Given the multiplicity of their roles, there have been demands from different actors for improved CSO accountability and transparency, especially with the sector's expansion and continued alliances with domestic and foreign donors.

On 24 May 2021, the Agent for Citizen-driven Transformation (ACT) programme, in collaboration with USAID-SCALE, organised a virtual dialogue for subnational networks and the steering committee on the civil society regulatory environment to discuss the self-regulation for CSOs in Nigeria. The session aimed to establish a National Technical Committee (NTC) to drive and coordinate the process of developing a "model" self-regulatory framework (SRF) for CSOs in Nigeria (such as: code of conduct, the standards of operation, information service, peer accreditation, etc).

The event brought together representatives from over 50 organisations (largely the sub-national CSO networks) who dialogued over the need for a sector wide SRF and made nominations for the membership of the committee. The nominations were ratified and include six subnational networks representing the six geo-zones of the country and three members of the ACT/OSIWA steering committee.

The NTC has already held its inception meeting and two follow-up meetings to develop a concept note and budget for the SRF "model" development project and to fill the remaining slots of the NTC. The membership has increased to 15 while commencing action towards developing this framework.

The ACT and SCALE programmes are committed to funding the activities of the NTC as they design, develop, and facilitate the voluntary adoption of the CSO self-regulatory framework model. It is hoped that such a model would be replicated by CSO networks/coalitions across the 36 states and the FCT.

“ACT's facilitation of the NTC is a critical catalyst for developing a self-regulatory model for Nigerian CSOs.”

“While it is important that CSOs comply with statutory regulations, it is equally crucial that CSOs hold themselves accountable. This can be facilitated by developing localised and contextualised self-regulatory models that CSOs are happy to voluntarily subscribe to and comply with.”

Dr Funmi Akinyele, Food Basket International and NTC Co-Chairman

FACTS & FIGURES:

(May 2019-July 2021)

Number of CSOs benefiting from ACT capacity strengthening

147

Number of trainings delivered

76

States covered by ACT

10

ONGOING ACTIVITIES

- Political economy analysis research in Enugu, Anambra, Kwara, and Plateau
- Organisational capacity assessments for CBOs and CSOs/networks in Borno, Enugu and Plateau
- Subnational CSO networks defend memorandum at the constitution review public hearings
- Coaching and mentoring for emerging and developing CSOs in the FCT, Lagos and Kano

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

- Coaching and mentoring for emerging and developing CSOs in the FCT, Lagos, Kano, Edo, Rivers, Sokoto, Plateau and Adamawa
- Development of a typologies and regulations pamphlet by the working group on civil society regulatory environment
- Continued support to the national technical committee on civil society self-regulatory framework to develop a "Model" self-regulatory frameworks at the national and sub-national levels

Find out more

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