

# 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 CSOs, 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 six geo-political zones: 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 CSOs in Nigeria. This work is implemented across 36 states and the FCT.

The four-year programme (2019 – 2023) is funded by the European Union and implemented by the British Council.



Capacity strengthening workshop to grow micro-scale businesses. Source: ACT

## KEY ACTIVITIES

This newsletter highlights the key activities undertaken by the programme in November to January 2023.

Summary of key activities include:

**CSO system strengthening:**

- CSO partnership to boost women and youth in Enugu
- Improving water, sanitation and hygiene practices in Dantsinke
- CSO trains women and people with disabilities on funding for small businesses in Lagos state
- ACT grantee advocates for the building of eight classrooms in Ikorodu
- School benefits from new furniture Igbogbo
- Women and PWDs empowered to grow micro-scale businesses in Lagos state
- ACT stakeholders reflect on programme implementation

**CSO regulatory environment:**

- New Civil Society Regulatory Platform launched

## CSO SYSTEM STRENGTHENING

### CSO partnership to boost women and youth in Enugu

In Enugu, the Small and Medium Scale Enterprise Development Agency (SMEDAN) is collaborating with the ACT-funded initiative Combating Youth and Women Irregular Migration (CY-WIM) to boost the capacity of women and youths as a way to stem migration.

CY-WIM is a CSO working within the Global Health Research Foundation-led consortium to create a society in which women and adolescents are free of sexual and reproductive health issues and their rights are acknowledged.

SMEDAN is providing CY-WIM with financial resources and access to existing initiatives and programmes, such as the National Business Skills Development Initiative; the One Local Government, One Product (OLOP); the Agri-Business Development and Empowerment Programme (ADEP); to boost the capacity of youth and engage them in productive ventures to earn an income.

**“The work will protect many young people from avoidable hazards at a time when they have acquired migratory dreams.”**

Ugwu Vincent, Zonal Coordinator, SMEDAN

## Improving water, sanitation and hygiene practices in Dantsinke

Friends of the Village Organisation (FOCO) – a CSO in Kano state – has improved access to clean drinking water while also fostering behavioural change and good practices in the areas of water, sanitation, and hygiene. This initiative took place in the community of Dantsinke and was made possible with ACT support.

According to a Word Bank reports, parts of the state lack drinkable public water, exposing community members to illnesses and water, sanitation, and hygiene issues.

To address this, FOCO launched a campaign increase personal hygiene, family environmental practices, and community management of the existing water infrastructure in Kano's Ungogo and Tarauni LGAs.

FOCO began advocating, discussing, and increasing knowledge about water sanitation and hygiene. Advocacy on has reached nearly 2,300,000 indirect beneficiaries through jingles, radio shows, and social media.

The CSO consulted with the community's traditional rulers and village chiefs. It also provided coaching and mentoring on lobbying, organisational growth/strategy and resource mobilisation with village heads, girls, boys and physically challenged youth. This work has enabled the community successfully advocated for the construction of a borehole in Dantsinke village.

To ensure the project's sustainability, the ward head has taken on the role of reaching out to higher authorities and community members to highlight personal hygiene habits at council sessions. A WASH committee made up of girls, boys, youths, and people with disabilities was established to continue the work together.

**“Access to portable drinking water in Dantsinke will not only promote our wellbeing but it will also boost our economic activities and it will continue to sustain the project and work on the good leadership pace that FOCO and EU-ACT have set for us.”**

Sani Auwalu Community leader, Dantsinke

## CSO trains women and people with disabilities on funding for small businesses

With ACT support, the Advocacy for Anti-Bribery, Corruption, and Crime Prevention Initiative has empowered underprivileged women and people with disabilities to acquire finance for small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs). This occurred in the Mushin Local Government Area in Lagos State. The initiative brought together vulnerable women, people with disabilities, and financial industry professionals.

The Anti-Bribery Corruption and Crime Prevention Initiative was formed to serve as a platform for fighting corruption and preventing crimes in society. The organisation devised a plan to alleviate poverty and address the issue of a lack of capital for female entrepreneurs.

Access to funding remains a big barrier for women entrepreneurs in Mushin LGA. Training was provided for women and persons with disabilities on how to tackle the problem of start-up capital and how to source funds to grow their businesses. The training provided practical solutions and recommendations on expanding the ability of women entrepreneurs to pursue economic opportunities, invest additional capital, hire more employees, and grow their businesses.

**“Women entrepreneurs must always keep proper records of their finances as efficient cash management is imperative for small businesses success and growth.”**

Adedeji Fatai State Coordinator, Advocacy for Anti-Bribery, Corruption, and Crime Prevention Initiative

## ACT grantee advocates for the building of eight classrooms in Ikorodu

To improve learning for children in the Ikorodu LGA, a two-story building with eight classrooms has been constructed at the Omolaye Primary School, in Agbede. This was made possible with a grant from ACT to the International Press Centre (IPC).

IPC is a leading media development and press freedom organisation dedicated to building media capacities for democracy and development in communities in three local government areas in Lagos.

The project aimed to give meaning to the roles that the media and civil society actors play in promoting good governance. Collaborations between both groups worked to engage government officials to respond to infrastructure development and service delivery issues in prioritised community-driven initiatives.

The team met with the Ikorodu constituency lawmaker and advocated for the construction of the new structure.

Furthermore, a platform known as the ‘Ambassador for Good Governance’ was created with the mandate of democratic engagement for inclusive involvement. Communities will be mobilised on the use of the platform for future interactions with political leaders. It is expected that media and citizens will embrace these constructive channels of promoting development at the grassroots levels and avoid future confrontation and protests.

**“The advocacy training gave us the required training we needed to advocate for projects in our community and it has yielded results.”**

Funke Adedotun, Project Officer, IPC

## School benefits from new furniture Igbogbo

BudgIT Foundation – an ACT grantee – used rights-based advocacy to advocate with the local government to finance the donation of over 300 pieces of furniture to the Methodist Primary School in Igbogbo, Ikorodu LGA in Lagos.

Over 400 pupils at the school had been learning on substandard and destroyed furniture. This was impacting their quality of learning.

BudgIT, a non-profit focused on fiscal transparency and accountability, was awarded financing from the ACT initiative in 2021 to increase accountability and openness in local government finances in the Lagos LGAs of Ikorodu and Somolu.

This model guaranteed that all parties involved in local government administration and community development actively participated in enhancing transparency and accountability in local public finances on the one hand, and development for local communities on the other.

Over 300 pieces of school furniture was given to the Methodist Primary School following a series of interactions.

By empowering children in the community and educating individuals on how they can be agents of change and effectively engage their leaders, a more constructive relationship between government and the community is developing.

**“We were surprised when the Chairman informed us that the local government wished to provide chairs for our children. We had been asking and pleading with them to do so for quite some time. We appreciate your assistance and are pleased with the outcome. Our youngsters now can learn in a nice school and master their books.”**

Oriade, PTA member, Methodist Primary School



New furniture for the Methodist Primary School. Source: ACT

## Women and PWDs empowered to grow micro-scale businesses

The Healthy Living and Women Empowerment Initiative (HELWEI) – an ACT grantee – has strengthened the ability of women and people with disabilities (PWDs) to participate successfully in community development activities. The project took place in Lagos State's Alimosho, Mushin, and Ibeju local government areas.

The Educational Co-operation Society (ECS), a member of HELWEI, led a consortium with three other non-profits on a project to promote the empowerment of women and vulnerable groups for participation and inclusion in social and economic development in the state's peri-urban areas.

The project was developed in response to the need to invest in and engage with CSOs to strengthen their capacity to engage in and influence sustainable development, as well as to contribute to social inclusion of women and people with disabilities in local development processes within Lagos State.

HELWEI provided capacity development for women, including those with disabilities, in areas such as human rights and redress pathways, community-level advocacy, leadership, self-esteem, and social inclusion.

As a result of the intervention, 80 women benefited with new skills to grow their micro-scale businesses and participate in community development initiatives. The project also resulted in an increase in change agents among PWDs (with an indirect reach of over 50 beneficiaries).

As an organisation, HELWEI has previously undergone coaching and training to improve its capacity to deliver on planned solutions such as financial management, social inclusion, and monitoring and evaluation. Other consortia NGOs involved in the activity include the Institute for Media and Society; the Advocacy for Anti-Bribery, Corruption, and Crime Prevention Initiatives; and the Koloba & Lala Women Progressive Association.

**“I am very happy to be part of this programme. I learnt a lot. Now my self-esteem is boosted. I'm more tolerant and know my rights as a human being, especially as a person with albinism.”**

Agbeye Imoleayo Sarah, PWD

## ACT Stakeholders reflect on programme implementation

ACT's Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and the Civil Society Advisory Committee (CSAC) held its first joint meeting in Abuja to reflect on accomplishments, challenges, and the way forward.

The meeting featured stakeholders across various sectors including TAC, CSAC, European Union (EU) implementers, EU youth sounding board members, and government officials. A brainstorming session was held to share experiences, achievements, failures, challenges and seek support and recommendations for the next phase of the ACT programme.

Reflecting on programme implementation, the Knowledge Management adviser, Tolase Olatinwo took the participants on a journey of progress so far with an overview of the key accomplishments and stories of impact. In the last four years,



ACT has strengthened the capacity 202 CSOs across 10 states (with other indirect beneficiaries), touched the lives of over 2,808 CSO personnel, helped 11 capacity development providers, and awarded 53 grants to CSO partners.

Practical support from CSOs has been provided to communities in the areas of increasing the voices and roles of women in decision-making; promoting inclusiveness and financial independence for CSOs; improving knowledge and awareness; and promoting peace.

## CSO REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT

### New civil society regulatory platform launched

In December, the Food Basket Foundation International (FBFI) launched the CSO Regulatory Platform (CRP) to assist in complying with government regulations.

The platform makes available to CSOs a comprehensive compendium for showing regulatory compliance. It serves as a countrywide public CSO directory, and assists in the compliance verification process. The website is secure, with data-security processes and features including factsheets, performance scorecards, and a compliance checklist.

The idea for the platform originated as a result of the regulatory burden placed on CSOs by several pieces of legislation. Many CSOs lack vital understanding about non-profit legislation, causing them to fall short of compliance criteria.

The platform was unveiled in an event attended by civil society, government, regulatory agencies, funders, and other stakeholders. Participants were taken through a virtual experience of the platform, which demonstrated its capabilities and how users can interact with it.

CSOs in attendance were encouraged to participate in the platform, which will enable international development partners and others to discover organisations working in a variety of disciplines.

The platform will not impose new or additional rules on CSOs, rather it will promote a voluntary approach to protecting CSOs and assisting them in being more responsive in compliance with necessary and existing laws. The long-term objective is to make it a one-stop shop for CSO compliance as well as a community of practice for CSOs that have been working in development for decades or are just getting started.

FBFI is implementing the CRP on behalf of the Steering Committee, with funding from ACT, the MacArthur Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and OSIWA.



Launch of the Civil Society Regulatory Platform. Source: ACT

**“CSOs have a duty to collaborate, when necessary, confront when needed, and coordinate as a matter of principle. The CRP allows CSOs to do all three.”**

Udo Jude Ilo, Senior Director for Advocacy at the Centre for Civilians

**“The European Union recognises that improving the capacity of Nigerian CSOs is a continuous effort. We are grateful for a partner like the British Council in making this work a reality.”**

Wynyfred Achu-Egbuson, Programme Manager, European Union Delegation

**"It is critical for CSOs to have a platform where they can engage in the country's regulatory processes and structures, so that when advocating for human rights, gender equality, and good governance, they do not fall short of expectations."**

Olufunke Baruwa, Programme Officer, Gender, Racial, and Ethnic Justice, Ford Foundation

## FACTS & FIGURES:

(May 2019-April 2022)

Number of CSOs benefiting from capacity strengthening

202

Number of trainings delivered

175+

States covered by ACT

10

## OTHER ACTIVITIES COMPLETED WITHIN THIS PERIOD

- Grants reflection session with CSOs in Adamawa state
- PEA training for CSOs in Borno, Enugu, and Plateau
- Peer learning session with CSOs in Borno
- Stakeholder meeting with TAC and CSAG members in the FCT
- Interviews for documentary in the FCT
- Training on CSO regulatory frameworks and compliance on CSOs in Plateau State
- 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

## UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

- Organisation Capacity Assessment for CSOs in Adamawa State
- Meeting with the National Technical Committee to review the Non-Profit Organisation Bill
- 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 an online financial accounts filing system.
- Continued support to the NNNGO on 'Strengthening State Civil Society Networks/Coalitions to Engage Regulatory Frameworks at the Sub-National Level Project'
- Continued support to the National Technical Committee on Civil Society Self-Regulation to develop and facilitate the voluntary adoption of a model self-regulatory framework (national and sub-national levels)

### Find out more

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