

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 Lagos, Kano, Abuja, FCT, Adamawa, Edo, Rivers, Sokoto, and others.

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



Cross-section of CSOs trained by ACT in FCT. Source: ACT

KEY ACTIVITIES

This newsletter highlights the key activities undertaken by the programme in November 2020 to January 2021.

Summary of key activities include:

CSO system strengthening:

- CSOs trained to redesign organisational strategies
- 100 CSO partners benefit from ACT training to date
- CSOs trained to design gender & social inclusion programmes
- 16 Days of Activism: CSOs share advocacy experiences on GBV
- Tackling gender-based violence with cartoons and illustrations

CSO regulatory environment:

- Engaging CAC for change: CAMA 2020 CSO regulations

CSO SYSTEM STRENGTHENING

CSOs re-design organisational strategies

Fifty (50) CSO partners from Lagos, Sokoto, Kano and the FCT have re-designed their organisational strategies, following capacity strengthening and mentoring delivered by the Agents for Citizen-driven Transformation (ACT) Programme.

During a reflection session in December 2020, where over 60 CSO partners participated, CSOs expressed satisfaction with the support they are receiving from the programme. This support goes beyond training and extends to coaching and mentoring.

ACT commenced full implementation in May 2019 with the objective of improving the effectiveness and credibility of civil society organisations as an agent of social and sustainable development in Nigeria. To date, the programme has strengthened the capacity of about 120 civil society organisations across the country.

The programme groups CSOs into three broad levels: emerging, developing and matured. This categorisation is based on the outcome of the Organisational Capacity Assessment (OCA) conducted at the onset of the programme. The OCA helped define ACT support through coaching, mentoring, training, and peer learning.



During the reflection session, CSOs elaborated on how the knowledge and skills acquired from ACT have supported them to strengthen their organisational strategies, processes and systems.

“The engagement with ACT has been an exciting journey. The programme came to our aid at a time when we needed such interventions. The trainings on communication and advocacy, organisational strategy and monitoring & evaluation have been very helpful. We are currently developing our two-year strategic plan.”

Representative from the Isa Walli Foundation, Kano State

“This coaching will boost our capacity and morale towards the actualisation of our mission.”

Alhaji Yusuf Umar, Acting Board of Trustees, Chairman of Productive Community for Sustainable Development Initiative

100 CSO partners benefit from training to date

Over 100 civil society organisations (CSOs) have benefitted from ACT capacity strengthening programmes between November 2020 and January 2021.

The training sessions have focused on organisational strategy development, gender and social inclusion, governance, financial management, operations and compliance, human resources, project management and procurement, among others.

The CSOs have been drawn from across ACT’s focal states and the federal capital territory, including WRAPA, CLEEN Foundation, Albino Foundation, NEEM Foundation, Mandate Health, Isa Walli Foundation, and the Kano State civil society network. Other beneficiaries are community-based organisations, such as Mafuka and Yakasai.

The training sessions have been followed up by ‘on-the-job’ coaching provided by ACT.

“Our organisation has been in existence for the past 12 years. We have never received the type of support like we have from ACT. The coaching has been an eye-opener and we are now re-designing our organisational strategy.”

Bose Ironsi, Executive Director, the Women’s Rights and Health Project

CSOs design gender and social inclusion programmes

The Agents for Citizen-driven Transformation (ACT) Programme recognises the importance of gender and social inclusion (GESI) to civil society engagement. The programme facilitated a five-day capacity strengthening workshop on GESI for 28 CSOs in Lagos state.

The training was conducted online between 25 January and 4 February 2021. It highlighted the role of GESI in programme design and the skills required to effectively mainstream and respond to GESI across programme delivery.

Participants – including principal officers, project managers and executive directors – are now rolling out the training in their respective organisations. ACT is also engaging the leadership in these organisations to ensure that the skills acquired are used in drafting GESI policies.

“The workshop is an eye-opener on gender equality and social inclusion.”

Henry Omokhaye, BudgIT

16 Days of Activism: CSOs share advocacy experiences against sexual and gender-based violence

On 8 December 2020, the Agents for Citizen-driven Transformation (ACT) Programme, in collaboration with the Rule of Law and Anti-corruption (RoLAC) Programme, hosted a storytelling event for civil society organisations (CSOs). The event named ‘Share to Support and Prevent’ focused on the CSOs advocacy response to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was organised in commemoration of the 16 Days of Activism.

During the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown in Nigeria, reports showed an increase in violence against women, especially in rural communities. CSOs were on the frontline in their communities and played a key role in raising awareness about the increase in cases, and providing support for victims of sexual assault.

CSOs shared stories about their experiences during the COVID-19 lockdown, and how they successfully carried out their activities. Due to movement restrictions, CSOs had to ‘think out of the box’ with their advocacy efforts and to strengthen the response for survivors of sexual assault. For example, mobile phone hotlines and website chat functions were set-up quickly to help victims remotely. CSOs also worked together in coalitions to amplify awareness about SGBV.

CSOs dialogued about these innovations and the challenges faced. They shared stories of resilience and progress in their advocacy work. CSOs called for increased awareness of issues surrounding SGBV, especially in hard to reach communities. Recommendations were developed for the key follow-on actions required by stakeholders across several sectors including CSOs, the media and government agencies.

Over 60 stakeholders participated in the virtual event, including CSO partners, the Mirabel Centre (Sexual Assault Referral Centre in Lagos), media organisations, and the Nigerian Bar Association. The event was streamed live on the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria and reported on by several radio stations, newspapers, and online platforms. It showcased the important role of CSOs as agents of change.



Promotion of the ACT-supported storytelling event on social media. Source: ACT

"During lockdown, CSOs took action and provided essential support for GBV survivors. We hope this event will increase awareness and galvanise advocacy efforts to end GBV in Nigeria."

Hafsat Mustapha, ACT

"For survivors of SGBV to get justice, the culture of silence must be dealt with."

Bukola Afeni, reporter, Newsday Online

"The lockdown exposed children to many negative issues. We came up with innovations to address these issues...including a robust synergy between CSOs, the media, security operatives, women's groups, traditional and religious leaders."

Mainasara Umar, Child Protection Network, Sokoto

"All hands must be on deck as we adopt and adapt strategies to address violence against women and girls. We must continue to empower women and girls until their voices are restored."

Comfort Onyega, Executive Director, CLICE Foundation, Rivers State

Tackling gender-based violence with cartoons and illustrations

The Agents for Citizen-driven Transformation (ACT) Programme engaged one of Nigeria's most popular cartoonist, Babakey, to boost CSO advocacy efforts, as part of the 16 Days of Activism campaign.

Babakey was invited to the CSO storytelling session to illustrate the voices and experiences of CSO advocacy efforts against gender-based violence (GBV) during the COVID-19 pandemic. The storybook presents a series of true-life stories from Nigerians who have experienced GBV in Nigeria and who accessed support through our network of CSO and media partners.



Cartoon illustration commissioned by ACT. Source: Babakey

CSO REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT

Engaging the CAC for change: CAMA 2020

In November 2020, the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) of Nigeria published a draft of the new Companies Regulations 2021 that will guide the implementation of the Companies and Allied Matter Act (CAMA) 2020. The CAC invited the public to submit comments on the contents of the regulations.

In response, the Agents for Citizen-driven Transformation (ACT) Programme collaborated with the Nigerian Network of NGOs and the Open Society Initiative for West Africa to engage civil society organisations (CSOs) across the country to review and submit comments on the regulations. A consortium of 42 civil society networks/coalitions and a working group was then formed to lead this effort.

Section 839 of the CAMA 2020 was contentious for CSOs, particularly religious bodies, because it enabled the CAC to appoint someone who may be of a different religion as interim manager to manage the affairs of another religious body, in case of disputes within the organisation. This is the main reason why there were oppositions to the CAMA 2020.

Therefore, CSOs proposed an amendment to appoint someone of the same religion as interim manager, which influenced the CAC to revise the relevant parts of CAMA 2020 Act.

As a result of CSO efforts, the Companies Regulations 2021 published in December 2020 now has clauses 30 (1 h) and 30 (2) added to ensure persons appointed by the CAC as interim managers would be from the same religion/culture, in the case of religious or cultural associations.

"An interim manager appointed by the Commission under section 839 of the Act shall be a person with knowledge and skill in the operations of the association; and in the case of a religious or cultural association, be a person of that religion or culture if only one interim manager is appointed.

Where more than one interim manager is appointed, in the case of a religious or cultural association, majority of the interim managers shall be persons of that religion or culture."

This successful legislative is a demonstration of how ACT played an active role in coordinating CSOs' responses to constructively engage with respective government agencies.

FACTS & FIGURES:

(May 2019-January 2021)

Number of CSOs benefiting from ACT capacity strengthening initiatives

120

OTHER ACTIVITIES COMPLETED WITHIN THIS PERIOD

- Support the eligibility check on the Centre for Democracy and Development
- Finalise contracting and kick off of the synthesis analysis/mapping of civil society regulatory framework and gender equality & social inclusion
- Scoping/feasibility assessment of the Corporate Affairs Commission's online filing system

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

- Ongoing coaching and mentoring for emerging and developing CSOs in FCT
- Finalise concept note and budget for a study on the impact of CSO operations
- Continued support to CAC: Finalise scoping/feasibility assessment of CAC online filing system
- Finalise and share draft memorandum of cooperation for engagement with the Corporate Affairs Commission

Find out more

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