

# 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.

We work with CSOs in 10 states selected across the six geopolitical 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.



CSOs and media interact at ACT event in Abuja. Source: ACT

## KEY ACTIVITIES

This newsletter highlights the key activities undertaken by the programme in November to January 2022.

Summary of key activities include:

### CSO system strengthening:

- CSO partners in Kano strengthened with skills in finance and management
- The Youth and Environmental Development Association to empower youth in Kano
- The Centre for Environmental Sustainability and Development Awareness leads campaign to end open defecation in public places in the FCT
- Smile Africa International Youth Development Initiative wins grant in Edo
- Affirmative Action For Women supports leadership drive in Enugu
- 16 CSOs develop organisational strategies in Edo
- New Century Initiative wins grant to empower youth in Enugu

### CSO regulatory environment:

- Stakeholders adopt new templates for filing financial accounts

### CSO spotlight:

- First Step Action for Children Initiative

## CSO SYSTEM STRENGTHENING

### CSO partners in Kano strengthened with skills in finance and management

Over the reporting period, the Agents for Citizen-driven Transformation (ACT) programme continued its series of capacity development initiatives. The most recent programme focused on financial control and management skills. Three CSOs in Kano state benefited from coaching and mentoring support for a period of six months (from July to December 2021). Beneficiaries included: WURO Development Concerns Nigeria, the National Association of Person with Physical Disabilities (Kano Chapter) and the Kano Civil Society Forum.

Consultants provided hands on support to the CSOs to improve their organisational skills in the areas of finance and management.

Funded by the European Union



Implemented by the British Council



An evaluation carried out after the engagement demonstrated good results. Areas of improvements were noted in how CSO partners develop their asset registers, inventory forms and worksheet templates; knowledge on accounting procedures; and the effective use of petty cash. A key outcome was the development of financial operational manuals for each organisation. For example, the Kano Civil Society Forum developed a policy on anti-fraud, bribery and corruption.

**“The financial management coaching session was an opportunity for us to improve our records and be more transparent and accountable.”**

Bilkisu Ado Zango, Zonal Officer, the National Association of Person with Physical, Disabilities, Kano Chapter (NAPWPD)

## CSO partner to empower youths in Kano State

The Youth and Environmental Development Association (YEDA) is benefiting from a grant from the Agents for Citizen-driven Transformation (ACT) programme to empower youths in Kano state.

The project will provide economic empowerment for youths through TVET training for 67 youth aged 18-35 years of age (both male and female). Beneficiaries will include youth who are out-of-school, unemployed, migrants, persons with disabilities, widows, divorcees, caregivers of orphans and vulnerable children, and single parents.

YEDA organised a press conference to launch the project, create public awareness, and solicit support from stakeholders. Over 40 participants from the media, CSOs and MDAs were in attendance.

The project intends to contribute to reducing poverty, hunger, economic inequalities, and gender-based violence, promoting domestic/communal peace, access to education, nutrition, shelter, and livelihoods.

## CSO leads campaign to end open defecation in public places

The Centre for Environmental Sustainability and Development Awareness (CESDA) has commenced a project funded by the ACT programme via a grant to end open defecation in selected motor parks and markets across the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) - an increasing health concern in the area.

CESDA conducted clean-up exercises and a mass sensitisation campaign on open defecation and the effect of cholera in markets and motor parks. The campaign was targeted at members of the public through a series of events and materials distributed in the community.

CESDA also conducted advocacy visits to key stakeholders, such as the Federal Ministry of Health, the Abuja Environmental Protection Board (AEPD) and the Market Men and Women Commodities Sellers Association of Nigeria, to seek their buy-in, cooperation and support for the project. The aim was to establish partnerships to increase awareness of the issue. As a result, the AEPB pledged its commitment to the initiative and deployed an outside broadcast van and personnel to support the exercise. CESA and AEPD came together to

conduct a mass clean up exercise in the Mabuchi Village on World Toilet Day (19 November 2021).

CESDA is an ACT CSO partner that has benefitted from institutional capacity strengthening support in various areas such as project cycle management, monitoring and evaluation. The CSO has also benefited from coaching and mentoring support on organisational strategy and finance management to improve their capability to access donor funding.

## Smile Africa International Youth Development Initiatives wins grant in Edo state

CSO partner, Smile Africa International Youth Development Initiative (SAIYDI), is putting learnings from ACT trainings into practice. The organisation recently won a grant from ISDAO – Sankofa Initiative of West Africa - a foreign donor agency working on youth development and human rights issues. Its mission is to work towards a just and inclusive West Africa free from violence and discrimination.

SAIYDI helps young people discover their potential by making informed contributions to the society. Their work aims to liberate youth from social vices that manifest from the use of drugs and narcotics.

In June 2021, SAIYDI saw a call for a concept note for project funding from ISDAO and promptly applied. The organisation won a grant worth US\$20,000 for a one-year project to address access to justice and legal empowerment for people who use drugs.

This grant application built on skills developed through the ACT capacity strengthening programme. SAIYDI has been an ACT partner since 2020. The organisation has benefited from a series of trainings, including how to develop proposals, concept notes, budgets, and M&E frameworks - as basic requirements for grant applications – advocacy, and the application of a human rights-based approach.

**“The ACT programme has lit up our pathways to development. It has empowered our passion and zeal with the necessary skills and knowledge to achieve our full potential.”**

Comrade Purpose Iserhienhien, Executive Director, SAIYDI

## Affirmative Action Initiative for Women supports leadership drive in Enugu

The Affirmative Action Initiative for Women (NCAA) is one of the beneficiaries of the ACT programme in Enugu state. The umbrella organisation is made up of over 50 civil society organisations (CSOs) working on women's rights.

The CSO has participated in a number of ACT trainings including financial management, project cycle management, advocacy, rights-based approach, fundraising, proposal writing, knowledge management and gender and social inclusion.

The NCAA has used these newly acquired skills to develop and submit the grant proposals to various organisations, including the United States Embassy and the Malala Fund.

The CSO recently developed a gender policy and has designed an advocacy campaign to disseminate the policy at the

community level in Ama-achala and Isi Agu. The sensitisation programme targeted traditional leaders, women leaders, youths, and children.

Community members were made to understand that it is the constitutional right of women to participate in the political leadership process. At the end of the programme, three women from each community joined the contest for the community ward/counsellor position in the upcoming elections. Furthermore, community members demanded that women be included in the male only cabinet of "Igwes" (executive members of the local traditional rulers). At the event, two women were invited to join the cabinets in Ama-achala and three women joined in Isi Agu. Similar efforts by the NCAA elsewhere have led to the emergence of two female counsellors in Eke community (Udi LGA) and in Agulu Ugwu Oba (Oji River LGA).

The NCAA have started to use a gender lens to scrutinise and challenge a list of candidates (males only) contesting for leadership of 17 local government areas in Enugu state. Representatives wrote a protest letter to the State Governor, engaged the leadership of the political parties, and the woman leader of the People's Democratic Party in Nigeria. So far, the parties have responded positively and have committed to appoint at least 10 females to serve as deputy chairpersons of the LGAs.

## 16 CSOs develop organisational strategies and policies in Edo state

The ACT programme has supported 16 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Edo state to develop organisational strategies and key policy documents to enable effective project delivery. The organisations work across a spectrum of social development issues in Edo state.

In 2020, ACT conducted a capacity development assessment of 20 NGOs in the state. The assessment showed gaps in organisational structure, leadership capacity, project management skills, internal and external relations to pass the credibility test of donor agencies.

In 2021, through the services of qualified consultants, ACT strengthened the capacity of the NGOs to develop organisational strategies and basic financial and management policies. The consultants coached and mentored the NGOs to guide the development of these documents. According to monitoring reports, all 16 NGOs have developed their organisational strategies and relevant policies.

The leadership of the NGOs highlighted their satisfaction with the intervention, coaches, and delivery approach. They also confirmed their organisations have improved and are positioned well to achieve their goals.

**"A big thank you to ACT for enabling us to go through this process."**

Victoria Ero, Executive Director, Society for the Empowerment of Young Persons

## New Century Initiative wins grant to empower youth in Enugu

The New Century Initiative (NCI) is a youth led, community-based development organisation. It was founded to intervene in the social, economic and political development of young people in Enugu state. NCI's aim is to strengthen youth representation on issues that affect their wellbeing and to foster relations between young people, government and the society at large, through effective collaboration and engagement.

NCI is a beneficiary of ACT-supported coaching, mentoring and training. The organisation applied its learnings to develop a grant application from the Voice Global Fund to implement the "Speak Up, Stand Out (SUSO)" programme. NCI was successfully awarded the grant to deliver the programme in the Nkanu East LGA. SUSO works to empower young people to participate meaningfully in the socio-political development of communities. The programme strives to maximise digital platforms for social mobilisation to amplify the voices of youth and develop campaigns on issues that affect them.

**"The ACT coaching and mentoring sessions on finance were instrumental to our successful application."**

Obinna Colins Nebo, Executive Director, New Century Initiative

## CSO REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT

### Stakeholders adopt new templates for filing financial accounts

Back in 2021, the Agents for Citizen-driven Transformation (ACT) programme supported the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) to develop an online financial accounts filing system for corporate bodies, including CSOs.

In January 2022, CSOs met with the CAC and the Financial Reporting Council (FRC) to discuss the minimum filing requirements and the upcoming deadline to submit financials to the CAC's Online Financial Accounts Filing System by 28 February 2022.

CSO stakeholders also worked with both parties to develop a standard reporting template for filing financial reports to the CAC. The initiative aims to improve CSO compliance with the Company and Allied Matter Acts 2020 (CAMA 2020).

**"Without these templates, the much-anticipated financial accounts filing system would not have been developed effectively. I am excited that with ACT support, we developed and adopted these templates for different entities to file their financial accounts. I am also happy that the Financial Reporting Commission was in the room and approved these templates."**

Terver Ayua, Special Adviser to the CAC Registrar-General

## CSO SPOTLIGHT: FIRST STEP ACTION FOR CHILDREN INITIATIVE



First Step Action for Children Initiative (FSACI) is a non-governmental organisation based in Jemeta Yola, Adamawa state.

FSACI promotes the recognition and acceptance of the rights of women and children and ensure that children have the best possible prospects for survival, development, protection and participation. Its mission is to assist families support their children wellbeing by improving access to education, health, nutrition, safe water, hygiene and sanitation.

FSACI's work focuses on early childhood education, access to girls education, the implementation of relevant child rights legislations, youth participation and empowerment, and the awareness and prevention of HIV/AIDs and other diseases.

FSACI is an ACT CSO partner. The organisation has benefited from a series of capacity strengthening activities: project management, gender & social inclusion, and resource mobilisation. FSACI is putting some of the learnings from these trainings into practice. New ways of working are starting to benefit the organisation.

We asked FSACI how ACT support has helped to strengthen capacity within the organisation.



Staff at First Step Action for Children Initiative. Source: FSACI

**“Before our partnership with ACT, we had low capacity in a number of areas. We did not understand project cycle management and the benefits of mainstreaming social inclusion. We struggled to raise funds for the organisation. We had an HR policy but it was not effectively used. This resulted in poor people management and low performance.”**

FSACI is pleased to report that many things have changed since the organisation has benefited from the ACT capacity development programme.

“The ACT trainings have been stepped down to all staff. We are applying the new skills to our activities on a daily basis. We better understand who our stakeholders at various levels: the state, the local government areas and the community. People living with disabilities are now included in our projects. We have clear targets for our programming.”

**“We are better at advocacy. For example, we have been monitoring the malaria commodities supported by the Global Fund in the public health centre in Ganye LGA. We are empowering community members on how to prevent malaria. We have begun holding government accountable and things are changing.”**

“We are also better at managing our people. Staff appraisals are conducted more regularly and with structured plans to address any gaps. Our employees are now more motivated and our organisational culture has improved. We celebrate the team's birthdays and other events of interest.”

### For more information

Website: [www.first.org.ng](http://www.first.org.ng)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/FirstStepNigeria](https://www.facebook.com/FirstStepNigeria)

## FACTS & FIGURES:

(May 2019-January 2022)

Number of CSOs benefiting from capacity strengthening

**203**

Number of trainings delivered

**150+**

States covered by ACT

**10**

## OTHER ACTIVITIES COMPLETED WITHIN THIS PERIOD

- Coaching sessions on organisational strategy for CSOs in Borno
- Peer learning meeting with CSOs in Rivers and Sokoto states
- Continued support to the Policy and Advocacy Centre on the Civil Society Legislative Engagement Project
- Continued support to the Federal Inland Revenue Service, the Pension Commission and the Special Control Unit Against Money Laundry on improving CSO compliance to regulations
- Continued support to the Corporate Affairs Commission to develop and install the online financial accounts filing system
- Committee meeting to finalise the financial accounts reporting templates
- Support the Nigeria Network of NGOs on the 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 a “model” self-regulatory framework

## UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

- Digital marketing skills training for capacity development providers
- Peer learning sessions for CSOs in Lagos state
- 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
- Continued support to the Federal Inland Revenue Service, the Pension Commission and the Special Control Unit Against Money Laundry on improving CSO compliance to regulations
- Continued support to the Corporate Affairs Commission to develop and install the online financial accounts filing system
- Support to Nigeria Network of NGOs on the grant: 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 a “model” self-regulatory framework

### Find out more

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