

IMPACT REPORT

RULE OF LAW AND ANTI-CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA

STRENGTHENING CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

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INTRODUCTION

Civil Society can be defined as the arena outside the family, the state and the business sector which is created by individual and collective actions to advance shared interests. Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) play a critical role in holding government to account, are advocates and watchdogs for the promotion of human rights and adherence to the rule of law, and act as mobilisers and educators of the public.

In recent years, state and federal governments in Nigeria have not been receptive to civil society engagement. In addition, many CSOs lacked the operational capacity and technical skills required to take part in policy decisions or monitor government processes neither were they able to access the spaces where government decisions occur.



ACTIVITIES

RoLAC designed interventions that were targeted at improving the capacity of CSOs to engage with government in the criminal justice reform process and the fight against corruption as well as improving the openness and availability of government for such engagement. The goal was to ensure that CSOs in Nigeria became valued as credible and respected voices with the capacity and opportunity to work alongside government as allies in the implementation of criminal justice and anti-corruption reforms.

The CSO engagement strategy focused around three key activity areas: training and mentoring; supporting opportunities for CSOs to engage in dialogue with government; and funding CSO-led initiatives through the award of strategic grants.

Training and mentoring

RoLAC delivered training to CSOs across a broad range of knowledge areas relevant to the criminal justice and anti-corruption sectors. This included the provisions of relevant legislation and the institutional policies and protocols that guide the delivery of justice services at state and federal levels, and on human rights perspectives and gender-sensitive and inclusive reform approaches. CSOs were also trained on advocacy planning and monitoring, budget tracking, investigative journalism, gender-sensitive media reporting, paralegal practice, public procurement monitoring, and on the role of CSOs in the implementation of state and national anti-corruption strategies.

CSOs were mentored through the process of identifying corruption

and criminal justice service delivery issues that most concerned citizens. CSOs identified the steps that criminal justice institutions and anti-corruption agencies needed to take to be more responsive and accountable to citizens. This exercise helped CSOs to develop a list of priority areas and actions that enabled them to focus their engagements with anti-corruption agencies and criminal justice institutions. This list of priorities proved very useful in providing the clarity of purpose necessary to mobilise more CSOs around the same objectives.

RoLAC also mentored CSOs through the process of developing and implementing advocacy plans based on the priority issues identified and tracking what government agencies were doing differently in response to issues CSOs had raised with them.

Supporting opportunities for CSOs to engage in dialogue with government

RoLAC supported activities that placed CSOs and government in the same room to listen to each other and agree collaborative actions to address priorities. This includes several CSO-led town hall meetings, policy dialogues, sensitisation and advocacy meetings that provided the opportunity for CSOs and citizens to speak directly to government representatives for the first time. RoLAC supported over 30 CSOs and coalitions and worked indirectly with

over 50 community and faith-based organisations across five states, to engage with government on some of the most pressing issues in the criminal justice and anti-corruption sectors. CSOs were selected from a broad list of over 200, applying rigorous, balanced, objective, and competence-based criteria. Gender, disability, youth representation, geographical representation, and the potential to mobilise communities were key factors. These engagements led to the establishment of gender or disability desks and the appointment of citizens liaison officers by justice institutions, including the judiciary and ministries of justice.

Funding CSO-led initiatives through the award of strategic grants

RoLAC awarded grants to CSOs based on their experience and administrative capacity to implement anti-corruption initiatives, establish community-based SGBV response mechanisms or promote disability inclusive service delivery by Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs). Some grants enabled the deployment of specialised training in public procurement, investigative journalism, and paralegal practice to more CSOs at the community level. Others engaged in raising awareness on justice and anti-corruption issues, or addressed essential service delivery gaps.



IMPACT

CSO action influenced policy and practice change by government agencies

Work with CSOs led to policy and practice changes at federal and state levels across multiple areas. For instance, CSO advocacy led by BudGIT Foundation led to five states (Adamawa, Anambra, Edo, Kano and Lagos) making their 2008 to 2018 financial data publicly available in a simplified format. This enabled the states to meet the 'Disbursement Linked Indicator' for the performance-based grant component of the World Bank-Assisted States Fiscal Transparency, Accountability and Sustainability (SFTAS) Programme – a US\$750m programme to incentivise and reward states for meeting any or all of the nine indicators that demonstrate improvements in transparency and accountability in the use of public resources. Similarly, a compliance ranking of Federal MDAs in the use of the National Open Contracting Portal (NOCOPO) by the Africa Network for Environment and Economic Justice (ANEEJ) contributed to increasing the number of MDAs making their procurement information available on NOCOPO increasing from 16 to over 460.

Following training and capacity building, members of the 'Citizens Wealth Platform' began participating in the House of Representatives Public Accounts Committee hearings. Enhanced capacity and understanding of the critical issues enabled CSOs in the Platform to advocate for an increased allocation to the office of the Auditor General

of the Federation (AuGF). This helped justify an increased allocation from N3.15 billion in 2019, to N4.13 billion in 2020 and N4.63 billion in 2021 - an overall increase of 47 percent.

In Lagos, RoLAC supported the first ever formal engagement between the CeCe Yara Child Advocacy Centre, a civil society organisation and the Lagos State Police Command to encourage collaboration and the adoption of Child Forensic Interviewing methodologies. These are critical tools in building and documenting evidence to support effective prosecution of child sexual abuse cases. In time, the Police Command agreed that investigating police officers could utilise CeCe Yara's Child Forensic Interviewing Suite and methodologies. CeCeYara has since supported the Police and the Ministry of Justice to conduct 24 child forensic interviews (between 2019 and 2022). using global best practice in child forensic interviewing. In one case, the evidence elicited through the forensic interview has resulted in a conviction. In Anambra State, based on best practice guidelines developed by CSOs and the State Child Rights Implementation Committee and adopted by the state, 10 of the 40 orphanages in the state were closed down for not meeting the standards in the guideline; while 13 SGBV victims found temporary shelter in those that were compliant.

CSO engagement with government agencies has also led to the adoption of practice directions for the trial of SGBV cases in designated courts in the FCT and Anambra, Edo and

Adamawa states, as well as the passage of the VAPP Laws in Edo and Adamawa states, and the Disability Rights Law in Edo state.

Expanded access to justice services for women, children and persons with disabilities

Support to CSOs closed the gap in justice service delivery for vulnerable people through the establishment of additional channels for citizens. In Lagos, the Child Protection Network (CPN) assisted in 783 cases of child abuse including neglect and sexual abuse, with 193 cases referred to the police or other services. The Women's Rights and Health Project (WRAHP) enabled referral and response to Lagos state authorities of 604 SGBV cases. Partnership for Justice facilitated emergency medical, counselling and legal services to 5,098 survivors of SGBV, 84 of whom were persons with disabilities, through the Mirabel Sexual Assault Referral Centre. In the FCT, the CSO-led mentorship delivered by the Sexual Offences Awareness and Response (SOAR) Initiative in four FCT communities, led to the establishment of Community-based Child Protection Committees (CCPCs). Twenty-four child sexual and physical abuse cases handled by the CCPCs were referred to FCT authorities, while its Child and Teen support Centre assisted 432 survivors of SGBV and child sexual abuse.

In Adamawa and Kano, support to the Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA) led to the establishment of 6 additional channels (one in each of the 6 senatorial districts of the states) to facilitate access for and link SGBV survivors to medical, counselling, legal and social support. WRAPA reported that 297 SGBV survivors received support services through the additional channels and access points.



CSOs recognised by government agencies as credible partners in justice sector and anti-corruption reforms

More CSOs are now engaged by government directly to drive and implement reforms. The VAPP Implementation Committees in states, the National, State and Local Government Child Rights Implementation Committees, and the Administration of Criminal Justice Monitoring Committees all have multiple CSO representatives actively involved in developing and overseeing strategies for the full implementation of laws. Other CSOs play active roles in national and state anti-corruption strategy implementation committees and in the Anti-Torture Committee.

The Nigerian Correctional Service (NCoS) is working directly with the Prisoners Rehabilitation and Welfare Action (PRAWA) - a CSO - to develop systems and build capacity to implement new penal measures especially parole and community services, under the Nigerian Correctional Services Act.

The BudGIT Foundation was appointed a member of the ICPC's Joint Project Monitoring Committee/ Constituency Project Tracking Group (CPTG), comprising of the ICPC and CSOs. BudGIT gathered and provided secondary data to ICPC on the level of implementation of 2015–2018 constituency projects in 26 states. BudGIT's project tracking officers accompanied ICPC officials during field visit investigations based on this secondary data as part of activities for Phase 1 of the constituency project tracking group project.

Increased public awareness of justice and anti-corruption issues

Many citizens have been educated and provided with tools to engage government on justice and anti-corruption issues through media and awareness initiatives of CSOs. The HerStoryOurStoryNG social media campaign reached over 84m people. There was an increase in the number of inquiries, complaints and SGBV disclosures on the social media handle of the HerStoryOurStoryNG campaign from 79 in 2020-2021 to 323 in 2021-2022.

Table 1: HerStoryOurStoryNG incident log

Platforms	Number of inquiries, complaints and SGBV disclosures received		Number of inquiries, complaints		Number of SGBV disclosures received		Number of SGBV survivors referred to existing SARCs	
	Year 5	Year 4	Year 5	Year 4	Year 5	Year 4	Year 5	Year 4
Twitter	14	15	13	11	1	4	1	2
Instagram	45	19	40	13	5	6	5	6
Facebook	12	6	10	5	2	1	2	1
HerStoryOurStoryNG Hotlines /WhatsApp	208	31	179	23	29	8	27	6
HerStoryOurStoryNG Email	44	8	43	6	1	2	1	2
Totals	323	79	285	58	38	21	36	17

Source: HerStoryOurStoryNG campaign

Similarly, the Paradigm Leadership Support Initiative (PLSI) social media engagement highlighting payments to key government institutions, taxes not remitted to the federation account by MDAs, and simplified audit data highlighting 30 key issues identified from the AuGFs 2016 audit report reached several thousands of citizens and

many others actively engaged with the content. This publicity drew a reaction from the Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB) in June 2020. The NCDMB decided to provide further clarity on monies paid to it by the relevant oil companies, including why such monies were paid and what the money was used for.

Table 2: PLSI's social media reach

	30 simplified illustrations/ infographics highlighting payments to key government institutions	50 infographic illustrations highlighting taxes not remitted to the federation account by MDAs	Infographics on simplified audit data, highlighting 30 key issues identified from the AuGFs 2016 audit report
No. of citizens reached	249,441	129,333	234,634

Source: PLSI/RoLAC



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DATA/STATISTICS AT A GLANCE

- **197 journalists/CSO representatives trained** in investigative journalism, fact-checking and verification. **46 small grants** for investigative stories were awarded resulting in **39 investigative reports** published on criminal justice and anti-corruption reform issues, leading to **4 reactions** from government agencies
- **3,097 citizens**, including pre-trial detainees, provided with legal aid services through the Rights Enforcement and Public Law Centre Police Duty Solicitors' Scheme
- HerStoryOurStoryNG social media campaign (Twitter, Instagram, Facebook) against SGBV grew social media reach to over **84 million**
- SOAR Child and Teen Support Centre assisted **432 survivors** of SGBV and child sexual abuse



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LESSONS

CSOs embed learning better through mentoring programmes rather than one-off training programmes

CSO training programmes are often not focused on measuring effectiveness or the difference their activities are making. RoLAC mentoring support took a different approach, encouraging CSOs to concentrate on critical aspects of the issue, identify relevant advocacy targets and plan realistically achievable objectives within tight timeframes. This was backed up by a structured system for measuring progress.

Programmes can expand access to funding opportunities for non-traditional civil society groups

By simplifying the application process and reporting requirements, programmes can open opportunities for less experienced and loosely structured CSOs. Deploying smaller grants with less rigorous selection criteria targeted at the less structured CSOs are a way to respond to dynamically evolving opportunities that CSOs and civic mobilisers are presented with in the field.

Support research

Providing CSOs with the opportunity to carry out detailed research or gather otherwise unavailable data to inform advocacy action developed their credibility as professional organisations and demonstrated their capacity to use data as an influencing tool to open doors to funding from other donors.

Social media and social networking

This can level the playing field by allowing a larger segment of the population, especially youth, to access information and influence outcomes. More deliberate programming for social media audiences and movements is imperative. The rapid growth of social media movements over the past 2 years in Nigeria is indicative of the extent to which social media has provided interactive communication tools that allow users to mobilise and build community around social issues much faster and easier. All over the country, citizens, especially young people are commenting, recording, videoing and posting on governance issues (in both traditional and social media). The Paradigm Leadership Support Initiative (PLSI) and the

BudgIT Foundation reported that the incorporation of social media engagement into RoLAC-funded anti-corruption interventions, combined with funding of web platforms for accessing government data and information, contributed to increased public engagement in public procurement and public expenditure monitoring nationwide.



COMMENTS FROM BENEFICIARIES

**Adeniyi Rotimi, member,
Joint National Association
of Persons with Disabilities
(training beneficiary)**

“

This three-day program has been an eye-opener for me. I now have a view of things I didn't know before. I know there is going to be a positive change for participants. We will train others to enlighten them that the rights that have been denied to us in the past, we now know about it; not through violence, but through intellectual discussion with government officials...

”

**Beneficiary, Ireti SGBV Response and Referral
Centre, Lagos**

“

When they raped and wounded me, we did not know what to do. We thought we will spend money for the police. My mother said we should pack to another place so that she can take care of me. I was not happy; I thought God was punishing me. But they told my mummy about the human rights people at Ireti, that they will help us, but I didn't believe. The Ireti people brought the police to our house and took me to hospital for tests. Now, they have carried (arrested) the people (perpetrators) and they say they will not leave them. I thank God that they are helping me now.

”

PERSONAL STORY OF CHANGE



“

RoLAC supported the first-ever formal engagement between the CeCe Yara Child Advocacy Centre - a civil society organisation - and the Lagos State Police Command to encourage collaboration and the adoption of Child Forensic Interviewing methodologies by the Command. ”

On 7 March 2020, Ibukun, a 15-year-old girl was arrested and detained for stabbing her father’s 49-year-old friend with a knife, while allegedly defending herself against his attempt to rape her. The case was reported to the Lagos State Command of the Nigeria Police Force. In June 2018, RoLAC had supported the first ever formal engagement between the CeCe Yara Child Advocacy Centre, a civil society organisation and the Lagos State Police Command to encourage collaboration and the adoption of Child Forensic Interviewing methodologies by the Command. The aim was to build and document evidence to support the effective prosecution of child sexual abuse cases, an area where CeCe Yara had experience and expertise. In the case of 15-year-old Ibukun, the police requested

CeCe Yara’s support in conducting forensic interviews with the child to ascertain the reason and circumstances under which the child stabbed the deceased. CeCe Yara also provided medical treatment, psychological evaluation and therapeutic support for the child and moved her to an appropriate correctional facility. Cece Yara supported the Police to set up a multidisciplinary team of child forensic interview experts, justice service providers and social workers across government and civil society who were able to adduce corroborative evidence from forensic interview with the child and provide expert opinion to assist the Police. Based on the expert opinion provided to the Police and the Director of Public Prosecutions the court acquitted and discharged the child and referred her for psycho-social support, allowing her to be re-

united with her family. This was the first time that the Lagos State Command collaborated with a civil society organisation to apply a multi-disciplinary approach to investigating and prosecuting child sexual abuse.

Ibukun is 17 years old now and back at school. Her dream is to become an engineer.

The Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption (RoLAC) Programme is working to enhance good governance by strengthening the rule of law and curbing corruption. Our main objective is to back the government's justice and anti-corruption agenda by supporting the adoption and implementation of relevant legislation, policies and strategies in the sector. The six-year programme (2017–23) is funded by the European Union and implemented by the British Council.

Find out more
Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption
(RoLAC) Programme
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www.justice-security.ng

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