

# AGENTS FOR CITIZEN-DRIVEN TRANSFORMATION

The Agents for Citizen-driven Transformation (ACT) programme works with civil society organisations (CSOs) to enable them to be credible and effective drivers of change for sustainable development in Nigeria.

Our work focuses on strengthening the system of CSOs, networks and coalitions to improve their internal, external, and programmatic capabilities. We also focus on providing a platform for multistakeholder dialogue for an improved, effective, and inclusive regulatory environment for the operation of CSOs in Nigeria.

ACT is implemented in 10 states selected across the six geopolitical zones: Adamawa, Borno, Edo, Enugu, FCT, Kano, Lagos, Plateau, Rivers, and Sokoto.

The five-year programme (2019-24) is funded by the European Union and implemented by the British Council.

This case study and other ACT publications are available at [www.justice-security.ng](http://www.justice-security.ng).

## CATALYST FOR CHANGE: CLONESHOUSE NURTURES GROWTH IN CSOS



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### WHY THIS CASE STUDY?

This case study illustrates how ACT capacity development providers (CDPs) are working to acquire new knowledge and skills, empowering them to advocate for change. It emphasises how enhanced internal and external organisational capacity enables CDPs to make substantial contributions to the development of CSOs.

### BACKGROUND

Nigeria's civil society is vibrant and fast-growing. Although CSOs are active in addressing a range of issues in the country's development processes, the sector faces several challenges to fully realise its potential to act as a driver of change. Many CSOs are confronted with organisational, human resources, and financial challenges.



Funded by  
the European Union



Implemented by  
the British Council

To address this, the ACT programme embarked on a series of innovative actions to strengthen the capacity of CSOs. The initiatives focused on strengthening institutional mechanisms, structures, and processes aimed at improving the internal, external, and programmatic environments for CSOs, networks, and coalitions.

A key strategy of the ACT programme is to support capacity development providers (CDPs). These partners – CSOs, training institutions, consultancies – receive grants from ACT to design and deliver tailor-made learning solutions for CSOs. The aim is that the CDPs will continue to function as a learning resource for CSOs even after the closure of the programme.

Cloneshouse is an ACT CDP. The organisation is a for-profit consulting firm that works in the area of monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL). To begin the programme's engagement with Cloneshouse, a resource mapping was carried out to determine whether the organisation's objectives and ambitions were aligned with ACT's strategy to build CSO capacity. The assessment was thorough and interactive, encouraging Cloneshouse to look inward and put in place the required mechanisms that enabled ACT to provide them with technical assistance.

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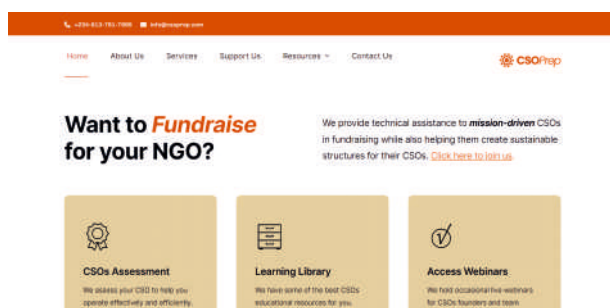
Abigael Oni, Clinical psychologist



## APPROACH

Through its partnership with ACT, Cloneshouse designed a new CSO learning tool, called ‘**CSO Prep**’. It is targeted at strengthening the institutional capacity of CSOs to undertake ‘praxis,’ a cycle of reflection and action that results in learning.

This tool was initially designed as a **mentorship programme** by Cloneshouse to target specific organisations and individuals who required training in monitoring and evaluation and other organisational capacity issues. However, the demand rapidly increased for tailored training solutions for CSOs. This led Cloneshouse to create a **database of CSOs** that enabled the organisation to interact with CSOs via a questionnaire to determine their specific needs for institutional strengthening. Based on the needs identified, Cloneshouse then designed a suite of **tailored trainings** for CSOs.



‘CSO Prep’ online platform

‘CSO Prep’ was initially created as an **online platform** (<https://csoprep.org/>) where CSOs could sign-up for trainings based on their specific needs. It has now evolved into a **collaboration tool** where Cloneshouse can interact with CSOs through webinars, training sessions, and other activities.

Some of the **goals** of the ‘CSO Prep’ include facilitating collaboration among CSOs at the local, national, regional, and global levels by supporting and encouraging the formation of civil society consortiums and networks, as well as improving communication and advocacy among CSOs to defend and protect the interests of vulnerable groups. It also strives to support civil society in providing quality services in the absence of state actors, for example in conflict or fragile states.

The tool focuses on building the capacity of CSOs in the following areas:

- **Relationship building:** The focus is on creating and maintaining respectful relationships that consider each partner's objectives, values, capabilities, and limitations. This approach ensures that all partners are on the same page and work towards the same goal.



- **Systematic engagement:** This organization provides a holistic view of the process, engaging all components of an organisation, including its internal and external linkages. This approach ensures that there is a coordinated effort across the organisation, and all stakeholders are working towards the same objectives.
- **Evidence-based practice:** The organisation focuses on evidence-based and best practices to improve quality. This approach ensures that the organisation is efficient in its delivery, and there is a continuous improvement in the quality of service provided.
- **Stakeholder engagement:** The organisation recognises the importance of consultation, buy-in, and collective decision-making among stakeholders. This approach ensures that all stakeholders' needs are considered, and there is a shared understanding of the process among all involved parties.

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## RESULTS

### A suite of tailor-made trainings are now available for CSOs

Cloneshouse developed the custom 'CSO Prep' tool and rolled out it to CSOs through a range of online self-paced courses, hybrid sessions, and brown bag series focused on grant writing, request for proposals, and tailor-made training programmes. These initiatives were designed to meet the unique needs of civil society. The range of initiatives offered greater accessibility and flexibility in the CSOs learning experience.

“

This training hub is for any development practitioner who wants to excel in his/her career. The skills I've learned have made my job easier. ”

Hadiza Musa, M&E Officer, Root Foundation

“

I joined the bi-weekly brown bag sessions on managing enumerators in monitoring, evaluation and research (MER). It reminded me that MER includes project management and we have double up as project managers. I learned a lot about planning the data collection activity, recruiting the enumerators, setting up a coordination platform - like Asana or Google Workspace - designing the data collection tool - like KoboToolbox, training the enumerators, testing the tool, checking-in with them for data validation, and managing a timeline. ”

Ngwoke Ifeanyi, Manager, ehealth Africa

### More collaboration amongst training partners

The engagement with ACT has helped Cloneshouse to develop promising relationships with other CDPs. Through a skills mapping exercise, Cloneshouse has identified future potential areas of collaboration with other training partners. This will enable Cloneshouse to expand the reach of its existing tools and offer more training opportunities to CSOs.

## LESSONS LEARNED

### Hybrid training approaches are effective for CSOs

Cloneshouse used a hybrid approach to deliver its intervention. The organisation combined in-person and self-paced training to provide the most effective support to CSOs. This approach enabled CSOs to learn at their own pace while still having access to live support from the training team.

### Closer engagement with CSOs yields better results

Cloneshouse recognised the importance of working 'shoulder-to-shoulder' with CSOs to achieve better results. The organisation learned from its initial approach, which focused more on traditional methods, and is now adopting a coaching and mentorship element to provide more effective support to CSOs.

### Complimentary resources increased uptake, but could pose sustainability challenges

Cloneshouse provided free resources to CSOs through the delivery of 'CSO Prep'. As a short-term goal, the organisation plans to curate more CSO-centred

resources, including guides, templates, and case studies. Cloneshouse also plans to invite industry experts to speak and share insights. The organisation understands that most CSOs cannot afford these services, which is why they will be provided for free.

### Grant writing and awareness raising play a key role in securing funding for future delivery

Cloneshouse will seek grants to increase awareness and raise funds for further 'CSO Prep' activities. The organisation believes this will enable them to reach more CSOs and continue to share free resources.

“

CSO Prep has helped us to focus on the outlook of our organisation. We've refocused and created a more suitable governance structure. As a result, we've recently landed a grant worth US\$100,000.

”

Programme Manager, Citizens Parliament

“

Being part of development work not only allows you to make a positive impact on communities, but also provides a platform to continuously learn, evolve, and contribute to meaningful change. ”

Abigael Oni, Clinical psychologist

### Find out more

Agents for Citizen-driven Transformation (ACT)

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www.justice-security.ng