

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.

PATHWAY TO KNOWLEDGE: PARE EXPANDS ACCESS TO EDUCATION FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN



WHY THIS CASE STUDY?

This case study demonstrates the contribution of CSOs to sustainable and peaceful communities by providing access to education for children not in school.

BACKGROUND

UNICEF reports that approximately 10.5 million children in Nigeria are deprived of education, many of whom (around 60 percent) are internally displaced refugees.¹ These children do not attend schools and reside in makeshift camps that lack major facilities and educational opportunities. According to This Day Newspaper,² the Almajiranci – a system of Islamic education practiced in northern Nigeria once aimed at facilitating children's education – can be attributed for the high rate of out-of-school children, due to the impact of the Boko Haram situation.



Funded by
the European Union



Implemented by
the British Council

¹ <https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/education>

² <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2021/04/07/need-to-remodel-almajiri-system-in-northern-nigeria?amp=1>

Education is a fundamental aspect of children's cognitive development. Every child has the right to free, compulsory, and universal basic education as per the Child Rights Act in Nigeria, and the government is responsible for providing this education.

Education is particularly important for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and Almajirai – the male and females seeking Islam knowledge. However, in communities in the Song local government area (LGA) in Adamawa State, there is currently no access to education because there are no schools and classrooms for these children.

With a grant from ACT, a local civil society organisation – Pastoral Resolve (PARE) – is working to address this issue and expand access to education for these children in Adamawa State. The project focused on providing education opportunities for children (aged 6 to 17) in the Song and Mboi districts. PARE rolled out a community sensitisation and advocacy programme to raise awareness of the benefits of education and how it can contribute to inclusive development and the amicable resolution of conflicts. The project also worked to expand access to education through the establishment of learning centres in the local community.



“ This project has ignited a change process that will go a long way in redefining the narratives of education in these districts. Positive change has indeed come to stay. ”

Dr Aminu Ahmad Chiroma, Executive Director, PARE



APPROACH

PARE has collaborated with the ACT programme since 2019. The CSO has benefited from training in several areas, including gender and social inclusion, fundraising, advocacy, monitoring and evaluation, finance, communications, research and analysis. For this particular project, PARE worked to strengthen its project management and undertook a situational analysis to identify stakeholders and target the right project beneficiaries. After receiving financing from ACT, PARE recognised the need to address the community's educational concerns and took the following steps.

Community sensitisation

PARE conducted sensitisation campaigns by visiting the identified stakeholders, including 26 leaders – both Tsangaya (a Quar'anic learning centre popularly known as “Makarantan Allo”) and community champions – in six communities to inform them of the project and solicit their cooperation. PARE successfully engaged relevant stakeholders, such as the Local Government Education Authority (LGEA).

PARE, alongside the local community, worked to establish learning centres. The community provided safe and accessible infrastructure for the project. Many of the centres existed already because they were Tshahaya schools within the community. Some communities provided a shelter specifically for the project.

Mentors and learning facilitators

PARE worked closely with the Department of Mass Education to identify mentors for the project, who would then train learning facilitators recruited from the local community.

RESULTS

Six learning facilities established and now benefit over 210 children

PARE led the establishment of six centres together with the community. The facilities are nonformal centres that operate three days and 12 times a month. The centres operate within 3 hours only to cover literacy, numeracy, and emotional management competencies.

Over 210 children are now formally registered and attend the centres regularly. The initiative has proved to be so popular that many more children are attending informally.

“

We are happy with this intervention because it will help our children to have basic formal education. ”

Mallam Sirajo Mohammed, Caregiver and Tsangaya Teacher, Kolere Community

Local and qualified facilitators trained and delivering classes

Two mentor teachers from the local education board trained six learning facilitators from the local community to provide numeracy and literacy classes. PARE recruited these facilitators, and helped train and mentor them to effectively manage the centres.

“

It is amazing that a learner who has spent just three months at the learning centre can improve from a zero writing/reading level and can handle a pencil effectively, write well, and identify words. ”

Zainab Hassan, Facilitator, PARE

Community coalition platforms created to gain buy-in

Community coalitions were established to conduct oversight functions and carry out advocacy and sensitization campaigns on behalf of the centres for sustainability and streamlining in formal schools. As a result of advocacy efforts, the local education board accepted and streamlined some of the learners into formal education systems.



Furthermore, youth and adolescent girls among the Almajiris and IDP children were selected and trained on marketable skills across the centres. The beneficiaries who used to roam about begging on the streets of Song and other communities now have something to do to support their livelihood and reduce their redundancy.

“

Project implementation was carried out directly by staff. But now diverse individuals and groups are involved, which has increased the chances of project ownership and sustainability. ”

Abubakar Gambo Bakori, Programme Officer, PARE



LESSONS LEARNED

Targeted advocacy is key to project uptake and sustainability

Community members were initially suspicious of PARE's efforts and were resistant to the change that the intervention aimed to bring about. PARE anticipated this and ensured that they first gained the acceptance and endorsement of community champions, including traditional and religious leaders. PARE also encouraged community members to share their thoughts and concerns at open forums, such as townhall meetings, and addressed them in these public settings. This led to the community being more open to the project and working with the PARE team.

Furthermore, partnering with the local government strengthened the project's outcome and guaranteed sustainability. Going forward, the local government has committed to fund and sustain six centres initiated by PARE. While the LGEA will provide funding and oversight, the centres will remain under the management of PARE and its CBO partners.



Engaging community members at all levels produced stronger results

The engagement of carers and parents of the beneficiaries enhanced the effectiveness of project activities. One community member said that the carers and custodians of Almajirai and out-of-school children now understand the importance of the project. This has changed the mindset of the community and the narrative of integrating western education into the Tsangaya curriculum.

CSO organisational development is crucial for sustainable development

ACT's approach of providing quality mentoring, coaching, training, and monitoring to PARE strengthened the organisation's capacity to deliver the project more effectively.

The project can become a victim of its own success

The community's positive interest in the initiative has led to a significant number of Almajiris and out-of-school children hanging around the classroom – many of whom are not registered but would like to participate in the programme. These large numbers of children pose a challenge to the teaching and learning process, and underscores the need to expand the initiative to support more children in the program.

Find out more

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