

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.

The programme works with CSOs in 10 states selected across the six geo-political 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 five-year programme (2019-2024) is funded by the European Union and implemented by the British Council.



YARAC handing over a business starter pack to youth in Plateau state. Source YARAC

KEY ACTIVITIES

This newsletter highlights the key activities undertaken by the programme in May to July 2023.

Summary of key activities include:

CSO system strengthening:

- ACT grantee empowers 80 youth and persons with disability in Plateau state
- CSO partners enhance community access to WASH
- AFRILAW combats forced labour in Enugu state
- ACT strengthens emerging CBO in Edo state
- Victims of illegal migration empowered by CAIMAT
- WOR1 initiates climate change awareness campaign in River state
- ACT partners train over 400 women in digital literacy in Rivers state
- CSO establishes 'women-support-women' group in Enugu state

CSO regulatory environment:

- CSO partners promote the harmonisation of CSO regulation at the sub-national level

CSO spotlight:

- Civil Society for Conflict Resolution in Nigeria

CSO SYSTEM STRENGTHENING

ACT grantee empowers 80 youth and persons with disability in Plateau state

Eighty youths and persons with disability (PWDs) in the Jebbu-Miango and Saya communities of the Bassa LGA in Plateau state received technical and vocational training from the Youth Adolescent Reflection and Action Centre (YARAC) consortium (an ACT grantee). The aim is to improve their livelihoods to combat the high rate of unemployment among young people.

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, [unemployment is a major trigger of drug and substance abuse](#). And the World Bank reports that [over 1 billion people are estimated to be living with some form of disability](#).

However, economic development programmes in Nigeria and elsewhere are still focused on the (perceived) costs of disability inclusion rather than the opportunities it provides for economic growth and poverty reduction.

Funded by the
European Union



Implemented by
the British Council



As a result, the YARAC consortium – with support from the ACT programme – established a technical and vocational (TVET) component of its project to constructively engage youths in both the Jebbu-Miango and Saya communities to reduce their vulnerability to drug and substance abuse, increase their employability, and reduce their participation in violence and political restiveness.

The project targeted those whose sources of livelihood were adversely affected by the 2021 Plateau Crisis. From November 2022 to January 2023, 80 beneficiaries (45 females and 35 males) were trained in vocational skills, including tailoring, bead making, articulation, design, and project proposals.

The consortium consulted widely with community leaders, women, men, young people, and people with disability from both communities on the selection of beneficiaries. Participants benefitted from a one-day financial literacy training and starter packs with tools to start their businesses.

“You are not giving us fish but teaching and empowering our youth to fish themselves. This is making them less vulnerable to violence.”

Bra Irigwe, Chairman, Traditional Council, Bassa LGA

CSO partners enhance community access to WASH

The YARAC consortium – an ACT grantee – has improved access to safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities for over 3,500 people in the Jebbu-Miango and Saya communities in Plateau state.

To improve access to WASH, YARAC built a borehole and two blocks of four toilets in both communities, following a series of advocacy visits to key stakeholders; including the Plateau state commissioner for NGO Affairs, the Plateau Rural, Urban Water and Sanitation Agency, the Paramount Ruler of Bassa LGA, the Chairman of Bassa LGA, and others, to gain their support and commitment towards improving citizens' livelihoods.

To ensure sustainability, 15 people were tasked with overseeing the upkeep and safety of the facilities. The people were drawn from each community and received hygiene promotion training. They are required to create an action plan for the management and upkeep of the restrooms. A memorandum of understanding for facility management and maintenance was also signed with the communities.

These new facilities have increased access to clean water and safe toilets for community members, particularly women, children and persons with disability. The facilities have the potential to reduce open defecation and communicable diseases associated with poor environmental and personal hygiene and sanitation.

“It is a pleasant surprise that people from far away who don't know us can come with their resources and construct a borehole for us. We promise to carefully use these facilities and ensure their maintenance.”

Maitala Yasanyi, village head, Saya



Citizens are introduced to new WASH facilities in Plateau state. Source: YARAC

AFRILAW combats forced labour in Enugu

The African Law Foundation (AFRILAW) – an ACT grantee – has received funding to tackle the forced labour of victims (including women and children) in the cocoa industry. The organisation has expanded its operations beyond Enugu state to Abuja where some women and PWDs are employed.

An objective of the ACT programme is to build the capacity of CSOs to become credible drivers of change. As reported by AFRILAW, ACT's proposal writing and fundraising training influenced several proposals, out of which two were successful.

Additionally, AFRILAW highlighted there has been a significant improvement in financial management, reporting, and record-keeping processes as a result of capacity building from ACT. The CSO's registration with the Special Control Unit against Money Laundry (SCUML) is up to date and fully compliant. AFRILAW also confirmed that its capacity and relationship with relevant stakeholders has improved.

Evidently, the ACT training courses have assisted the organisation in maintaining financial integrity and prudence in financial management among the senior management staff. It has also aided the CSO to establish a system to detect and report fraud within the organisation.

“Trainings like the use of QUICK BOOK has helped us to demonstrate to our potential funding partners that we have improved our financial management system and our capacity to manage their fund.”

Barr. Chinwike Okereke, Founder and Chief Executive Director, AFRILAW

ACT strengthens emerging CBO in Edo state

The Edo state government has recognised the Society for Awareness and Family Initiatives (SAFI) – a community-based organisation in Edo state – for working with the state government to address gender-based violence (GBV). This comes after the ACT programme's capacity development support interventions.

SAFI was set up out of the need to restore broken family value systems and empowerment, which is manifesting in high crime rates, gender-based violence, and an increasing number of out-of-school children in the state.

The CBO benefited from tailored training, coaching and mentoring from the ACT programme in 2022. SAFI confirmed that with ACT support, the organisation has developed an organisational structure, policies, systems, and procedures. SAFI has also secured a physical office.

In 2023, SAFI was recognised by the state government for addressing the GBV crisis in the state and was nominated for the GBV dashboard. This is an online platform aimed at addressing the GBV data gap for programme planning and implementation at the federal and state levels.

“I have a strong desire to help people out of a situation in a real society into a model society.”

Abraham Obode, President and Founder, SAFI

Victims of illegal migration empowered by CAIMAT in Edo state

Creation of Alternatives to Irregular Migration and Trafficking (CAIMAT) – an ACT grantee – has been creating jobs and empowering PWDs and youths (including victims of human trafficking and illegal migration) through skills acquisition programmes.

According to reports, the largest number of victims of trafficking in Nigeria come from Edo state. This is why CAIMAT is enabling young people in Benin to have increased access to socio-economic alternatives to irregular migration and empowering them to make good choices.

Through CAIMAT initiatives, several youths and PWDs have been trained in shoe and bag making, and barbing amongst other skills. This has made them more beneficial to society and improved their economic output.

“With this skill, the sky is my starting point. In the next two years, I see myself as a very successful leatherwork merchant if I am assisted accordingly.”

Michael Chimezie Okorie, beneficiary

WORI initiates climate change awareness campaign in River state

The Women Rights and Empowerment Initiative (WORI) – an ACT partner – has strengthened the institutional and community structures of 90 eco-preneurs, 40 school children and 30 government workers in the Ikwerre LGA of Rivers state to adapt to climate change through its project: “Enhancing Awareness and Institutional Capacity on Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation”.

Residents of Rivers state have been disproportionately affected by the impact of climate change – from oil spills resulting from crude oil exploration to incessant flooding incidents and gas flaring. To mitigate this, WORI empowered women, young people and PWDs to embark on climate change actions within their local government and beyond.

The project received wide acceptance from constituents because of the inclusive and participatory approach adopted by WORI. Through the creation of a Climate Action Monitoring Group – made up of representatives from youth, community leaders, community-based organisations, government, and the

private sector – the project has directly benefited about 715 people consisting of women, men, boys, girls, and youth. The group was formed to promote and sustain behavioural change and climate-friendly practices within the state.

To raise public awareness and sustain the project’s objectives, handbooks and manuals were created and distributed to the public; electronic media was used for mass communication and awareness creation through radio jingles with relevant messages; and guest speakers were hired to educate the public on global warming, climate change and related issues.

Also, traditional rulers (Nye-nweali), the Council of Chiefs and elders (highest decision-making body in the communities) were engaged. WORI supported the creation of Climate Action Clubs in secondary schools to empower youth to drive climate action.

“We have become preachers and evangelists of climate change. We now talk about climate change in our various social meetings and gatherings.”

Chibuzor Wekhe, beneficiary

400 women benefit from digital literacy support in Rivers state

Talklove Africa Foundation (TAF) is collaborating with the ACT programme to close the digital gender gap by providing essential digital skills and opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship. About 400 rural women in Rivers, including PWDs, have benefited from the initiative.

The project aims to address the prevalent gender disparities in the digital realm in Rivers state as women face high rates of unemployment, work in less productive and precarious sectors, earn lower wages, and have limited access to critical skills like digital literacy.

Through the grant provided by ACT, TAF is implementing a free and comprehensive digital literacy training programme. The project encompasses various stages of women’s development, focusing on their acquisition of digital skills, access to employment and entrepreneurship opportunities. The initiative focuses on policy advocacy and overcoming cultural and social barriers.

It also aims to encourage strategic interactions between local leaders and government representatives towards strengthening commitment to reducing digital gender inequality in the community economy. Strategic engagements with private sector tech companies and state government officials will also be deployed to secure commitments towards reducing digital gender inequality in the local economy.

This partnership aims to bring about long lasting change and improve the digital environment in Rivers state by equipping women with in-demand digital skills.

“The collaboration with ACT to further bridge the digital gap amongst women is a testament to the sustained impact that the programme has made through our capacity development grant. So far, we have successfully built the digital literacy of indigent women and girls in Rivers state.”

Cynthia Obinwanne, Executive Director, Talklove Africa Foundation

CSO establishes 'women-support-women' group in Enugu state

As a result of ACT trainings on rights-based advocacy and gender and social inclusion (GESI) in governance, ACT CSO partners are working to improve women's participation in politics.

The Idikacho Women in Governance and Affirmative Action for Women Initiative are partnering with the ACT programme to make politics more inclusive in Enugu state. As part of this initiative, a 'women-support-women' platform was established to mentor and engage women to participate in the primaries of the state's 2023 elections. The platform is a WhatsApp group with over 230 participants, including 30 female political aspirants from different parties and political affiliations, women in the media, civil society, faith-based organisations, and the diaspora.

By 30 April 2022, there was an increased number of women running for elective positions and who had secured tickets to run for positions in the Senate, House of Representatives, and the Legislature. This led to the need to develop advocacy messages and to engage the State Governor and other stakeholders to support the election of women in the state.

The group paid a courtesy visit to the Executive Governor of Enugu state, His Excellency Rt. Hon. Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi, to appreciate his efforts at including women in the governance structures of the state. The group pointed out that there were many more eligible women aspirants than there had ever been in the history of electioneering in state. They encouraged the Governor to create an enabling environment for more women to participate actively in the state leadership roles.

The visit was an opportunity for the group to create a working relationship with the leadership of the state. The women received a commitment from the governor to support those who have the capacity and competence needed for their leadership roles.

CSO REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT

CSO partners advocate for the harmonisation of CSO regulation at sub-national level

In Enugu state, a group of CSOs – partnering with ACT – have taken on the responsibility of advocating for the harmonisation of the regulation of CSOs in the state.

For a long time, the ACT programme has been working to create a more enabling regulatory environment for CSOs in Nigeria and has supported the development of platforms, such as the CSO regulatory platform to help CSOs comply with government regulations towards a harmonised regulatory process.

A team of 32 CSO representatives in Enugu state met virtually to express their commitment to ensuring the continuity and sustainability of ACT activities, including the harmonisation of the regulation of CSOs at the state level.

To achieve this, a seven-man steering committee was set up to mobilise for the support and commitment of other non-partner CSOs in the state. Membership was drawn from the Idikacho Women in Governance; the Institute for Growth and

Development; the Women Information Network; the Development Strategy Centre; the New Century Initiative; the Global Health Awareness and Research Foundation; and the New Life Community Care Initiative.

The team pledged to work together to achieve these objectives and requested further engagements to enable them to reflect on the issues and its benefits; have a clear and shared understanding of the initiative; agree on strategies; identify more people and stakeholders to be engaged; and stay focused.

“It is necessary for the state government to begin providing a law that gives the registration of CSOs a legal backing. Benue is the only state in Nigeria that has legal backing for CSO operations at the state level.”

Dr Cosmas Ohaka, Managing Partner, Development Strategy Centre

CSO SPOTLIGHT:

Civil Society Organisation for Conflict Resolution in Nigeria

The Civil Society Organisation for Conflict Resolution in Nigeria (CS-CRIN) is a non-governmental organisation based in Yola, Adamawa state. CS-CRIN advocates for the peaceful coexistence and a safe environment free from violent conflicts and mass atrocities in society. The CSO focuses on justice, democracy, security, peacebuilding, conflict management and resolution through promoting and developing creative solutions to challenges that impede development in Nigeria.

The organisation has carried out capacity development and strengthening activities, such as training on communications and media; advocacy and rights-based advocacy; financial control and management; human resources; knowledge management; fundraising; gender and social inclusion; project cycle management; research and analysis; civil society compliance to regulatory frameworks; governance and leadership skills; as well as mentoring and coaching sessions (on financial control, management and organisational strategy) from the ACT programme. This support has broadened the knowledge gaps of staff and helped management to develop competencies and skills that can make the organisation more effective and sustainable.



The CS-CRIN team © CS-CRIN

We asked CS-CRIN how ACT support has helped to strengthen capacity within the organisation.

“Before the engagement with ACT, we had limited knowledge of the civil society regulatory framework in Nigeria. With the trainings and coaching, we now know more and comply with the regulatory framework.”

The big triumphs of CS-CRIN have been on the programmatic side of the organisation. This was achieved through all the capacity development trainings on project cycle management delivered by ACT.

“The ACT trainings have been stepped down to all staff. We are applying the new skills to our activities daily. We better understand 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.”

“The gender and social inclusion aspects of ACT capacity development activities have strengthened our capacity to function well with our stakeholders, particularly the gender aspect of our work. We are a more gender-sensitive and friendly organisation. We now run an all-inclusive policy on gender and social inclusion.”

“Before the ACT intervention, CS-CRIN had a weak financial system. With the training and coaching sessions on financial control and management, it is now strengthened significantly. We have rejigged our systems and have functional financial control, management and procurement policies in place.”

For more information

www.csocrinigeria.org

FACTS & FIGURES:

(May 2019 – July 2023)

Number of CSOs benefiting from capacity strengthening

202

Number of trainings delivered

174+

States covered by ACT

10

OTHER ACTIVITIES COMPLETED WITHIN THIS PERIOD

- Coordination meeting with the CSO 'Promoting Local Response Capacity and Partnership' on the Nigeria NGO support hub
- Review of submissions from FCT CSOs for the pilot C1 outcomes stories harvesting activity and planning meeting with nine states State Focal Persons for roll out of data collection template
- Continued support to five capacity development Providers towards development of frameworks (communications strategy, knowledge management) and M&E tools for sustainability of learning on the civic action learning website.
- Continued support to granting process for successful CSOs for three non-ACT CSOs in 10 ACT implementing states

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

- Onboarding/technical session for 10 CSOs for replication of ACT capacity development process through coaching and mentoring grant for 30 non-ACT CSO across states
- Meeting with Caritas Nigeria to discuss further opportunities for sustainability of learning and capacity development support to CSOs
- Continued support to capacity development providers to host a monthly webinar series for CSOs
- Support to technical working group on the development of a code of corporate governance for NGOs
- Meeting with CAC, PENCOM, FIRS and SCUML on progress of mainstreaming gender and social inclusion
- Meeting and continued support to the National Technical Committee on Civil Society Legislative Engagement
- Continued support to the CSO Accountability and Transparency Initiative
- Continued support to the CSO National Self-Regulation Council to facilitate the voluntary adoption of the "model" self-regulatory framework at the national and sub-national levels
- Support to the harmonisation of CSO registration procedures at sub-national levels in Nigeria

Find out more

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