

SPECIAL BULLETIN

AGENTS FOR CITIZEN-DRIVEN TRANSFORMATION

16 Days of Activism 2023: Invest to prevent violence against women and girls



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This bulletin summarises the key highlights and outcomes of the 16 Days of Activism campaign held across five ACT programme states and the FCT

16 Days of Activism 2023

The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence is an annual international campaign that begins on 25 November – the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women – and ends on 10 December – Human Rights Day. The campaign aims to build awareness and momentum in the global effort to eradicate violence against women and girls.

In 2023, the global campaign theme was “Invest to Prevent Violence Against Women & Girls”¹ and focused on the importance of financing different prevention strategies to stop violence from occurring in the first place.

To commemorate the campaign in Nigeria, civil society organisations (CSOs) participated in a series of activities across the ACT programme states (Edo, Plateau, Lagos and Kano), culminating in a national policy conversation with key stakeholders in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). These activities were supported by the ACT programme over the campaign period from 25 November-7 December 2023.



H.E. Josephine Piyo, Deputy Governor, Plateau State. Source: ACT

State highlights

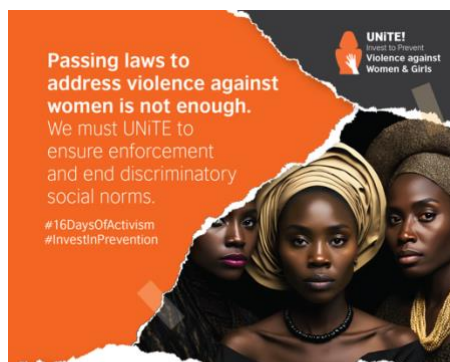
In the **FCT**, the ACT-supported campaign began with community town hall meetings held in three area councils. The purpose was to convince duty bearers to commit to boosting investment in gender-based violence (GBV) prevention, enforcing the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Act, and ensuring survivors' and potential survivors' access to justice.

ACT collaborated with CSOs partner (WRAPA) to host a 'social media hackathon' to engage young Nigerians during the 16 Days of Activism. The aim was to jointly develop a social media campaign to end violence against women and girls. Participants were encouraged to use their social media accounts to invite followers to be an ally in preventing VAWG by taking a stand publicly and engaging in activities and events to raise awareness of VAWG in their communities.

In **Edo State**, policy makers brainstormed how to put an end to violence against women and girls in the state. Stakeholders pledged their commitment to ending GBV. They also developed a data collection tool on violence against women and girls (VAWG).

In **Plateau State**, CSOs organised a one-day symposium to increase financial inclusion and economic opportunities for women. The event called on state-based financial institutions and relevant ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) to support women's access to financial services, including deposit banks. It also focused on developing political will to execute the VAPP Act and raise investments for GBV prevention.

In **Lagos**, CSOs launched a campaign with government officials, policymakers, and relevant stakeholders to bridge the gap and foster understanding on GBV. The aim was to ensure citizens are aware and able to recognise, report, and combat GBV. CSOs advocated to increase funding/budgets for services that address GBV. The overall goal is to eliminate GBV by addressing the underlying causes, raising awareness, advocating for action, and creating a safer environment for women and girls. The campaign also raised public knowledge of GBV-related laws and regulations in the state.



The objective of Civil Society Advocacy is to encourage collective engagement towards the eradication of violence against women and girls in Nigeria.

Social media from the hackathon held with young Nigerians. Source: ACT

In **Rivers State**, a consortium of CSOs (Talklove Africa Foundation, D-Ability Initiative, Coalition of Eastern Non-Governmental Organisations and Centre for Environment and Human Rights Development) hosted 70 stakeholders and partners at a high-level dialogue session on the prevention of violence against women and girls. Highlights included a special address by the SGBV response team who underlined the laws geared towards the protection of women, girls and children. The response team shared that 128 cases were reported in 2023, but lamented the slow pace in getting justice for victims from the court and advocated for a special court to facilitate justice to serve as a deterrent for potential perpetrators.

Finally in **Kano**, CSOs launched an advocacy campaign to empower citizens and relevant parties to address GBV in the state. The objective was to boost investment in programmes that prevent VAWG, offer support services for survivors, and improve legal frameworks. Partnerships were established between government, civil society, and the private sector to jointly tackle VAWG. The campaign created awareness about dismantling harmful gender norms, strengthening legal frameworks, providing support services for survivors, and promoting gender equality in education and economic opportunities.

¹ https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-11/unite_concept_note_english.pdf

“Funding of gender-based violence is critical to the well-being of women and national development.”

National dialogue event on GBV

The 2023 National Dialogue event was held in the FCT. It called on greater support from stakeholders to end violence against women and girls, including state governments, the private sector, civil society, universities, donors, and development partners. The goal was to increase investment and strengthen policy to tackle GBV. Stakeholders were encouraged to join the ‘Generation Equality Action Coalition on GBV’ and make tangible policy, programme and financial commitments.

Speakers highlighted that it is essential to have **gender laws**, but they must be acted on through **commitments from government and state officials**, as well as traditional rulers. It was agreed that a **multi-sectoral action-costed plan** be developed in collaboration with CSOs, and a **GBV response budget line** created in state and national government budgets. CSOs committed to working closely with ministries to **monitor** and ensure that allocated funds were released for implementation. Civil society brainstormed how **other sources of funds** can be accessed for GBV survivors' funds. Stakeholders also discussed the introduction of a GBV subject course in universities and to establish a GBV mentorship program for women and girls to increase awareness. Finally, stakeholders advocated for Sexual Assault Referral Centres – like in Lagos – to be created in primary healthcare centres across the country.



“I am pleased with the high calibre of attendees at this event. Our intention is that the information conveyed will be taken back and effectively implemented.”

Damilare Babalola, National Programme Manager, ACT programme

According to Hajiya Saudatu Mahdi, the Secretary General of Women’s Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative, the National Dialogue brought attention to the impact of GBV on the economy, affecting both victims and perpetrators and hindering national development. One major issue highlighted was the lack of proper **budget allocation** for the GBV response in the Women Affairs Ministry’s budget at the federal and state levels.

Damilare Babalola, ACT National Programme Manager. Source: ACT

“The role of CEDAW is to monitor and ensure accountability to the convention on the elimination of violence against women and girls. This includes activities during the 16 Days of Activism that are holding people accountable and focusing on the financial dimensions of protecting all genders from violence.”

Esther Ehobamien-Mshelia, Nigeria Representative, United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

Summary of Commitments

During the campaign period, various commitments were made:

- CSOs in all states pledged to continue creating awareness beyond the 16 Days of Activism on the rights of women and girls, including financial inclusion, continue with the social media hackathon, and advocate to leaders of culture and faith
- Lagos: The state television committed to partnering with CSOs to mainstream gender in their programmes
- Edo State: Stakeholders agreed to have a quarterly meeting to strengthen reporting and data collection, and the Ministry of Social Development and Gender Issues committed to taking the leadership of the meeting going forward
- Kano State: The state government committed to reproducing the VAPP bill in local languages
- Rivers State: A policy directive was issued for all prosecuting institutions to adopt the VAPP and related laws in the management of all SGBV cases



Participants at the National Dialogue. Source: ACT

Key Resolutions

At the National Dialogue event, participants and panellists agreed on the following resolutions to be achieved for the year 2024:

- **Understanding the gender budgeting process:** It is important that participants, frontline MDAs, and CSOs learn and understand the budgeting and planning process, specifically gender budgeting, to better articulate programmes, interventions, and proposals for impact and results. CSOs will approach the Ministry of Budget and Planning to request support and training, and identify new ministers and legislators to act as new champions for GBV prevention and response.
- **Dedicated lines for GBV prevention and response in state and national budgets:** At the state level, ministries should adopt specific lines for GBV intervention. Specific ministries include women affairs, justice, information, health, and education. At the federal level, a specific line in the National Charter of Accounts for GBV prevention and response should be incorporated.
- **Multi-sectoral, multi-dimensional GBV costed action plan:** States should develop and adopt plans that cover budgeting, allocation and disbursement of funds for specific GBV activities. This should also include mapping communities and local governments. CSOs can play a role and monitor these plans with an official 'means of verification' to ensure funds are used where/how they should be.
- **GBV Survivor Support Fund in all states:** The VAPP law includes a provision that all states dedicate a fund solely for GBV prevention and response. For those states that have removed the provision for the fund, a legal review is required to re-instate it and provide the legal backing for the fund. A body of principles and frameworks for the implementation of the fund should be drawn up, including fundraising through corporate social responsibility, tax deductions for donor companies, etc.
- **GBV Investment Coordinating Agency:** Stakeholders advocated for the creation of a coordinating agency in the state with the goal of increasing and coordinating budgets for GBV prevention and response across different agencies.
- **CSO roadmaps and learning:** CSOs pledged to share and learn from the gains achieved from step one of the roadmaps planned for this year, and acknowledge the challenges conquered towards creating positive shifts.
- **Pressure legislators** to nominate projects that support VAWG prevention and response.
- **Budget tracking:** CSOs will track the \$5Bn fund dedicated/allocated to improving girl-child education in the north-east and north-West for the past 5-7 years.
- **Report card event in 2024:** Stakeholders committed to report back in 2024 at an event entitled, 'Report Card', and share results, impact, and learnings from 2023. The European Union committed to funding the event.



Participants at the National Dialogue. Source: ACT



Stakeholders at an advocacy event in Kano. Source: ACT

Conclusion

The events held to commemorate the 16 Days of Activism 2023 campaign provided an excellent platform for CSOs to share their stories and challenges with a broad network of government agencies, policymakers, and the media. This fulfilled the objectives of drawing more attention to the needs of survivors of GBV and supporting CSOs in communicating more effectively.

Throughout the campaign, it was evident from the discussions with stakeholders that investment, whether material or immaterial, is crucial in the fight against GBV. Stakeholders agreed that deeper collaboration is required between CSOs and the government and there is a need to develop a costed multi-sector action plan to tackle GBV. Going forward, CSOs will play a crucial role in working closely with ministries to monitor and ensure that allocated funds are released for GBV projects. Crucially, concrete commitments and resolutions were made and will be followed-up on in 2024. The European Union has pledged to support civil society in these follow-up efforts.

TESTIMONIALS FROM CSO PARTICIPANTS

“It is important that change comes from within our communities and leadership - not just the international community - to gain more acceptance and create shifts in line with our belief systems.”

Sheikh Zakariyya Husayn, Sultan Foundation for Peace and Development, FCT

“There is a need for a structured approach to governance on the challenges of GBV in Nigeria. An approach that will encourage synergy amongst institutions and organisations responsible for tackling the issue.”

Dr Limota Goroso Giwa, CEO of International Women Communication Centre, Kwara State

“MDAs need to understand the budgeting process as a whole, and how we can incorporate projects to tackle GBV into budgeting. There are many approaches to funding - some of which are public-private partnerships, state funding, philanthropists, private sector, citizens, CSOs, and counterpart funding for states to access.”

Elizabeth Egharevba, Ministry of Finance, Budget and Planning

“Enugu State has trained judges and set up family courts and sexual assault referral centres. But the main challenge is operating a shelter for GBV survivors.”

Dr Uzoamaka Uzoechina, Director, Gender Issues and Technical Adviser to H.E. the First Lady of Enugu State

“In Anambra State, significant efforts have been made to ensure that women's voices are heard and not drowned, and that women who experience any form of abuse receive adequate attention and can report it. The VAPP and Child Rights laws are now being enforced more effectively than ever before in the state.”

Hon. Chiamaka Nnake, Commissioner, Ministry of Economic Budget, Planning and Development, Anambra State

“There is the need for a society that respects women and girls and condemns gender-based violence in all forms. We must stand up and challenge patriarchal norms that are harmful to women and girls.”

Hon. Rukayat Motunrayo Shittu, Legislator, Kwara State Assembly

“A special court to handle SGBV cases should be created for the quick response and handling of SGBV cases.”

Tombari Dumka-Kote, Coordinator, Rivers State Response Team on Violence against Women & Children



Stakeholders at 16 Days of Activism event in Rivers. Source: ACT



Stakeholders at policy think tank in Edo State. Source: ACT



Stakeholders at the GBV sensitisation event in Lagos. Source: ACT

MEDIA ROUND-UP

EU, CSOs seek increased funding, awareness to end gender-based violence

<https://healthwise.punchng.com/eu-csos-seek-increased-funding-awareness-to-end-gender-based-violence/>

Stakeholders pledge commitment to end gender-based violence in Edo

<https://guardian.ng/news/stakeholders-pledge-commitment-to-end-gender-based-violence-in-edo/>

VAWG: Stakeholders seek Investments, access to justice for survivors

<https://dailytrust.com/vawg-stakeholders-seek-investments-access-to-justice-for-survivors/>

CSO organises friendly football match in Borno State to raise awareness against GBV and gender barriers

<https://youtu.be/4XDQiglCzeA?si=AyLu1wP6cSJ0UcP7>

VAWG: Stakeholders advocate for justice for survivors

<https://nannews.ng/2023/12/10/vawg-stakeholders-advocate-investments-access-to-justice-for-survivors/>

How Nigeria and others can raise \$42b to end GBV

<https://guardian.ng/news/how-nigeria-others-can-raise-42b-to-end-gbv/>

EU-ACT partner with 200 CSOs to mitigate gender-based violence

<https://sweetcrudereports.com/eu-act-partners-200-csos-to-mitigate-gender-based-violence/>

Rivers records 3,000 sexual violence cases in 4 years

<https://dailytrust.com/rivers-record-3000-sexual-violence-cases-in-4-years/#:~:text=48%3A18%20WAT-.The%20Coordinator%20of%20Rivers%20State%20Response%20Team%20on%20Violence%20Against,based%20violence%20in%20the%20state>

Group partners with 200 CSOs to mitigate violence against women in Rivers

<https://www.thenewswriterng.com/2023/11/30/group-partners-200-csos-to-mitigate-violence-against-women-in-rivers/>

<https://independent.ng/group-partners-200-csos-to-mitigate-violence-against-women-in-rivers/>

Federal government to develop legal procedures for prosecution of GBV in schools

<https://www.vanguardngr.com/2023/11/fq-to-develop-legal-procedures-for-prosecution-of-gbv-in-schools-says-agf/>

VIDEOS

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4XDQiglCzeA>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rQVP6FwOzHE>

https://www.mediafire.com/file/dmzk2sqcjh9s0ce/AIT_16+Days+of+Activism.mp4/file

Find out more

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