

RULE OF LAW AND ANTI-CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA

The Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption (RoLAC) Programme is working to strengthen the application of law and curb corruption in Nigeria.

RoLAC focuses on:

- reforming the criminal justice system
- ensuring women, children and people with disabilities have access to justice
- improving the performance of anti-corruption agencies and how they work together
- enhancing the voice of Nigerians in curbing corruption.

We work at the federal level and in five focal states: Adamawa, Anambra, Edo, Kano and Lagos.

The five-year programme (2017–22) is funded by the European Union and implemented by the British Council.

Find out more:

www.justice-security.ng

IMPROVING DELIVERY OF PUBLIC SERVICES THROUGH COLLABORATION BETWEEN CSOS AND ANTI-CORRUPTION AGENCIES



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WHY THIS CASE STUDY?

This case study illustrates the impact of coordinated action by non-state and state actors to enhance public services and ensure the transparent and efficient use of public funds. The change brought about by this work has the potential to positively influence the relationship between government and CSOs, and ultimately provide better public services for Nigerian citizens.

Funded by the European Union



Implemented by the British Council



BACKGROUND

Public projects such as electricity, water supply, healthcare, education, and roads are designed to improve the lives of citizens. To ensure that funds meant for public projects are well spent, the Office of the Auditor General of the Federation in Nigeria undertakes an annual audit of public revenue and expenditure. The aim is to guard against the possible misappropriation of funds and to ensure effective budget implementation.

Where breaches are observed, recommendations are made to the National Assembly, whose responsibility it is to

oversee budget implementation for corrective actions. In reality, this oversight seldom happens, and projects abandoned by contractors are visible across the country.

Furthermore, individuals and organisations that are responsible for breaches may not be prosecuted if the anti-corruption agencies, like the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) - mandated to receive and investigate complaints from members of the public on allegations of corrupt practices and prosecute the offenders - do not receive such complaints.

APPROACH

RoLAC supported the Paradigm Leadership Support Institute (PLSI) - a civil society organisation (CSO) working to promote citizens' active participation in Nigerian public audit - to carry out a detailed analysis of the 2016 Auditor General's Report and highlight key audit red flags requiring follow-up actions. PLSI identified two abandoned projects: the Igboho-Kisi Road Rehabilitation and the Malete Community Water Project.

The Igboho-Kisi Road Rehabilitation contract was awarded in 2014 by the Ogun-Osun River Basin Development Authority. It is a 31-kilometre road linking Kisi and Igboho, the headquarter of Orelope Local Government Area. The contract was for a three-month duration and worth N99.8million. However, the road work was never completed.

The Malete Community Water Project focused on the construction and upgrade of the community's water works. This contract was awarded in October 2013 for N1.02billion for completion within 12 months. The work

was still outstanding and impacting residents. Malete hosts 10,000 students at the Kwara State University and over 3,000 community members.

Both projects were flagged by the 2016 Auditor General's Report as uncompleted and abandoned. However, no action had been taken and both communities continued to suffer from the deprivation of these key amenities.

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The scarcity of water causes conflicts between the students at the university and community residents. ”

Abdullah Ibrahim, Chief Imam, Malete community

“

Thousands of us struggle to access water from a single borehole in the community. We have to queue as if we are voting in an election. ”

Zikrullah Bello, university student



The CSO embarked on an advocacy campaign to raise awareness of the issues. Reader-friendly infographics were created to convey the issues and disseminated to citizens in both communities, as well as through social media to attract a wider audience. This enabled stakeholders to better understand the information and to demand accountability from contractors and public officials.



PLSI targeted CSOs, journalists, and social media influencers to increase publicity about the issues and encourage full investigative reporting.

A television programme was hosted by PLSI where the issues were discussed. The programme drew the attention of relevant government agencies and put pressure on them to respond to the issues. During the discussion programme, stories from residents of the affected communities were highlighted.

Policy briefs were developed by PLSI for the public, the anti-corruption agencies, and affected community stakeholders. The briefs provided concise summaries of audit issues, the policy options to deal with them, and recommendations on how stakeholders could respond.

“

This awareness programme helped us in the Malete community to better understand the audit issues. This empowered us to engage with the relevant public officials on the abandoned water project in our community. ”

Aremu Usman, Vice President, Malete Community Development Association

PLSI also submitted petitions to the ICPC to encourage the investigation of the issues and the possible prosecution of offenders. The ICPC invited PLSI to its headquarters in Abuja to provide additional information to aid its investigations.

RESULTS

Resources recovered

Following the CSO's engagement on the Igboho-Kisi Road Rehabilitation Project, the ICPC froze the contractor's bank account. The contractor was made to return N9.8million to the government. This recovery of funds represented the difference of money paid and the level of job executed as determined by the ICPC's evaluators.

Project completed

The ICPC investigation and intervention in the Malete Community Water Project led to the work being completed. The water works are now fully functional and serving the residents and the students.

“

We are very happy now. The abandoned water project has been completed and our community now has water. ”

Aremu Usman, Vice President, Malete Community Development Association

LESSONS LEARNED

A strong collaboration between state and non-state actors improved reform outcomes.

Collaboration amongst accountability actors - the ICPC, civil society, and media organisations - led to stronger advocacy and results. This partnership enabled a more effective use of audit information to address the issues of the misapplication and diversion of public funds.

Accessible information increased public engagement.

When public projects and financial reports are too technical, it is difficult for citizens to understand the issues, effectively engage, and demand accountability. The analysis and simplification of the audit issues increased the understanding of the media, CSOs, and

the public. This led to more involvement in discussions on community issues, tracking government actions, and demand for transparency and accountability.

Public facilities work better with oversight.

The dearth of social services in marginalised and underserved communities across Nigeria is not just a consequence of inadequate budgetary provisions or insufficient releases of funds for projects. It is more a result the failure of citizens and public oversight agencies to hold individuals and organisations to account. The campaign delivered by PLSI ensured that citizens better understood their rights and responsibilities. Citizens were provided a platform to engage public agencies and to put pressure on them to address their grievances. As a result, public agencies were more engaged on the issues and forced to act.



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Find out more

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