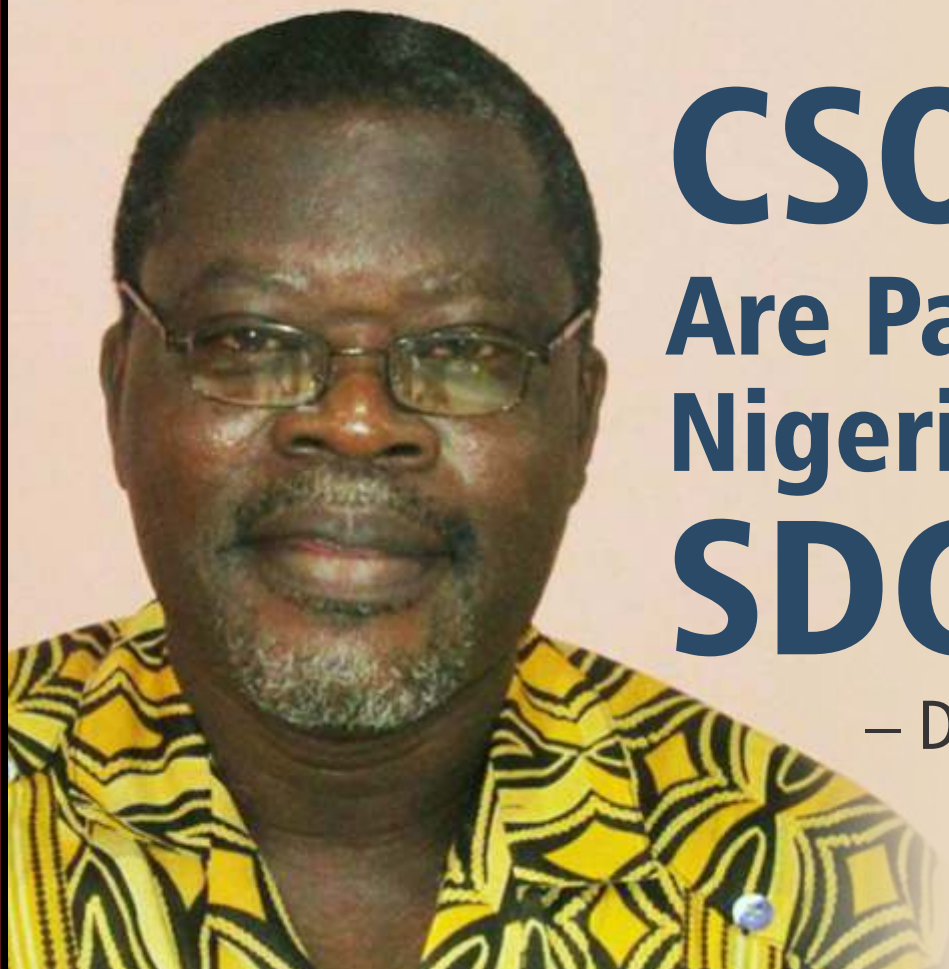


SDGs Monitor

April - June, 2018

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CSOs Are Partnering Nigeria To Drive SDGs

— David Tola Winjobi



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X-raying CSOs' Role in Localising the SDGs in Nigeria

FOR more than two years, the Nigerian government has been striving to implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on September 25, 2015.

However, given the scope and ambition of the SDGs, it is clear that government alone cannot achieve the agenda. Those in authority will need the broad involvement of other stakeholders, such as the private sector, the public and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). Indeed, the CSOs serve as one of the key drivers of the SDGs process in Nigeria.

It is against this background that in this edition of *SDGs Monitor*, we are focusing is on the role of the CSOs in localising the SDGs in Nigeria. In our well investigated reports, we highlight how some leading CSOs have been partnering with the Nigerian government to ensure effective implementation of the global goals in the seven selected SDGs we are closely monitoring. The selected SDGs are:

- **No Poverty: SDG-1**
- **Quality Education: SDG-4**
- **Gender Equality: SDG-5**
- **Decent Work and Economic Growth: SDG-8:**
- **Reduced Inequalities: SDG-10**
- **Climate Action: SDG-13**
- **Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions : SDG-16**

Basically, our reports capture the collaborative synergies between the government and the CSOs in the implementation of these seven critical goals.

However, the process of gathering information for the reports was not quite smooth-sailing as some of the CSOs who were initially enthusiastic and pledged to furnish *SDGs Monitor* with information on how they are strategically partnering the government to drive the SDGs in Nigeria, later reneged on their promise. We found it rather astonishing that some of the CSOs we had contacted for inputs could not respond to our questionnaire meant to gather information on what their various organizations were doing to drive the SDGs.

But our team of crack reporters were undaunted as they tapped their various CSO sources to deliver this edition through well investigated reports in line with our knack for robust journalism practice.

Also in this edition, we feature in our star interview, Dr. David Tola Winjobi, National Coordinator of the Civil Society Coalition on Sustainable Development (CSCSD). The seasoned human rights activist, gender analyst and community development consultant sheds light on how the CSOs are complementing the efforts of the government to mainstream the SDGs in Nigeria.

Happy reading.

Ebere Onwudiwe
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CSOs Are Partnering Nigeria To Drive SDGs – David Tola Winjobi

DR. David Tola Winjobi, National Coordinator, Civil Society Coalition on Sustainable Development (CSCSD) is a seasoned human rights activist, trainer of trainers, gender analyst, community development consultant, thoroughbred researcher, and conflict manager.

With over 20 years' development and human rights experience in organizations such as Amnesty International, Centre for Constitutional Governance, Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD), Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP), Winjobi has vast knowledge of democracy, human rights, poverty and SDGs profile in Nigeria.

He is a sought after international speaker on human rights issues and has made presentations through workshops and seminars on Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in some countries including Ghana, Uganda, Kenya, Nigeria, the United Kingdom and United States. He was the only Nigerian invited by the UN General Assembly in New York in June 2010 as a speaker on MDGs situation in Africa. In December 2010, he was also invited by the UN in Geneva to present a paper on Minority Rights Issue. He was part of the Nigerian civil society delegates to the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) National Volunteer Review in New York in July 2017.

Winjobi is a Draper Hills Fellow, Centre on Democracy, Development and the Rule of Law (CDDRL) at Stanford University, California (USA) as well as Fellow, Human Rights Learning Alliances, Fundar Center of Analysis and Research, Mexico. He is the Africa Focal Person, CSOs Partnership for Development Effectiveness (CPDE), the Founding Coordinator of the South West, Freedom of Information Act Network, Nigeria. A member of African Working Group on SDGs, Winjobi is also an Executive Member, Emerging Scholars and Practitioners in Migration Issues Network (ESPMI), Canada, and founding member, African Civil Society Coalition on Migration and Development (AFRICISCOMD). He was the Convener, Campaign2015+ International (now Civil Society Coalition on Sustainable Development) which had campaigned towards achieving MDGs by 2015 and challenging government to look beyond 2015 and give the lives of people a meaning.

Winjobi's sterling leadership qualities and intellectual disposition have been largely shaped by his academic background. He possesses B.A. Ed. English (1986); M. Ed Psychology (1989); M.A. Peace and Conflict Studies (2006), and PhD Psychology (2000).

In this interview with **SDGs Monitor**, Winjobi provides an insight into the role of the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in localizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Nigeria. Excerpts:



David Tola Winjobi

On September 25, 2015, the United Nations adopted the 17 global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). How would you appraise the role of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in the implementation of the SDGs in Nigeria?

It has often been said that the development of a nation hinges not only on the government but also on individuals and organizations. The deficiency of governments makes room for CSOs but the latter should not be seen as competing with the former because the purpose of the CSOs is not to replace governments. Rather, its purpose is to support the efforts of government so as to improve lives and give the lives of people a meaning by upholding justice, human rights, and defending the rule of law. In other

words, in the face of the current global economic recession, governments alone cannot be solely saddled with the development of a nation because of the scarce resources at their disposal. Hence, all hands must be on deck to salvage the situation. Without mincing words, governments at all levels know that it is their primary responsibility to provide good governance through the provision of the necessary socio-economic services that would impact on the general wellbeing of the governed while the non-state actors (Civil Society Actors) are to complement the efforts of the governments.

CSOs in Nigeria have been playing some critical roles even before the adoption in September 2015 of the 17 SDGs. We may recall that there were series of consultations and deliberations on post-2015 development agenda in which Nigerian CSOs not only participated in government's and UN's deliberations but also organized their own deliberations across Nigeria. Campaign2015+ International (now Civil Society Coalition on Sustainable Development) indeed organized deliberations in five geo-political zones of Nigeria. These deliberations involved faith-based organizations (FBOs), Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), trade unions, professional associations, student organizations, community groups (the poor and the marginalized), town unions, disability groups, women and youth. The essence of these deliberations was to enable people voice out the kind of world they wanted, nay the kind of Nigeria they envisioned. The outcome of these consultations fed into the national deliberations organized by the Nigerian government under the auspices of the Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on MDGs supported by the United Nations Millennium Campaign. In fact, our own coalition came up with a 260+ page book titled: *"A Compendium of Deliberations on post-2015 Development Agenda"* which contains the summary of the deliberations that took place not only in Nigeria but also across the globe. Since September 2015 when the new set of goals was adopted in New York, CSOs in Nigeria have not been resting on their oars. I remember vividly that press conferences were organized in the South West purposely to sensitize the Nigerian people on the new Global Goals and especially to serve as a wake-up call to the Nigerian government so as to hit the ground running in order to attain SDGs. This was also to ensure that the case of SDGs would not be like that of MDGs where late implementation affected achieving the MDGs by 2015.

It is not too late for OSSAP-SDGs to provide an enabling environment for CSOs to operate and sustain Government-CSO Strategy Group on SDGs



To what extent has the Nigerian government been able to sustain the Government-CSO Strategy Group on SDGs which the UN SDGs Action Campaign spearheaded in November 2015?

Yes, the UN SDGs Action Campaign spearheaded Government-CSO Strategy Group on SDGs in November 2015. The goal of the Strategy Group is ambitious while its objectives are laudable. The objectives among others are to deepen understanding of the SDGs and encourage adequate and systematic engagement with all the SDGs; and to ensure coherent and expert approach to programming on the goals and targets of the SDGs. The inauguration actually took place in OSIWA Office in Abuja where the participation of government officials was not encouraging because government was represented by the Chairman of the House Committee on SDGs. The Nigerian government lacks the capacity to sustain the Government-CSO Strategy Group on SDGs. This body has been in coma as there is no capacity to coordinate its meeting. Moreover, the government could not give the deserving leadership direction to the group. The Office of the Senior Special Assistant on SDGs (OSSAP-SDGs) needs to do more. Paramount is the need for OSSAP-SDGs to constructively engage the civil society, the academia, the media, the private sector, professional bodies, donors, youths, women and even children, persons living with disability and other stakeholders as each of these groups has one role or the other to play in achieving the SDGs. It is not too late for OSSAP-SDGs to provide an enabling environment for CSOs to operate and sustain the Government-CSO Strategy Group on SDGs. The idea of impromptu CSO consultation with Abuja-based CSOs erroneously called voluntary national consultation is not the best for the voice of civil society to be heard as several NGOs are being side-lined in such meetings that only take place in Abuja. No amount of money is too small for government to support CSOs' attendance at such meetings; it is nothing about development if such meetings are not about CSOs.

Could you give us an insight into the activities of the Civil Society Coalition on Sustainable Development (CSCSD) and how it is synergizing with the federal and state governments in Nigeria to drive the sustainable development agenda?

The Civil Society Coalition on Sustainable Development is a national coalition of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and networks registered by the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) and active in all the six geo-political zones of Nigeria. With a board of trustees and a national steering committee, CSCSD is the only government-recognized coalition of over 300 registered civil society and NGOs set up essentially for monitoring the implementation of SDGs in Nigeria. It envisions a society whose centre-stage is justice, peace, fulfillment of human rights and development in all ramifications.

Its work is being done in partnership with other civil society organizations, the poor, the marginalized, professional associations, the academia, the private sector, and development partners with a view to pressuring governments to account to the SDGs promises, and give the lives of people a meaning through upholding justice, human rights and development in all ramifications. CSCSD considers all the stakeholders including the poor, the marginalized, the minority, and development agencies as co-partners who have an important but collective role to play in the attainment of the Global Agenda, and upholding of human rights, justice and peace.

Since the SDGs mantra is “leaving no one behind”, in order to attain SDGs by 2030, all hands must be on deck; everyone should be involved while their voices should also count. We need to synergize with governments at all levels. OSSAP-SDGs cannot do it alone. This is our belief at CSCSD. Without mincing words on the realization of SDGs, the civil society and the media are central to creating nationwide awareness, building the capacity of stakeholders, providing information to the grassroots, monitoring the implementation process, and supporting the efforts of the governments in service delivery. The media, our staunch ally, has really been playing a leading role with the civil society as the print, electronic and social media have been giving adequate publicity to issues on the SDGs even free of charge.

In order to support the governments to drive SDGs in Nigeria, CSCSD has implemented many activities around the SDGs from the inception of Agenda 2030 in September 2015. Few among them were: a two-day capacity strengthening workshop on the strategies for localizing the SDGs for CSOs in Abeokuta and Ibadan (March/April 2017); establishment of a Think/Do Tank Group responsible for writing and issuing out position papers, media briefs, press releases, communiqués etc.; media capacity building on commitment to professional reportage on SDGs (June 2017); “*Ojumo Alayo*” 18-week episode, which is an SDGs Yoruba talk-show on the *Africa Independent Television (AIT)* every Saturday; *Splash FM 105.5* Ibadan “SDG Talk” every first Tuesday of the month featured in English; “*Otun Ojo*”/New Dawn OGTV Abeokuta live magazine programme where CSCSD Ogun State members feature

every Monday 7:45 a.m. to 8:45 a.m. to talk about SDG events and gender nexus; and a two-quarter episode on *Sweet FM 107.1* Abeokuta, Ogun State titled “The Podium” every Thursday from 9.00 a.m. to 10 00a.m. featured in both English and Yoruba.

Others were Lagos SDG Conference, (June 15 2017) first of its kind in Nigeria; and an international stakeholders conference on SDGs in Abeokuta (March 6 to 7, 2018). There was also a National SDGs Advocacy Training (August 2017) on Goal 16 so as to enable CSOs to be meaningfully engaging the stakeholders on peace, justice, inclusive societies, transparency and accountability. We also engage in massive production and free distribution of information, education and communication (IEC) materials on the SDGs through leaflets; cards and booklet forms including a 260+ page book entitled “*A Compendium of Deliberations on Post-2015 Development Agenda*”.

Poverty reduction is goal number one of the SDGs. What kind of support is your organization giving national and sub-national governments in Nigeria as they strive to achieve the target of eradicating extreme poverty by 2030?

In fact, Goal 1 is not about poverty reduction *per se*; it is indeed about poverty eradication by 2030. Considering the first target of that goal, it is clearly enshrined that extreme poverty shall be eradicated for all people everywhere in particular for people living on less than \$1.90 a day. I think governments – the Federal Government in particular provided they are sincere, is working in line with some of the targets of goal number one. Target number 3 focuses on implementing nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all to achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable. There is a Social Investments unit/department in the Presidency which has come up with a National Social Protection Programme Framework and Monitoring Plan in the interest of the poor and vulnerable. I remember that in September 2016 there was a national social protection programme organized by ActionAid in which the activities of the Social Investments in the Presidency were presented by the Special Advisor. There are five programmes under Social Investments viz: Home-grown School Feeding Programme; Teach Nigeria; cash transfer programme; enterprise and empowerment programme. There is so much under this social investments programme, including 150 pupils to a caterer to feed in some senatorial districts, N-Power programme to build the skills of youth, partnering with the National Orientation Agency,

In order to support the governments to drive SDGs in Nigeria, CSCSD has implemented many activities around the SDGs from the inception of Agenda 2030 in September 2015

relevant ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) including agric education, Small and Medium Scale Development Agency (SMEDAN), ICT companies at state level, improving household consumption, and cash transfer programme with consideration for the poor in 30% of the Senatorial Districts in Nigeria.

All the activities above need partnership with stakeholders, especially the civil society that has to monitor the process so as not to derail. Many non-state actors are involved in monitoring the Home-grown School Feeding programme in the north. Likewise in the south where the school feeding programme had been in operation by some state governments before the Federal Government's current intervention, many non-state actors are also involved in monitoring how the programme is fairing.

How are civil society organizations propelling the Nigerian government to reduce the growing economic inequality in the country?

The goal of SDG-10 is to reduce inequalities within and among countries. This suggests that there is a growing inequality between one country and the other especially between countries in the global north and the global south. Beyond that, there are inequalities within each country and this can be considered from three perspectives - social, economic and environmental. Unfortunately, most people are concerned about economic inequality. Even at that, social inequality affects economic inequality whereas inequality has no boundary; neither is it a respecter of ethnicity, race, gender, age, religion, or disability. There is a yawning gap between the rich and the poor in our country, Nigeria. The wealth of the nation is skewed in favour of the rich who continue to enrich themselves and impoverish the poor. There is socio-economic inequality between our political leaders and the governed. Inequality is perverse in terms of women's political participation and representation in government against the Beijing Platform for Action. People living below the poverty line of \$1.90 per day are increasing in number while the political class continues to amass wealth. We are told that a Senator of the Federal Republic of Nigeria takes home on quarterly basis a whooping sum of \$29 million (Senators are yet to publish what they earn in order to rebuff this!) still many state governments have thrown their people into further penury as they cannot pay even a pittance of the N18,000 minimum wage. Worst still, many states are currently owing their workers salary arrears; an indication that some states are not viable as they have to go cap in hand to the Federal Government to collect the monthly allocation.

In the face of all this, civil societies have been in the forefront campaigning against inequalities especially against the growing economic inequality in Nigeria. Several of our members are working assiduously on inequalities enshrined in target 2 of Goal 10 of the SDGs by collaborating with and advocating that governments should promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all irrespective of age, sex, disability, ethnicity, religious status or background.

Some members of CSCSD are actually organizing empowerment programmes in order to increase the

status of women while some are meaningfully engaging governments in their respective states to ensure that favourable economic policies are enacted. Indeed, some NGOs like CAFSO-WRAG for Development, Farmers Development Union (FADU) and Justice Development and Peace Commission (JDPC) are directly implementing micro-credit schemes in both rural and urban communities essentially for indigent women. Similarly, the activities of some of our members focus on women's political empowerment. This is strategic with the belief that once women gain political power it would invariably transform to economic empowerment, though this may not be so all of the time. Even then, women's political representation across board at the federal and state levels has not been encouraging because of the unfavourable political atmosphere for women who



may not be able to face the political brigandage that men's politicking is characterized. This is the reason why our members who are involved in the electoral reform system often organize programmes around stemming political brigandage and violence so as to encourage women to participate in politics.

What are the efforts of your organization to ensure gender equality and women's economic empowerment in Nigeria?

Achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls is the focus of Goal 5 of the SDGs. Hardly can one see an organization that is not working in the area of gender; if an organization is not working directly on gender, it is apparent that such organization would have mainstreamed gender into its plans and programmes. However, the activities of CSO on gender go beyond mainstreaming gender but also campaign to ensure that governments at all level also mainstream gender into their plans and programmes while they encourage governments to end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere

There is a yawning gap between the rich and the poor in our country, Nigeria. The wealth of the nation is skewed in favour of the rich who continue to enrich themselves and impoverish the poor. There is socio-economic inequality between our political leaders and the governed

according to target number one of Goal 5. Organizations such as CAFSO-Women's Rights Action Group, Campaign against Impunity and Domestic Violence (CAIDOV) and Gender Development Initiative (GENDI) and many more are prominent when it comes to the issue of gender especially working on violence against women and harmful traditional practices. For example, CAFSO-WRAG for Development has submitted to Oyo State House of Assembly a bill on gender-based violence while clamouring for a special court to try the violators of gender-based violence.

What are the contributions of your organization towards ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education in Nigeria by 2030?

Specifically, Goal 4 target 1 of the SDGs requires "that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes". Primarily, education is the bedrock of development while quality education is dependent upon a good learning environment. However, our organization is saddened by radical de-education of girls in the North East through the dangerous activities of the *Boko Haram* insurgents. In 2016, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) lamented over the 11 million children out of school in Nigeria. *Boko Haram* extremists are further decimating the poor number of children in schools in the North East by abducting school girls. The unpalatable news started on April 14, 2014 with the abduction of over 276 girls from Government Secondary School in Chibok, Borno State by *Boko Haram*. The same month in 2014, 58 male students of the College of Agriculture, Buni Yadi, Yobe State were murdered in cold blood while asleep. Yet on February 19, 2018, *Boko Haram* insurgents attacked Government Girls Science Technical College, Dapchi, Yobe State and made away with 110 girls. The aim of these incessant attacks is to discourage education through radical de-education which tallies with the agenda of *Boko Haram* - "education is a sin".

There are quite a sizeable number of our member-organizations working on education for all among which are; Community Education Advancement of Peace and Development Initiatives (CEAPDI); Women's

Right to Education Programme (WREP), Centre for Youth Initiative on Self Education (CEYISED) and Phelyn Skill Acquisition Centre. It is necessary to point out that some of our members are part of the Bring Back Our Girls Campaign which came up at the behest of the Chibok Girls saga. It needs to be underscored too that many of these organizations took active part during the post-2015 development agenda deliberations especially in Nigeria. In line with the UN slogan of leaving no one behind, many of these member-organizations are engaging the Nigerian government in ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting life-long learning opportunities for all. While some are campaigning to achieve literacy and numeracy, others are involved in school infrastructural rehabilitation. And while some are involved in referral on skills acquisition, some are basically providing vocational skills for youth's employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship in line with target 4 of SDG 4. In addition, some of our member-organizations are involved in monitoring of the school system while others have been appointed members of the school-based management system.

How is your organization assisting government in sensitizing the public on how best to save the planet from ecological doom through Climate Action?

The story of SDGs might be incomplete without making reference to the first United Nations Conference on Environment and Development which was held in Brazil in 1992. It was there that the first agenda for environment and development was developed and adopted which turned out to be called Agenda 21. Twenty years later, at the Rio+ Conference, a resolution known as *the Future We Want* was reached by member-states. This Rio+20 outcome document set out a mandate to establish an Open Working Group (OWG) to develop a set of sustainable development goals for consideration and appropriate actions by the General Assembly at its 68th session. The OWG underscored the fact that the global nature of climate change calls for the widest possible cooperation by all countries and their participation in an effective and appropriate international response with a view to accelerating the reduction of the global greenhouse gas emissions. The thrust of the climate change action (Goal 13) is taking the urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

For the benefit of the readers, it is necessary to present succinctly the main targets of Goal 13. Since climate change is increasingly posing one of the biggest long term threats to our planet, the time for action is now. There is need to take necessary actions: to strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries; to integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning; to improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning; to implement the commitment undertaken by developed countries through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to a goal of jointly mobilizing \$100 billion

annually by 2020 from all sources to address the needs of developing countries.

Our member-organizations have been active when it comes to awareness creation and sensitization on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning. They speak on radio and television, and use the social media as a campaign platform. They develop and distribute freely flyers, posters, leaflets and pictorials on climate change. I remember that there are organizations like the Foundation for Environmental Rights, Advocacy & Development (FENRAD), Centre for Disaster Risk and Crisis Reduction (CDRCR) and African Foundation for Environment and Development (AFED) that are active in this regard. Something unique about their media engagements is the use of local languages such as Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa in order to give non-English speakers the opportunity to participate in finding solutions to the common problem of climate change.

Over the years, Nigeria has continued to record decent work deficits. How are civil society organizations collaborating with the labour unions to safeguard the basic rights and interest of workers in the country through decent work and economic growth which is goal 8 of the SDGs?

Nigeria's decent work deficits concept is traceable to labour standards deficits. It may be good news that Nigeria has ratified a total of 40 International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions but Nigeria is famous for ratifying conventions that are not crucial to the wellbeing of workers. In other words, Nigeria tends to flinch when it comes to ratifying crucial conventions that address decent work deficits. For example, some of the ILO conventions that are yet to be ratified include ILO C122, C129, and C150 relating to labour market governance; C102 dealing with social security; C189 on domestic workers etc. Even where conventions are signed, Nigerian governments easily violate them with impunity just in the same way they seem not to have regard for target 6 of Goal 8 to reduce substantially "the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training" with about 42 million youths in the age bracket of 25-44 years unemployed, according to National Bureau of Statistics (2016). For all age groups, unemployment rate stood at 19.3 in the same year which translates to 79.8 million unemployed Nigerians. No wonder our youths are travelling abroad at all cost to eke out a living but ending up doing precarious menial jobs. Some travel irregularly and become a prey in the hands of human rights violators such as human traffickers.

It is not yet *Uhuru* for those in employment especially in the public and private sectors. For those in the public sector, their take-home-pay is not commensurate with the efforts they put in. The minimum wage is nothing to take the workers home whereas the political leaders especially the senators and House of Representative members are living in opulence. Workers in the private sector are worse off



as the casualization mechanism of the workforce is dealing the poor workers a great blow. Horrendous stories of occupational hazards leading to maiming and dismemberment of workers are deafening. Some are hospitalized for months as a result of job-related causes and are abruptly laid off while some often meet rough deaths while their employers seem not to be bothered in violation of labour laws (that some employers don't make use of).

The foregoing contributes to decent work deficits in Nigeria; the malaise which the unionists are not taking kindly to. Though the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) and Trade Union Congress (TUC) are not directly members of CSCSD, some of our member-organizations often campaign for employment for our youths and decent job at best. For example, CAFSO-WRAG for Development has for many years been using information, education and communication (IEC) materials and the media to campaign for decent job opportunities including conducive environment for the youths to work. What is needed really is a concerted effort to compel the Nigerian government to sign those conventions that address decent work deficits especially those that are geared at challenging poverty, occupational hazards, indecent work environment and social exclusion through human rights-based approach. After ratification, there should be monitoring of the implementation so as to make government and private sector employers walk the talk.

What are the prospects of achieving the SDGs in Nigeria by 2030?

There are 17 Goals and 169 targets in all and I am not sure the Nigerian government is prioritizing their implementation so as to see those they can easily work on which will impact on the people. However, the Federal Government has put some mechanisms in place to ensure hitch-free

implementation of the SDGs. There is the establishment of the Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on SDGs which is a carry-over from the MDGs under the Presidency. There is also a House Committee on and there is the National Assembly Steering Committee on SDGs too to play oversight functions and make appropriation to SDGs. There is also an Inter-Ministerial Committee on the SDGs established to guide the coordinated engagement with Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) though there has never been a replica of this at the state level. There is also a Private Sector Consultative Group which, the Nigerian government hopes, would bring financial leverage to SDGs implementation. Putting these mechanisms in place is not a measure of the progress of SDGs implementation but evidence-based result of the implementation which we don't have. What do all these translate to in terms of reduction in the number of people going hungry daily, suffering from poverty, being lost to death as a result of poor road networks, decayed hospital

The activities of CSO on gender go beyond mainstreaming gender but also campaign to ensure that governments at all level also mainstream gender into their plans and programmes while they encourage governments to end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.

facilities coupled with wrong diagnosis, unemployment, unpaid salary arrears and pensions, insecurity especially in the hands of armed robbers, violent extremists, kidnappers and ritualists? Can we say that the government is doing well in moving towards attaining SDGs by 2030 in the face of all these calamities befalling our citizens? Worse still, the National Assembly has not been helping matters despite their oversight functions as they not only indulge in budget padding but they also delay with impunity the passage of the budget. For example, the 2017 Appropriation Act was not passed till almost half of year 2017 while the 2018 budget is still gathering dust with the Senate which has accused the ministers and directors of MDAs of flinching to defend their budgets.

However, one needs to praise the Federal Government for being involved in the last concluded High Level Political Forum, National Voluntary Review (HLPF NVR) of the SDGs held in July 2017 in New York. HLPF is desirable as it was an opportunity for countries involved in VNR to showcase their efforts in



implementing the SDGs in the past two years. It was also an opportunity for NGOs from these countries to hear directly from their political leaders some "lies" being told about the implementation of SDGs. Unfortunately, there was no opportunity for NGOs to rebuff some of these "insincere" implementation commentaries because NGOs were pre-selected to make comments.

However, HLPF though political in nature is good as NGOs can still hold their governments accountable back home. Something that stood out cutting across the NVR presentations in developing countries is the fact that many of them were really passionate about implementing the SDGs in their various countries but they shied away from the major challenges facing them; two of which are insecurity and corruption. For example, countries like Nigeria, Kenya, Somalia and even Somaliland are still battling with violent extremism as evident in the antics of *Boko Haram*, *Al-Shabab*, *Al-Qaeda*, etc destroying lives and property which ossifies smooth implementation and attainment of the SDGs. Corruption has also become a dreaded disease seeping through the pores of the fabrics of Nigeria and ravaging it beyond repair. For example, the leadership of the Senate is enmeshed in high level corruption to the extent that senators refused to confirm the appointment of Mr. Ibrahim Magu, the Acting Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) because the latter already has their graft case files with him.

In order for Nigeria to attain the SDGs by 2030, there is the need for the political will from our leaders who should walk the talk and be accountable to their SDGs promises. Inclusive governance atmosphere for service delivery, peace, upholding human rights and the rule of law whereby no one is left behind is central to achieving the SDGs without which all concerted efforts would turn out to be a mirage in 2030. Now is the time to act! ■



CSOs: Voice of the Poorest and Vulnerable Nigerians



Princess Adejoke Orelope-Adefulire

ONE of the greatest challenges facing humanity is eradicating poverty in all its forms. Globally, the gap between the rich and poor is widening by the day. According to the World Bank, nearly 800 million people still live below the internationally accepted extreme poverty line of less than \$1.90 a day, and hundreds of millions more are at risk of falling back into it.

The situation is worse in African countries, where growth rates continue to surge while poverty and inequality remain persistently high. A recent UN Report on Nigeria's Common Country Analysis (CCA) described the country as one of the poorest and most unequal countries in the world with over 80 million or 64% of her population living below poverty line.

Worried by global poverty, world leaders have been passionate about mobilising the entire international community to achieve the twin goals of ending extreme poverty and boosting shared prosperity. Consequently, on September 25, 2015, the United Nations adopted the 17 global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with goal number one as ending poverty in all its forms everywhere in the world by 2030.

Since January 2016 when the implementation of the SDGs commenced, the Nigerian government has demonstrated its commitment towards lifting millions of its citizens out of poverty through massive social interventions.

However, given the scope of SDG-1, national and sub-national governments cannot achieve this ambitious poverty eradication goal alone. Collective and individual efforts at the local, national and international levels are necessary. They must also facilitate participation of all sectors of society, including Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), the private sector and the public at the local level.

The inclusion of CSOs in these processes is imperative, for these actors play crucial roles in society as agents of accountability and service delivery. CSOs play a critical role in advancing the poverty eradication goal by effectively articulating the needs and aspirations of the poor, fulfilling critical service-delivery gaps and promoting good governance practices.

Civil Society Partnership

The Nigerian government has pledged partnership with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) on the implementation of the SDGs in the country because it recognizes the strategic importance of such relationship for Nigerians. Princess Adejoke Orelope-Adefulire, Senior Special Assistant to the President on Sustainable Development Goals, (SSAP-SDGs), stated this position in New York, USA while speaking at the side event on achieving the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development during the recent 55th Session of the United Nations Commission for Social Development, CSocD55.

In her presentation titled: *The Strategies for innovative partnership between Government and Civil Society Organizations in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Nigeria*, the presidential aide noted that government recognises the multiple functions that civil society organizations play in governance at all levels. Some of these include addressing the challenges of poverty and environmental degradation, conflict and disaster prevention and mitigation as well as the prevention of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Princess Orelope-Adefulire explained that OSSAP-SDGs would continue to build and forge strategic partnerships with all critical stakeholders, inclusive of the CSOs:

“The growing strength and sophistication of CSOs as actors in the development arena presents us with new challenges in building multi-faceted and creative alliances with the CSOs. To design and sustain genuine partnerships with CSOs, it is essential to understand the civil society sector, assess its capacities and weaknesses, and develop

appropriate and effective tools and instruments to engage with.”

Orelope-Adefulire made the presentation at a side-event organised by Women in Development & Environment World-wide Network Nigeria. The event was aimed at seeking effective strategies and promoting multi-stakeholders' partnership, if the implementation of the SDGs must leave no one behind.

Edward Kallon, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative in Nigeria also said that partnership with private and civil society organizations is at the very centre of the sustainable development agenda, as it would help to tackle the pervasive poverty and deprivation in the country. Speaking at the International Sustainability Conference 2017 organized by the Lagos Business School in November 2017, Kallon affirmed that governments, acting alone, will not deliver on the SDGs. He emphasised, “Progress, or the lack of it, towards the SDGs, will depend heavily on the extent to which public, private and civil society partnership can serve as the driver for sustainable development.”

He recalled the active engagement of the CSOs during the entire consultative process leading to the adoption of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs. According to him, the 2030 Agenda is “an Agenda of the people, by the people and for the people.” He added:

“Civil society organisations are the voice of the poor and marginalized. Just like during the consultative process, they will be critical in capturing the voices and aspiration of local communities and bringing these to bear in development discourse; and policy and decision making at national and international levels.”

Kallon added that it is gratifying to note that the Nigerian government has taken steps to provide the necessary platforms for engagement with the private sector and civil society organisations, through the establishment of the SDGs Private Sector Advisory Group and CSOs Coordination Board. “We should seize the opportunity provided by these platforms to elevate and properly position the private sector and CSOs as key drivers of the SDGs process in Nigeria,” he said.

Critical roles of CSOs as drivers of SDG-1

“Leaving no one behind” is an underlying principle of the SDGs. Its aim is to ensure that development throughout the world has positive impact on the poorest and most marginalised members of society.

To represent the interests of the poorest and most marginalised members of society at the local level, CSOs in Nigeria have taken on some critical roles as follows:

- **Listening to people and being aware of what is happening in their respective areas of operation:** The CSOs have been proactive in gathering information and interacting with communities. Therefore, they create opportunities, spaces and platforms for engaging with these groups in order to promote genuine dialogues, build community awareness and develop strong relationships. They

listen to, and consider the solutions to problems identified by these groups.

- **Translating the voices of the poorest and most marginalised citizens into rational arguments that are acknowledged and addressed by the government:** The CSOs in Nigeria have often identified integrated improvements or interventions that could make a significant difference for vulnerable people.



Edward Kallon, UN Resident Co-ordinator and UNDP Resident Representative in Nigeria

- **Developing relationships or partnerships with the local government, and in particular, identify the government departments, actors or institutions that need to respond in order to remedy problems:** The CSOs ensure that action is taken by government at all levels by following up with the relevant government officials or departments. The goal is to ensure that local resources are mobilised for those who are most vulnerable and that their needs are reflected in local development plans and national public policies.
- **Using human rights as a lens of analysis:** The CSOs adopt a human rights approach which will enable the identification of groups of people whose rights have been violated, neglected or overlooked in development processes. They do this by understanding why these particular groups of people have had their rights infringed - for example, as a result of discriminatory laws or social practices that perpetuate poverty and inequality.
- **CSOs in Nigeria engage in systematic monitoring and reporting of advocacy activities.**
 - **CSOs drive the campaign against corruption to the grassroots level:** Given the enormous resources of Nigeria, it is puzzling that a huge

Table 1: Poverty rate across 36 states in Nigeria

STATES	POVERTY RATE
Lagos	8.50%
Osun	10.90%
Anambra	11.20%
Ekiti	12.90%
Edo	19.20%
Imo	19.80%
Abia	21.00%
Rivers	21.10%
FCT (Abuja)	23.50%
Kwara	23.70%
Akwa Ibom	23.80%
Delta	25.10%
Ogun	26.10%
Kogi	26.40%
Ondo	27.90%
Enugu	28.80%
Bayelsa	29.00%
Oyo	29.40%
Cross River	33.10%
Plateau	51.60%
Nassarawa	52.40%
Ebonyi	56.00%
Kaduna	56.50%
Adamawa	59.00%
Benue	59.20%
Niger	61.20%
Borno	70.10%
Kano	76.40%
Gombe	76.90%
Taraba	77.70%
Katsina	82.20%
Sokoto	85.30%
Kebbi	86.00%
Bauchi	86.60%
Jigawa	88.40%
Yobe	90.20%
Zamfara	91.90%

Source: UN 2014

portion of the populace lives in poverty. This vast incidence of poverty in the midst of plenty has severally been linked to the endemic corruption in the country, as it involves the massive stealing of resources that would have otherwise been invested in providing wealth-creating infrastructure for the citizens. CSOs therefore assist the anti-corruption agencies to drive the campaign against corruption to ensure that the critical mass needed to achieve traction in the campaign is possible.

Nigeria's recent poverty index

Before delving into the efforts of the CSOs to assist the Nigerian government in the implementation of SDG1, it is imperative to highlight the recent poverty index of Nigeria.

Based on some of Nigeria's SDGs indicators Baseline reports produced by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), a large proportion of Nigerians still live below poverty line and are exposed to various vulnerabilities. According to the poverty index report published by the NBS in October 2016, about 112 million Nigerians (representing 67.1 percent of the country's total population of 167million) live below the poverty line.

Similarly, a recent United Nations report on Nigeria's Common Country Analysis, (CCA), made public in September 2016 shows that the most populous black nation is one of the poorest and most unequal in the world, with over 80 million or 64 percent of her population living below the poverty line. The report added that the over 80 million Nigerians who live in poverty are affected in one way or the other by the current humanitarian crisis. According to the UN, available reports indicate that there are over 3.3 million Internally Displaced Persons, (IDPs), the largest number in any African country and only ranking behind Syria and Columbia on a global scale. The report states *inter alia*:

"Poverty and hunger have remained high in rural areas, remote communities and among female-headed households and these cut across the six geo-political zones, with prevalence ranging from approximately 46.9 percent in the South-west to 74.3 percent in North-west and North-east.

In Nigeria, 37 percent of children under five years old were stunted, 18 percent wasted, 29 per cent underweight and overall, only 10 percent of children aged 6-23 months are fed appropriately based on recommended infant and young children feeding practices. Youth unemployment which is 42 per cent in 2016 is very high, creating poverty, helplessness, despair and an easy target for crime and terrorism."

See Table 1: Poverty rate across 36 states in Nigeria

Buhari administration's poverty alleviation initiatives

For more than two years, the Buhari administration has been unwavering in its commitment to the smooth implementation of policies targeted at SDG-1. It has embarked on initiatives that tackle poverty from a multi-sectored perspective in order to create opportunities for good and decent jobs and secure livelihoods. This involves targeting those living in vulnerable situations and increasing access to basic resources and services.

To fast-track his administration's poverty eradication initiative, President Buhari launched a N500 billion Social Protection Programme on May 29, 2016 to cater for a larger number of the poorest and most vulnerable Nigerians. Launching the programme, Buhari lamented that for too long Nigeria has been:

“...a society that neglects the poor and victimizes the weak, a society that promotes profit and growth over development and freedom. A society that fails to recognize that 'poverty is not just lack of money; it is not having the capability to realize one's full potential as a human being.'”

Following the launching of the programme, the Nigerian leader established a Social Investment Office with an annual budget of N500 billion to ensure that government's efforts reach the people in a timely manner. The social investment programme is designed to ensure social protection for the core poor and reduce inequality among the Nigerian populace. The scheme is already being implemented with particular focus at the sub-national levels.

A National Social Safety Net Coordination office coordinates and ensures a uniform reporting platform, monitoring and evaluation as well as a suitable payment system for the cash transfers. In order to reach those who are actually in need, a community-based targeting approach has been adopted in building up a National Social Register that will identify the poor and vulnerable population groups.

There are five schemes under the Social Investment Programme, namely:

- N-power for job creation initiatives for teachers, artisans which targets 500,000 graduates and 100,000 non-graduates.
- The Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (HGSF) which is a free school feeding scheme for primary school pupils across the country.
- The Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) which ensures the transfer of N 5,000 monthly directly to one million caregivers in targeted poor and vulnerable households.
- An Enterprise & Empowerment Programme for financial inclusion and access to credit for market women cooperatives, traders, farmers, and the youths which targets 1.66 million beneficiaries.
- The Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Bursary Programme, which is a form of financial support for students of tertiary institutions studying Education, Science and



Maryam Uwais, Special Adviser to the President on Social Investments

Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

- The Presidential Initiative for the North East (PINE) is one of the major responses of Government not only to poverty but several other challenges facing the North East. PINE has been well designed to improve the lives of citizens who have been devastated in the region.

At the Civil Society Information Dissemination on Monitoring Federal Government Social Protection Programme (SPP) on SDGs held in Abuja in September 2016, Maryam Uwais, Special Adviser to the President on Social Investments, said that despite the paucity of funding occasioned by the prevailing economic crunch, government would ensure that vulnerable people benefit from the scheme:

“We are developing a comprehensive register of vulnerable people in the society so we want to engage the CSOs to ensure that the register is authentic and realisable. Nigerians are difficult. We were worried about our programme being politicised, so we want to make sure that our programmes reach every Nigerian irrespective of political affiliation, and irrespective of ethnicity or culture.”

Poverty eradication drives of CSOs

Since the adoption of the SDGs as a definitive plan to save the planet and its people, CSOs in Nigeria have been supporting national and sub-national governments in the country as they strive to achieve

the target of eradicating extreme poverty by 2030.

CSOs have been effectively articulating the needs and aspirations of the poor, fulfilling critical service-delivery gaps and promoting good governance practices. On September 25, 2017 when Nigeria joined the rest of the world to commemorate the second year of the adoption of the SDGs, CSOs in Nigeria organised events in different parts of the country to mark the anniversary. They used the opportunity to renew their call on the Federal, State and Local Governments to act on the SDGs.

Mr. Oyeibisi B. Oluseyi, Executive Director, Nigeria Network of NGOs, emphasised the need for the Nigerian governments at all levels to act in time by implementing SDG-1:

“If our governments (at all levels) don't act in time, we stand the chance of not meeting the goals and our growing pains — disparities in the incomes of the poor and the wealthy, limited access to education, health and basic social services, increasing vulnerabilities of the poorest to human-induced climate change and disasters, and the growing repression of human rights and civic participation would have exacerbated.”

Oluseyi said that it is disheartening that more than two years after the adoption of the global goals, 112 million Nigerians still live below the poverty line. “This is unacceptable and it calls for urgent action on the part of our government. Now is the time to break the cycle of poverty in our land,” he said.

One of the most formidable CSO which has been working round the clock to “further human rights and defeat poverty for all” in the country is ActionAid Nigeria. ActionAid Nigeria commenced programmatic operations in January 2000 after a country appraisal, which found that Nigerians were wallowing in poverty in the midst of plenty. The organisation has a geographically based integrated Partnerships Against Poverty (PAP), which is being implemented in many sub-national governments and communities in Nigeria. The coordination and administrative processes of PAP allows for effective engagement of the thematic leads in the community-based programmes and facilitates linkages from local to national and international policy work. PAP has increased citizens' participation in local governance, which is gradually leading to improved service delivery.

As part of its response to the deepening inequality of power and wealth in the country, ActionAid Nigeria

recently launched a £60 million Country Strategy Paper to end poverty within six years. The strategy tagged Social Justice to End Poverty (SJEP) 2018-2023 is aimed at ensuring social justice for all, gender equality and poverty eradication in Nigeria.

Speaking at the launching of SJEP in Abuja, in January 2018, Ms. Funmilayo Oyefusi, Interim Country Director of ActionAid, said that during the strategy period, the organisation would implement a theory of change premised on empowering citizens especially the youths, women and girls, and building accountability mechanisms. She lamented that the economic and political systems in Nigeria fostered the capture of power and resources by the elite; a non-inclusive growth that promotes social inequality and poverty-triggering situations:

“We feel that there is so much injustice in the country and that is what is leading to inadequate redistribution of wealth within the country. This strategy is looking at how we can ensure that the resources are distributed equally. Then, equity between men and women and also ensure that the female headed households and those who are affected in conflicts and emergencies are able to have a voice and economic empowerment that will help them to live a dignified life.”

Oyefusi said that the £60 million for the project would be raised through institutional donors, local fund raising and high value net worth individuals. “The money is going to be used in specific areas where we work, we are working in over 26 states and 222 communities,” she added.

Oyefusi explained further that the community sponsorship was an initiative by ActionAid to ensure that everyone donates in support of the extremely poor communities across Nigeria, adding that it is a platform to help the vulnerable and excluded communities to overcome poverty in the areas of food, education, governance, health and emergencies. “We want to be able to reach more communities and what we are saying is that we are distributing resources that will end poverty,” Oyefusi said.

The Initiative for Peace and Comfort (IPC) is another CSO which has tailored its relief services towards assisting government to implement SDG-1. Dr. Comfort Onifade, Executive Director of IPC said that in line with the organization's vision which is to achieve a world where people can be free from hunger and poverty, IPC has initiated empowerment programmes for identified indigent individuals in the society. For instance, IPC recently organized an empowerment



Dr. Comfort Onifade, Executive Director, Initiative for Peace and Comfort

training programme for female students and staff of Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (FUNAAB).

In addition, officials of IPC regularly visit the less privileged in the society with relief materials. The IPC has made regular and annual visits to orphanages and special needs centres within Abeokuta and environs such as Gideon's Orphanage, Old People's Home Asero, Abeokuta and Toluwani Special Needs Centre, Olokuta, Kemta, Abeokuta. Onifade said that the initiatives are geared towards empowering the poor to conquer hunger and poverty.

Forward Africa is another CSO that is working closely with ministries, departments and agencies in some states in the South East geo-political zone to mobilize local human and material resources to improve the lives of Nigerians. Elder Kenneth Amogu, Executive Director, Forward Africa said that the organization has through its agricultural and economic development programmes been supporting national and sub-national governments in Nigeria to alleviate poverty. According to him, the organization established the Rural Development and Economic Center (RUDEC), located in Umuokanne in Ohaji/Egbemma Local Government Area of Imo State, where it organizes training on mechanized system of agriculture for women and youths.

To increase food production and ensure food security, Forward Africa, has within the last six years in partnership with Harvestplus Nigeria promoted the planting and consumption of Biofortified Crops (Vitamin A) in 12 councils and 74 communities in Imo State, through the provision of improved planting materials, training on agronomy practices and linkage to the markets.

The Centre for Peace, Education & Community Development based in Jalingo, Taraba State is also providing unflinching support to national and sub-national governments in Nigeria as they strive to achieve the target of eradicating poverty by 2030.

Gimba Joseph, Executive Director of the organization said that in order to alleviate poverty among the people, it runs two programmes on agro-based enterprises for over 2,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Taraba State. The organization enlightens them on how to improve their yield and also provides them with farm inputs. "We are also involved in monitoring other programmes and projects of government aimed at alleviating poverty," Joseph said.

Certainly, CSOs are increasingly playing an important role in poverty alleviation in Nigeria. However, there is a need to strengthen the partnership between the CSOs and government in all spheres in the country.



Eze Onyekpere, Lead Director, Centre for Social Justice (CSJ)

The Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) has equally served as a platform for promoting poverty reduction. The organization considers poverty reduction strategies as a tool for social justice. It has therefore been canvassing for pro-poor and rights-based approaches to budgeting.

Eze Onyekpere, Lead Director of the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) has over the years, worked on Nigeria's economic policy and legal issues for poverty reduction such as the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (SEEDS) and the Local Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (LEEDS).

Onyekpere said recently that poverty and inequality persist in Nigeria because non-state actors are not given opportunities to be part of policy implementation process. He believes that it has become imperative to capacitate the Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) to reduce poverty and inequality through pro-poor policies and budgeting.

Last word

Certainly, CSOs are increasingly playing an important role in poverty alleviation in Nigeria. However, there is a need to strengthen the partnership between the CSOs and government in all spheres in the country. This will further improve the participation of CSOs in various mechanisms and processes including integrated development plans to ensure effective implementation of poverty alleviation programmes. Experts contend that unless this partnership is nurtured and maintained, poverty will continue to be a challenge in Nigeria and the most populous black could miss the target of eradicating poverty by 2030. ■



Contributions of CSOs in Delivering Quality Education in Nigeria



Adamu Adamu, Minister of Education

THE role of education in the development of man and his environment is well known. Education is crucial to societal development but the extent of improvement for man and his society will depend on the quality of education received. This explains why the United Nations makes enhancing quality of education number four of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This is in realization of the fact that the education sector in many countries is in poor shape generally and requires upgrade.

One such country where challenges are manifest in the education sector is Nigeria. The challenges range from decrepit infrastructure, unqualified teaching staff, corruption, poor welfare package and strike actions which disrupt academic calendar. This impacts the education sector negatively leading to the production of what is commonly called "half baked graduates."

Nigeria's huge population worsens the country's problem in the education sector because the increase in population is not matched by a corresponding increase in educational facilities and infrastructure.

This disparity ultimately has a negative impact on learning. According to the Global Partnership for Education, "Nigeria is the largest country in Africa in terms of population and has approximately 20% of the total out-of-school children population in the world."

Adding to this challenge is the demographic pressure with about 11,000 newborns every day that overburdens the system capacity to deliver quality education. In the Northern part of Nigeria, almost two-thirds of students are functionally illiterate. According to the data on literacy index recently published by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the states where majority of people can neither read nor write are those in the Northeast, Northwest, and North-central. The data shows that Yobe State has only 7.23 percent literacy level, the lowest in the country. The dismal record of Yobe is followed by Zamfara (9.16 percent); Katsina (10.36 percent); Sokoto (15.01); Bauchi (19.26 percent); Kebbi (20.51 percent); and Niger (22.88 percent) respectively. Only Taraba is an exception with 72 percent literacy rate.

The Northern states of Jigawa, Kaduna, Katsina, Kano, and Sokoto have shown commitment to improving their education systems, but they face severe challenges including high poverty levels, low enrolment, gender disparities, poor quality and relevance, poor infrastructure and learning conditions.

For a country like Nigeria, a lot of work needs to be done in sustaining or improving standard of education but leaving it to government alone could be dangerous as government agencies are hardly associated with excellence. Bureaucracy and corruption in the system makes this worse. To ensure effective oversight functions, many civil society organizations (CSOs) have sprung up in the country with the aim of collaborating with the government to ensure the improvement of education across board.

Olubusola Kolade, a Nigerian-Canadian educationist who runs an after school programme in Nigeria called Ornaments of Grace Virtue (OGAV) believes that better co-operation between the government, and CSOs will yield dividend. "Civil organizations need to work with the government to improve education. The government cannot do everything at least not now that there is so much decadence. All hands need to be on deck. However, the government needs to make it easy for the NGOs too. There has to be tax incentives for people to financially support NGOs since they rely on public funds to carry out their mandate. There must be transparency between the government and the NGOs for them to work as partners and collaborate when necessary."

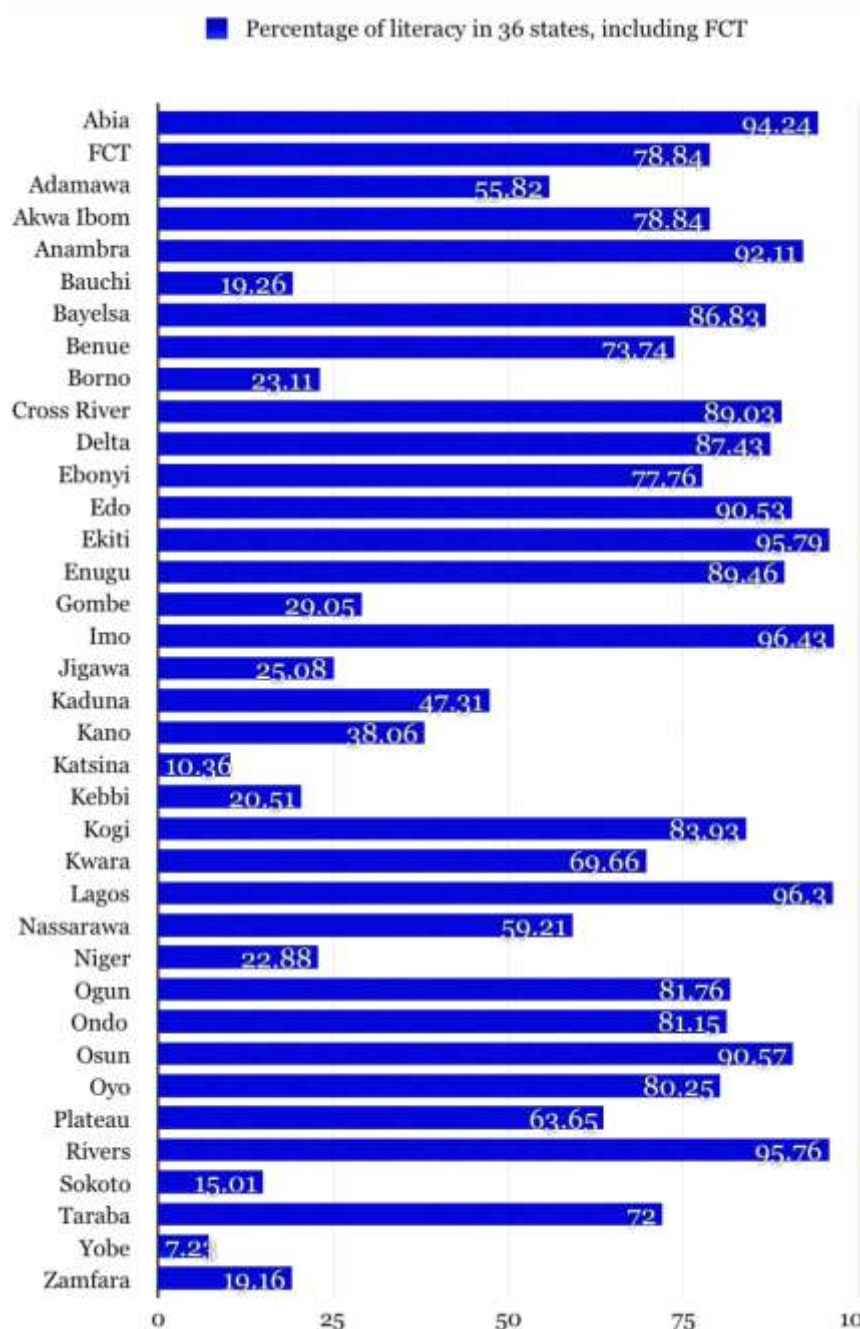
Providing an insight to the work of OGAV, Kolade said it has a holistic approach to promote the education of the girl-child:

"We empower the girls through our initiative - 'Learning beyond the classroom'. We have two programmes under this initiative - Summer Leadership Camp and a Co-curricular Girls' Club in secondary schools. This is a three-year programme meant to support public secondary school girls (SS1 -SS3) using the 'head and heart' teaching approach. The head refers to academic skills and the heart social and emotional skills. Our areas of focus are: Career guidance, character moulding, academic success, skills development and acquisition, leadership skills and life coaching. The impact on the girls has been encouraging and includes improved academic achievement, and social competence which foster better school relationship. Girls are empowered to be independent self managers and problem solvers."

Dr. David Tola Winjobi, National Coordinator, Civil Society Coalition on

Sustainable Development (CSCSD) also said that the CSOs under the coalition have been partnering with government to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education in Nigeria by 2030. He said:

"There are quite a sizeable number of our member-organizations working on education for all among which are; Community Education Advancement of Peace and Development Initiatives (CEAPDI); Women's Right to Education Programme (WREP), Centre for Youth Initiative on Self Education (CEYISED); and Phelyn Skill Acquisition Centre."



Source: National Bureau of Statistics 2015



Ibrahim Zikirullahi, Executive Director, Centre for Human Rights and Civic Education

He pointed out that some CSOs under the coalition are members of the Bring Back Our Girls Campaign which came up at the behest of the Chibok Girls saga. He recalled that many CSOs took active part during the post-2015 development agenda deliberations especially in Nigeria. He explained that in line with the UN slogan of leaving no one behind, many of these member-organizations are engaging the Nigerian government in ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting life-long learning opportunities for all:

"While some are campaigning on achieving literacy and numeracy, some are involved in school infrastructural rehabilitation. And while some are involved in referral on skills acquisition, some are basically providing vocational skills for youth's employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship in line with target 4 of SDG-4. In addition, some of our member-organizations are involved in monitoring of the school system while some are appointed members of the school based management system."

Winjobi, however, noted that members of the coalition are saddened by radical de-education of girls in the North East through the dangerous activities of the *Boko Haram* insurgents. He recalled that in 2016, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) had lamented over the 11 million children out-of-school in Nigeria:

Boko Haram extremists are further decimating the poor number of children in schools in the North East by abducting school girls. The unpalatable news started on April 14, 2014 with the abduction of over 276 girls from Government Secondary School in Chibok, Borno State by *Boko Haram*. The same month in 2014, 58 male students of the College of Agriculture, Buni Yadi, Yobe State were murdered in cold blood while asleep. On February 19, 2018 *Boko Haram* insurgents attacked Government Girls' Science Technical College, Dapchi, Yobe State and made away with 110 girls. The aim of these incessant attacks is to discourage education through radical de-education which

tallies with the agenda of *Boko Haram*, "education is a sin."

According to the Education Data, Research and Evaluation in Nigeria (EDOREN), a five-year initiative funded by the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID), there are more than 600 CSOs involved with the education sector in Nigeria and these are visible in the 36 states of the country. The CSOs are part of the Civil Society Action Coalition on Education for All (CSACEFA). EDOREN gives a background to the formation of the CSO:

"The Civil society Action Coalition on Education for All (CSACEFA) is a coalition of NGOs, community-based organizations (CBOs) and faith-based organizations (FBOs) working on education issues in Nigeria. Forty (40) education NGOs came together in the run-up to the World Education Summit in Dakar in April 2000 to form the coalition. CSACEFA developed a core set of positions and attended the Dakar Summit to join in the call for quality education for all. The coalition has since expanded its membership to over six hundred (600) CSOs covering the 36 States of Nigeria and Federal Capital Territory (FCT) and has been engaging, advocating and inputting to education policies and programmes at Local, National and International levels."

The mission of CSACEFA is to ensure free, quality and inclusive education for all through effective participation of civil society while the vision is to help guarantee quality education and dignity for all structures. The organization's activities are coordinated at the state level by an elected state coordinator and at the zonal level by an eight-member Facilitating Committee (FC) drawn from the six geopolitical zones, the FCT and a representative of International Development Partners (IDPs) elected for a maximum two terms of two years each.

The Facilitating Committee led by a National Moderator is to meet at least four times in a year depending on availability of funds, while the coalition has an Annual General Forum (AGF). The Annual General Forum is the apex decision-making organ of the coalition. The coalition is managed through the secretariat led by the Policy Advisor/National Coordinator who oversees the national secretariat, coordinates the states and reports to the Facilitating Committee.

Many of the CSOs sustain their work with grants from foreign organizations such as the MacArthur Foundation which has an office in Nigeria. In December, 2017, CSACEFA held a three-day dialogue meeting and capacity building on tracking UBE (Universal Basic Education) funds in Kaduna State with the support of MacArthur Foundation. The Federal Government established UBE in 1999 "to eradicate illiteracy, ignorance and poverty as well as stimulate and accelerate national development, political consciousness and national integration."

According to the UBE Act of 2004, "the financing of basic education is the responsibility of States and Local Governments. However, the Federal Government has

decided to intervene in the provision of basic education with 2 percent of its Consolidated Revenue Fund. For states to fully benefit from this Fund, criteria were established with which states are to comply."

However, there have been reports, over the years of missing UBE funds and it is in this context that the CSACEFA event in Kaduna holds meaning. In March, 2018, CSACEFA, in conjunction with One Campaign and Malala Fund, at an event, called on the Nigerian government to take education in the country seriously. They requested President Muhammadu Buhari and Mallam Adamu Adamu, Minister of Education to come up with concrete measures to urgently address the incessant challenges in the education sector.

"We can no longer continue to relegate the important sector of the economy to the background when we are aspiring to be among the top world economies. It is saddening to note that education has received low priority and attention both at the national and state levels over the years. Little wonder why we are bedevilled with the various crises we experience in the country today," CSACEFA stated.

The coalition listed the challenges confronting the education sector in Nigeria today to include insecurity, poor finance, abysmal teacher development and poor learning environment.

In addition to CSACEFA, a non-governmental organization known as Resource Centre for Human Rights and Civic Education (CHRICED) had in December 2017 launched an innovative data-driven project to track funds earmarked for the provision of Universal Basic Education (UBE) in Kaduna State.

Ibrahim Zikirullahi, Executive Director of CHRICED gave reasons why the organization chose to focus on UBE funds:

"It provides three years of Early Child Development, and nine years of formal schooling. It is the Federal Government's policy for ensuring every child of school age has access to quality basic education. However, while the problem of inadequate funding has been implicated as one of the reasons for the low quality of service delivery in the Universal Basic Education (UBE), corruption and its damaging effects have derailed the potential of the policy to deliver quality basic education to citizens."

In a 2013 paper published in *Jorind* titled: *The Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme in Nigeria: Problems and Prospects*, Uche S. Anaduaka of the Department of Science and Environmental Education, University of Abuja and Chinese Okafor of the Department of Science Education, Anambra State University point out some problems/challenges besetting the UBE programme. They include inadequate funding, inaccurate data for planning, lack of enough competent teachers, poor implementation of the New UBE curriculum, poor public enlightenment, poor monitoring/evaluation and poor motivation of teachers.

In a November 2017 report, *Premium Times*, an online newspaper, reported that, of the N8.6 trillion

2018 Budget, President Muhammadu Buhari's government allocated only 7.04% (translating to N605.8 billion) to education which breakdown is: N435.1 billion for recurrent expenditure, N61.73 billion for capital expenditure and N109.06 billion for the Universal Basic Education Commission.

Some of these monies are lost to corruption. A report by Felix Khanoba of the International Centre for Investigative Reporting, published in October 2017 warns that:

"Thousands of physically-challenged children across the country are at risk of missing out on education, as many of the government-run special schools supposed to meet their educational needs are on the verge of collapse. The schools, which were specifically built for persons with physical challenges, including down syndrome, have received N10.6 billion grant from the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) within a period of 10 years but have little or nothing on ground to show for it."

Khanoba's report makes reference to a document showing that over N10 billion UBEC funds was disbursed to the 36 states and Federal Capital Territory (FCT) between 2006 and 2016 to support special education, with little to show for it:

"A recent visit to some of the special education schools located in the Federal Capital Territory, Nasarawa, Edo and Anambra states revealed a sordid state of affairs. Apart from the commonly identified problems of students not living in decent condition and lacking access to health services or proper feeding, most of the schools' structures could easily be mistaken for abandoned homes left behind by the nation's former colonial masters. In one of the schools, Special School for Physically Challenged, Umuchu, Anambra State, there were no good structures. The only major proofs of the presence of a school were a dusty signboard and obsolete blackboards hanging on dilapidated open rooms that serve as classrooms."

It is the same for the issue of procurement and budget for which CSACEFA in September 2017 organized a workshop for CSACEFA state coordinators and CSOs in the northern part of the country on advocacy, communication, monitoring and evaluation and budget. Report on the event which held in Kaduna State, states:

"Participants were also trained on monitoring and evaluation; the training took participants round the definition of monitoring as a systematic and continuous collection, of analysis and use of information for management control and decision-making. The moderator stated that monitoring is done to check the indications of the extent of progress and achievement of objectives and progress in the use of allocated funds. On the other hand, it was explained that evaluation is the assessment of an ongoing or completed project, programme or policy, design, implementation and results. It was also highlighted that monitoring is done on a daily basis while evaluation is done on a

periodic basis; the result chain process was explained and guided the participants on how to properly capture data collected in a report.... The participants also learn the four ways to monitor and track a budget."

However, some of the CSOs themselves are not immune from challenges. An "in-depth capacity assessment" of eight CSOs in Kaduna State by Iliya Ambi and Dr. Mustapha Gwadabe published in December 2009 states that:

"Baseline situation of the assessed CSOs shows that there were 13 issues for capacity development/support of the CSOs with more than 50% of these issues being related to internal management and programme issues. These issues range from internal, programme and external relationships. These were; vision, mission and value statements not clearly articulated; ineffective board, weak financial management systems, inadequate personnel policy, communication flow, weak monitoring & evaluation system as well as programming skills. Strategically, others were strengthening the existing skills, knowledge base of CSOs on educational policies, advocacy, gender, inclusive participation, the concept of voice and accountability within a wider state educational framework for effective delivery of education services."

Lack of synergy

A 2009 report by Wale Samuel and Ignatius Agu for the Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria (ESSPIN) titled: *Mapping of Civil Society Organizations in Lagos State* shows the lack of linkage between education-focused CSOs and the Lagos State Government.

Findings reveal that the CSOs' partnership with the Lagos State government is not well documented. According to the State Universal Basic Education (SUBEB), Lagos, the only documented evidence of CSO/Government working relationship is the compilation of the list of NGOs intervening in schools and this list was only compiled based on correspondence from the NGOs who report on their intervention to Government:

"Generally, most respondents observed that there was the need for ESSPIN to build the capacity of NGOs on gaps identified in the report especially around areas like work with school-based management committees (SBMC), monitoring & evaluation, budget tracking and education policies. They also called for ESSPIN to support networking activities among NGOs working in the area of education in Lagos State amongst others."

The paper further reveals that:

"Very few NGOs work directly at community level. NGOs who work directly with rural or urban communities account for only 3.1% of those surveyed. The high figure recorded for NGOs with community level outreach is in sharp contrast to the findings on NGOs that are actually located in rural Lagos. This upholds the submission that most



Umar Buba Jibril, Deputy Majority Leader of the House of Representatives

Lagos-based NGOs are city dwellers but with only community outreach."

Perhaps, part of the lack of synergy is mistrust and suspicion between government agencies and the CSOs. This was pointed out by Musa Umar of the Nigerian Institute of Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS) at a recent education workshop organized by the Development Research Project Centre (DRPC). While noting that government cannot handle education alone, and that NGOs are necessary to complement the efforts of government, Umar says their work is hampered by a silent mistrust between both parties.

Using OGAV's experience as an example, Kolade says: "The challenges are more at the Ministry level than the district. The District is directly involved with the schools and so they appreciate the values added to the lives of the students thus making them a lifelong learner."

Knocks for CSOs in Nigeria

Despite the important role CSOs play in monitoring and building capacity in the education sector in Nigeria, some of them have been criticized in recent times for paying more attention to the monetary or personal gains rather than humanitarian concern.

In a 2013 article titled: *Eight Challenges for Civil Society*, Brian Pratt argues that the expansion of privatization of welfare, health and education globally has led to new entrants from the private sector. He says:

"International aid has seen a similar process, with companies branching out from their comfort zones of finance and construction into civil society, education, health, and rural development - with some even learning how to masquerade as ersatz civil society groups to project a cuddly image. There will be more manoeuvring between NGOs



Jaye Gaskia, Chairman of the Network of Civil Society Organizations in Nigeria

and official aid agencies as we close in on 2015, when for many development goals will be reviewed and revised."

A 2014 report entitled: *The Two Main Challenges Facing African Civil Society Organisations*, (Centre for International Private Enterprise), Ryan Musser points out that "Civil society organizations often struggle with a dependency on donor funding which hinders sustainability, distracts from their missions, and encourages a short-term strategy of chasing funds. As organizations face a global decline in donor funding, the issues of dependency and unsustainability only grow in importance."

It further notes that "USAID's most recent CSO Sustainability Index for Sub-Saharan Africa found that "difficult economic environments due to the global financial crisis impacted CSO resource availability in almost all of the countries" included in the index. In an effort to ensure financial stability, organizations have a tendency to focus their energy and attention on finding more funding rather than focusing on implementing their mission.

Lars Benson advises that CSOs need to "avoid mission creep and resist seeking pots of gold."

Bulama Abiso, chairman of the Borno State chapter of the Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT), at an event organized by the Kano-based Development Research Project Centre (DRPC) in September 2017 said that the NGOs in Borno State are not coordinated and their activities overlap one another, making it difficult for education authorities to know who to deal with, when and how. On the issue of budgeting, Abiso urged NGOs to be specific about their aims and what cause they want to support. He pointed out that when the NGOs identify what they want to achieve, it will be easier for local authorities to key into their agenda.

As part of his submission at the event, Abdullahi Hudu, Permanent Secretary, Jigawa State Ministry of Education said the major challenges government face while working with NGOs and CSOs is sustainability and timing.

The event drew various education stakeholders and organizations like the Girl-Child Concern, Centre for Girls Education, Isa Wali Empowerment Initiative, The Education Partnership (TEP), Malala Foundation and Ford Foundation.

Plot to clip CSOs' wings

The National Assembly seeks to clip the wings of civil society organizations in Nigeria through a bill proposed by Umar Buba Jibril, Deputy Majority Leader of the House of Representatives. Part of Jubril's argument for the introduction of the bill is the funding enjoyed by some CSOs from international donors which he says are not well accounted for. He believes that the bill will checkmate the excesses of CSOs and help to promote probity and accountability within the civil society sector.

Speaking on the floor of the house, Jibril, said:

"NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) and CSOs (Civil Society Organizations) are voluntary organizations that are registered to partner government at all levels to fill gaps wherever they exist. They are supposed to be partners in progress with the government; therefore, the need for a commission to serve this purpose arises.

Secondly and naturally for them to carry out their activities, the NGOs and CSOs solicit for funds from all over the world and collect billions of naira on behalf of Nigerians. Thirdly, they recruit expatriates to help them run their activities in the country with lots of abuses.

However, recent developments have shown that some people registered NGOs, solicited for funds and disappeared. That happened recently in the North East...

The NGOs bill therefore is primarily to set up a commission to regulate their activities and provide a platform for robust relationships between them and the government for the interests of Nigerians. In addition it is to ensure transparency and accountability in the ways and manners the NGOs collect moneys and use them for Nigerians."

But the move is not well received by many Nigerians, especially civil society groups who say it is meant to intimidate the leadership of CSOs.

Jaye Gaskia, Chairman of the Network of Civil Society Organizations in Nigeria, described the bill as toxic, saying it is a calculated attempt by the government to stifle freedom of speech and portends a great threat to the hard earned democracy in Nigeria.

Funding of CSOs

The evidence that CSOs receive grants from foreign organizations is available in a recent work, *Civil Society Organization Consolidation Fund Grant Manual* which is a joint initiative of the Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria funded by the Department of

International Development (DFID). On page 7 is the declaration that "ESSPIN will provide CSO Consolidation Grants for a period of 14 months to a maximum value of NGN 293, 487,425 (equivalent to Sterling Pounds 1,048,000). ESSPIN will disburse the funds to CSOs across the six ESSPIN states on a tranche basis." And while "CSOs will receive grant funds from ESSPIN periodically in tranches based on plans and budgets for the period; disbursements are scheduled for June 2015, September 2015, January 2016 and May 2016."

However, "Expenditure/Retirements during the previous tranche and remaining grant balances held by the CSOs shall be remitted to ESSPIN's coffers as soon as retirements are made with the use of Under-spent Remittance Form." In regards to first tranche, "payments will be made to the CSOs on application of the Grant, signed contract and MoU and upon being approved by ESSPIN's Management," and "Subsequent tranche payments to CSOs will be made subject to proper use and reporting (Financials and Narratives) of the previous quarter disbursement and remittance of any under-spent funds."

Selection process

The *Civil Society Organization Consolidation Fund Grant Manual* describes how beneficiaries are selected. It points out that due diligence was "conducted on 58 CSOs within the 6 ESSPIN-supported states of Enugu, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Kwara, and Lagos," and that "in line with DFID's due diligence framework requirements, CSOs were assessed for risk in five key areas: Governance and control, ability to deliver, financial stability, monitoring & evaluation and external relations."

Part of the process was for them to complete a questionnaire and provide supporting documentation. Risks were measured against a standard benchmark for the CSOs and ESSPIN required that CSOs achieve an overall risk rating of low or medium in order to qualify to receive grant.

Fifty seven CSOs in some states met the due diligence requirements and were selected. They include Enugu-based CSOs like Youth Education on Human Right & Civic Responsibilities (YEHRCR), Raise a Child Today Initiative (RACTI), Economic Empowerment & Development Initiative (EEDI), Agents of Communication and Development (ACODE), Society for the Improvement of Rural People (SIRP), Youth Resource Development Education & Leadership (YORDEL), and Poverty in Africa Alternative (POVINAA).

The successful ones in Jigawa are Gadawur Youth Forum (GYF), Rural Education Foundation (REF), Hadejia Development Circle (HDC), Kamala Health and Education Development Initiative (KAHDEV), Gumel Youth Movement (GYM) and Society for Community Health Awareness and Mobilisation (SOCHAM). Others are Federation of Muslim Women Association of Nigeria (FOMWAN), Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN), Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT), Maranda Development Association (MDA).

In Kaduna State, there are twelve beneficiaries. They are: Hope for the Village Child Foundation,

Despite the important role CSOs play in monitoring and building capacity in the education sector in Nigeria, some of them have been criticized in recent times for paying more attention to the monetary or personal gains rather than humanitarian concern.

Millennium Hope Programme, ABANTU for Development, Grant AID for Widows, Orphans and Needy Foundation (GAWON Foundation), Lifeline Education Development Resources Centre, Gender Awareness Trust (GAT), JEBI Educational Services Ltd, Youth Team in Action Supporting Community Initiated Development (YOTASCID), Fantsuam Foundation, Women of Vision Development Initiative (WVDI), Support Health and Education (SHED).

In Kano State, the successful ones include: Neighbourhood Education Committee (NEC), Basic Education Association (BEA), Citizens Council for Public Education (CCPE), Federation of Muslim Women Association (FOMWAN) Global Youth and Women Support Initiative (GLOYWSI), Support for Women and Teenage Children (SWATCH). Others include Turaki Educational Consultancy Services Ltd., InuwarJa'maar Kano (KANO FORUM), Aminu Kano Centre for Democratic Research and Training (Mambayya House), Community Development Initiative (CDI), Magajin Malam Educational Services.

Kwara State beneficiaries are: Community Development Initiative (CDI), Centre for Appropriate Technology for Rural Women (CAPTEC), Hilltop Foundation, Federation of Muslim Women Association of Nigeria (FOMWAN), Living Care Community Development Foundation (LCCDF), Royal Health Heritage Foundation (RHHF), Womankind Family Enhancement Initiative (WOKFEI), and Integrity Mission.

The funds also extended to Lagos State, and the selected CSOs include: Quality of Life Initiative, Health and Sustainable Development Association of Nigeria (HESDAN), Linking the Youth Together of Nigeria Exchange (LYNX), Organization for Non-Formal Education Foundation (ONEF). Others are Women Protection Organization (WOPO), Talent Plus Resources International (TRI), Defence for Children International (DCI), Development Support Institute (DSI), Centre for Health Development & Communication (CHEDCOM).

The way forward

For Nigeria to attain SDG-4, Mr. Kabir Alihu, National Moderator, CSACEFA believes there is need to improve the partnership between the government and CSOs to ensure proper accountability for education budget. "We should make education budget more transparent, more inclusive of the Civil Society Organizations and NGOs. By so doing, it will make the government accountable on what whatever they are meant to do," he said. ■



The Role of CSOs in Gender Mainstreaming in Nigeria

THE 2030 Agenda is clear: there can be no sustainable development without gender equality. It is remarkable that gender equality and women's economic empowerment are at the centre of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Antonio Guterres, Secretary General of the United Nations reinforced the premium which the UN places on gender equality in his message to mark the 2018 International Women's Day (IWD) on March 8. In his message titled: *Gender Equality: The Unfinished Business of Our Time*, Guterres said:

"The United Nations stands with women around the world as they fight to overcome the injustices they face – whether they are rural women dealing with wage discrimination, urban women organizing for change, women refugees at risk of exploitation and abuse, or women who experience intersecting forms of discrimination: widows, indigenous women, women with disabilities."

Guterres emphasized that the world is at a pivotal moment for women's rights. He noted that the historical and structural inequalities that have allowed oppression and discrimination to flourish are being exposed like never before:

"Achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls is the unfinished business of our time, and the greatest human rights challenge in our world. The activism and advocacy of generations of women have borne fruits. There are more girls in school than ever before; more women are doing paid work and in senior roles in the private sector, academia, politics and in international organizations, including the United Nations. Gender equality is enshrined in countless laws, and harmful practices like female genital mutilation and child marriage have been outlawed in many countries."

However, Guterres said that despite the positive results recorded in these areas, serious obstacles remain as UN member-nations strive to address the historic power imbalances that underpin discrimination and exploitation.

In conformity with the observation of the UN Scribe, the UN Women affirms that although the 2030 Agenda promises to put an end to barriers that prevent women and girls from realizing their full potential, significant challenges lie ahead. In its report titled: *Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, the UN Women observed that in 18 countries, across the world, husbands can legally prevent their wives from



Antonio Guterres, Secretary General of the United Nations

working; in 39 countries, daughters and sons do not have equal inheritance rights; and 49 countries lack laws protecting women from domestic violence. Globally, 1 in 5 women and girls under the age of 50 reported experiencing physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner within a 12-month period. According to the report, the figure is even higher for sub-Saharan Africa, where 22.3% of women and girls aged 15 to 49 reported to be experiencing physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner within a 12-month period.

With particular reference to Nigeria, the report revealed that 23% of women have been victims of physical or sexual violence by a previous husband and 17.3% by another relative.

The report of the UN Women also identified inequalities among women and girls within Nigeria across a range of development dimensions. According to their findings, those who are deprived in one dimension are likely to experience deprivations in other dimensions as well. The findings of the report on Nigeria are as follows:

- **Education:** The report shows that wealth is a driving force behind educational attainment: 13% of women and girls from the richest households in Nigeria reported completing six or less years of education, while in the poorest households, 96.5% are education-poor.
- **Child marriage:** The findings of the UN Women indicates that a low-income, rural woman of Hausa ethnicity (from Northern Nigeria) is eight times as



**Mrs Josephine Effah-Chukwuma, Executive Director,
Project Alert on Violence Against Women in Nigeria**

likely to be married before the age of 18 as a high-income, urban woman of Yoruba ethnicity.

- **Violence against women and girls:** The report shows that 23% of women have been victims of physical or sexual violence by a previous husband and 17.3% by another relative. Igbo women and girls are the likeliest to report being victims of violence at the hands of a relative: 25.2%.
- **Clustered deprivations:** The UN Women's report reveals that 15% of all women aged 18–49 (or 5.2 million) are simultaneously deprived in four SDG-related dimensions. These women were not only married before the age of 18 and education poor, but they also reported no agency in healthcare decisions and said they were not working at the time of the survey.

Similarly, the 2017 Global Gender Gap Report by the World Economic Forum (WEF) shows that Nigeria has failed to close widening gender gap. The report shows that Nigeria has a lot to do in improving the parity between the sexes. The Global Gender Gap Report by WEF places Nigeria 122nd out of 144 countries investigated across the world. Thus, while Nigeria is focussing on diversifying from oil, fighting against corruption and showcasing the talent of its citizens to the world, it appears to be lagging behind in closing the parity gap between men and women in their contributions to society. The report explored and ranked the progress of gender-based disparities in Nigeria and other countries, particularly in Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, and Political Empowerment. "The rankings are designed to create global awareness of the challenges posed by gender gaps and the opportunities created by reducing them," the World Economic Forum posted on its website.

Indeed, in the past few years, Nigeria has become a focus of global leaders in the SDGs Gender Equality. This is because it is one of the many countries where tradition, custom, sexual stereotyping of social roles

and cultural prejudice militate against the enjoyment of rights and full participation of women on an equal basis with men in national development.

However, since Nigeria has subscribed and pledged to actualize the Gender Equality Sustainable Development Goal Number 5, there are indications that the country's fortunes are likely to change for the better through the expected bridging of the gender gap.

The administration of President Muhammadu Buhari places emphasis on gender equality because the linkage among gender, poverty and education are well known. But based on the enormity of the challenges of gender equality, government alone cannot effectively address them. Interestingly, other stakeholders, particularly the civil society organisations (CSOs) in Nigeria have been working in synergy with the governments at various levels in gender mainstreaming.

Gender mainstreaming is also gradually becoming mandatory in all government and private sector policies in Nigeria. CSOs continuously advocate and collaborate with the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, the Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on SDGs (OSSAP- SDGs) and other relevant agencies to ensure that women are given equal opportunities to contribute in the national development process by actively participating and championing policy changes and practices.

Government-CSOs synergy on Nigeria's Gender Policy

In Nigeria, some laudable efforts have been made by government in conjunction with the CSOs to put in place the necessary mechanisms required for the elimination of gender discrimination so as to ensure gender parity and human dignity.

In line with various international commitments, as far back as 2006, the Nigerian government had developed a National Gender Policy that focuses on gender mainstreaming, women empowerment and eliminating discriminatory practices that are harmful to women. The National Gender Policy, which replaced the National Policy on Women (NPW) was designed to equip stakeholders, including the CSOs with strategic skills for galvanizing the levels of social change required for the empowerment of all citizens to participate actively in the country's socio-economic and political development. It was one of the cardinal objectives of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which preceded the SDGs.

Under Nigeria's Gender Policy document, the Federal Government is committed to building a nation devoid of gender discrimination, guaranteeing equal access to political, social and economic wealth creation opportunities for women and men; and developing a culture that places a premium on the protection of all, including children.

To achieve this ambitious goal, the Federal Government pledged to take drastic policy measures that would promote the full participation of women in both the public and private sectors as agents of development. The Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development is charged with the

responsibility of working with relevant stakeholders, particularly the CSOs to ensure the involvement of Nigerian women in the mainstream of the national development processes.

The government also proposed to develop a National Gender Strategic Framework (NGSF) which would outline explicit implementation, monitoring and evaluation guidelines for achieving measurable targets and enhancing accountability to gender equality and women's empowerment.

With the adoption of the SDGs by the United Nations in September 2015, more interest has been generated and a better attention paid to the pursuit of gender sensitive policies by government with the support of the CSOs. Indeed, the CSOs in Nigeria have been collaborating with the Nigerian government to ensure that the balancing of the gender equation in the country.

Despite the collective efforts of the Nigerian government and the CSO to ensure gender equality, Nigerian women still face dehumanizing treatments, they are less represented in decision-making and have the least access to economic opportunities and ownership of resources. The participation of women in politics in Nigeria has remained low in spite of all efforts made so far.

Leveraging the CSOs for gender equality

Achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, the focus of Goal 5 of the SDGs in Nigeria demands participation and partnership by the Nigerian government at all levels and civil society organizations. It is therefore heart-warming that CSOs in Nigeria as transformers in society have been involved in training and advocacy processes, which build the capacities and knowledge of the general populace towards achieving the SDG-5.

In fact, many the leading CSOs in Nigeria are working in the area of gender. Even when some CSOs are not working directly on gender, they usually mainstream gender into their plans and programmes. However, the activities of CSOs on gender go beyond mainstreaming. They also encourage governments at all levels to end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere according to target number one of SDG-5.

CSOs such as CAFSO-Women's Rights Action Group (CAFSO-WRAG), Campaign against Impunity and Domestic Violence (CAIDOV) and Gender Development Initiative (GENDI) and many more are prominent when it comes to the issue of gender, especially working on violence against women and harmful traditional practices. For example, CAFSO-WRAG for Development recently submitted to Oyo State House of Assembly a bill on gender based violence while clamouring for a special court to try the violators.

Project Alert on Violence Against Women in Nigeria

Project Alert on Violence Against Women in Nigeria stands out as a frontline CSO devoted to educating the Nigerian society on the forms and prevalence of violence against women and rendering practical support to female victims of violence. Mrs Josephine Effah-



Dr. Abiola Akiyode-Afolabi, Executive Director, Women Advocates Research and Documentation Centre

Chukwuma, Founder and Executive Director, Project Alert on Violence Against Women in Nigeria said that the organization's vision is to seek to influence society by actively advocating for zero tolerance for all forms of violence against women / young girls.

According to her, sexual violence, whether domestic violence or otherwise, has become a real issue in Nigeria today. "With the increased level of information in this digital age, messages flow between Whatsapp and Facebook daily that speak of sexual violence, mostly of women and children. These victims are molested by their parents, landlords, teachers, drivers, pastors and so on," she said.

Over the years, Project Alert has carried out studies to establish the rate of sexual violence in Nigeria. On March 1, 2017, it released another report following the one it had done in 2013 on the state of sexual violence in Nigeria. In 2013, it reviewed 155 cases reported between 2010 and 2011 across the major regions in Nigeria to come to the conclusion that 69% of the victims of sexual violence were children.

The revised 2017 report titled: "*Sexual Violence in Nigeria: A Silent Epidemic*" was published with information from Mirabel Centre, the first sexual assault referral centre set up by Partnership for Justice (an NGO) with support from the Justice for All Project (J4A) of the UK Department for International Development (DFID). It shows that in Lagos State alone, there were 1,110 sexual violence cases reported between July 2013 and July 2015, and 98% of these victims were female and 2% were male.

The shocking part of the report is that 77% of the 1,110 cases were children between the ages of 0-17 years old. Effah-Chukwuma said:

"Thus, there was an increase by 8%. There was even a case of a victim as young as four months old. "Considering the fact that 77% of the victims were

children aged 0-17 years, the most prevalent form of sexual violence in Nigeria, is defilement of children. It is important to note that the perpetrators are not strangers to these children. They are family members, neighbours, friends, teachers and religious leaders to these children. They are people these children know, love & trust. They are in 95% of the cases not strangers.”

She pointed out that the way forward is that the federal and state governments should as a matter of urgency “acknowledge that we have an epidemic on our hands and immediately come out with a national plan of action, to respond to it.”

According to Project Alert, there is an urgent need for community sensitization programmes to help create public awareness on this debilitating issue. “The criminal justice system should be urgently reformed to ensure that officers are well trained and funded to respond to reported cases in a timely and sensitive manner; and not to make justice so expensive that victims continue to say “I leave it to God”. They do so because victims of crimes in Nigeria are made to foot the bill for seeking justice, right from the police station,” Effah-Chukwuma added.

Apart from the report on sexual violence, Project Alert had on November 25, 2017 (International Day on Violence Against Women) commenced its 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence which ended on December 16, 2017 (International Human Rights Day).

Reflecting on the activities of Project Alert in past 18 years, Effah-Chukwuma said that the organization may not have solved half of the problems in relation to violence against women and girls in Nigeria, but it has definitely impacted individuals and institutions. “It definitely is not business as usual in relation to violence against women, as it used to be in the 90s, when I joined the movement. The silence which used to surround such issues has been broken... We are happy with the progress we have made so far, but we are not resting on our oars,” she said.

According to her, gender-based violence or violence against women is not only physical, sexual and psychological in nature:



Dr. Priscillia Achakpa, Executive Director, Women Environmental Programme (WEP)

“It also includes harmful traditional practices that abuse the rights and dignity of women which in turn results in or could result in physical or psychological consequences. These harmful traditional practices include widowhood rites; girl-child disinheritance; male child preference; and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). Widows should not be subjected to obnoxious practices under the guise of culture and tradition; and widowhood period should not be score settling time. The girl-child has a right to inheritance and should not be discriminated against. The girl-child should also not be discriminated against at birth and patriarchal cultures that prefer male children should be done away with. FGM which has been outlawed in several states in Nigeria should be enforced.”

Women Advocates Research and Documentation Centre (WARDC)

The Women Advocates Research and Documentation Centre (WARDC) is another CSO which focuses on the promotion of women's rights, governance, human rights and the rule of law. Dr. Abiola Akiyode-Afolabi, Executive Director of WARDC said that since it was established in 2002, it has served as a platform for addressing issues relating to gender-based violence. “In the process of addressing gender-based violence, we go to court a lot. We deal with at least 2,000 cases that have to do with women in a year. We also engage in policy advocacy to give women more voice in society. We have a shelter in Ogun State that caters for women, so we've come a long way in terms of intervention in this area,” she said.

Akiyode-Afolabi, who is a lawyer, added that WARDC has consistently fought for the rights of women in Nigeria because they have continued to suffer structural and institutional injustices:

“The programmes and projects of different governments majorly have consistently and consciously excluded women despite their huge population. The environment is not suitable for women; there is a very strong 'shadow system' that continues to suppress women irrespective of their struggle for change. There seem to be no serious commitment to advancing women's cause in Nigeria and that is why today, violence against women is treated with impunity in most states.”

In terms of the clamour for 35 percent affirmative action and women's participation in politics, Akiyode-Afolabi, who is also the President of Transition Monitoring Group (TMG), described it as a matter of right and not a privilege:

“We claim as women that we have suffered injustices not because of our fault, but because the society has led us through several factors like religion, culture, law, beliefs to where we are. For us to be able to rise above all these anomalies, we need a level playing field. The call for affirmative action is not just a Nigerian thing but also a global principle to support marginalised groups.”

She explained that over the years, it has been established that increased representation of women has had an immediate and important impact on Nigerian

politics. She, however, explained that there exists an underlying factor in relation to women participating in the electoral space in Nigeria either as politicians, office contestants, voters and members of election management bodies. According to her, although many women aspire for electoral offices, party politics and structures as well as god-fatherism and tokenism prevent them from emerging as candidates in their parties. "To give increase women participation in politics, political parties should provide a level playing field for all women, who have indicated interest in contesting election, so as to get more women into electoral offices," Akiyode-Afolabi said.

It is noteworthy that WARD used the opportunity offered by the celebration of the 2018 International Women's Day, WARD (to urge the Nigerian government to implement policies that will promote the inclusiveness of women in politics and governance of the country. WARD also asked government to revise laws and administrative policies and practices that are denying women equal rights and access to economic resources while undertaking legal reforms that will give women full and equal access to economic resources.

In August 2017, WARD had organized a gender dialogue in commemoration of 50th anniversary of the creation of Lagos State. At the event which was attended by many prominent personalities, the organization called on policy makers in Nigeria to reassess the level and effectiveness of her gender equality commitments in different sectors such as education, health, governance and employment in order to improve the lives of women and girls across the country.

Akiyode-Afolabi explained that the event was useful in aggregating the concessions among stakeholders to mainstream gender equality, support a dialogue that will build the enabling environment for gender policy in Lagos State and build capacity in gender mainstreaming knowledge and skill. She further explained that the objective of the Policy Dialogue was to support the government and people of Lagos State in shaping policies that will promote gender equality and the development of women in the state post-50 years' celebration. "In reality, there are still lots to be done in promoting gender equality and development in Lagos State," she said.

Women Environmental Programme (WEP)

The Women Environmental Programme (WEP) is a leading CSO which has carved a niche for itself as a strong advocate for gender equality in Nigeria. WEP is a CSO with consultative status to the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), observer status to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and observer status to United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Dr. Priscilla Achakpa, Executive Director of WEP said that the organization is committed towards achieving environmental sustainability, while empowering women and youth not only in Nigeria, but across the world.

In 2016, WEP had designed a project geared towards ensuring effective implementation of programmes, policies and legislations, which would

contribute to achieving gender equality in Nigeria by 2030. The project funded by the Kingdom of Netherlands, targeted at contributing specifically to the attainment of gender equality in Benue and Zamfara states of Nigeria.

In Benue State, WEP organized the project in collaboration with the Benue State Ministry of Women Affairs. The pre-project advocacy and sensitization forum took place at the Benue State Planning Commission's Conference Hall, State Secretariat, Makurdi, Benue State, on December 8, 2016 and brought together members of the Benue State Executive Council, legislators, CSOs, women groups, traditional/religious leaders and the media within the state.

As a follow-up to the pre-project advocacy forum, WEP organized a two-day workshop for the Legislators, Commissioners and other State Executives held on June 7, 2017 at Benue Hotels, Makurdi, while that of the personal assistants to the State Executives and Legislators held from June 8 to June 9, 2017 at Hallydays Hotel, Makurdi, Benue State.

The workshop provided a platform for the legislators, commissioners and other members of the State Executive Council to clearly understand the concept of gender equality and practical ways of mainstreaming gender in programmes, policies and legislations. It became very clear to all at these workshops that gender equality is not a ploy by women to take over from men, but a request for equal opportunities for both men and women to realize their potential.

Achakpa said gender mainstreaming is very critical to the success of the SDGs in Nigeria, hence the decision of WEP to advocate systematically to the leadership of Nigeria and other African countries to understand why they need to address gender issues:

"They have all signed on to the SDGs and goal 5 of the SDGs specifically talks about gender equality and women's empowerment. As such, integrating gender into our development agenda is a very important issue. Although I will say it is a slow process, we strongly believe we shall get there."



Dr. Joe Okei-Odumakin, President, Women Arise for Change Initiative

The Initiative for Peace and Comfort (IPC)

The Initiative for Peace and Comfort (IPC) is also deeply involved in ensuring gender equality and empowering all women and girls. Dr. Comfort Onifade, Executive Director of Initiative for Peace and Comfort (IPC) said the organization's work in ensuring gender equality and empowering women and girls in Nigeria are evident in the organisation's engagement in many activities that would enable them fulfil their aspirations in a peaceful and prosperous country. She said that IPC in collaboration with the Community Education Advancement of Peace and Development Initiative (CEAPDI) and the Gender Development Initiative (GENDI) recently conducted training on information and communication technology (ICT) for about 40 girls and over 50 boys at Asayi Lokoji Village. IPC also organized a Capacity Building Retreat for couples in Abeokuta, Ogun State, South West Nigeria where they discussed extensively the *Equal Roles of Men and Women Towards Achieving Peaceful Homes in a Peaceful Society*.

In collaboration with a research team from the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (FUNAAB), IPC has equally conducted a study on *"Violence Against Women"* at Ode-Omi of Ijebu waterside, Ayetoro in Ogun State, and paid sensitization visits to some parts of Kwara State where it advocated for gender equality. Over 200 women and 100 men were sensitized.

Besides, IPC had partnered the Women of Worth Team to train and educate thousands of Nigerian women on *Improving Female Self Worth at Achieving Gender Equality in the Society*.

Women Arise for Change Initiative (WA)

Women Arise for Change Initiative has equally been active in championing the cause of women and clamouring for the elimination of all kinds of gender-based discriminations affecting women in its bid support the Nigerian government to achieve Goal 5 of the SDGs by 2030.

Dr. Joe Okei-Odumakin, President of Women Arise for Change Initiative (WA) said in order to help government address issues affecting women and girls in the country, the group provides training for women and girls in both the rural and urban areas. The training programmes are mainly on women's human rights as a way of equipping the women with basic knowledge needed to defend their human rights and fundamental freedoms. "Our organization also conducts advocacy meetings and policy dialogues with the federal and state governments in order to formulate pro-women policies. Between 2013 and 2017, WA has met with not less than 16 state governments across the nation. WA continues to conduct women political participation capacity workshops across the nation," she said. According to her, Women Arise also operates a counselling centre for women and girls where survivors receive prompt response to issues of gender-based violence such as rape, sexual assault, battering, abandonment, stalking, and psychological torture. It has handled not less than 4,000 cases in this regard.

She noted that although the Nigerian government has pledged and signed various international agreements and treaties that seek to end all forms of violence against women and most importantly gender-based violence, the past and present administrations have not demonstrated the political will to ensure an end to all forms of discrimination against women by the year 2030:

"Though there are pockets of laws and policies that have been put in place through civil society efforts and partnership with government at the federal and state levels, the implementation of the laws and policies have been very slow and in some places not even implemented at all. For instance, the Nigeria gender policy stipulates that there should be 35% affirmative action in political and elective



Some CSO members campaigning under BringBackOurGirls BBOG

positions for women at all levels of government but till date; no government in Nigeria has implemented this aspect of the policy. The Nigerian government pays lip service to gender development as we are yet to see concrete actions that will really achieve the Sustainable Development goal number 5 by the year 2030."

Okei-Odumakin explained that as a gender activist, she is not satisfied with government's response to various issues affecting women rights, career and participation in the socio-economic and political development in the country:

"There are still a lot of issues that are begging for government attention. For instance, there are still a lot of work place discrimination against women as regards maternity leave, promotions and dignity of labour. Women are still majorly marginalized in politics. Women's political participation is very poor and women's economic empowerment is not a priority of government. Gender disparities in education have persisted from basic education to tertiary education. The invasion, killings and abduction of girls and women has worsened the condition of girl-child education in many parts of Nigeria, particularly the North East where *Boko Haram* insurgency has made life unbearable for women."

Okei-Odumakin said that WA would continue to canvass that government should put in place proactive policies and laws that would check violence against women. According to her, while the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act has become law at the federal level, several states in Nigeria are yet to replicate the law despite efforts by development workers and international development partners in Nigeria to push it through:

"A good number of states are still foot-dragging on this law and policies. In the same vein, the federal and states government are yet to legislate on harmful cultural and traditional practices that discriminate against women such as widowhood, not standing surety, right to own land. Violence against women is rooted in gender-based discrimination and social norms and gender stereotypes that perpetuate such violence. Given the devastating effect violence has on women, government's efforts have mainly focused on responses and services for survivors. However, government needs to realize that the best way to end violence against women is to put in place laws and policies that prevent it from happening in the first place by addressing its root and structural causes."

To address gender imbalance in Nigeria, Okei-Odumakin urged government to recognize that male violence against women is a major structural and societal problem based on the unequal power relations between women and men and therefore encourage the active participation of men in actions aimed at combating violence against women. "Above all, government should develop policies that will enable women equal access to resources such as land,

It is clear that CSOs in Nigeria have been mounting relentless pressure on government to implement good policies that would enable the country achieve gender equality by 2030.

training, technology and credit. These efforts will go a long way towards attaining goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals," she said.

Campaign for the release of Chibok Girls

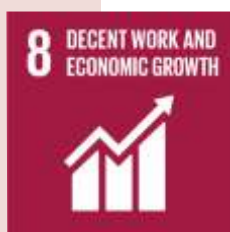
Civil Society Action Coalition on Education for All (CSACEFA), a coalition of over 500 CSOs, faith-based organizations (FBOs), Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), working in the area of education in the 36 states of the country and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) is equally involved in the gender equality drive.

Since May 14, 2014 when *Boko Haram* abducted over 200 girls from Government Girls Secondary School (GGSS) Chibok in Borno State, CSACEFA has been working on the ground to lobby for the release of the girls. It has also been appealing to the federal and state governments to intensify efforts towards ensuring the security of children especially the girl-child in schools. CSACEFA members across the country equally joined the BringBackOurGirls #BBOG movement as they embarked on several campaigns and rallies in this respect until the release of a good number of the girls.

CSACEFA recently cautioned that the abduction of Chibok Girls in 2014 and another set of 110 female students from the Girls' Science Technical College, Dapchi, Yobe State on February 19, 2018, would slow down the progress made in the campaign for girls' education especially in the north.

Mrs. Chioma Osuji, the Policy Adviser of the coalition urged the government to step up measures that would lead to the rescue of both the remaining Chibok girls. According to her, girls face increasing dangers in the society because if they are not raped, abducted and given out to marriage at tender age, they will be given out as house helps. "We are worried because as concerned citizens, the attacks on girls in schools in the North East will cripple the successes we have recorded in championing the cause for the education of the girl-child. And if this is not urgently addressed, in few years to come, it might endanger girls/women participation and representation in our democratic processes," she said.

From the foregoing, it is clear that CSOs in Nigeria have been mounting relentless pressure on government to implement good policies that would enable the country achieve gender equality by 2030. ■



CSOs-Labour Strategic Partnership For Decent Work in Nigeria



Dr. Chris Ngige, Minister of Labour and Employment

THERE is little doubt that the failure of countries like Nigeria to empower individuals through decent work was one of the key factors behind the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGAS) in New York in September 2015.

It is remarkable that 'Decent Work and Economic Growth', which is goal number 8 of the SDGs specifically encourages all UN-member countries, including Nigeria to do more to empower individuals through the promotion of development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation.

Indeed, SDG-8, which promotes inclusive and sustainable employment as well as decent work for all, is meant to set a new path to economic growth for a country like Nigeria which has about 112 million people living in poverty and over 20 million people without jobs.

Targets of SDG-8

The targets for SDG-8 are as follows:

- To sustain per capita economic growth in accordance with national circumstances and, in particular, at least 7 percent gross domestic product growth per annum in the least developed countries.
- Achieve higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation, including through a focus on high-value added and labour-intensive sectors.
- Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formalization and growth of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services.
- Improve progressively, through 2030, global resource efficiency in consumption and production and endeavour to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation, in accordance with the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production, with developed countries taking the lead.
- By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.
- By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training.
- Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms.
- Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment.
- By 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products.
- Strengthen the capacity of domestic financial institutions to encourage and expand access to banking, insurance and financial services for all.
- Increase Aid for Trade support for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, including through the Enhanced Integrated Framework for Trade-Related Technical Assistance to Least Developed Countries.
- By 2020, develop and operationalize a global strategy for youth employment and implement the Global Jobs Pact of the International Labour Organization.

Pillars of decent work

The International Labour Organization (ILO) recognizes that concept of decent work as a leeway for the creation of opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration. It also enables workers to actively participate in decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment of all women and men.

In fact, decent work is a tool for poverty reduction and equitable globalization and is achieved through four pillars, namely:

- **Employment creation and enterprise development:** This covers measures that promote 'employment-rich' growth and pro-poor growth. It also encompasses programmes and policies that enhance productivity; macroeconomic and fiscal policies that aid employment growth; creating an environment conducive for employment activity; linking trade policies to employment; promoting education and training; addressing youth employment and employability; and adopting policies that help improve the management and governance of labour migration.
- **Social protection:** This pillar encompasses policies that provide safety nets, thereby reducing the level of risk to workers' lives, health and well-being. It embraces social security and unemployment benefits; basic health provision for rural and informal workers (including occupational health and policies addressing HIV); social transfers and cash benefits for those not able to work or too old or too young to work; development of policies that address fairness at work; and promotion of pension systems.
- **Standards and rights at work:** This pillar relates to measures that promote compliance with fundamental principles and rights at work.
- **Governance and social dialogue:** This refers to activities that promote social dialogue between government, employers, and workers, including institution building; labour law reform and strengthening enforcement; promoting collective bargaining; and strengthening dialogue and consultation processes.

Decent work deficits in Nigeria

Since the Nigerian leader, President Muhammadu Buhari joined other world leaders to endorse SDG-8 as one of the 17 global goals; Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in the country have been collaborating with the labour unions to safeguard the basic rights and interest of workers in the country through decent work and economic growth. This is because Nigeria has continued to record decent work deficits.

It is on record that Nigeria has over the years has ratified a total of 40 International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions that deal with the rights of workers in the workplace. However, the country is famous for

ratifying conventions that are crucial to the wellbeing of workers but successive administrations in Nigeria easily violate the conventions with impunity. Apart from government, transnational corporations, global financial institutions as well as private employers who are supposed to respect these rights, are also key violators.

Nigeria has therefore continued to record decent work deficits which include employment and labour market deficits, labour standard deficits, deficits in social protection, labour administration deficits and social dialogue deficits.

Employment and labour market deficits

Nigeria has had a decade of jobless growth in which years of economic growth have not translated to more employment opportunities or poverty alleviation. For instance, the labour force in Nigeria has not reflected the impressive level of economic growth experienced from 2005 to 2013. While the economy recorded an average of 9.8 percent growth in its GDP per annum between 2008 and 2010, the official unemployment rate for the working population ranged from 12 to 15 percent between 2002 and 2007.

This trend of "jobless growth" was captured in the 2009 World Bank report on Employment and Growth in Nigeria. Currently, half of the country's 170 million people live in urban areas with high rates of unemployment. The high level of unemployment was



Comrade Ayuba Wabba, NLC President

demonstrated when about 18 job seekers died and many were injured during a nationwide recruitment test conducted by the Nigeria Immigration Service in March 2014.

Poverty in Nigeria has been exacerbated by the persistently high unemployment levels. According to the recent report by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), Nigeria's unemployment rate increased to 18.80 percent in the third quarter of 2017 from 16.20 percent in the second quarter of 2017. Unemployment rate in Nigeria averaged 10.63 percent from 2006 until



Abiodun Aremu, Secretary, Joint Action Front (JAF)

2017, reaching an all time high of 19.70 percent in the fourth quarter of 2009 and a record low of 5.10 percent in the fourth quarter of 2010.

The Nigerian government seems not to have regard for target 6 of SDG-8 to reduce substantially “the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training” with about 42 million in the youth age bracket of 25-44 years unemployed, according to National Bureau of Statistics (2016). It is therefore not surprising that thousands of Nigerian youths have been travelling abroad at all cost to eke out a living but ending up doing precarious menial jobs. Some travel irregularly and become a prey in the hands of human rights violators such as human traffickers.

The increase in the unemployment rate is attributed to a number of factors. Some of the factors include, the increased number of school graduates with no matching job opportunities, a freeze in employment by institutions, the crash in the capital market and continued job losses in the manufacturing and oil sectors.

Another contributing factor to the unemployment situation is the limited employability of the workforce. This is due to the fact that graduates and young people lack training opportunities and to the level of skill required in the world of work. Apart from this, the training available and the curricula of technical vocational institutions are obsolete and do not reflect current market requirements.

In addition, employment and human resource planning functions are not developed adequately to equip the nation to face the challenges of the present labour market.

Labour standards deficits

Nigeria has ratified 40 ILO conventions, of which 35 are currently in force, including all eight core conventions.

However, the country is yet to ratify a number of conventions that are crucial to addressing decent work deficits in the labour market and the critical challenge of poverty and social exclusion, particularly within the

context of prevailing economic difficulties. These include ILO conventions C122, C129, C150 relating to labour market governance; C102 dealing with social security; C181 on Private Employment Agencies and C189 which focuses on domestic workers. Even though Nigeria ratified the Maritime Labour Convention 2006 in 2013, it has not been domesticated.

Many Nigerians in employment in public and private sectors receive poor remuneration. For those in public sector, their take-home-pay is not commensurate with the efforts they put in. While the average Nigerian civil servant earns merely N18,000 as minimum wage the political leaders especially the senators and members of the House of Representative are living in opulence. Workers in the private sector are worse off as the casualization mechanism of the workforce has dealt a great blow on the poor workers. Horrendous stories of occupational hazards leading to maiming and dismemberment of workers are deafening. Some are hospitalized for months as a result of job-related causes and are abruptly laid off while others often meet rough deaths while their employers seem not to be bothered in violation of labour laws.

Besides, some labour laws that were reviewed more than a decade ago are still pending at the National Assembly. Consequently, many greedy and lawless indigenous and multinational employers continue to take delight in violating labour standards to their own selfish advantages.

Deficits in social protection

The social protection model adopted by Nigeria in 2005 declares that the goal of social protection in the country “is to reduce poverty and protect vulnerable groups through effective and sustainable management mechanism.”

The specific objectives are to:

- Assist the population who are poor to get out of poverty;
- Protect the vulnerable against poverty;
- Provide income support to the poorest, especially the sick, disabled and retirees;
- Increase the enrolment and attendance rates of poor students in school;
- Address short-term employment needs by developing skills and competences.

However, several components of the social protection model are yet to be fully deployed in Nigeria. The country has not lived up to expectation when it comes to enacting and implementing policies which provide a safety net that will reduce the level of risk to workers' lives, health and well-being, as well as offer social security and address HIV/AIDS.

The plight of people aged 60 and above who have retired from formal salary or wage employment, self-employment or other forms of work such as small scale farmers and artisans, is pitiable. This is due to the absence of any meaningful policy or practice of social security for this group of Nigerians. Indirectly, this puts the welfare of several other dependants who rely on the fortune of these retirees to eke out a living

for themselves in jeopardy. With the prevailing economic difficulties in the country, pensioners in many states of the federation are being owed arrears of their pension payments.

The situation is the same for informal sector workers who account for about 70 percent of the workforce in Nigeria. The future and retirement life of most of these workers who have no organised pension plan remains a cause for concern.

In terms of protection for the vulnerable, the country has not fared better. For example, there are no unemployment benefits for persons with disabilities. Nigeria's HIV epidemic is described as generalised (above one percent prevalence among those attending antenatal care facilities) with a wide variation of prevalence within the country. The figure given for Nigerians living with HIV/AIDS - 3,459,363 - out of an estimated total population of 170 million Nigerians, means that Nigeria has the second highest HIV burden in the world and the largest in the West African sub-region. The 2012 estimate showed an adult prevalence of 4.1 per cent. However, the 2015 report by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and the National Agency for the Control of AIDS (NACA) showed that HIV among adults in the country was 3.1 or 3.2 million people. The key drivers of the epidemic in Nigeria include the low perception of personal risk, multiple concurrent sexual partners, chronic poverty and the persistence of HIV-related stigma and discrimination.

In 2013, the ILO supported the Nigerian government and its social partners to revise its outdated National Workplace Policy on HIV and AIDS and its implementation guidelines to meet the International Labour Standard concerning HIV and AIDS. Although a national workplace policy on HIV and AIDS exists, there is no comprehensive programme on HIV and AIDS which covers all elements of the world of work.

Deficits identified include the continued stigma and discrimination against those infected and affected by HIV as well as lack of HIV and AIDS interventions in the workplace with focus on vulnerable sectors.

Besides, Nigeria is a source, transit, and destination country for women and children trafficked for the purposes of forced labour and commercial sexual exploitation. Within Nigeria, women and girls are trafficked for domestic servitude and commercial sexual exploitation. A 2010 survey of the National Agency for Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) showed that over 10,000 Nigerians were engaged in prostitution in Italy, constituting 60 percent of all prostitutes in the Italian sex market.

Child labour is most predominant in Nigeria among African nations, with an average of 28.8 percent of the

under-15 years population engaged in child labour. In many parts of the country, boys are trafficked for forced labour in street vending, agriculture, mining, stone quarries and as domestic servants. In Northern Nigeria, religious teachers traffic boys, called *almajiri*, for forced begging.

Labour administration deficits

The Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment is charged with the responsibility of ensuring effective labour administration. The objective of labour administration is to strengthen labour standards and practice in all sectors, especially in the weak sectors, to ensure minimum levels of protection for vulnerable groups. Thus, all aspects of the ministry's mandate are covered in labour administration.

However, there are major gaps in achieving the goals that labour administration espouses. Decent work deficits in labour administration include capacity gaps in training for factory and labour inspection, and in funding of monitoring services. Until recently, factory and labour inspection continued to attract very low budgetary allocations in spite of Nigeria's ratification of Convention 81 on labour inspection.

Infringement of freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining has become more rampant. Often, victimised groups do not seek state intervention, especially in the informal economy because they fear further victimization by the employer. The Ministry of Labour and Employment appears to lack the capacity to sanction offending employers, and indeed, its structure and processes suggest that the ministry has neither the mandate nor the capacity to sanction factory owners with substandard labour practices.



Achike Chude, Deputy Chairman, Joint Action Front (JAF)

Social dialogue deficits

The social dialogue pillar in Nigeria consists of a network of actors and the institutions they have established for the promotion of joint discussion, negotiation or determination of issues that confront the social partners either within the place of work, or even outside it when the object of is the resolutions of identified conflicts.

In terms of workers' organizations, there are two main umbrella bodies in Nigeria - the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) and the Trade Union Congress of Nigeria (TUC).

Forms of social dialogue in Nigeria include collective bargaining, which is bipartite, and cooperation among government, employers' organizations and workers' organizations in formulating or implementing labour, social or economic policy, which is tripartite. Tripartite-plus dialogue involves all stakeholders such as the host community, non-governmental agencies, civil society

and the three arms of government (executive, legislative and the judiciary) as well as workers' organizations and employers' organizations.

Other efforts at social dialogue involve the Nigeria Employers' Consultative Association (NECA) which has been conducting seminars and training programmes on business development and growth as well as labour market dialogues. Collective bargaining is quite effective in Nigeria, especially in the private sector where trade unions and employers or employers' associations have shown a visible commitment to the sanctity of collective agreements.

However, the system of collective bargaining in the public sector does not encourage appointed bargaining agents to secure firm commitment from their government counterparts by signing draft agreements. This often leads to delay in the ratification process, with resulting social dialogue deficits.

Social dialogue deficits in Nigeria are noticeable in the following areas:

- Low rate of unionism in the informal economy, even though approximately 70 percent of the workforce is in this sector;
- Low union density in the formal sector;
- Anti-union stance of some employers in spite of the ratification of freedom of association and collective bargaining conventions;
- Tendency of the state to introduce non-inclusive reforms (i.e. without reference to other interested or affected parties, such as labour and host communities);
- Absence of values that are accepted by all sides to inspire dialogue in good faith.

CSO-Labour collaboration in demanding for decent work

Worried by the negative impact of decent work deficits on the Nigerian workers, the CSOs have been collaborating with the major labour unions –the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) and Trade Union Congress (TUC) to campaign for decent work and the creation of employment opportunities.

Collectively they have been making concerted efforts to pressure the Nigerian government to sign the conventions that address decent work deficits especially those geared towards poverty alleviation, curbing occupational hazards, indecent work environment and social exclusion through human rights-based approaches.

The CSOs have been collaborating with the major labour unions –the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) and Trade Union Congress (TUC) to campaign for decent work and the creation of employment opportunities.



Chinedu Bosah, Publicity Secretary, Campaign for Democracy and Workers' Rights (CDWR)

Some of the vital roles of civil society organizations and labour leaders to guarantee decent work in Nigeria are as follows:

- Supporting the move to adopt a realistic basic global level of social protection as set out in the ILO's Social Protection Floor Initiative;
- Organising and giving voice to workers and other vulnerable groups in their call for equity and decent livelihoods; and in holding governments and the international community to account when they fail to implement the legislation, policies and funding to which they have committed.
- Raising awareness among workers of their rights so that they can claim and exercise them;
- Getting workers organized by bringing together unorganized and isolated workers (in cooperative and/or trade unions) and supporting them in gaining official recognition as interlocutors so that they can fully participate in pushing for the development and implementation of a basic level of social protection;
- Advocating for and supporting legislative changes; and monitoring the implementation of national laws and international commitments (for example, ratified ILO Conventions) and holding governments to account when they fail to deliver on commitments.

Protest against unfair labour practices

CSOs in Nigeria have always rallied behind labour unions while protesting against unfair labour practices.

Indeed, the World Day for Decent Work (WDDW) which is marked on October 7, every year, has become an avenue for the CSOs and the labour unions to unite in campaigning against all forms of violations of the rights of workers.

For instance, during the 2017 World Day of Decent Work (WDDW), some CSOs and labour unions took to the streets of Lagos to protest increasing casualization of workers, outsourcing, contract staffing and the anti-union posture by employers among other perceived unfair labour practices.

Among the CSOs who joined labour unions in the protest are the Joint Action Front (JAF), Campaign for

Workers Democratic Rights (CWDR) and the Democratic Socialist Movement (DSM). The protesters carried various placards with inscriptions such as “Stop casual and contract work”; “respect workers rights”; “Equal pay for equal work”, “Just and humane conditions of work”, “Improved health and safety conditions”, “There should be respect for freedom of association” and “Respect for collective bargaining”, among others.

Comrade Issa Aremu, General Secretary, National Union of Garment and Textile Workers of Nigeria (NUTGTWN) reminded the protesters that the struggle for decent work is historical. He recalled that workers in colonial employment in the mines, railway and colonial public service were poorly paid, discriminated against and denied the right to unionism. He expressed concern that there is a new form of colonialism in which employers are destroying the many gains of the workers struggle. “Employers now engage workers on temporary basis without good pay, good conditions of work, good health and safety provision, social protection and without the right to belong to workers' union,” he said.

Comrade Abiodun Aremu, Secretary of JAF said that the campaign to stop precarious work is critical in the struggle to restore the right of workers to organize and join the labour union as the basis for collective bargaining and social dialogue.

A year earlier, on October 7, 2016, pro-labour CSOs and labour unions had picketed some companies accused of subjecting workers to precarious work conditions. Some of the companies picketed for poor conditions of service include Crown Sack Plc and the Jagal Group of Companies.

CSOs had also protested the high level of unemployment in Nigeria. For instance, on March 27, 2014, no fewer than one hundred people including unemployed youths and civil rights activists gathered at the Nigerian Civil Service Union Secretariat at Alausa

- Ikeja, Lagos, to protest the death of 18 youths during the Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS) recruitment exercise on March 15, 2014.

The Joint Action Front (JAF), which is a pro-labour coalition, organized the protest to underline the fact that the crisis of unemployment is the root cause of the sad incident and to demand decent jobs and payment of unemployment benefits.

Abiodun Aremu, Secretary of JAF said that the governments at all levels were culpable of the failure to create decent jobs opportunities despite the huge resources at their disposal.

Achike Chude, Deputy Chairman of JAF said that the protest was meant to compel government to pay compensation to the families of all dead and injured applicants, implement decent work and living wage for all as well as unemployment benefits for all unemployed Nigerians.

Clamour for new minimum wage

The CSOs have also become dependable allies of the labour unions in their current struggle to compel the Federal Government to increase the national minimum wage from N18, 000 to N56, 000.

On September 20, 2017, the Campaign for Democratic and Worker's Rights (CDWR) organized a symposium which focused on how the labour movement could actualize living wage for Nigerian workers and the payment of backlog of salary arrears by some state governments. Chinedu Bosah, Publicity Secretary of the CDWR said that the widening disparity between the rich and the poor as well as the high cost of living demands that the labour movement should wage a spirited battle to secure living wage for workers. The government and the organized labour are still at the negotiating table.

Expectedly, Comrade Ayuba Wabba, NLC President has vowed to mobilize workers and the CSOs to resist any attempt by government to frustrate the current moves to give Nigerian workers an improved minimum wage. Wabba disclosed during NLC's 40th anniversary in February, this year, that the demand for an upward review of the minimum wage was borne out of the current realities of higher cost of living, free fall of the local currency - the Naira, and high cost of goods and services.

The demand for an upward review of the minimum wage appears to be yielding the desired result as Dr. Chris Ngige, Minister of Labour and Employment has promised that the Federal Government will announce a new minimum wage by September, this year.

With the ongoing collaboration between the civil society organizations and the labour unions in the struggle to safeguard the basic rights and interest of workers in the country, it is hoped the Nigerian government would be propelled to promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities and decent job creation. ■



Comrade Issa Aremu, General Secretary, National Union of Garment and Textile Workers of Nigeria (NUTGTWN)

10 REDUCED
INEQUALITIES

The Quest of CSOs towards Reducing Inequalities in Nigeria

FOR a country like Nigeria where the gap between the rich and the poor has continued to widen, and government's promises of addressing poverty and inequalities remain unfulfilled, the interventions of the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) have become critical in its quest to achieve goal number 10 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.

SDG-10 focuses on reducing inequalities in a variety of contexts: income inequality within a country, as well as inequality by gender, age, disability, race, class, ethnicity, religion, and opportunity. It mandates UN-member countries, including Nigeria, to ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and by promoting appropriate legislations and actions, adopting policies – especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies – to progressively achieve greater equality.

SDG-10 seeks to ensure that by 2030, every country would have achieved sustainable income growth for the bottom 40 percent of the population at a rate higher than the national average; and must have empowered and promoted the social, economic and political inclusion of all.

Development experts reckon that CSOs, known for their traditional role of interface between the citizens and policymakers/implementers in government, would be instrumental in fast-tracking the process of actualizing the vision of addressing extreme poverty, inequality, injustice and discrimination in Nigeria.

Expectedly, many CSOs in the country have been deeply involved in the crusade to compel the Nigerian government to reduce the growing economic inequalities. Indeed, they have been working assiduously on inequalities as enshrined in SDG-10 by advocating that the three tiers of governments in Nigeria should promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all irrespective of age, sex, disability, ethnicity, religious status or background.



President Muhammadu Buhari

However, before appraising the role of CSOs towards reducing inequalities in the country, it is pertinent to present the recent data on the inequalities in Nigeria and efforts by government to address the issue.

Nigeria's rising inequality

When President Muhammadu Buhari assumed office on May 29, 2015, one of the key promises he made to Nigerians was that his administration would take action to reduce poverty and inequality in the land. He was unequivocal in his pledge to address the widening gap between the rich and poor in the country, and to ensure equitable distribution of national wealth:

“We promise not to leave any Nigerian behind in our determination to create, expand and ensure equitable and effective allocation of economic opportunities. No matter the amount of wealth we create, it would be meaningless unless it benefits the majority of our people.”

Four months after his inauguration, in his maiden address to the 70th session of the United Nations General Assembly, Buhari told world leaders that in line with the SDGs, Nigeria under his leadership would “tackle inequalities arising from massive unemployment and previous government

policies favouring a few people to the detriment of the many.”

However, after nearly three years in office, it appears that his administration has not made much progress in terms of reversing the trend of poverty and economic inequality. Indeed, inequality has worsened with the brazen display of wealth and opulence alongside abject poverty and squalor in major cities in Nigeria. cursory checks on key economic indicators show that the country's socio-economic circumstances have not improved as significantly as some would have anticipated. For instance, Nigeria's unemployment rate increased to 18.80 percent in the third quarter of 2017 from 16.20 percent in the second quarter of 2017. Unemployment rate in Nigeria averaged 10.63 percent from 2006 until 2017, reaching an all time high of 19.70 percent in the fourth quarter of 2009 and a record low of 5.10 percent in the fourth quarter of 2010.

Nigeria's GINI Index also confirmed the widening income inequalities in the country, being measured at 48.83 in 2010, up from 43 in 2004, according to the World Bank. The rise from 43 to nearly 49 in six years shows the growing gulf in the country's income distribution.

Recently, Oxfam International had in a report titled: *Nigeria: extreme inequality in numbers* revealed that economic inequality in Nigeria has reached extreme levels, despite being the largest economy in Africa. It noted that the country has an expanding economy with abundant human capital and the economic potential to lift millions out of poverty yet majority of Nigerians are living in extreme poverty. The report gave a damning statistics of the rising inequality in Nigeria:

“The combined wealth of Nigeria's five richest men - \$29.9 billion - could end extreme poverty at a



Senator Attai Aidoko Ali Usman, Chairman, Senate Committee on SDGs

national level yet five million face hunger. More than 112 million people are living in poverty in Nigeria, yet the country's richest man would have to spend \$1 million a day for 42 years to exhaust his fortune. The amount of money that the richest Nigerian man can earn annually from his wealth is sufficient to lift two million people out of poverty for one year. 79% of women represent between 60 and 79 percent of Nigeria's rural labour force but are five times less likely to own their own land than men. Women are also less likely to have had a decent education. Over three-quarters of the

NIGERIA'S UNEMPLOYMENT RATE



SOURCE: TRADINGECONOMICS.COM | NATIONAL BUREAU OF STATISTICS, NIGERIA

poorest women in Nigeria have never been to school and 94% of them are illiterate.”

According to the report, between 1960 and 2005, public office holders stole about \$20 trillion from the treasury. “This amount is larger than the GDP of the United States in 2012 (about \$18 trillion). Poverty and inequality in Nigeria are not due to a lack of resources, but to the ill-use, misallocation and misappropriation of such resources. At the root is a culture of corruption combined with political elite out of touch with the daily struggles of average Nigerians.”

Another consequence of the mismanagement of the nation's resources is the high rate of unemployment, especially among the youths. In 2016, between 12.1% and 21.5% of Nigeria's youth were without a job.

According to Oxfam, for Nigeria to close the inequality gap, the government must work with the international community to get food and aid to hungry people. In addition, Oxfam suggested that government must free millions of Nigerians from poverty by building a new political and economic system that works for everyone, not just a fortunate few.

Corroborating the recent inequality index, Senator Attai Aidoko Ali Usman, Chairman, Senate Committee on SDGs, expressed fear that inequalities that were still constitute a major development barrier in Nigeria and could hamper the achievement of the SDGs if not checked. Senator Usman observed this while addressing a high-level dialogue, which sought to address the imperative of reducing inequality in Nigeria by redirecting the attention of policy makers and implementers of the SDGs-10. He declared:

“From statistics available to our committees, Nigeria seems to be one of the most unequal societies in the world in terms of income, access to basic social services, life expectancy among others. Across geo-political zones, states, population and age groups, we see clear manifestations of social, economic and political inequalities. These should concern all Nigerians and must be addressed.”

Similarly, Tijani Abdulkadir Jobe, Chairman of the House of the Representatives Committee on SDGs and Chairman of the African Network of Parliamentarians on the SDGs, also expressed regrets that the country is still bedevilled by various socio-economic and political challenges. He said these are traceable to inequalities in spite of the provisions of Section 42 of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution which prohibits any form of discrimination. He expressed optimism that given the array of experts and practitioners at the interactive forum, more efforts should be on international best practices towards addressing inequalities in all its ramifications in Nigeria.

Mr. Shetimma Buka Abba of the Federal Character Commission (FCC) decried the huge gap between the rich few who sit on 80 percent of the country's wealth and the majority poor in Nigeria. He expressed fear that the consequences of such crass inequalities may spell doom for the country if not checked now. He said inequalities in the educational sector manifest in the form of male-female enrolment and urban-rural distribution of teachers, where more teachers are concentrated at the urban areas while most schools in the rural areas have little or no teachers.

Dr. Oladimeji Olayinka of the National Primary Healthcare Development Agency (NPHCDA) averred that inequality cuts across all the sectors in Nigeria and the health sector was not an exception. According to him, Nigeria's development quagmire was traceable to the fact that the wealth of the nation is skewed in favour of the few rich who continue to enrich themselves and impoverish the poor.

There is equally socio-economic inequality between the country's political leaders and the governed; inequality is perverse in terms of women's political participation and representation in government against the Beijing Platform for Action. A large percentage of Nigerian citizens still live below the poverty line of less than a dollar, ninety-cents per day while the political class continues to amass wealth and

live in incredible opulence. While a Nigerian Senator reportedly earns a whopping sum of \$29 million on quarterly basis, the average Nigerian civil servant earns merely N18, 000 as minimum wage monthly. Worst still, many states are currently owing their workers salary arrears; an indication that some states are not viable as they have to go cap-in-hand to the Federal Government to collect the monthly allocation.

CSOs to the rescue

The people-centred mandate of the 2030 Agenda, points to the critical role of the civil society organizations in ensuring that people are the focus of the SDGs and that the society does not leave behind its most vulnerable.

Currently, CSOs are actively involved in waging relentless campaigns to bridge the inequality gap. Dr. David Tola Winjobi, the National Coordinator of the Civil Society Coalition on Sustainable Development (CSCSD) said that the CSOs in the country have been playing an active role in narrowing the yawning gap between the rich and the poor in Nigeria, which is the thrust of SDG-10.

According to him, a good number of CSOs have dedicated their energies and resources to organizing



**Tijani Abdulkadir Jobe, Chairman,
House of Representatives
Committee on SDGs**

empowerment programmes in order to increase the status of women while some are meaningfully engaging governments in their respective states to ensure that favourable economic policies are enacted. "Some NGOs like CAFSO-WRAG for Development, Farmers Development Union (FADU) and Justice Development and Peace Commission (JDPC) are directly implementing micro-credit schemes in both rural and urban communities essentially for indigent women," he said.

In February 2018, Oxfam, an international non-governmental organization renowned for its enduring commitment to creating a world without poverty where people are capable of building a livelihood, in collaboration with Budget Information Technology Network Lagos, held a two-day workshop in Lagos in bid to devise strategic measures for tackling inequalities in Nigeria. The theme of the workshop is: *Even it up: Tackling inequality in Nigeria through analysis and advocacy, with Right to Food (R2F) and Financing for Development (F4D).*

Mr. Celestine Okwudili Odo, Oxfam's Coordinator for Private and Public sector Transparency and Accountability, expressed worries over the widening gap between the rich and the poor. He stressed that poverty and inequality in Nigeria could be linked to the pressure on limited resources.

According to him, misallocation and misappropriation of limited resources has made the problem bigger, hence the need for such strategic campaigns like Right to Food and Financing for Development, which aims at bridging the inequality gap. He highlighted the critical role of the Right to Food campaign and access to land in addressing inequality in Nigeria. Odo therefore called for concerted efforts to tackle the clashes between farmers and herders and review of the Land Use Act to allow for easier access to land in order to guarantee food security, since majority of Nigerians are farmers.

Odo said that in its efforts to address inequality in Nigeria, Oxfam sponsored the Right To Food (R2F) Bill which has passed Second Reading in the House of Representatives and now on the table of Constitutional Review Committee of the House. It has also mobilized over 40,000 Nigerian youths and small-scale farmers to campaign for increased funding and investment in the agricultural sector.

He further disclosed that Oxfam is equally facilitating the mobilization of small-scale farmers to access loans and has intensified its advocacy for the implementation of new National Tax Policy and the Voluntary Income and Asset Declaration Scheme (VAIDS), geared towards stopping illicit financial flows and revenue leakages for the government.

According to him, Oxfam's strategy includes research, lobby and advocacy, citizens' mobilization and enlightenment, networking and alliance building, capacity building for the civil society and the government. The organization's local partners such as ActionAid Abuja, Niger Delta Budget Monitoring Group (NDBUMOG), Budget Information Technology Network Lagos, Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC), KEBETKACHE Women Development



Celestine Okwudili Odo, Oxfam's Coordinator, Private and Public Sector, Transparency and Accountability

and Resources Centre, HEDA Lagos, Farm and Infrastructure Foundation (FIF) took part in the brainstorming workshop.

Mrs. Emem Okon of the KEBETKACHE Women Development and Resources Centre said that her organization is working towards addressing the challenges that usually hamper budget implementation on the developmental needs of people at the grassroots. According to her, it has been noticed that community needs most often do not get included in the state and federal government budgets. "Therefore, we are training members of communities on how to conduct needs assessment. We also train government agencies, parastatals and ministries on community needs assessment to ensure that the extant or future budgets include the needs of the people," Okon said.

Studies have consistently shown that the Nigerian economy is structured in such a way as to ensure that the rich get richer while the poor gets poorer. This has had adverse consequences on the social well being of the populace as a whole.

Victor Emejuiwe, Programme Officer (Good Governance) at the Centre for Social Justice in Abuja, said that the huge gap between the rich and the poor in Nigeria could be traced to unequal income distribution among workers:

"Income inequality gives birth to corruption, insecurity, lack of efficiency and capacity in the workplace. It retards growth and development of both the individual and the nation. With the exception of a few corporations, income inequality exists amongst large percentage of the workforce in the private and public sectors in Nigeria. The approved minimum wage of N18, 000 is not feasible in the present economy. Workers indulge in bribes and fraud just to meet up with the demands for survival. The low income wage ensnares workers to corruption, hence making a majority of Nigerians guilty of corruption."



Adetokumbo Mumuni, Executive Director, Social-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP)

Emejuiwe noted that President Buhari's fight against corruption is a welcome development, but added that corruption must be fought on all fronts by addressing the wage disparity that exists between highly placed public officials and the ordinary workers. He noted that the current situation where less than one percent of Nigerians consume much of the country's budget as recurrent expenditure would further increase inequality:

"The National Assembly, 469 senators and House of Representatives members, earn salaries and allowances that can pay the minimum wage of 1000 workers. Nigerian lawmakers, according to one report, are known to be the highest paid in the world, with an annual salary of \$189,500 (N101030.6 million) each, which excludes allowances. The Revenue Mobilisation and Fiscal Commission (RAMFAC) reports that the constituency allowances of senators are 250 percent of their annual basic salaries, while the members of the House of Representatives receive 100 percent of their annual basic salaries. There are 1,500 political office holders which include ministers, special advisers and special assistants. The Certain Political, Public and Judicial Office Holders (Salaries and Allowances, etc.) (Amendment Act) of 2008 enumerates the allowances of these public officers as follows; (using the annual basic salary of N2,026,400 as the basis) accommodation 200 percent; utilities 30 percent; domestic staff 75 percent; entertainment 45 percent; medical facilities and security are provided by the state and will cover treatment in foreign hospitals; furniture 300 percent; personal assistants 25 percent; motor vehicle loan 400 percent; motor maintenance and fuel allowance, 75 percent; severance gratuity, 300 percent; leave allowance, 10 percent; newspaper allowance, 15 percent; duty tour allowance, N35,000; estacode \$900; monitoring allowance 20 percent."

Emejuiwe said that to address inequality successfully, the salaries of all public office holders should be reviewed, with the aim of cutting down some of the unreasonable entitlements.

He added that to address income inequality, the focus should be granting workers access to reasonable

purchasing power that meets the competing demands of society:

"In doing this, there must be a real cost computation. Consideration must be given to the market cost for certain living conditions such as cost of education, housing, transport, communications, feeding, health and utilities. This consideration should be reasonable and allotted to all workers despite their level or grade."

Campaign against legislators' Jumbo salary

Worried by the bumper package which senators and members of the House of Representatives receive as remuneration/emoluments, some CSOs have been pushing for a new legislation that would address the jumbo salary for political leaders.

The Citizens for Justice, Employment and Transparency (C-JET), is one of the frontline campaigners for a drastic cut in the wage and expenditure bills of the National Assembly. The organization highlighted the secret manipulations of the national budget by the lawmakers that jerked up its share of appropriations since 2011 on its website — www.jet-cng.org.

C-JET observed in its report that before the lawmakers kick-started their budget tinkering in 2010, its budget was largely recurrent, as NASS' capital projects were rightly being implemented by the Federal Capital Territory Authority (FCTA). NASS' total personnel cost was also limited to N10, 358, 640,069. Management consultants and cost control experts suggest that institutions like the National Assembly, the National Planning Commission (NPC), the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the Ministry of Justice, and the Independent Corrupt Practices and Related Offences Commission (ICPC), among others, perform similar functions in the same public service, and should have the same cost structure in their service delivery. The C-JET report further states:

"The wide range in recurrent expenditure (notably Overhead Cost) between these other agencies on the one hand and NASS on the other raises very serious questions, and leaves one with the impression that because the legislators have absolute powers over their budget, they have used such powers optimally to inflate their recurrent budgets to the stupefying proportions witnessed all-round the budgets. It was probably in a bid to cover-up this budget bloat that the Constitution was hurriedly amended on the eve of April 2011 general elections, and NASS budget aggregated with effect from 2011."

The organization makes the following startling observations:

From 2011, the NASS' appropriation has been increased to N150billion and aggregated, without the public being able to know the expenditure heads again, in spite of numerous law court orders for NASS to disaggregate its budgets.

Rather than decrease, public outcry against NASS budget soared, with the general impression that the incidence of budget-padding and other irregularities

have worsened, considering the sort of expenditure items and amounts appropriated in the last seen 2010 NASS' budget. The general resentment against bloated recurrent budget has negatively affected the public image of the legislators.

Neither the 1999 Constitution (even after the first amendment) nor the RMAFC recommendations provided for Legislative Aides as a separate expenditure head, other than provisions for Personal Assistants and general staff of NASS Service Commission. This unconstitutional importation has become a conduit for perfecting the deliberate act of misappropriation through bloated personnel/overhead budget of NASS.

Concerned groups and activists insist that if the capital budget of NASS is rightly left in the FCTA budget, then in the current state of the economy, NASS' Total Recurrent Budget can be judiciously met with a sum not exceeding N25 billion (to cover total personnel cost of members, aides, and staff of NASS Service Commission) and reasonable overhead cost.

There is also growing demand for Senators and members of the House of Representatives to perform their legislative duties on a monthly total emolument (excluding allowance for constituency) of N500,000 and N400,000 respectively – considering the emoluments of Directors in other federal establishments who live in Abuja and even pay for accommodation. According to C-JET, at the current N150 billion constant budget, the 469 Legislators and NASS as a body are receiving in the excess the sum of N125 billion annually, to the detriment of many poor and unemployed Nigerians. “This amount is much higher than the N96 billion (\$600 million) loan which the out gone Finance Minister went to beg from China in 2013 to continue the people-oriented Abuja Light Rail project, for instance”.

C-JET insists that in the current 8th Parliament, the legislators are required to effect the cut of this excess N125 billion, and have the moral ground to cut similar excesses in the recurrent budgets of other MDAs, and thus cure the perennial budget plague of unsustainable recurrent expenditure. If this is done, the sum of N800 billion could be saved from the 2015 recurrent federal budget.

The argument from the CSO is that half of the N800 billion saving (N400 billion) can be deployed to comfortably empower about two million NDE graduates who could not get NDE's post-training N200,000 loan for lack of collateral.

Expectedly, the group has demanded that the RMAFC and NISWC review down the pay package and overhead costs of political office holders, especially that of the national legislators. According to the group, “the desirability and constitutional feasibility of factoring in the varying revenue and cost of living indices of different states should also be considered in the current review exercise.”

CSOs and the bailout funds saga

The CSOs have been in the forefront of public outcry which trailed the lack of accountability and

Studies have consistently shown that the Nigerian economy is structured in such a way as to ensure that the rich get richer while the poor gets poorer. This has had adverse consequences on the social well being of the populace.

transparency in the management of the bailout funds dished out by the Federal Government to the states in the wake of the recent economic recession.

It would be recalled that the Buhari administration came to the rescue of the states with N338 billion, when about 26 states were practically bankrupt. This was followed by another N575 billion; \$2.1 billion from the Nigeria Liquified Natural Gas (NLNG); N7.85 billion to assist with revenue shortfalls; N3.6 billion from solid minerals savings; N117.3 billion taken from the excess revenue generated from Petroleum Profit Tax, before the latest tranche of the Paris Fund Refunds.

The research by BudgIT released in April 2017 showed that the Buhari administration had given N1.75 trillion extra-statutory allocations to states. These were in spite of the infrastructure fund from which some states got more than N10 billion and the reimbursement for federal projects executed by states.

However, instead of using the funds for the primary purpose of settling workers' salary arrears and reducing inequality, most state governors diverted the funds for personal aggrandizement.

Many civil rights activists are angry that the mismanagement of the bailout funds has further widened the inequality gap and have initiated campaigns against it. For instance, the Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP) has taken up the gauntlet, demanding that state governors provide details of expenditures pertaining to the Paris Club refund. SERAP also demanded for the return of over N40 billion allegedly collected by ex-governors, now serving as senators and ministers as pensions from their states.

The bid got a massive boost on June 27, 2017 from a Federal High Court sitting in Ikoyi, Lagos. It granted SERAP permission to “apply for judicial relief and to seek an order of mandamus directing and/or compelling the government to publish details of spending of N10388.304 billion Paris Club refunds allegedly diverted and mismanaged by 35 states”, among other requests granted by the court.

SERAP has also taken its battle for public scrutiny of financial imprudence to members of the National Assembly because some of the ex-governors who are now senators have almost turned it into leisure rendezvous. “After milking their states dry, they now seat in the NASS to selfishly stop their prosecution if ever there is any”, SERAP said.

On July 15, 2017, SERAP again put the Accountant-General (AG) on notice to institute a legal action for the recovery of over N1040 billion dubiously earned in double payment by those who had served as governors and are now serving as senators or ministers of the federation. About 17 senators and four ministers were reportedly involved in this double pay issue. SERAP urged the AG to use his "good offices as a defender of public interest" to institute legal action to challenge the legality of state laws permitting governors to enjoy emoluments, even while they serve as senators or ministers.

Adetokunbo Mumuni, Executive Director of SERAP argues that "public interest is not well-served when government officials such as former governors and deputies supplement their emolument in their current positions with life pensions and emoluments drawn from their states' meagre resources, thereby prioritizing their private or personal interest over and above the greatest happiness of the greatest majority of the people."

SERAP's legal battle eventually forced Dr. Bukola Saraki, Senate President, to stop collecting pension in Kwara State, where he had served as governor between 2003 and 2011. Saraki disclosed that he wrote a letter to the Kwara State government to stop the payment of the pension after SERAP declared it as illegal.

Mumuni, the Executive Director of SERAP believes that efforts of successive administrations in Nigeria have not been able to address the root causes of widening inequality and poverty in the country because of poor planning and implementation. According to him, government's best efforts have not been enough in reducing economic inequality and poverty among majority of Nigerians because of the slipshod manner of their execution.

He cautioned that if the Nigerian government continues in that manner, it is doubtful whether it will be possible to significantly reduce inequality in Nigeria by 2030. ■



Climate Action: Appraising the Vital Roles of CSOs

CLIMATE change has become a great challenge to the present generation and its impact is felt in almost every society in the world. Nigeria, as a developing country with a population of about 180 million, has been adversely impacted by climate change due to its vulnerability and low coping capability.

Ranked amongst the top 25 Green-House Gas (GHG) Emitting Countries, Nigeria is expected to mobilize its citizens and other stakeholders for effective implementation of measures to reach the target of 20 percent unconditional green-house gas emission reduction by 2020, scale another target of 30 percent unconditional reduction by 2030 and also put in place policies that would enable the country reach the goal of 100 percent renewable energy by 2050.

In order to achieve goal number 13 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which is Climate Action by 2030, Nigeria is expected to strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters. It is also expected to integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning as well as improve education, awareness-raising, human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning.

Climate change poses grave danger to Nigeria's economic growth and poverty-reduction aspirations. According to experts, Nigeria's agriculture sector is heavily dependent on rainfall and natural weather



Prof. Yemi Osinbajo, Nigeria's Vice President

conditions. For a sector that employs more than the two-thirds of its workforce and contributes about 42% to its gross domestic product (GDP), a climate change-related crisis could be too much for the country to contend with.

If current climatic conditions worsen, Nigerian farmers could face deepening poverty due to the country's dependence on the export of fossil fuels. As the world becomes increasingly concerned about the effects of climate change, Nigeria's dependence on the export of crude oil faces an uncertain future. To this extent, building a climate-resilient and prosperous economy through eco-friendly projects remains critical to reaching the targets.

With the magnitude of climate-related hazards in Nigeria, environmental experts acknowledge that governmental efforts alone cannot produce the much anticipated results needed to actualize the targets of SDG-13 by 2030. Indeed, Alhaji Ibrahim Jibril, Nigeria's Minister of State for Environment recently acknowledged the fact that government cannot do it alone. He said that the Federal Government requires significant contributions from the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and other stakeholders in implementing climate policy actions to be able to meet the targets. According to the minister, inputs from the CSOs would engender greater transparency in implementing environmental programmes.

Jibril, who listed some of the environmental challenges facing Nigeria such as desertification in the North, coastal erosion in the South East and South West and oil pollution in the Niger Delta, during the 2017 edition of the World Environment Day in June, 2018, noted that the contributions of the CSOs would go a long way in achieving a sustainable and healthy environment.

Ronald Kayanja, Director of the United Nations Information Centre (UNIC) in Nigeria, equally emphasized that the CSOs, foundations and development partners have a great role to play in the realization of the goal. "There is a need for high level partnership in order to achieve the goals of the SDGs and everyone has a role to play," he said.

Expectedly, scores of CSOs have either banded together, forming a strategy group or working independently at national, sub-national and local levels to help Nigeria reach the targets set in SDG-13.

Experts consider the contributions of CSOs as imperative for Nigeria to meet the targets. Professor Margaret Okorodudu-Fubara, a former Dean of the Faculty of Law, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ife, who is Nigeria's first female Professor of Environmental Law, believes that the country may not be able to meet the targets of SDG-13, especially in the area of enforcement of multi-lateral environmental agreements without the CSOs. "I'm not sure where we would have been without the CSOs and NGOs. Without them we would not have known the level of improvement that has been made on the Nigerian environment because there are still so many obstacles on the part of the government in actually enforcing the laws that they put in place," she said.

Over the years, the Nigerian government has drawn the ire of the CSOs over its poor commitment towards ending gas flaring in the country. Despite Nigeria's anti-gas flare law, the international oil companies (IOCs) operating in the Niger Delta have continued to flare gas from all their oil rigs unperturbed

CSOs and the end gas flaring campaign

Over the years, the Nigerian government has drawn the ire of the CSOs over its poor commitment towards ending gas flaring in the country. Despite Nigeria's anti-gas flare law, the international oil companies (IOCs) operating in the Niger Delta have continued to flare gas from all their oil rigs unperturbed, because it is cheaper for them since they have managed to avoid payment of a supposed \$3.50 fine for every 1,000 standard cubic feet (SCF) of gas flared. According to experts, Nigeria lost \$76.59 million in September 2017 alone as oil and gas companies operating in the country flared 25.53 billion standard cubic feet (SCF) of gas.

Mrs. Kemi Adeosun, Minister of Finance blamed it on a misplaced word in the law. According to her, the IOCs were able to avoid fines and sanctions for gas flaring in Nigeria because of a misplaced word in the law that was made to serve as a deterrent to gas flaring in the country. She explained that in the "legal framework for the gas-flaring penalty, it was drafted as a charge on tax deductible, rather than penalty." Consequently, IOCs flare and pay the charge on which they get tax relief. The minister, however, promised that the government would approach the National Assembly to amend the law and have the word "penalty" replace "charge."

As the government prepares to get the law amended by the National Assembly, some CSOs have been putting pressure on the authorities to ensure that the IOCs pay the outstanding N2.3trillion gas flaring penalty to host communities in the Niger Delta region. They are also pushing for the release of about N1trillion gas flaring penalty fund that the IOCs have already paid but which is trapped in the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN).

One of the CSOs involved in the campaign is the Centre for Peace and Environmental Justice (CEPEJ). In November, 2017, CEPEJ had organized a conference in Benin City, Edo State where it made a critical appraisal of the rising tide in environmental degradation and avoidable perpetuation of poverty in the Niger Delta through the activities of oil companies, especially persistent gas flaring. Comrade Sheriff Mulade, National Coordinator of CEPEJ frowned at government's lack of political will to tackle gas flaring. He said that CEPEJ is aware that the IOCs pay three percent penalty to the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) for the development the oil-rich



Alhaji Ibrahim Jubril, Minister of State for Environment

region and has been campaigning for the release of the funds directly to host communities:

“As a civil society, we are also putting machinery in place to see how we can tackle government towards those funds so that the funds can be released to communities directly, not through a commission. This is because all the commissions are political commissions to compensate their political friends.”

Faith Nwadishi, Founder and Executive Director of Koyenum Immallah Foundation, also expressed disappointment with the Federal Government for not being sincere in the implementation of its gas flaring policy and has resorted to shifting the deadline for ending gas flaring in Nigeria:

“Over the years, we have shifted the goal post. Today, we say we want to end gas flaring, tomorrow; we shift the deadline for ending gas flaring. Now there is a new date of 2020 to end gas flaring in Nigeria because of the World Bank initiative that says we should reduce gas flaring by 2030.”

Nwadishi wondered why the government has refused to tackle violators of gas flaring in the country since a High Court sitting in Benin City, had already declared it as illegal.

In response to the criticisms by the CSOs of Federal Government's lukewarm attitude towards ending gas, Dr. Ibe Kachikwu, Minister of State for Petroleum reiterated the commitment of the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari to put an end to gas flaring by 2020, 10 years ahead of the United Nations deadline. According to him, Nigeria is about 70 percent compliant on gas flare exit, and hopes to take away the other 30 percent within the 2020 deadline. “We are going to try and change our dynamics from being an oil producing country to being a gas producing country, because that is really what we are. Now we need to move from policies to directives,” Kachikwu said.

Concerns over nuclear power project

The Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Earth Nigeria (ERA/FoEN) is leading other CSOs to raise concerns over the Federal Government's plan to build a nuclear power plant in Nigeria. Russia's State Atomic Energy Corporation (ROSATOM) which had reportedly signed an agreement with Nigeria to build a nuclear energy plant is believed to be working on two planned projects. They are the Centre for Nuclear Research and Technology for which an agreement for the construction was signed in 2016 and the Nuclear Power Plant project, for which agreement on construction and operation was signed in October 2017.

Although, proponents of the project claim that nuclear power plant could help in addressing the country's poor public power supply and save some \$14 billion annually, ERA/FoEN, insists such project may cause more harm to the Nigerian environment and its people than the anticipated power supply. The anti-nuclear power campaigners argued that nuclear energy is both expensive and dangerous to health. They contended that it is not a clean energy and contradicts Nigeria's commitment on Climate Action.

Push for energy efficient cooking fuel

A recent report by the World Health Organization (WHO), cautioned that with nearly all public boarding secondary schools in Nigeria still using wood for cooking and about 30 million households dependent on wood as a source of fuel for their daily cooking, firewood cooking remains Nigeria's third highest killer of women and children after HIV and malaria.

Apart from the high number of deaths caused by firewood, its negative impact on the environment is deplorable. Nigeria loses approximately 3% of its forest annually to the use of firewood. Even though the National Energy Policy seeks to substitute the use of fire wood with kerosene, cooking gas and electricity, this transition has been slow. Today, smoke from millions of cooking fires has become a major cause of green-house gas emission and global warming.

Thankfully, the Nigeria Climate Action Network (NCAN), a network of CSOs is working towards propelling government, corporates and individuals to address the problems of cooking fuel and climate change. NCAN is investing in the energy efficient cooking stoves project in Nigeria in its bid to drastically reduce the high number of deaths that

occur in the country as a result of cooking with fire woods.

In addition to building and installing clean cooking stoves for schools in many states across the country, NCAN is equally building the capacity of stove producers and helping them create markets for their products.

The group has equally lobbied for the development of clearer and stronger policies on environmental regeneration, the passage of the Bill to Establish the National Climate Change Commission and the development of several national climate change action plans.

Clamour for Ogoni clean-up

One of the controversial environmental issues which had brought the government on a collision course with local communities and the CSOs in Nigeria is the Ogoni remedial project. Since the clean-up of Ogoniland was flagged off by the Vice President of Nigeria, Professor Yemi Osinbajo in June 2016, not much progress has been made on the project.

Worried by the slow pace of the project, ERA/FoEN, has been mounting pressure on the Federal Government to expedite action on the Ogoni clean-up. Dr. Godwin Uyi-Ojo, Executive Director, Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Earth Nigeria (ERA/FoEN), said that it is rather unfortunate that the Federal Government has not shown enough commitment towards the implementation of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) report on Ogoniland. Continuing, Uyi-Ojo declared:

“We had also expressed worry that while the UNEP 'Environmental Assessment of Ogoniland' report had recommended that the government and Shell contribute \$1 billion over a five-year period to undertake the clean-up, the government's body language did not show it was committed to committing any tangible sum to the process nor compelling Shell to do same.

“We can see that even though we now have a governing council, the polluter was invited to sit in their midst and continues to call the shots and slow the processes. No tangible sum has been committed to the clean-up as we speak. Surprising as that is, there are more baffling tales. One very disturbing development occurred in December 2017 when the Federal Government in cahoots with governors from the 36 states of the federation gave approval for the immediate withdrawal of \$1 billion from the Excess Crude Oil Account (ECA) to facilitate the fight against the *Boko Haram* insurgency in the North Eastern part of the country.”

Uyi-Ojo wondered why the same government that has failed to make contributions to the clean-up fund save for the \$10 million start-up fund that it gave to the Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP) to commence its activities smoothly is ready to pump a whopping \$1 billion into an insurgency that it had “technically” won. “This is strange to us and the international community that is keen on seeing

tangible progress in relieving the Ogoni people of a Shell-imposed burden,” he said.

According to the environmental rights activist, apart from starving HYPREP management of funds needed for implementation of the clean-up of Ogoniland, the body has been unable to put together a well-thought-out work plan and budget for the clean-up process. “We have said it time and again that Ogoniland represents an entry point on the issue of environmental remediation and restoration in the entire Niger Delta,” Uyi-Ojo added.

The Environmental Rights Action (ERA) has declared its readiness to work with HYPREP and other partners towards ensuring that the agency delivers on its mandate of cleaning up Ogoniland and building the template for the clean-up of the rest of the Niger Delta region. To actualize that goal, ERA tabled a seven-point demand as follows:

- That Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) should be immediately removed from the governing council; the board of trustees and other structures of the clean-up process to allow for the independence of the agency and in line with the “polluter pays principle.”
- That HYPREP should be sufficiently resourced by the Nigerian state and Shell immediately by paying the \$1 billion clean-fund to the accounts opened by the Board of Trustees. All stakeholders who are to contribute funds to the Ogoni Environmental Restoration fund should publicly declare their contributions before the 7th anniversary of the submission of the UNEP Ogoniland Environmental Assessment report.
- That the Nigerian government must act with dispatch on raising the \$1 billion Restoration Fund just as it did with the North East Development Commission which went through the legislative process in record time and to which it is making huge contributions.
- That a 2018 HYPREP strategic work plan should be prepared and be made available publicly for inputs and suggestions. A website that would have full information on contracting and procurement should be up and running so that the public is aware of the contractor/consultant handling a project, project sum, duration and the expertise

One of the controversial environmental issues which had brought the government on a collision course with local communities and the CSOs in Nigeria is the Ogoni remedial project.



Comrade Sheriff Mulade, National Coordinator, Centre for Peace and Environmental Justice

and relevant experience of the contractor

- That HYPREP discountenances the use of RENA in any of the remediation sites that would be worked on. RENA is inappropriate in our environment and has caused more harm to our communities.
- That Shell and other oil companies such as Robo Michael and Belema oil whose activities have been pitting the Ogoni people against one another and overheating Ogoni polity be cautioned and desist from such acts and allow the clean-up process to proceed without distractions.
- That ERA proposes that \$100 billion be set aside to be invested for the clean-up of the region within the next 25 years.

ERA urged the Federal Government not to fail the people in its Ogoni clean-up legacy project. "The time for concrete actions is now. The time to kick Shell out of the steering committees and bodies to be presiding over the clean-up exercise can no longer be delayed," it declared.

Apart from the outcry by the CSOs over Federal Government's prevarication on the Ogoni clean-up project, analysts view the recent pledge of the Norwegian government to support the clean-up process as a sign that the international community is equally not happy with the pace of the project. When Jens Petter Kjemprud, the Norwegian Ambassador to Nigeria visited impacted sites in Ogoniland recently, he remarked that the world was interested in the clean-up of Ogoni, and that Norway, as one of the biggest donors of the United Nations, was also committed to the safety of Ogoni people.

Expectations are high that with the pressure being mounted by the CSOs, the comprehensive clean-up of Ogoni and other polluted sites across the Niger Delta region would soon become a reality. Actualizing that

would go a long way in taking Nigeria closer to the targets of SDG-13.

Campaign against energy crisis

The Environmental Rights Action (ERA) is also leading a campaign geared towards halting the destruction of lives, local livelihoods and environment through reckless exploitation of natural resources by government multinational companies. The group is mounting the campaign under its energy and extractives programme.

The group observed that the Nigerian society is confronted by the energy and climate change crises. According to ERA, both have global dimensions and have impacted many communities across Nigeria whose environments have been devastated. The group asserted that these crises are in the main driven by the unsustainable economic and development models adopted by the Nigerian government which makes the country dependent on the exploitation of fossil fuels and other unsustainable energy sources for its sustenance.

ERA insisted that its goal is to break the monopoly of a few multinationals over energy supply and access and oppose the reckless exploitation of dirty energy sources such as coal, crude oil and gas. It declared:

"We are working with impacted communities to enhance the capacity of our governments at local, state and federal levels and policy makers to see the necessity of immediately transiting from dirty energy sources to clean, renewable energy for the benefit of our communities and for the global environment.

"We are working with our communities to bring about climate justice and provide access to millions of our people who do not yet have access to energy a clean, renewable, decentralized and community controlled energy. We are working with international civil society groups, affected peoples and local communities all over the world to halt or reduce the emission of green-house gases into the atmosphere."

Forest and biodiversity

ERA/FoEN's forest and biodiversity programme has equally been launched in response to the alarming rate of deforestation and invasion of community territories through corporate capture, neo-liberal policies and patriarchal systems that undermine right to life, livelihoods and a saner climate. The organization works with forest dependent communities and vulnerable groups who are directly impacted by unsustainable environmental practices like unregulated logging, industrial tree plantations, construction of dams and super highways, oil pipeline right of way, forest fires, and the new eco-business called REDD. "This invasion of community territories also has serious impacts on biological diversity. We support forest peoples' struggles to defend their lands and livelihoods", the group said.

To actualize these objectives, Community Forest Watch (CFW) network was formed to support forest peoples to build their own capacities to claim and

exercise their human rights as well as monitor and challenge any unsustainable environmental practices that undermine their collective rights at the local, national and international levels.

According to the group, plantations are not forests and entrusting community forest to multinational companies by government or putting a price tag on forest is a dangerous eco-business.

Drive for climate smart agriculture

Experts are unanimous in their view that Nigeria has a lot to lose with adverse weather conditions orchestrated by climate change due to dependency of its agricultural sector on natural climatic factors. However, the CSOs have equally stepped up campaign for the country to cue into climate smart approach to agriculture in its bid to achieve food security, adaptation and mitigation.

Expectedly, organizations such as the International Centre for Energy, Environment and Development (ICEED) and its local affiliates under the aegis of the Nigerian Alliance for Clean Cook stoves (NACC) are making giant strides in addressing the challenges of access to energy and smart agriculture in their quest to lift millions of Nigerians out of poverty.

ICEED is working to develop climate insurance solutions aimed at helping farmers recover from losses to crops that are linked to climate change. According to ICEED, the insurance scheme will help to strengthen the resilience of rural farmers to climatic risks. The project is also intended to reduce rural poverty, promote environmental sustainability and strengthen international partnership on climate risk management in Nigeria.

The centre has equally formed a partnership with the Nigerian Meteorological Agency (NiMET), the National Insurance Commission (NICOM) and the Nigerian Agricultural Insurance Scheme (NAIS) to research, develop and launch the climate insurance scheme.

It is also working with the Helio International and researchers from 10 African countries to improve energy and climate resilience. ICEED participated in developing indicators for measuring energy sector vulnerability to climate change and response measures. This innovative approach to climate change adaption is particularly important in tracking progress in developing response measures.

Forestation campaign

Environmental experts believe that forestation remains critical for Nigeria to actualize the SDG-13 targets as many parts of country have been ravaged by environmental problems which can only be mitigated or restored through aggressive tree planting. Although the northern part of the country suffers the most from deforestation, Southern Nigeria is not spared. The numerous benefits of afforestation include addressing environmental degradation, especially desertification, deforestation, erosion and flooding as well as reducing the effects of climate change.



Godwin Uyi-Ojo, Executive Director, Environmental Rights Action, Friends of the Earth

Interestingly, many CSOs have been in the forefront of the campaign for a holistic approach towards the restoration of trees and forests around the country. For instance, organizations such as the Nigerian Conservation Foundation (NCF), the Environmental Advancement Initiative (EAI) and the Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Initiative (CCMAI), have been relentless in their efforts to engender the culture of tree planting as well as expand the scope of forestation in Nigeria.

Mr. Adeniyi Karunwi, Director-General of NCF has been consistent in urging Nigerians to seek opportunities to engage in activities that will enhance the quality and longevity of the environment especially through tree planting to avert an imminent danger. According to him, “people globally now know the role trees play in remediating the microclimate and mitigating climate change as well as value addition to property and other health benefits.”

Similarly, Mr. Dennis Ugwuja, the Executive Director, Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Initiative, has underscored the need to plant more trees to mitigate the effects of climate change. Ugwuja, who blamed poverty and other economic factors for the large-scale deforestation in the country, called for immediate actions and regulations as well as stringent measures to check indiscriminate tree felling and bush burning across the country:

“Due to poverty and other economic factors, more people in the rural areas engage in the business of tree felling. Charcoal business has become the booming business of the day. The worrisome aspect of this is that the tree fellers make little or no effort to plant new trees.

“It is common knowledge that our environment is our heritage, which we are entrusted to optimally

protect, preserve and conserve, especially the original flora and fauna species."

For Mr. Habib Omotosho, National Coordinator, Environmental Advancement Initiative, governments at all levels and other stakeholders must go outside the existing forest reserves to designate new forest areas as part of efforts to achieve the 25 percent forest cover for Nigeria.

Climate Change Network Nigeria (CCNN)

The Climate Change Network Nigeria (CCNN) is another coalition of CSOs deeply involved in the Nigerian climate change action project. CCNN is a coalition of over 150 diverse CSOs from across Nigeria promoting climate-friendly initiatives through multi-sectoral approach and partnership.

It works in partnership with the Special Climate Change Unit of the Federal Ministry of Environment of Nigeria; Pan African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA); UNEP's Climate Neutral Network (CNNet); World Bioenergy Association (WBA) and State of the World Forum (SWF). It was the selected coalition of CSOs that implemented the UN worldwide 2009 campaign in Nigeria. In addition, it was Nigeria's CSO

Environmental experts believe that forestation remains critical for Nigeria to actualize the SDG-13 targets as many parts of country have been ravaged by environmental problems which can only be mitigated or restored through aggressive tree planting.

representative as part of the national delegation for COP15 & 16. CCNN is also a member of National Inter-Ministerial Committee on Climate Change as well as the National Technical Committee on REDD+. It co-facilitated the African Mayors Action on Climate Change (AMACC) due to its primary focus on cities and climate change.

The Climate Wednesday connection

Climate Wednesday has equally evolved as a formidable CSO mounting pressure on the Nigerian government to mobilize its citizens and stakeholders for joint efforts towards actualizing the SDG-13. The group focuses on key climate-based issues affecting development in Nigeria. It identifies local realities, engages relevant stakeholders, proffers sustainable solutions and presents them on the global stage for actionable steps towards mitigating the effects of climate change.

Climate Wednesday has emerged as a strong voice in the climate change campaign with its weekly tweet conversation on climate change, environment, sustainable development and related matters contributing to a change towards building a climate

smart generation in Nigeria and Africa. The group disseminates information through its tweet, news, essays, films, articles, documentaries, photographs and other related issues around environment.

Its newsletter, *Green Dairies*, goes to hundreds of subscribers and its weekly online conversation series #ClimateWednesday on twitter has created a lot of awareness on sustainable development.

Climate Smart Nigeria (CSN)

The Climate Smart Nigeria (CSN), an arm of Glow Initiative has also been actively involved in tackling environmental degradation and power sector crisis through its campaigns aimed at curbing climate illiteracy and promoting the intervention of renewable energy. Its goal is to attain a Climate Smart Nigeria, and to do so, CSN places emphasis on awareness creation on climate change and renewable energy through the education sector and the mass media.

The organization believes that people need to first know about the menace of climate change before they can learn the solutions. Succinctly put, CSN is committed to addressing the issue of climate illiteracy which stems from low awareness of climate change. According to the organization, more than 70% of Nigerians are not knowledgeable about climate change and its adverse effects on their society.

In 2016, CSN launched a 10-year-plan geared towards facilitating the country's attainment of a Climate Smart Nation target by the year 2026. Promoters of CSN are desirous of taking Nigeria to a level where 70% of its population will be conscious and aware of climate change and take deliberate action to mitigate it.

The group is equally concerned about the electricity crisis plaguing Nigeria. According to it, the poor electricity system and constant power outages have forced millions of Nigerians to depend hugely on fossil fuels for their energy needs thereby exacerbating climate change in the country. To tackle the problem of unstable power, CSN is creating awareness about the option of renewable energy technology.

Among the programmes initiated by CSN to tackle climate issues in Nigeria includes the Green Week and Climate Online Campaign, Green Guild School Initiative, Climate Aware Teachers Training Programme and Climate Ambassadors Network. Others are the Renewable Energy Initiative, the Solar Up Nigeria (SUN), Community Centres for Clean Energy and Education and the Clean Energy Action as well as the Renewable Energy Technology Training Institute (RETTI) initiative.

Last line

Certainly, the CSOs in Nigeria have been playing critical roles in propelling the Nigerian government to strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in the country. The sustenance of the partnership between the CSOs and government would enable Nigeria record a measure of success in terms of achieving the SDG-13 targets by 2030. ■



Promoting Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions through CSOs

ONE common feature of developing countries, including Nigeria, is the absence of a peaceful atmosphere necessary for growth and development. The lack of peace, or, at best, fragile peace, in some cases, is worsened by a weak justice system and lack of strong institutions in many societies. Societies short of peace, justice and strong institutions provide the perfect ground for chaos, violence, maltreatment, corruption, state terror and injustice.

Indeed, a society where peace, justice and strong institutions are hard to come by is a veritable ground for anarchy, corruption and violence. This leads to reprimination and alienation among the populace.

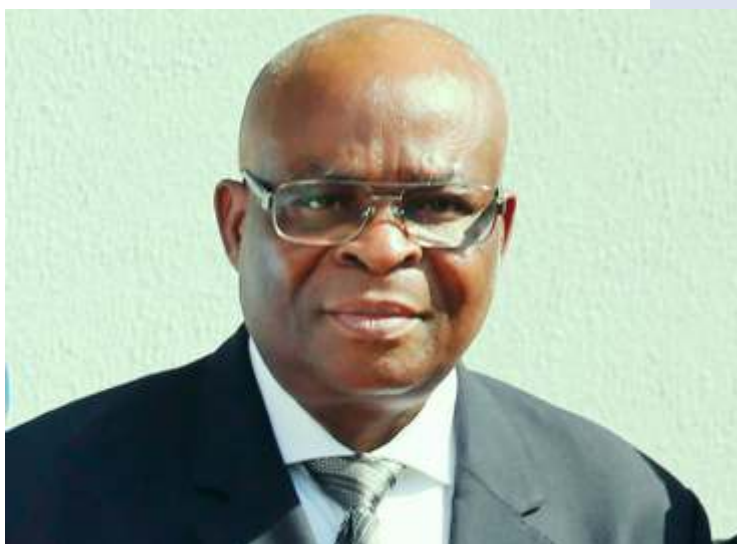
It is in pursuit of the development of societies where peace, justice and strong institutions prevail that the United Nations makes it number 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for transforming the world by 2030. According to the UN, "Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals is dedicated to the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, the provision of access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable institutions at all levels."

Among the institutions entrusted with ensuring a just and peaceful society in countries the world over are the police and judiciary. However, according to the UN, these two critical institutions are tainted by corruption.

The UN report states *inter alia*:

"Among the institutions most affected by corruption are the judiciary and police. Corruption, bribery, theft and tax evasion cost some US \$1.26 trillion for developing countries per year; this amount of money could be used to lift those who are living on less than \$1.25 a day above \$1.25 for at least six years. The rate of children leaving primary school in conflict affected countries reached 50 per cent in 2011, which accounts to 28.5 million children, showing the impact of unstable societies on one of the major goals of the post 2015 agenda: education. The rule of law and development have a significant interrelation and are mutually reinforcing, making it essential for sustainable development at the national and international level."

In Nigeria, public opinion and statistics support the UN's view of the police and judiciary. An April 2015 report by NOIPolls rates the Nigeria Police Force as the most corrupt agency in Nigeria. It found that among other factors, Nigerians cite "weak public institutions



Justice Walter Onnoghen, Chief Justice of Nigeria

(24 percent), poor pay incentive (6 percent), ineffective anti-corruption agencies (5 percent), absence of key Anti-Corruption tools (2 percent) as "responsible for the prevalence of corruption" in their country. The report also cites "findings from a survey conducted by the CLEEN Foundation in collaboration with the McArthur Foundation [which] revealed the Nigeria Police Force (NPF), alongside the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), and the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) as the most corrupt of federal government agencies in the country in 2013." The NOIPolls report also reveals that:

"...regardless of gender, age and geo-political zones, majority of Nigerians (63 percent) claimed they have experienced cases of corruption, either in the form of bribery, illegal business practices, irregular payments etc."

According to a USAID report, *Reducing Corruption in the Judiciary*, "some corruption is found in the judiciary especially of all countries-rich and poor, democratic and authoritarian. And corruption is found in all legal systems whether state based or non-state, formal or informal, applying civil law, common law, religious law, or customary law. The complete eradication of all corrupt acts is not a realistic goal. Rather, the goal should be a judicial system that adheres to high standards of independence and impartiality, Integrity, accountability and transparency."

The police and judiciary, however, are just two agencies that occasionally come under scrutiny or where officials are accused of receiving bribes. The Nigerian military has also been accused of gross human rights abuse. No doubt the country's military is saddled with maintaining peace in troubled zones across the country like the South East where the agitation for the Sovereign State of Biafra has gained currency in the last three years, the Niger Delta region where militants threaten Nigeria's oil production and the North East where *Boko Haram* is waging an insurgency. This must pose enormous challenges. Nevertheless, some civil society organizations (CSOs) and international organizations like Transparency International have alleged on several occasions that the military in Nigeria often trample on the rights of people they are in the field to protect.

There is also the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) which activities also attract scrutiny. Just like the police and judges, some INEC officials have been accused of corruption, partisanship and generally poor performance in the course of their work. A report by the *Vanguard* newspaper of February 8, 2018 states that:

"Two officials of Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC, Mr. Nwosu Christian, and Tijani Bashiru, were, yesterday, picked up and whisked away by operatives of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, EFCC, after proceedings at the Federal High Court sitting in Lagos. The two INEC officials were arrested after attending their trial over alleged N10264 million received from former Petroleum Resources Minister, Mrs. Diezani Alison-Madueke, during 2015 elections."

Given the shortcoming or perceived shortfall in service delivery of some government departments like the police, judiciary and the military, not a few civil society organizations have sprung up in Nigeria over the years to help monitor and report on their activities.

A list of CSOs by Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room shows that most of the 63 published CSOs, from their names, are concerned with issues of peace, justice and development which strengthens institutions.

CSOs involved in promoting peace, justice and strong institutions

Some of the vibrant CSOs involved in promoting peace, justice and strong institutions in Nigeria are as follows:

1. Advocates for Human Rights and Justice Development
2. Agents of Communication and Development (A-CODE)
3. Alliance for Credible Elections
4. Centre for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD)
5. Centre for Democracy and Development
6. Centre for Information Technology and Development (CITAD)
7. Citizen's Advocacy for Good Governance
8. Citizens Centre for Integrated Development and Social Rights
9. Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC)
10. Community Life Project, Community Rights Project (CRP)
11. Development Dynamics
12. Election Monitor
13. Empowering Women For Excellence Initiative
14. Enough is Enough Nigeria
15. Equity Advocates
16. Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Initiative
17. Forward Africa
18. Gender on the Balance
19. Human Rights, Justice and Peace Foundation
20. Human Rights Monitor, Kaduna
21. Initiative for Total Development and Empowerment
22. Inspire Nigerian Youths
23. Justice & Peace (JDPC) / Caritas Nigeria
24. Majesty Community Rural Development Foundation,
25. Media Rights Agenda (MRA)
26. Niger Delta Budget Monitoring Group (NDEMUBOG)
27. Nigeria for Change International
28. Partners for Electoral Reform
29. Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC)
30. Reclaim Naija
31. Responsible Citizens and Human Development Initiative (RECHI)



Adeniyi Sulaiman of Centre for Human Rights and Social Justice (CHRSJ)

32. Spaces For Change (S4C)
33. Stakeholder Democracy Network (SDN)
34. Transition Monitoring Group (TMG)
35. Youth Alert Nigeria
36. Youth Initiative for Advocacy Growth & Advancement (YIAGA)

CSOs as watchdogs

The CSOs in Nigeria act as watchdogs and town criers, pointing out shortcomings within the system with a view to either drawing attention of the authorities to act and change things, or effect change themselves. Some of them also organize conferences where issues of national importance are discussed, and training programmes for government agencies. They also participate in elections as observers.

One of the CSOs contributing to achieving the goal of a peaceful, just and strong Nigeria is the Initiative for Peace and Comfort (IPC). Dr. Comfort Onifade, Executive Director of IPC said that the organization aims to achieve a world where people can be free from hunger and poverty. It aims for homes devoid of violence, where peace would reign and every member will enjoy love, a world where women have their pride of place, not the wretched of the earth, and a world where the girl-child reaches her full potential.

In realization of its goal, IPC has established Peace Lovers' Clubs in some schools in Abeokuta, Ogun State. Some of the schools include Glorified Group of Schools, Abeokuta, Exponent Nursery and Primary School, Abeokuta. IPC has also collaborated with different CSOs to advocate for peace. It partnered with Stephanie Peace-building and Development Foundation (SPADEV) and West Africa Network for Peace-building Nigeria (WANEP-Nigeria) on Peace Day celebration and Peace Tree Planting at Egba Comprehensive High School, Abeokuta. It also collaborated with the Gender Development Initiative (GENDI) on a sensitization visit to Mosunmore Village, near Kobape, Abeokuta on the Dangers of Cultism for over 100 youths and teenagers.

It also partnered with the Advocate Reconciliation Group to visit prisoners at the Nigerian Prisons Service Ibara, Abeokuta as part of its "Worry" Alleviation Programme.

When they are not organizing conferences or visiting troubled spots, some CSOs are holding government accountable to the people they lead.

In respect to peace, justice and strong institutions, for instance, they allege that the Nigerian government headed by President Muhammadu Buhari has been infringing on people's rights. Specifically, they accuse the police and EFCC, of detaining people arbitrarily, ignoring court orders or refusing to release suspects freed by the court; using the apparatus of state to intimidate groups like the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) seeking for self determination for the Igbo race and of killing members of the Shiite Movement in Zaria.

The International Centre for Not for Profit Law in a January 2018 report with the title, *Civil Freedom*

Monitor: Nigeria writes:

"The victory of Buhari and the APC (All Progressives Congress) in 2015 was attributed to his pledge to prosecute the war against *Boko Haram* effectively and to fight corruption. The fulfilment of both of these pledges and heavy-handed responses to largely peaceful protests, have left the government exposed to allegations of human rights abuses, however. The government has rejected these charges, insisting that it is upholding the rule of law while the army also rejects accusations of abuses and is publicly questioning the *bona fides* of those raising such concerns.

"Protests by those supporting the leader of the (Indigenous) Peoples of Biafra (IPOB) have, in some instances, also been met with violent crackdowns. There is a complaint at the International Criminal Court about such crackdowns. Similarly, in response to what has been widely described as a violent massacre of Shiites in Kaduna, the Kaduna State Government has established a Commission of Inquiry to investigate. The Shiites, who have named 705 persons they believe are dead or missing because of the massacre, have insisted on the production of their missing leader, Sheikh Ibrahim El-Zakzaky, before they will appear before the Commission. There have also been efforts to break up protests by the #BringBackOurGirls movement, which demands the government exert its maximum capacity to free the nearly 280 school girls that *Boko Haram* took captive in 2014, and threats to break up nationwide protests against the country's poor economic situation, bad governance and corruption. The Federal Government has, at least in some cases, however, deployed the police to protect--rather than thwart--protests."

The police was also accused of sealing up the office of the Peace Corp in 2016 despite an existing court order on the Nigerian government. The court order had instructed the government to fulfil its constitutional role of paying workers salary as at when due. It has since been charged to the International Criminal Court (ICC) by the Socio-Economic Rights & Accountability Project (SERAP) in 2016.

SERAP argued that "non-payment of workers' salaries by several state governments in Nigeria has made life impossible to live for the workers and their families," who have suffered "severe deprivation, mental and physical health challenges" due to delayed payment of their salaries. SERAP also recently asked the United Nations to declare the killer herdsmen a terrorist organization as their grazing activities have, over the years, led to clashes and bloodshed between them and farmers, resulting in countless deaths across the country.

Timothy Adewale, SERAP's Deputy Director, in a statement, expressed worry over the wanton killings by herdsmen which he said "have uprooted families, destroyed communities' socio-economic activities, and taken away their livelihoods and common heritage." Such attacks, he points out, "undermine the very purposes and principles of the UN Charter" which

if not urgently combated, may rise to the level of threat to international peace and security.

The CSO therefore wants the UN to “treat the atrocities by herdsmen as terrorist acts, in line with the UN Security Council resolution 2349 (2017), which addresses *Boko Haram*'s presence in the Lake Chad Basin and calls on all states to combat all forms and manifestations of terrorism.” According to SERAP, declaring attacks by herdsmen as terrorist acts would enable the authorities to seriously address the threats posed by herdsmen and combat the crimes against humanity being committed against Nigerians.

The concern is not restricted to security challenges. In mid March 2018, a CSO known as the Centre for Human Rights and Social Justice (CHRSJ) led by Adeniyi Sulaiman, wrote a letter to the National Assembly informing it of its plan to picket some telecommunication firms, pay television firms or operators for habitually failing to redeem promo offers to their customers. In the press release, the group warned that its members were expected to stage series of rallies and protest marches across the country to sensitize the public on the need to preserve and secure their rights for quality service. Sulaiman's letter reads in part:

“We have written and fine-tuned our petitions to the National Assembly, the Presidency, the ministers responsible for supervising the activities of these companies and organizations. After that, we have mobilized our members to be on standby as we will also stage peaceful rallies in the premises of the affected ministries, which would last for a year terminating on October 1, 2019 based on our engagement diary and timetable. We are also engaging the National Assembly with a view to ensure that they do the needful by siding with Nigerian masses in this struggle and that they must respect and act on the petitions that we have written to them.”

Sulaiman listed the grouse of his group to include unsolicited messaging, over billing subscribers for terminated calls, acts he considered unacceptable, and said the situation would no longer be condoned.

He further disclosed groups to partner with the Centre for Human Rights and Social Justice in the planned protest marches and rallies. They include Apata Ayeraye Socio-political Volunteer Group, De Mainstream Independent Campaign Group, Centre for Constitutional Rights and Counter-Corruption Crusade, the Conscience Mainstream, African Masses Voices for Survival and the Christian Youth for the Peoples Rights and Development.

Another advocacy group, Access to Justice, recently urged Justice Walter Onnoghen, the Chief



Adenike Aiyedun, Deputy Director, Access to Justice

Justice of Nigeria, to declare a state of emergency in the country's justice system. At a press conference in Lagos, Adenike Aiyedun, Deputy Director, Access to Justice, said the state of the judiciary in Nigeria today, leaves much to be desired and that the country needs a judiciary that will better serve the citizens. He said:

“Without an iota of doubt, Nigerians want to see more judicial reforms executed, with more speed and urgency. We need more traction and more resolve applied in the fight to transform the delivery of justice in Nigeria. Our concern is that the current

speed and pace of reforms is neither strong nor vibrant enough and it is not creating the kind of momentum or impetus that Nigerians are eager to see.”

Aiyedun pressed for a three-phase reform plan to be implemented in the short, medium and long-term to focus on reducing court delays, tackling corruption and initiating institutional reforms.

On court delays, the group urged the National Judicial Council (NJC) to act and save the nation from embarrassment:

“These 'no-shows' have huge costs implications on everyone – litigants, lawyers and witnesses (some of who may have travelled long distances to be in court). They also cause terrible delays in the hearing of cases, thereby creating frustrations for many court users, congestion of dockets and diminish public confidence in the administration of justice.”

Access to Justice also wants to see judges' vacation period reviewed and an end to the practice of transferring judges from one jurisdiction to another before the judges conclude the cases. “Judges' transfers take a huge toll on the time for completing cases, and entail many cases starting afresh even where they may have been pending in court for many years, and are nearing completion,” Aiyedun said.

As regards corruption and fostering transparency in the judiciary, Aiyedun urged for a review and strengthening of the NJC's Judicial Discipline Regulations 2014 and a system of financial disclosure reporting system whereby extrajudicial payments to judges are self-reported and financial disclosure reports are submitted by judges. The purpose of the review, Aiyedun said, is to “enable the NJC act on anonymous complaints, protect whistle blowers, and collaborate with official anti-corruption agencies to investigate allegations of corruption.” She points out that “corruption is a problem in lower courts across the country, and many states do not have credible or effective systems for fighting corruption within their respective jurisdictions:

"The NJC should immediately direct heads of courts in State and Federal jurisdictions to establish effective disciplinary regulations or guidelines applicable to both lower court 'judges' and court staff, and increase efforts to stamp out corruption from the lower courts. Access to Justice recently concluded an empirical research which shows that the disciplinary system for fighting corruption in lower courts, particularly in Lagos State, is extremely weak."

The group also canvassed for the judiciary to strengthen the procedures for appointing judges as well as build a consensus around a vision statement: "The judiciary should bring stakeholders together to develop a strategic reforms' framework and plan immediately. The plan will represent the judiciary's vision of how the judiciary should be restructured."

The Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law (IHRHL), is another CSO working hard to promote peace, justice and strong institutions in Nigeria. Anyakwee Nsirimovu, Executive Director of IHRHL said that the organization established in 1988, focuses on structural human rights education, conflict resolution, conflict prevention, research, public interest advocacy and documentation in Nigeria. The CSO which is based in Port Harcourt has been particularly involved in peace-building and conflict resolution in the oil-rich Niger Delta region.

Nsirimovu, Executive Director of IHRHL believes that the main conflict driver in the Niger Delta region is the violation of human rights and that the majority of the people in the Niger Delta do not have access to legal assistance, despite the fact that their rights are often grossly violated. Ignorance and illiteracy also contribute to the problem. "People, especially those in rural areas, are unaware of their legal rights and have little understanding of the fact that the law can be used to serve and protect their legitimate interests. IHRHL tries to raise awareness and promote a peaceful way of conflict resolution, while at the same time working on conflict prevention," Nsirimovu said.

Due to the rising instability and violence in the region, IHRHL decided to add the 'Conflict Transformation Strategies Unit' to its regular programme. This unit works through a variety of approaches, such as conflict management, conflict prevention and peace-building, with the overall objective of transforming the existing conflict in the Niger Delta into sustainable peace by transforming the situation from the bottom-up. As part of this programme, IHRHL organizes inter-community consultations between grassroots groups in order to forge new alliances and strengthen the existing foundations for peace. IHRHL also works on education in schools to counter secret cult activities, as well as introduce alternatives to violence.

The work of IHRHL is backed by the likes of MacArthur Foundation, National Endowment for Democracy, Swedish NGO, Cordaid, Open Society Institute for West Africa, and Oxfam GB.

Another CSO in Nigeria involved in peace-building and conflict resolution is the Justice for All Programme. It provides succour to rape victims by ensuring that they receive good but confidential treatment in a hospital. The organization believes that CSOs have the potential to be an important driver of pro-poor change in Nigeria's justice sector and its focus is to "demonstrate the benefits of a bottom-up approach in delivering local justice services."

Some other CSOs partner or seek to work with government institutions to improve democracy in the country. Since the return to democratic rule in Nigeria in 1999, not a few CSOs have participated in elections as observers. Ahead the 2015 elections, NigeriaElections.org, had released a list of 89 organizations to monitor the elections. They include groups like CLEEN, Society for Equity, Justice and Peace, Citizens Right and Leadership Awareness Initiative. Society for Equity, Justice and Peace has been embarking on positive evangelism within Nigeria. It also monitors the abuse of human rights in all facets of human life and offers assistance/aids to victims, report and or publish same.

In addition, it monitors and observes elections in Nigeria and reports same. It liaises and relates with other organizations with similar objectives to promote equity, justice and peace.

On its part, the Centre for Democracy and Development, another of the accredited 2015 observer team, serves as "the ultimate catalyst in the transformation of the West African sub-region into an integrated economically vibrant and democratically governed community that assures holistic

security to the population and is capable of permanent peaceful conflict management."

Challenges

In the course of their work, some CSOs grapple with challenges ranging from insecurity to threat to life and intimidation from security or government agents displeased with their work. The latter is mostly true of works independently carried out. Generally, the militancy in the Niger Delta, *Boko Haram* insurgency in Northern Nigeria and political thugs across the country are threats the CSOs have had to grapple with.

However, in spite the challenges, the CSOs remain undaunted in their resolve to use their various organizations as platforms for the enthronement of a humane Nigerian society where peace, justice and the rule of law takes pre-eminence over and above the rule of man. ■



Anyakwee Nsirimovu, Executive Director, Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law (IHRHL)



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