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SPARK NEWSLETTER

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT REPORTING KNOWLEDGE



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Issues 1

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Welcome to the First Edition of SPARK

We're thrilled to welcome you to the inaugural edition of the Strategic Partnership Agreement Reporting Knowledge (SPARK) newsletter. This platform is your gateway to staying connected, informed, and inspired by the impactful work of the Strategic Partnership Agreement II (SPA II) project.

In each edition, SPARK will spotlight project milestones, celebrate advocacy achievements, and share powerful stories of change from the communities we serve.

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About SPA II

Funded by the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), Strategic Partnership Agreement SPA II is a four-year initiative (2022-2025) aimed at advancing human rights, resilience, and sustainable livelihoods for young people, especially young women, living in marginalized communities and areas affected by crises. The project operates across five states in Nigeria—Akwa Ibom, the BAY States (Borno, Adamawa, Yobe) Enugu, Lagos, and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) in collaboration with our dedicated partners who work tirelessly to bring the SPA II vision to life on the ground.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

01

Ensure that young people, especially women and those experiencing marginalization or fragility, can exercise their rights within an open and enabling democratic space. This includes facilitating access to well-resourced programs and public services.

02

Empower young people, particularly women and marginalised individuals, to achieve enhanced, sustainable livelihoods through the promotion of climate-accountable governance and a green private sector.

03

Enhance the participation and skills of young people, especially young women, and their associated organisations, networks, and movements in youth-led programs, campaigns, and advocacy efforts. This aims to improve sustainable livelihoods, resilience, and protection, fostering strong youth alliances with like-minded national and regional partners.



SPA II LGA Election Observers training in Enugu

Election observers for the Enugu and Akwa Ibom State LGA Elections

As part of our commitment to holding governments accountable and promoting effective governance under the SPA II project, AAN and its partners organised a training program for local government area (LGA) election observers in Enugu and Akwa Ibom State.

In response to the federal government's decree mandating LGA autonomy, which requires LGAs across the country to conduct their elections, 240 young people were equipped with the skills needed to observe elections .



SPA II Team at a pooling boot in Akwa Ibom



Members of political party appending their signature for the peace accord

ENUGU STATE FIRST LGA ELECTIONS PEACE ACCORD SIGNED

A historic step towards peaceful LGA elections

Ahead of the 2024 Local Government Area (LGA) elections in Enugu, AAN and partners brought key political stakeholders in Enugu State together, to sign the first-ever Peace Accord for LGA elections. The accord commits parties to a fair, violence-free election, setting a new standard for local governance in Enugu State. This was a key milestone achieved through the SPA II



AAN Team with the Enugu State Commissioner of Police



GREEN VENTURES AGROECOLOGY TRAINING IN FCT

Participants having a practical section at the farm

The training of 30 young people with skills on sustainable agriculture through the Youth Green Ventures Agroecology training fostered a positive result. We organised the Youth Green Ventures Agroecology training to equip 30 young people with sustainable agriculture skills.

The training has led to a reduction in chemical pesticide use on participants' farms, improved soil health, and enhanced water conservation. Many participants, including Blessing, are now exploring grants and microloans to expand their operations and continue making strides toward a greener, more sustainable future. Through their dedication and hard work, these young farmers are contributing to environmental sustainability in their communities



Blessing, one of the participants from this training has already put her newfound knowledge into action by starting a vegetable farm at home. She cultivates fluted pumpkin leaves (ugu) using organic methods, demonstrating her commitment to sustainable practices. Inspired by the training, Blessing is not just growing her own food but also hopes to provide her community with healthy, organic produce.

AGROECOLOGY PHOTOREELS





ADVOCACY WALK FOR WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

Tax evasion and a lack of public awareness around tax obligations remain significant challenges in Borno State, hindering the development of essential services and infrastructure. Many community members, especially business owners, traders, and the youth, are often unaware of how progressive taxation can support societal growth and public welfare.

This gap in understanding has contributed to revenue losses and inefficiencies in tax collection, impacting the funds available for critical local services. In response to these challenges, we took the step to coordinate young people and facilitating engagements with the Borno Internal Revenue Services to address the issue. Young people embarked on a street sensitisation to create awareness on the importance of paying taxes.



A business owner pasting the Tax Education material in his shop



LAGOS YOUTH POLICY SIGNED AND LAUNCHED WITH MAJOR CONTRIBUTIONS THROUGH SPA II ADVOCACY

The Lagos State Government officially signed, approved and launched the Lagos State Youth Policy, a significant milestone achieved through persistent advocacy on the SPA II project. This policy framework is designed to address the needs, aspirations, and challenges of young people across Lagos State, providing a structured approach to youth empowerment and development. The approval and launching of the Youth Policy marks a critical achievement in Lagos State's commitment to youth development.



The SSG to the Lagos State Government Unveiling the policy document officially



Lagos State Commissioner for Youth and Social Development, Mobolaji Ogunlede, giving his remarks at the policy launch

LAGOS CLIMATE TECH EXHIBITION SHOWCASING YOUTH INNOVATION FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE



Innovator displaying his innovation

One notable climate tech innovation is the Clean Cookstove. This innovative solution transforms waste into an odorless and smokeless liquid that is used for cooking, promoting healthier living conditions for its users.

The Lagos State Climate Tech Innovation Challenge, presented a unique platform for the empowerment of young people. We organised the Lagos Climate Tech Exhibition, a unique platform for young people in Lagos State to showcase their skills and innovations in climate-related technologies.

This program highlighted a variety of climate-tech solutions developed by local youth, aiming to tackle pressing environmental challenges and drive sustainable development within their communities.



Innovator explaining his innovation

EMPOWERING YOUTH THROUGH SKILL ACQUISITION IN ABBAGANARAM COMMUNITY



Bukar packaging the vaseline he had produced

In Jere Local Government, seven young graduates under the SPA II response are rewriting their futures. Nine months after successfully completing their training, these dedicated individuals have established a thriving business hub, specializing in the production of Vaseline cream and liquid soap. The demand for their products has soared, with local community members and vendors purchasing in bulk to sell for profit.

What sets their business apart is the innovative "On-Request-Production" system they developed.

This approach allows them to produce items based on demand, reducing the risk of unsold stock and enabling better price management, giving them control over their supply chain.

In September, their business reached a major milestone when a local company placed a substantial order for nearly 2,000 pieces of Vaseline. This single transaction resulted in an unprecedented profit, transforming their business journey.

One of the graduates, 21-year-old Bukar, was able to use part of his earnings to cover his sister's medical bills, a testament to how this business is directly impacting their lives and the community. Today, this business hub is a beacon of success, offering not just a source of income but also a survival mechanism for its founders. The story of these seven youth stands as a powerful example of how skill acquisition can ignite economic growth and personal empowerment in vulnerable communities.



YOUTH POWER IN ACTION: A HISTORIC CHANGE FOR AKWA IBOM YOUTH

In response, we led a strategic advocacy campaign, collaborating with policy experts, civil society organisations, and youth leaders presented compelling data and hosted dialogues to highlight how the existing ministry structure hindered youth development.

After years of inadequate representation, the youth of Akwa Ibom State achieved a historic victory through the efforts of the the SPA II project in Akwa Ibom State and its youth networks. The state's youth affairs had long been merged with sports under one ministry, which failed to address critical issues like unemployment and limited youth participation in decision-making.

The efforts culminated in the announcement by Governor Pastor Umo Eno on May 7th, 2024, of the creation of Nigeria's first dedicated Ministry of Youth Development with specific focus on youth employment, entrepreneurship, and education, ensuring that young people's concerns are prioritized with dedicated resources.

EMPOWERING OKORITAK: YOUTH-LED SOLUTIONS TO THE WATER CRISIS



Recognizing this challenge we initiated a training program to address the community's water crisis. Instead of relying solely on external experts, the project focused on empowering the village's youth to take ownership of their water needs. Fifty young people, including Sarah, were trained on how to install and maintain Biosand filtration systems, providing a sustainable and affordable solution for purifying the village's water.

In Okoritak, access to safe drinking water has been a long-standing challenge, with the community relying on an abandoned oil well for their water supply for over forty years. This well only produces water during the rainy season, and the water collected is often unsafe, leaving families vulnerable to waterborne diseases. For years, Sarah and her neighbors made a 15-kilometer journey to fetch water, but even then, they couldn't guarantee its safety.

This improved the quality of the water and empowered the youth to become water quality experts and system maintenance specialists. Despite the progress made, the community is still facing challenges. The Biosand filtration system is a step forward, but the village continues to call for help in securing a consistent and reliable source of potable water. Dependence on abandoned oil wells during the rainy season remains unreliable.

A MOTHER'S COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABLE FARMING: EUNICE STORY



Farming was something I did just to survive, but now it's become a real source of pride and stability for my family. I never imagined I'd be able to lead other farmers and help them grow, but here I am. In this community, I am the go-to person for agroecology education, especially on agroecology practices. The leaders often invite me to support them in composting organic manure.

Eunice, a 32-year-old mother of four and the chairperson of both the Igbe Farmers Association and the Village Savings and Loans Association, a group set up by ActionAid Nigeria as part of the Agroecology training held in Lagos State, had a life filled with struggle before the agroecology training. Despite already being a farmer, she wasn't fully aware of the dangers of traditional farming practices and the long-term impacts they could have on the environment and health.

Growing up in Delta State, Eunice faced the harsh realities of job scarcity, enduring countless failed job hunts. When she eventually moved to Lagos with her husband, she decided to turn to agriculture as a means to support her family while continuing her search for employment. When she finally got a teaching job offer, she rejected it to focus on her little vegetable farm at the time.



Some Members of Igbe Farmers Association and AAN Team

Through the agroecology training, Eunice not only received agroecology training but also found financial empowerment through the Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA), which helps farmers build financial support for one another.

The training transformed her understanding of farming, equipping her with sustainable practices that have greatly improved her yield, income, and leadership abilities.

Looking baack, Eunice reflects, "Farming was something I did just to survive, but now it's become a real source of pride and stability for my family. I never imagined I'd be able to lead other farmers and help them grow, but here I am. In this community, I am the go-to person for agroecology education, especially on agroecology practices. The leaders often invite me to support them in composting organic manure."





Eunice spraying organic pesticide on her vegetable farm

She continued, "Before now, I used to spend so much money buying chemical fertilizers for my farm, expecting they would make my produce more productive. However, through the agroecology training, I no longer need to spend on fertilizers. I've learned how to create natural alternatives and pesticides using materials that support a healthier environment. Now, people in the community are eating healthier food, and I've noticed my children no longer fall ill as often as they used to."

"Farming isn't just for the illiterate as many people have made us believe. It's a sustainable way to secure livelihoods," Eunice shared. "Thanks to ActionAid, I was introduced to agroecology practices, which have expanded my knowledge of environmentally friendly farming. Through these practices, we're not only improving food production but also contributing to the fight against climate change."

One of the market women who regularly buy from Eunice shared her experience selling organic vegetables in Igbe, emphasising the preference of her customers. "My customers love organic vegetables because they're always fresh, green, and last longer, even when not sold right away. Unlike the ones grown with chemical fertilizers, these stay good for much longer. Whenever I buy from a different seller, my customers complain, and I lose money. That's why I always make sure to buy from Eunice," she explained.

My passion now is to help other women see that farming can be more than just survival, it can be the key to a healthier and stronger community.



FCT YOUTH POLICY DEVELOPMENT REVIEW, VALIDATION AND ADOPTION MEETING



Key stakeholders, youth leaders, policymakers, and civil society groups, for a two-day event to review, validate, and adopt the FCT Youth Development Policy. This framework, aimed at addressing youth challenges and enhancing development opportunities in the Federal Capital Territory, was shaped through a participatory process, with young people actively involved in discussions on skill development, entrepreneurship, healthcare, and governance.



EMPOWERING STUDENTS TO TACKLE CLIMATE CHANGE IN ENUGU



Climate change, driven by greenhouse gas emissions from human activities, is a global crisis manifesting in rising temperatures, altered precipitation patterns, severe weather events, and sea level rise. These changes pose significant risks to ecosystems, human health, food security, water resources, and economic stability. In Nigeria, the impacts of climate change are evident in desertification, land degradation, increased flooding, and reduced agricultural productivity. Enugu State, in particular, faces challenges such as disrupted agricultural activities, soil erosion, and increased prevalence of waterborne diseases due to altered rainfall patterns and rising temperatures.

Recognising the urgency of these issues we took the initiative to address the through a one-day sensitisation outreach and climate policy dialogue session.

This event was held at the faculty of environmental studies, University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus, with the aim of enhancing environmental sustainability, raising awareness and encouraging proactive environmental stewardship among students. This initiative was crucial for promoting sustainable development and building resilience against the adverse impacts of climate change.

BUILDING PEACE IN DALORI COMMUNITY THROUGH SPA II



In Dalori Community, Jere, a crucial step towards peace was achieved during a quarterly community dialogue. For years, local farmers and fishermen clashed over land use around the bridge to Lagos Street, leading to lost livelihoods and deepened mistrust.

At the peace dialogue, facilitated by local leaders, both groups voiced their grievances and agreed on a solution: mutual respect for each other's property and the establishment of shared boundaries. This collaboration not only resolves long-standing tensions but also sets a powerful precedent for peaceful conflict resolution within the community, fostering trust and cooperation among all.





Lucy harvesting organic maize

EMPOWERING ENUGU FARMERS THROUGH AGROECOLOGY

Across the globe, there's a growing recognition of the vital role sustainable agriculture plays in tackling key issues like food security, climate change, and rural development. This emphasis is especially pertinent in Africa, where agriculture is the backbone of many livelihoods. With its abundant agricultural potential, Nigeria grapples with challenges such as low productivity, the adverse effects of climate change, and limited financial access for smallholder farmers.

Research shows that agriculture contributes about 25 percent to Nigeria's GDP and employs nearly 70 percent of the country's population. However, farmers still struggle with low productivity, the adverse effects of climate change, and limited financial access for smallholder farmers. This isn't any different in Enugu state as farmers are plagued by limited resources and access to financial services, making it even more challenging for farmers to adopt sustainable farming practices.



Meshach Ayogu at his Farm in Enugu

The challenge of limited access to finance presents a significant obstacle for smallholder farmers aiming to adopt and maintain agroecological practices.



I have been wanting to expand my farm and cultivate more land to include new crops but funds have been a limiting factor. Now, I will be able to grow my business and increase my annual income.

MESCHACH AYOUGU

The Central Bank of Nigeria reports that 36% of Nigeria's adult population has access to formal financial services. This financial exclusion significantly limits farmers' ability to invest in quality inputs, sustainable technologies, and essential equipment needed for agroecology.

Realising this gap through the SPA II project realizing, we established Village Savings and Loans Association, VSLA, in our three project communities in Enugu: Umuogili, Oduma Achara, and Ihenyi to support young farmers. VSLA empowers farmers by offering a structured platform for savings, borrowing, and investment within their community.

Mrs. Lucy, the Chairperson for Ihenyi VSLA group shared, "I am grateful to SSDO and ActionAid for this initiative. Getting loans from the bank is a long process for us, especially considering the distance. But with VSLA, I can access loans to start a poultry business."

The groups have successfully drafted their constitution, ensuring structured and efficient operations. This includes membership criteria, savings and loan procedures, interest rates, repayment schedules, and conflict resolution mechanisms has also been clarified. The associations have collectively saved N375,000 since their inception and six people have accessed loans, a testament to their functionality and effectiveness in mobilizing local financial resources for agri-business.



PHOTO REEL



Persons with Disability at the Climate Tech Innovation Lab, Lagos



Enugu State Independent Electoral Commission Chairman at the Stakeholder Engagement and Peace Accord Signing in preparation for the LGA elections



AAN Situation Room during the Akwa Ibom State LGA elections



Group photograph with Andrew Mamedu, AAN Country Director, during the SPA II Partners review meeting



The Governance Manager with during a courtesy visit to the Lagos State Commissioner for Youth and Social Dev.



Group photograph of the Young Urban Women Training Participants



A group section of panelists at the Lagos Climate Tech Innovation



A photo section with the representative of the Youth Minister



AAN Election Observers at the Akwa Ibom State LGA Elections



Group photograph of participants at the finance retreat



Group photograph with the Enugu State Independence Electoral Commission Chairman during a courtesy visit

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