

ACTIONAID NIGERIA BIANNUAL NEWSLETTER

# SW!FT

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A woman with a black headwrap and a blue patterned top is standing outdoors. The background shows some trees and a building. A red semi-transparent box is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing text.

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Hello and welcome to the 22nd edition of SWIFT!

This edition of SWIFT comes at a truly exciting time for ActionAid Nigeria. With the launch of our new Country Strategy Paper, “Citizens’ Action to End Poverty and Injustice” in 2024, we’re working more closely with communities to strengthen their voices and drive real change. Over the past months, we have invested in trainings that strengthen the capacity of movement organisations and journalists, which you will read more about in this edition.

You will also see moments from my recent visit to communities where we work, where I had the privilege of meeting and listening to the people we serve. You’ll also catch a glimpse of our work in the Northeast, addressing malnutrition and helping children and mothers access the nutrition and care they need to thrive. These experiences remind me why our work matters: it is about people, their dignity, and their right to a better life.

We are equally excited to welcome new projects to our portfolio. RECONNECT returns us to vital work with migrant communities, ensuring no one is left behind. CITI-ACT, the successor to the CLEAP Justice Project, is dedicated to strengthening citizens’ participation in governance, promoting accountability, and ensuring justice at the grassroots. These projects reflect our commitment to solutions that are both inclusive and sustainable.

I hope you enjoy this edition. It is full of stories of action, resilience, and hope. Until next time, happy reading!

In solidarity,

Andrew Mamedu  
Country Director





Country Director's Office:

## My Visit to Gwalada: A Community's Fight for Education

In February 2025, my team and I visited Gwalada, a small community just outside Abuja, and were struck by the resilience of children determined to learn against all odds. With no primary school nearby, young children trek nearly an hour on rough, untarred roads to attend classes—many never make it that far. Those who stay gather daily under a tree, learning from a single teacher without desks or blackboards. Despite constructing a basic structure through community efforts, the learning environment remains harsh, a vivid reminder of how urgently Gwalada needs a proper school.

Our visit was part of ActionAid Nigeria's Back to School Campaign under the Community Sponsorship Initiative. Thanks to generous donors, including a special contribution from Sony Music, we raised 1 million to provide school supplies like bags, books, and sandals. The children's excitement was unforgettable—many were receiving school materials for the first time, and the community responded with songs, dance, and heartfelt gratitude. Yet, we know that real change demands more: government action to build a functional school in Gwalada, because education is not a privilege—it's a right.

We also spent time with the children at Vine Heritage Home (VHH), where ActionAid Nigeria has nurtured partnerships for over five years. Visits to VHH are about more than giving essentials—they are about sharing joy, dancing, playing, and strengthening the bond with these remarkable young people. Our work continues in Gwalada, VHH, and beyond, as we push for better education and brighter futures. You too can be part of this movement—visit [actionaid-ngr.org](https://actionaid-ngr.org) to make a difference.





## Fatima Musa's Story

### A Journey of Impact: How School Meals Are Changing Lives in Taraba

My journey to Sah-Kaka and Mayo-Ndaga in Taraba State was as challenging as it was inspiring. After a long flight and rugged road trips, we arrived in these remote communities where the Innovative Action for School Feeding Programme is bringing real hope. Despite the cold, the spirit of the people was warm and alive, especially during the Inception Meeting that gathered government officials, traditional rulers, teachers, and parents. It was a powerful reminder that no child should have to learn on an empty stomach.

The highlight of the trip was launching new canteens and training 100 "canteen mothers" who would provide daily nutritious meals to 800 pupils. Watching the children eat, laugh, and dance after their meals was unforgettable—a raw, joyful expression of gratitude. This programme is not just feeding children; it's empowering women, supporting 100 smallholder women farmers, boosting local economies, and transforming education outcomes as more children attend and thrive in school.

Leaving Taraba, I carried with me the powerful stories of resilience and hope. The road ahead remains tough, but the success of the school feeding programme proves that when communities are empowered, real and lasting change happens. This is more than a development project—it is a lifeline, and it's a journey well worth continuing.



## Pushing for a Stronger 2025 Agriculture Budget

Stakeholders are raising the alarm over the proposed 2025 agriculture budget, warning it falls dangerously short. At a press conference led by SWOFON, COANSA, and ActionAid Nigeria, concerns were raised about a 36% cut to the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security's funding, even as Nigeria faces worsening hunger and economic hardship. With just 1.3% of the national budget allocated—far from the 10% Malabo Declaration target—critical programmes like extension services, credit access, and climate-resilient farming are at risk. Urgent calls have been made to redirect funds, increase budget transparency, and prioritize investments that truly strengthen Nigeria's food system and rural economy.

Meanwhile, ActionAid Nigeria's radio campaign on agroecology has reached millions across Ebonyi, Delta, Ondo, Jigawa, and the FCT. Through local stations like Vision FM, Radio Jigawa, and others, farmers learned practical techniques to boost harvests sustainably while women farmers found a platform to demand better land access, government support, and market opportunities. These broadcasts ignited crucial conversations around building an agriculture system that is good for farmers, communities, and the environment.

Building on this momentum, town hall meetings across the five project states gave women farmers a voice in shaping solutions to land access challenges. Traditional rulers pledged to allocate land, legal groups offered support for land disputes, and government agencies committed to strengthening market access and reviewing restrictive policies. Though challenges remain, the collective energy from farmers, leaders, and civil society shows that with sustained advocacy and action, women farmers can secure the land and opportunities they need to thrive.





## Flourishing Against the Odds: Young Women Leaders Rising in Northeast Nigeria

In the face of conflict and hardship, hope is taking root in northeast Nigeria. Across Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe states, young women-led organisations are stepping up to rebuild their communities—and ActionAid's FLOURISH program is helping them do it.

For four powerful days in Maiduguri, emerging women leaders gathered under the FLOURISH mentorship programme to build the skills needed to lead sustainable, impactful organisations. Through sessions on humanitarian principles, organisational resilience, crisis response, and gender advocacy, these women gained not just knowledge—but the confidence to transform humanitarian and development work in their communities.

Designed in collaboration with UNOCHA and humanitarian experts, FLOURISH focused on real-world challenges: how to maintain neutrality in conflict zones, secure vital funding, plan for emergencies, and push for women's leadership in decision-making spaces. By the end of the program, participants had formed a powerful network of changemakers ready to drive lasting change.

And the journey doesn't end there. Through continuous mentorship, technical support, and access to funding, ActionAid is ensuring that these women leaders—and the communities they serve—continue to flourish against odds.

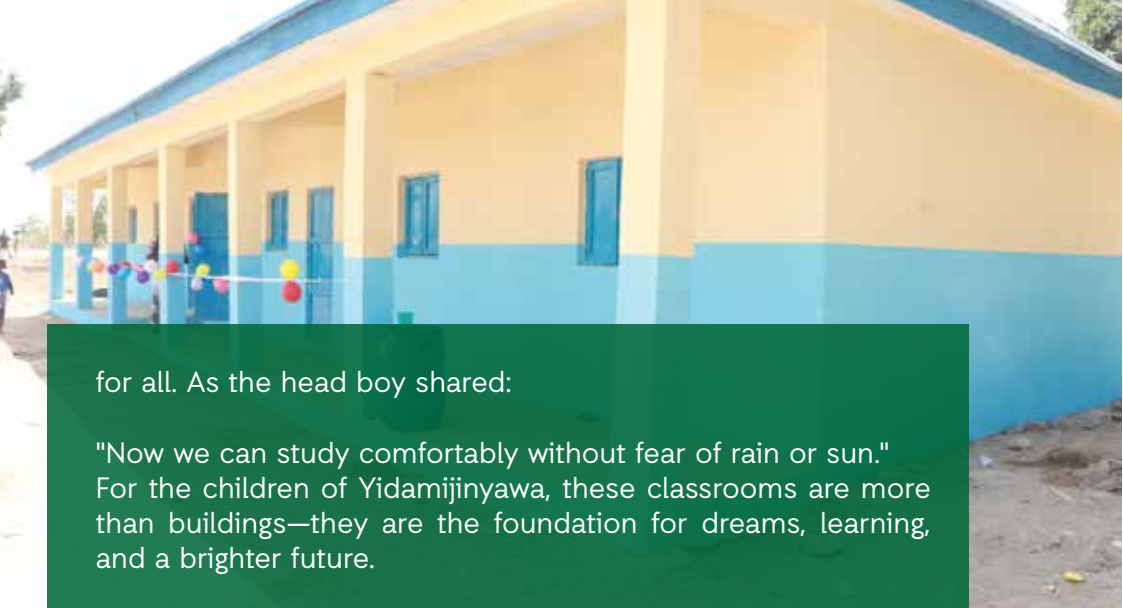


## Building Dreams, One Classroom at a Time: A New Dawn for Education in Yidamijinyawa

For years, children in Yidamijinyawa community, Paiko LGA, Niger State, learned under trees, braving the sun and rain without classrooms or enough teachers. Many eventually dropped out, as parents lost faith in a system that seemed to have forgotten them.

Through ActionAid Nigeria's Local Rights Programme (LRP), the community was mobilized to claim their right to education. Today, a brand-new block of two classrooms—built with a budget of 10.26 million—stands proudly in Yidamijinyawa. Enrollment has soared from 157 to 234 pupils, and six new teachers have been deployed to support the growing school. The transformation is immediate and inspiring. At the commissioning, Niger State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) pledged further support, promising infrastructure expansion and new sports facilities—signaling deeper government commitment to sustaining progress.

This intervention directly advances Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4)—ensuring inclusive, equitable, quality education



for all. As the head boy shared:

"Now we can study comfortably without fear of rain or sun." For the children of Yidamijinyawa, these classrooms are more than buildings—they are the foundation for dreams, learning, and a brighter future.

When communities are empowered, lasting change isn't just possible—it's inevitable.







## Turning the Tide: Clean Water, Health, and a Brighter Future for Dagbasode

For years, Dagbasode community in Kacha LGA, Niger State, battled daily for clean water. The only source—a faraway, contaminated stream—endangered health and safety, with women and girls trekking long distances, missing school, and risking their wellbeing. Cholera outbreaks and waterborne diseases were a constant threat.

Sadly, Dagbasode's story mirrors that of countless rural communities across Nigeria. Access to clean water, a basic human right, remains out of reach for millions—hindering health, education, and economic growth.

Through ActionAid Nigeria's Local Rights Programme (LRP), in partnership with AMANA Foundation, the community's call was answered. Today, a four-pump motorized borehole stands proudly in Dagbasode, providing safe drinking water to over 2,500 residents. Women and girls are now safer and have more time for education and productive work. Health outcomes have improved significantly, with fewer cases of waterborne diseases and community dignity has been restored.

At the commissioning, the community head shared heartfelt gratitude:



"For years, we cried for help, but no one listened. Today, we celebrate because ActionAid answered our call."

Representatives from RUWASA and IFAS praised the initiative, emphasizing the importance of community ownership to sustain the facility.

This project advances Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6)—ensuring access to clean water and sanitation for all. In Dagbasode, clean water now flows, bringing health, hope, and a brighter future for generations to come.







The Fund Our Future (FOF) campaign by ActionAid International exposes fossil fuels as the leading driver of climate change, with industrial agriculture as the second-largest contributor. Despite global commitments to address the crisis, emissions continue to rise as governments prioritize short-term economic gains over real climate action.

This year, the campaign aims to gather 10,000 petition signatures demanding a just transition to 100% renewable energy and sustainable agricultural practices, particularly Agroecology. It also challenges the massive financial backing that sustains fossil fuel dependency and industrial farming. Through a series of compelling photo and video messages shared across its social media platforms, ActionAid Nigeria is calling for a transition that is inclusive, equitable, and community-centered, ensuring it does not exploit workers or displace vulnerable communities.

The #FundOurFuture Campaign also mobilizes youth climate advocates through Monthly Climate Chats, providing a space for strategizing, digital activism, and policy engagement. These sessions equip young advocates with training, mentorship, and advocacy tools, enabling them to put continuous pressure on governments and financial institutions to end harmful investments and support climate-friendly solutions.

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## Translating Commitment into Action: Engenni Kingdom Sets a New Standard for Marriage and GBV Prevention

In Rivers State, HRM Moore Maclean Ubuo, the Okilomu Ibe III of Engenni Kingdom, is leading a historic shift towards fairness and community harmony. By introducing uniform marriage law requirements across 200 communities, the King has ended the era of inflated dowries and bride prices that fueled resentment, violence, and undermined the sanctity of marriage. His leadership aims to ease financial pressures on families while restoring dignity and equality within marriages.

Inspired by his participation in ActionAid Nigeria's training on Gender Transformative Programming, Advocacy, and GBV prevention, HRM Ubuo embedded a strong anti-GBV clause in the new law. Beyond legislation, he holds monthly dialogues with youth and women leaders, fostering a culture of respect, safeguarding the girl child, and openly confronting harmful practices like Female Genital Mutilation. These efforts have contributed to a noticeable decline in GBV incidents across the Kingdom.

This bold action reflects the growing impact of the Multistakeholder Action for the Prevention of Gender Based Violence (MAP GBV) project. Through the Rivers State Multistakeholder Action Committee, traditional leaders like HRM Ubuo are not just advocating for change — they are turning commitment into lasting community transformation.





## Shifting Socio-Cultural Norms: One Dialogue at a Time

In Osun State, the movement to prevent Gender-Based Violence (GBV) is gaining strength, thanks to the efforts of the Osun State Multistakeholder Action Committee trained by ActionAid Nigeria. Traditional rulers, religious leaders, and state actors are driving localized solutions to tackle harmful socio-cultural norms. Leading the way, Oba Adedokun Abolarin, the Òràngún of Òkè-Ìlá and Chair of the Committee, organized a community Town Hall where he declared zero-tolerance for GBV, emphasizing the need for support systems for survivors and strict penalties for perpetrators.

In a powerful move, Oba Abolarin directly engaged youth by inviting secondary school students to the dialogue, raising their awareness of the risks and consequences of GBV. Teachers, parents, and community chiefs — earlier sensitized by the Oba — added their voices, urging peaceful conflict resolution and mutual respect as core values. The chiefs' active participation reinforced the importance of collective leadership in challenging and changing harmful traditions.

By publicly speaking out against GBV, the Òràngún and his council, respected custodians of culture, have sent a clear message: violence against women and girls has no place in Òkè-Ìlá. Through continued community engagement and accountability, there is hope that this bold step will nurture a safer, more equitable society for all.



## ActionAid's Ambassador Engagement: Transforming Women's Lives in Nkume

Christmas 2024 was unforgettable for 15 women entrepreneurs in Nkume Community, Enugu State, as they each received 100,000 to boost their businesses. Funded by a 1.5 million donation from the Mark Angel Foundation in partnership with ActionAid Nigeria's Community Sponsorship and Local Rights Programme (LRP), this initiative went beyond charity—it was an investment in women's economic empowerment. Mark Angel, ActionAid's Ambassador, personally handed over the funds, reminding the women that when they thrive, entire communities flourish.

The impact was immediate and inspiring. Beneficiaries like Mrs. Eze Fidelia, a tailor, expressed profound gratitude, sharing how the support would help expand her business and secure a better future for her family. By removing financial barriers and fostering self-reliance, this initiative amplifies the LRP's mission to tackle poverty through community-driven solutions and partnerships that advance gender and social justice.

As Nkume's women step boldly into 2025, this Christmas intervention stands as a testament to how strategic giving fuels lasting change. ActionAid Nigeria remains committed to empowering communities and eradicating poverty—one investment, one partnership, and one woman at a time.





## Back2School Campaign: Transforming Lives Through Education

For many children, education is the key to unlocking a brighter future. Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, the Back2School Campaign—held from December 3, 2024, to January 10, 2025—turned this vision into reality. With 1,222,000 raised, we provided essential school supplies to 450 children, ensuring they could continue their education with confidence.

ActionAid Nigeria (AAN), through its Community Sponsorship team, visited three Local Rights Programme (LRP) communities in the Federal Capital Territory—Vine Heritage Home, Gwagwalada, and Leleyi Bassa—to distribute school bags, sandals, exercise books, and mathematical sets to children in primary and junior secondary schools. This initiative directly supported orphaned children, children with disabilities, and other vulnerable students, identified through a collaborative selection process with CITAD and local schools.

Beyond providing school supplies, the campaign championed educational equity by prioritizing those most in need. Regular social media updates and videos kept donors engaged, showcasing the real-life impact of their contributions. This strengthened trust, increased campaign visibility, and built momentum for future initiatives.

The Back2School Campaign didn't just send children back to school—it opened doors to opportunity, learning, and a better tomorrow.







## From CLEAP-Justice to CiTi-ACT: A New Step Forward

The CLEAP-Justice project started as a 24-month journey by ActionAid Nigeria to push for citizen-led accountability in post-election justice. It focused on making sure ordinary people could question and influence how justice was delivered after elections. It brought people closer to the courts, and the courts closer to the people.

But along the way, something became clear: the issues in our justice system go beyond just elections. If we want real change, we have to look at the whole system. That's how the idea for a new project was born: CiTi-ACT — Citizens' Actions for Judicial Accountability to Promote Democracy in Nigeria.

CiT-ACT is not starting from scratch. It's building on what CLEAP-Justice began to do, but with a wider lens. Now, it's about making sure citizens can engage with every part of the justice system, not just around elections, but every day, at every level. It's about promoting democracy and protecting human rights by putting people at the center of justice.

Citizens' Open Day was as a close out for CLEAP and a launch of CiTi-ACT. It was a day of reflections and fresh energy. But one moment stood out: students from the University of Abuja Law Clinic took the stage to debate Independent Judicial Accountability Panel (IJAP) recommendations on the Supreme Court judgement. Some argued for it, some against it. What mattered most was that young Nigerians were engaging with real, complex issues of justice, boldly and publicly.

That debate reminded us of what this is all about. Citizens taking action. Young voices shaping the future. And the belief that justice must work for everyone, not just during elections, but all the time.



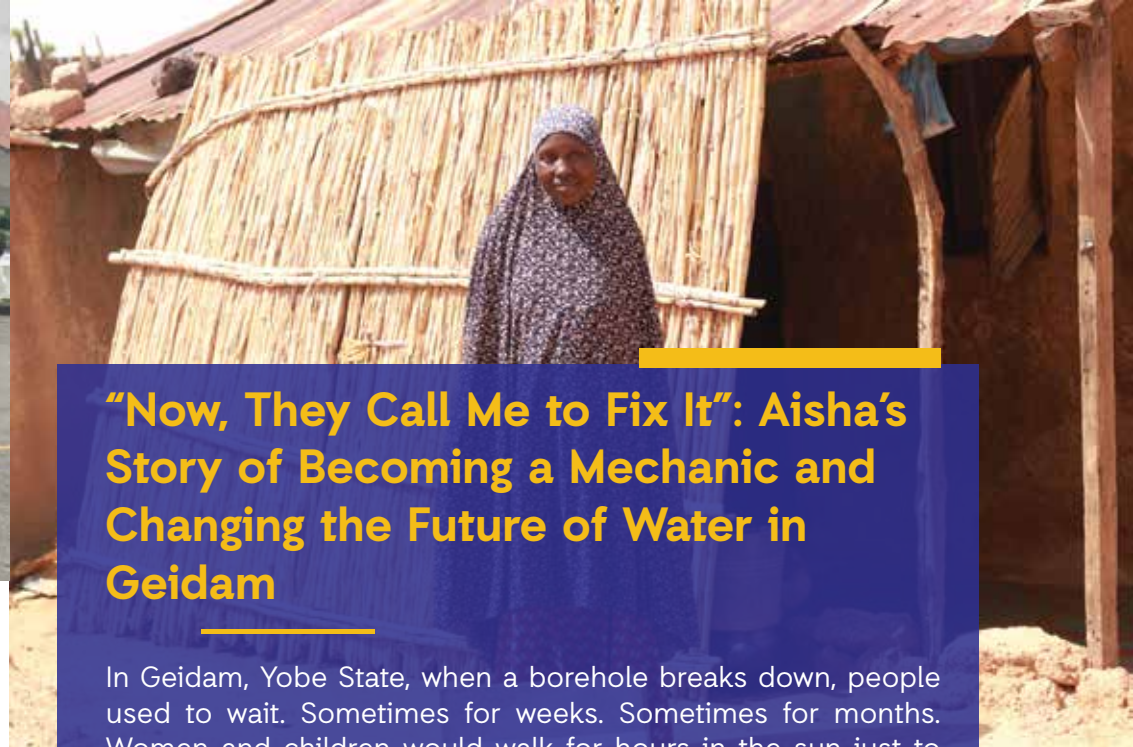


## Young People Are Speaking Up And SPA II Is Making Sure They're Heard

Under Indicator 4 of the Strategic Partnership Agreement II (SPA II) — “Number of young people or their organisations that have access to influencing spaces at local, regional, national, or international levels”, we’re seeing what real impact looks like.

At the recent Zonal Public Hearings on the Constitutional Review organised by the Senate, young people across SPA II states participated actively, presenting the change they want to see in the constitution as a memorandum to the Senate Adhoc Committee on Constitution Review. With support from the project, they were mobilised and supported to be part of the conversation, not just as observers, but as contributors in shaping Nigeria’s future.

In Lagos, 12 young people presented their demands. Enugu had 28, while Maiduguri and Akwa Ibom had 10 each. Each presented their memoranda built around five major thematic areas: electoral reform, local government reform, inclusive governance, fiscal reform, and the protection of fundamental rights, carefully thought-out priorities based on what young people in their communities are facing every day.



## “Now, They Call Me to Fix It”: Aisha’s Story of Becoming a Mechanic and Changing the Future of Water in Geidam

In Geidam, Yobe State, when a borehole breaks down, people used to wait. Sometimes for weeks. Sometimes for months. Women and children would walk for hours in the sun just to fetch water, returning home exhausted.

“That used to be my life.

My name is Aisha. I’m a mother of two. I live in a quiet part of Geidam, where the land is dry and the sun doesn’t play. For years, every day started with one question: “Where will we find water today? I used to wake up before dawn, carrying buckets with other women in my community. We would walk miles, praying that the hand pump at the next village wasn’t also broken. Often, it was. And when one borehole stopped working, it could take forever before anyone came to fix it, usually a man from town who might show up after a month, or not at all.

Everything changed the day I learned how to fix a borehole

I never imagined myself becoming a mechanic. Where I come from, women are not seen doing technical work. We’re



expected to take care of the home, raise the children, cook, clean, and somehow still find water, no matter how far it is. That's just how it's always been.

So when I heard that ActionAid Nigeria, through the WEAVE Project, was training women to become Local Area Mechanics, I was surprised. And curious. Then afraid. Would my husband support it? Would the community laugh? Would I even be allowed?

But something in me said yes. I had suffered too much fetching water. My children had missed too many school days due to sickness. I was tired of waiting.

The training was not easy at first. We learned about borehole parts, preventive maintenance, how to troubleshoot problems, how to use tools like spanners, pipe wrenches, testing rods. They gave us toolkits and uniforms and linked us to the WASH committees in our communities. For the first time, I felt like my hands could do more than just carry water, they could fix the system. About six (6) women have so far been trained as Local Area Mechanics (LAMs). Now, when there's a problem with the borehole, they call me or anyone from the LAM. The same people who used to wait for a man from town now come to us. They respect us. The men in the community ask our opinion. The women come to learn.

"Since we started, my team has fixed up to 10 boreholes in Geidam and nearby communities. We don't wait anymore. Children are no longer late to school because of water. Diarrhoea cases have dropped. I know the lean season is getting worse. The sun is harsher. More families are arriving in search of food and safety, but with clean water flowing, we at least have one less worry. And I believe women like me are part

of the solution.

We are not just fixing pipes. We are fixing the future. I am proud to be a Local Area Mechanic. I never thought I'd say that and I carry my wrench with pride.

### About the Project:

The WEAVE Project, implemented by ActionAid Nigeria in partnership with Jami Al Hakeem Foundation and supported by the Nigerian Humanitarian Fund (NHF) through UNOCHA, is building community resilience in northeast Nigeria by training women as borehole mechanics, improving access to safe water, and challenging gender inequality in crisis-affected areas.





## Tombrown Is a Mother's Mix: How Malaga Found a Cure in Her Own Kitchen

In Yobe State's Geidam and Fune LGAs, where communities face the compounded effects of poverty, displacement, and climate shocks, mothers and children have often been left to battle hunger with little more than instinct and prayer. Through the WEAVE Project, supported by ActionAid Nigeria, women are now reclaiming their agency by reviving a once-forgotten tradition, Tombrown, and using it as a powerful tool to nourish both their children and their confidence.

One of these women is Malaga, whose story captures both the struggle and the quiet strength behind this transformation.

"I come from Balle community in Yobe State. If you had seen my youngest son six months ago, you would not recognise him today. He was always weak, his ribs showing, his eyes dull, his body barely moving. We thought he was just a small child, but the health workers said it was something called moderate acute malnutrition. I didn't even know what that meant. I just knew he was always sick.

Every clinic visit brought fear. Sometimes there were medicines,

sometimes there were none. We were told about special food from the city, but it hardly ever reached us. In our house, even regular food was not always enough, especially during the lean season, when the little we grow dries up before the rain comes again. I felt like I was failing him.

But then one day, I joined a cooking demonstration held under a tree near our compound, run by ActionAid Nigeria and their partners. That day, they showed us how to make Tombrown, a mix of things we already had in our kitchens: millet or sorghum, soybean, and groundnut.

I had heard of Tombrown before. Our grandmothers used to make it. But I never knew it could be used to treat malnutrition. I never knew it could save my child.

That day, I took the recipe home and started preparing it. I gave it to my son morning and evening. After a week, he started to smile more. Then he started playing. Then the weight started coming. The health worker checked him again and said, 'He's getting better.' I cried.

Today, he eats well. He runs around the compound with his older brother. And I teach other women how to make Tombrown. We even have a mother-to-mother support group, where we share what we've learned.

Tombrown is a mother's mix. It reminds us that we still have something to give our children, even when everything else is hard."

ActionAid Nigeria's efforts through the WEAVE Project reached over 2,000 households across Geidam and Fune, promoting practical, culturally familiar tools to tackle moderate



malnutrition. Rather than introducing outside interventions, the project focused on building community confidence and autonomy. Cooking demonstrations, mother-to-mother groups, and the training of Community Nutrition Mobilisers gave women like Malaga more than information—they gave them voice, visibility, and the ability to support one another.





## Building a Stronger Humanitarian Response: Inside ActionAid Nigeria's EFAST Training

From April 14th to 17th, 2025, ActionAid Nigeria hosted an intensive Emergency Fast Action Support Team (EFAST) training at Kini Country Resort in Nasarawa State. The goal? To equip staff and partners with the knowledge and skills they need to respond quickly and effectively to emergencies across the country.

The training kicked off with warm welcomes from AA's International Humanitarian and Resilience team, setting a positive tone for the days ahead. Deputy Country Director and Director of Programmes, Suwaiba Muhamad Dankabo, emphasized the importance of the gathering. She reminded everyone that this was not just any training but a strategic investment in building a team ready to take on humanitarian challenges, especially with a focus on empowering women in disaster management.

Over four days, the sessions covered everything from feminist leadership and human rights based approaches to needs assessment and safeguarding. Participants also had the opportunity to learn first aid from the Red Cross, explore

psychosocial support techniques, and discuss stress management. What stood out was the focus on community led responses and the critical role women and youth play in driving effective humanitarian action.

The discussions were lively, with participants eager to explore how to translate theory into action by planning step down training in their communities and strengthening women's leadership roles. Many expressed the need to build stronger social movements led by women to improve disaster preparedness and response across Nigeria.

Feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Participants appreciated the interactive approach, real life case studies, and the facilitators' expertise. Suggestions to improve included extending the training length and increasing time for group discussions to ensure everyone could fully absorb and apply the lessons.

By the end of the week, it was clear the EFAST training had empowered a motivated, skilled team ready to make a real difference. These individuals will be the frontline responders, stepping up when disaster strikes and championing inclusive, effective humanitarian responses while ensuring women's voices lead the way.

Stay tuned as ActionAid Nigeria continues to build resilience and strengthen communities through trainings like this, turning knowledge into action and commitment into change.





## Father's Day Reflections: Shaping Positive Masculinity Across West Africa

On June 19, 2025, ActionAid Nigeria, with generous support from the Ford Foundation, convened an inspiring Stakeholders' Convening on Positive Masculinity at Abuja's Yar Adua Centre, just days after Father's Day. The timing was purposeful, a moment to celebrate the often overlooked positive roles of men and fathers while critically examining the cultural norms that shape masculinity across West Africa.

The event brought together over 400 participants, both in person and online, including traditional and faith leaders, youth advocates, media personalities, civil society actors, and development practitioners from Nigeria and countries like Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Uganda. This diverse gathering reflected a shared commitment to reshape narratives around masculinity moving away from stereotypes of dominance and control toward empathy, accountability, and shared responsibility.

Dr. Hussaini Abdu, a leading voice on gender justice, set the tone with a powerful keynote that challenged the idea that masculinity is innate. Drawing from groundbreaking research, he

revealed how societal norms teach men to suppress emotions and assert control, often to the detriment of themselves and their communities. Yet, he highlighted hopeful signs of change, men embracing vulnerability, rejecting violence, and partnering equally with women in family and community life. His words were a call to action: masculinity is not fixed but can be consciously reshaped.

The first panel, Power, Culture, and Change, brought together a rich mix of voices. Hamidou Ba, a Senegalese researcher, emphasised how faith and tradition, when rightly interpreted, can support gender equality rather than hinder it. Nigerian media star Omotunde Adebawale-David, known as Lolo One, shared personal stories of raising her children without gendered expectations, teaching both her sons and daughters essential life skills equally. Reverend Isaac Komolafe urged faith leaders to model new forms of masculinity rooted in partnership and mutual respect, while ActionAid Nigeria's Andrew Mamedu detailed how the development sector can embed positive masculinity in organisational culture and advocacy. The discussion also acknowledged the challenges in reconciling cultural norms with progressive ideals, reflecting a complex but necessary journey toward change.

The second panel, Reimagining Masculinity: The Role of Men and Boys in Advancing Gender Justice, explored practical ways to empower boys and men as allies and leaders for change. Rufai Oseni, acclaimed Nigerian broadcaster, highlighted the media's dual role in perpetuating toxic norms and holding the potential to champion positive stories of masculinity. He proposed innovative media campaigns to shift public perceptions and urged influential figures to model healthy masculinity. Dr. Patience Ekeoba from UN Women shared insights from her research on early socialization and its impact

on gender roles, emphasizing the urgent need to reform how boys are raised. John Nkaw of ActionAid Ghana recounted his own challenges confronting stigma when embracing gender-equitable partnerships, while Noel Ifeanyi Alumona, founder of Boys Champions, stressed mentorship as a critical tool to guide boys away from harmful stereotypes. Their conversations underscored the power of youth engagement and the necessity of sustained support for community-led initiatives.

Throughout the day, a moving spoken word performance and vibrant cultural dances reminded attendees of the deep cultural roots of masculinity and the rich potential for transformation within African traditions. These moments brought the message to life, illustrating that positive masculinity is not a rejection of culture but a reimagining of its best values. Participants also grappled with the realities of intergenerational trauma and the ways harmful norms are passed down, recognizing that breaking these cycles requires long-term commitment and funding. The role of technology and media emerged as a vital theme, not only as a source of challenges but as powerful tools for advocacy, education, and amplifying new models of manhood.

As the convening closed, participants committed to a shared roadmap, engaging traditional and religious leaders as allies, reforming education curricula to embed gender-transformative values, expanding media initiatives to portray men as champions of equality, and creating safe spaces where boys can express emotions and learn new models of manhood. The message was clear, positive masculinity is a collective journey requiring courage, humility, and partnership.

This convening was more than an event, it was a regional call to

reimagine masculinity and unlock the power of men and boys to build healthier families, safer communities, and a more just society across West Africa. With voices from every corner of the region and every walk of life, the day planted seeds for a movement grounded in empathy, respect, and shared responsibility that promises to transform lives for generations to come.







## Embracing the Movement Mindset in Media

In May 2025, ActionAid Nigeria gathered a passionate group of media professionals for a two-day training that sparked fresh energy around organising, mobilising, and storytelling for social change. The event was expertly led by a powerhouse team: Dr Otiye Igbuzor, a veteran social movement expert with decades of experience; Celestine Odo, Head of Programmes at ActionAid Nigeria; Seun Akioye, a dynamic social mobilisation specialist; Mojeed Alabi, Team Lead and Editor-in-Chief of DevReporting; and Oluwakemi Akinremi-Segun, a sharp media strategist passionate about redefining journalism's role in activism.

Together, they took participants on a journey through the vibrant world of social movements—from their roots in society's cracks and frustrations to the thrilling highs and sobering realities of collective action. Trainees explored how movements like Nigeria's own MOT!ON coalition can rally millions toward accountable governance, yet also wrestle with trust and leadership challenges in such broad alliances.

The training didn't shy away from the complexities of movement work. Participants exchanged candid reflections on

the tensions between personal ambition and collective goals, the lurking presence of opposition groups, and the powerful yet sometimes perilous role of media in shaping public perception. The discussion was raw and real, touching on everything from the dangers journalists face covering protests to the uncomfortable truth about staged demonstrations and even the alarming use of violence within some movements.

Amid these heavy truths, the power of storytelling emerged as a beacon of hope. The sessions illuminated how telling human stories, those rich, emotional narratives that go beyond facts can transform apathy into empathy and silence into action. Drawing inspiration from iconic Nigerian figures like Ken Saro-Wiwa, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, and grassroots heroes from the Boko Haram crisis, the group explored what makes a story resonate: compelling characters, context, conflict, and a call to action that stays with you.

The conversations also challenged traditional journalism to break free from corporate and political constraints, envisioning a media practice deeply rooted in solidarity and community accountability. This fresh approach insists that media not just report movements, but walk alongside them, amplifying voices that often go unheard.

By the end of the two days, it was clear: media professionals hold immense power to influence change, but with that power comes responsibility to report truthfully, to protect those on the frontlines, and to tell stories that matter. The training left everyone inspired, equipped, and ready to play their part in Nigeria's ongoing quest for justice and accountability.

This gathering wasn't just a workshop; it was a rallying cry for the media to step boldly into the role of movement allies and changemakers. And with this kind of commitment, the future of social activism and journalism in Nigeria looks brighter than ever.



## Capacity Strengthening Workshop for Agricultural Reporters on Inclusive and Sustainable Food Systems

In May 2025, ActionAid Nigeria with funding from GIZ hosted a vibrant two-day Capacity Strengthening Workshop for Agricultural Reporters in Abuja. Bringing together 35 journalists from leading media outlets across Nigeria, the workshop aimed to equip them with fresh skills and insights to tell powerful stories that inspire investment in sustainable and inclusive agriculture.

The event kicked off with Deputy Country Director Suwaiba Mohammed Dankabo setting the scene. She spoke candidly about the many challenges facing Nigeria's agriculture—from climate change to economic and security issues and called on journalists to help build resilient food systems by amplifying voices often overlooked, especially those of women and youth. Speakers from GIZ and ActionAid reinforced how vital the media's role is in shaping public perception and holding decision-makers accountable.

Sessions by experts like Azubike Nwokoye and Mojeed Alabi equipped journalists with practical skills in data-driven and

investigative reporting. Ebere Agozie's presentation on gender illuminated the unique struggles and contributions of women in agriculture, urging gender-sensitive storytelling. The workshop also embraced innovation in communication, with Cynthia Anaele guiding participants on crafting compelling digital narratives that resonate with diverse audiences. A key highlight was the exploration of language's power in shaping perceptions, led by Rolake Ogunfemi, sparking reflections on media responsibility in fostering dignity and hope through inclusive reporting.

Over two days, the journalists deepened their understanding of food systems, the importance of inclusion, and the impact of climate change on farming. They learned how to bring gender into their stories through the lens of women's critical but often invisible roles in agriculture. Sessions on investigative and climate reporting provided practical tools for uncovering stories that matter and pushing for solutions. Digital storytelling techniques showed how to use multimedia and social media to reach and engage wider audiences effectively.

By the workshop's close, participants were energised and committed to taking their reporting to the next level. Certificates were awarded, marking not just completion but a shared pledge to champion inclusive and sustainable agriculture through journalism.

This workshop was a major step forward in equipping Nigeria's agricultural reporters with the knowledge and tools they need to shine a light on critical food system issues and drive positive change.



# DECODE THE MESSAGE

## CIPHER CHALLENGE

### Objective:

Readers must decode a secret message using a simple substitution cipher. This puzzle is perfect for engaging ActionAid supporters in a fun, brainy way — while revealing a powerful quote or theme.

### Cipher Key:

Each letter has been shifted +3 forward in the alphabet. (A > D, B > E, C > F, etc.)

### Encrypted Message:

"DFWUXRQ DLH HQGV SRYHUW\ DQG LQMXVWLFH."

### Instructions:

Use the Caesar Cipher (+3) to decode the message.

Example:

D = A

F = C

W = T

...

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