

SWIFT

Volume 5



Women casting their votes at Magwan polling centre in Gingiyu Ward, Nasarawa L.G.A, Kano State during the 2019 general election.

Photo Credit: Wale Elekolusi

IN THIS ISSUE



- Nigeria's 2019 General Election: ActionAid Nigeria's Role And More
- Breaking Barriers... Promoting Inclusive Education For All
- Turning The Tides: Pressing For Progress Through Agriculture
- Building Bridges; Creating Alternatives
- Back To Home ... Building A Complete Future For Borno State Children
- Connecting The Dots Between Monitoring & Evaluation And Good Governance

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Welcome to Swift!



NIGERIA'S 2019

General Election: ActionAid Nigeria's Role & More

As envisaged, Nigeria's 2019 Presidential Election was fiercely contested, the aura brought with it a thirst for good governance, which has unfortunately eluded the Nigerian state over time. With renewed hope and vigour, people turned out massively to celebrate the festival of democracy by going to the poll to elect Nigeria's President, Governors, Senators and the Members of the House of Representative, anticipating that the outcome will usher in dividends of democracy namely, strong public institutions, security, good roads, regular power and water supply, food security, freedom of speech and association – to mention a few.

Prior to the election, political parties electioneering campaigns were carried out with increased political intrigues to grab the power, but Nigerians are aware, more than ever that it needs strong institutions, not persons to effectively and efficiently deliver a gendered public service capable of reducing poverty, inequality and unemployment as major challenges confronting the country today. It means investing more in essential public services like education, health and agriculture, as evidences have shown that increased investment in these pro-poor sectors has strong impact on poverty and inequality reduction, while simultaneously creating employment potentials. Ultimately, the incumbent, President Buhari of the All Progressive Congress (APC) was declared winner of the election by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) out of the 73 political parties that sponsored candidates for the President position. Unfortunately, the major opposition party, the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) has rejected the result of the election, pointing out incidences of result manipulation, suppressions of voters in the opposition strongholds, non-functionality of the Card Reader Machines in some polling units – to mention a few, and indicated its interest to go

to court to challenge the outcome of the election, while appealing to its members and supporters to maintain peace.

For the 2019 General Election, ActionAid Nigeria (AAN) played vital role in training observers, deploying observers across the country and effectively participating in the Civil Society Situation Room that diligently tracked the three crucial stages of the electoral processes; the campaign period, the election day and the post-election activities.

For the first time, AAN was accredited and issued with a certificate to observe the election as an independent entity and thereafter tender a comprehensive report to INEC Headquarters. Following this positive development, AAN collaborated with the Alliance for Credible Election Nigeria (ACE) to conduct a Training of Trainers (ToT) workshop for 48 observers comprising 34 males and 14 females. The training modules include; Electoral Processes, Legal Framework and Electoral Guidelines, Code of Conduct in Election Observation etc. Following the successful conduct of the ToT, the trainees stepped down the training to 317 persons (197 males & 120 females) comprising of staff and partners of AAN in 11 states (Kaduna, Gombe, Bauchi, Akwa-Ibom, Kebbi, Ondo, Kogi, Kwara, Delta, Ebonyi, Lagos) and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

On the election day, the 317 trained observers deployed by AAN within 11 states and the FCT provided live verified reports through a WhatsApp communication channel. The information was further transferred to the Civil Society Situation Room's information collation centre for detailed analysis.

Following the announcement of the election result, AAN has in a press statement urged the winner of the number one seat, President Muhammadu Buhari to focus on driving policies that will empower the people, while simultaneously reducing poverty and inequality in the country.



Ummu

Breaking Barriers

...Promoting Inclusive Education For All

“ I once fell down on a bike on my way to school and on that day, I cried all night and thought I should drop out of school because of the pains and humiliation I experienced ”

These were the words of 16 year old Ummu Kari - one out of many children with special needs that the Breaking Barriers project seeks to support. Affected with Polio at the age of 3 with both legs infected, being in school was quite challenging for her as friends and family members had to carry Ummu always to school when her wheel chair malfunctioned.

Ummu who is now an SS1 student at the Government Girl Day Secondary School Tambauwal – Sokoto – One of the Schools that the Breaking Barriers Project is intervening, was identified by a consultant working on a data collection exercise in the school for the Baseline research conducted in November 2018.

At the validation meeting in February 2019, the consultant while presenting some key findings of the research shared Ummu's

plight and the need to support her as an inclusive education practice. During the discussion session, one of the participants, the Education Secretary of Sokoto South Local Government Area pledged to donate a wheel chair that will support Ummu to and from school. He subsequently brought the wheel chair in the evening of the meeting to the project partner for onward delivery to Ummu.

Before now, Ummu would always stay in the classroom even during breaks because she could not go out to play or get something to eat. She was often hungry and thirsty and would rather not use the bathroom because it wasn't disability friendly, but now Ummu can go out and play with her friends.

She is very grateful for the support and is dedicated to achieving her dream of being a Medical Doctor.

Ummu's peculiar story further demonstrated the need for Sokoto State to promptly domesticate the National Inclusive education policy, hence the Breaking Barriers project has commenced working with all education stakeholder in the state to ensure that no child is denied access to education on account of disability.

TURNING the Tides:

Pressing for Progress Through Agriculture



Fighting poverty without ensuring food security is like a chase against time. The world is now threatened by hunger and inflation is constantly reoccurring. Certain human activities including neglect for the agricultural sector has been seen to be the major cause.

ActionAid Nigeria through its Public Financing for Agriculture Project (PFA), has made some significant progress towards achieving food security and reducing poverty. During the past year, over 150 women farmers were trained on agroecology, irrigation farming, crop preservation, soil protection, the use of natural fertilizers as against artificial ones and the importance of extension workers. Mrs Smart Okie, a commercial woman farmer in Delta state was displeased with the pests' attack on her garden egg fruits. She called the attention of the extension agent who went with her to the farm and resolved the issue. Now she is happy having made a profit of N20,000 naira from selling the garden eggs.

“It was ActionAid training that thought me what to do, she said ”

Many of these women have

testified that the knowledge acquired from the training has improved their farming system and increased output.

Also, through advocacy efforts by ActionAid Nigeria and partner, Hope for the Lonely (HfL), 25 women farmers in Gombe benefited from the cassava stems distributed by the ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources, and 50 members of the Small-Scale Women Farmers Organisation Of Nigeria (SWOFON) received two bags of fertilizers each at subsidized rates from Gombe State Agricultural Development Programme (ADP).

In December 2018, the first ECOWAS People's Agriculture Budget Summit was held in collaboration with ActionAid's Public Financing of Agriculture (PFA) Project, OXFAM, Trust Africa and Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) Non-State Actors Coalition. The Parliament is now committed to pushing for more agricultural budgeting in their respective states. If we must end world hunger by 2030 and reduce poverty, government must be willing to allocate more funds to the agricultural sector.



SARVE Beneficiaries

BUILDING Bridges; Creating Alternatives

The System and Structure Strengthening Approach against Radicalisation to Violent Extremism, SARVE project ended in style in December 2018. The 30 months ambitious project commenced in 2016 to address the intrinsic issues of extreme violence spilling across communities in Kogi State.

At the time Kogi was on the radar as the state with the most vicious and violent attacks and it was an unsafe corridor for the 11 States that borders it. The spill-over effect informed the choice of location for the project as the crime record could almost match a war zone; people were kidnapped on almost a daily basis; highway robbery was regular and deadly; herdsmen/farmers clash was at its peak. Added was the biting issues of poverty; lack of minimal infrastructure; poor or complete absence of health and educational facilities. The people just lived; and died. There was little to inspire a good life.

26 years old Enemi Michael was one of those who had a full bag of sad tales. She got married at 20, with no skill or education; she raised 3000 naira (8 USD), bought a handful of groundnuts, collected used wine bottles and began her business. After the herdsmen attack on her husband's farm, she became the breadwinner and when she took in with a

child, she could not achieve so much "It was a complicated pregnancy, an issue between life and death. At that period, we only ate from the farm, we had no money for anything" she retorts. When it was time for delivery, Enemi borrowed all her maternal kits from pads to the baby clothing. She couldn't even afford the hospital bill of 7,000 (19 USD) and had to pay in instalments for 6 months after delivery.

It was against this backdrop that the SARVE project strategy leveraged on a methodical participatory approach to tackling poverty which topped the list as the number 1 driver of violence and radical extremism. The project provided Community Livelihood Support while building social cohesion in the communities, assisting government in enhancing and improving structures and systems for better efficiency. The project also focused on providing platforms for learning and sharing of opportunities especially in rural communities where people were economically and socially excluded. It focused on building the capacity of women and youth, by raising their self-awareness, providing exposure to relevant life skills and giving the communities a general sense of purpose.

Continue reading from page 6

The project outcome has been fantastic; according to Leadership Newspapers, Kogi State recorded over 160 cases of kidnapping between January to June 2015, but no case of kidnapping was recorded between January to June 2018. Record from the State Police and the local vigilante also attest to the drastic reduction of the rate of kidnapping. Umar Namatazu, 46, the head of the vigilante group at the Fulani community commented as follows: we now sleep with ease “We only have one case of kidnap since this year and we were able to track the kidnapers and rescue the victim” he enthused.

The project directly reached 12,985 youths, 4,230 women and 8,705 men. One major landmark success was the sustained

advocacy which resulted in the passage of the Kogi State Youth Development Commission Bill into Law. The Law will help to create jobs and increase economic development opportunities for youths in Kogi state.

“Now, with the livelihood support given to us and all they have taught us on peaceful coexistence and harmonious living, life is better. Women and youths here are no longer idle, and we are sure our families will no longer suffer, Ememi concludes. Although the project ended December 2018, AAN has now received funding for a second phase and expand the gains to 1 more state. AAN will commence implementation of SARVE 2 in Kogi and Nasarawa states in March 2019.



Back to Home

... Building a Complete Future for Borno State Children

ActionAid Nigeria is reaffirming its belief that every Child in Borno State, have a right to access quality and affordable education, and other necessities for a good life, in a peaceful and secure environment through a project tagged '**Back to Home**'

The Back to Home project, funded by Danish Television through ActionAid Denmark, will be executed in 3 Local Government areas in Borno State - Jere, Konduga and Kaga where children will be provided with learning and school materials; 300 women will be provided with financial stability through livelihood training and equipment for sustainability and psychosocial counselling. In all, 2400 children will benefit from the Back To Home project with 600 unaccompanied (with no parent or guardian) children reintegrated into foster homes at the end of 2 years.

This is coming as a solution-based approach to a major problem identified in the current crisis in the North East of Nigeria. The recent government led returning schemes have

further showed that the number of unaccompanied children that have been separated from their parents is huge. It is imperative to state that the care and welfare of unaccompanied children will create a big challenge if not urgently and technically attended to, bearing in mind that 7.7 million people across the North East are in dire need of humanitarian assistance and 4.5million of this figure are children, 45% of them have been separated from their families. This separation is due largely to children being displaced from where their parents or guardians are or as a result of the death of their parents or guardians. Apart from orphans who have lost both parents, a huge number of children have lost their father to the civil war, and are left with mothers who have little or no means of income.

The complete and total well-being of children remains a top priority on AAN's commitment to national development and is at the heart of its social justice campaign.



CONNECTING THE DOTS

between Monitoring & Evaluation and Good Governance

In recent times, the public sector particularly in Nigeria has faced diverse evolving operational challenges; prominent of which are insecurity issues, tax remittances and subordination of rule of law. The war against corruption has always been limited by the lack of transparency and accountability. However, with a robust Monitoring and Evaluation system, the Nigerian public sector can improve and overcome its challenges. Citizens should be able to ask relevant questions and get answers to those questions which in turn will ensure citizens feel involved.

It should be noted that these challenges abound because there is limited or no system in place to keep real time track of the activities of the stakeholder's involvement. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) is a system that ensures that at every level of a project, there is a focal person responsible for the success or failure of the project and not only does it

ensure that the focal persons are accountable, it also provide indicators that can be utilised to ensure and evaluate every stage of a project; in Nigeria's case, by both the leaders and the governed.

In the company of a Monitoring and Evaluation system, citizens will be able to keep real time track on the public sector and you will agree that for accelerated development and good governance, it is vital that the stakeholders involved be transparent and accountable. This is possible, the set time is now, we cannot go further as a nation if our public sector cannot be held accountable. We deserve good governance, we deserve accelerated development, we are of age as a nation, we demand for accountability.

Sources: www.pwc.com/ng/en | www.proshareng.com

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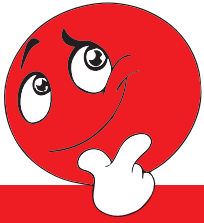


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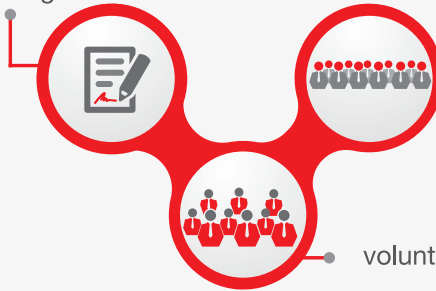
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Whats New in ACTIONAID NIGERIA ?

8

new project
agreement signed



11

additional
staff hired

9

volunteers joined the
team



Arit Effanga

One More THING!

Gbenga Adanikin

Arit Effanga, Core TV and Gbenga Adanikin of The Nation Newspaper received ActionAid Nigeria's female and male journalist of the year award at the annual staff dinner held at Ibetu Hotel Abuja on the 18th of January 2019. Gbenga's entry examined the plight of rural farmers in the country whose official record showed that, 100 milling centres were built in their various communities to ease the production of locally milled rice, but his piece revealed that the milling plants were non-existent. Three months after his report, the Federal government approved the disbursement of the rice processing machines to the affected rural areas. Arit's multiple entries was praised by the jury for her extensive fieldwork, consultation with locals and experts and provision of evidence-based investigative stories which uncovered different forms of injustices taking place in internally displaced persons camps and other excluded communities.

The award was presented by MacJohn Nwaobiala, a member of ActionAid Nigeria's Board of Trustees who commended the winners and urged them to remain committed to ActionAid global values of transparency, accountability, equity and justice for all.

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