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**Nigeria**  
**Civil Society Assessment**

Under the Analytical Indefinite Quantity Contract (IQC),  
Contract No. AEP-I-00-99-00041-00, Task Order 823

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# **Nigeria Civil Society Assessment**

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## **Final Report**

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Analytical IQC

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## ***Acronyms and Abbreviations***

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|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| ACFED     | Anpez Center for Environment and Development                                   |
| AFRIGOV   | African Center for Democratic Governance                                       |
| ASUU      | Academic Staff of Universities Union   |
| CAN       | Christian Association of Nigeria   |
| CEDPA     | Center for Development and Population Activities                               |
| CBO       | community-based organization   |
| CSO       | civil society organization   |
| CSP       | Country Strategic Plan   |
| DG        | democracy and governance   |
| ENABLE    | Creating an Enabling Environment for Women’s Effective Participation           |
| FOI Act   | Freedom of Information Act   |
| FOMWAN    | Federation of Muslim Women’s Associations of Nigeria                           |
| JHU/CCP   | John Hopkins University/Center for Communications Programs                     |
| IDASA     | Institute for Democracy in South Africa  |
| ILO       | International Labor Organization   |
| INEC      | Independent National Electoral Commission                                      |
| IP        | implementing partner   |
| LADDER    | Labor Advancing Democracy, Development, and Economic Reform                    |
| Law Group | International Human Rights Law Group   |
| MAN       | Manufacturer’s Association of Nigeria  |
| MSI       | Management Systems International   |
| NACCIMA   | National Association of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mines, and Agriculture |
| NCWS      | National Council of Women’s Societies  |
| NLC       | National Labor Congress  |
| NGO       | nongovernmental organization   |
| NSCIA     | Nigerian Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs                                    |
| PACE      | Partnership for Advocacy and Civic Empowerment                                 |
| PROSPECT  | Promoting Stakeholder Participation in Economic Transition                     |
| SC        | Solidarity Center  |
| SO        | Strategic Objective  |
| TMG       | Transition Monitoring Group  |



## ***Executive Summary***

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### *Introduction*

Nigeria has earned a well-deserved reputation for having one of the most diverse and complex polities on the African continent. Not surprisingly, its vast civil society reflects this complexity, presenting a daunting challenge to USAID/Nigeria and other donors committed to supporting the role of civil society in democratic consolidation. The task is further complicated by the diminishing availability of US funding for democracy assistance in Nigeria. In order to achieve results at the highest level, USAID/Nigeria has decided to focus its assistance to civil society on advocacy, civic awareness, and transparency and accountability at the national level.

As USAID/Nigeria considers priorities for its future civil society program, the lessons learned from USAID's completed (2000-2002) and ongoing (2002-2004) civil society programs constitute a critical input. An accurate understanding of the priorities of Nigerian civil society organizations (CSOs) in the area of democracy and governance (DG) is likewise crucial to the success of future programs. This report is an initial step in assessing opportunities to support civil society in the pre-defined areas of advocacy, civic awareness, and transparency and accountability. The report has two interrelated objectives. The first objective is to review the performance of the DG Office's civil society programs and assess their overall effectiveness; the second is to identify opportunities for the design and implementation of USAID's new civil society program (2004-2009).

### *Assessment of USAID's Portfolio of Civil Society Activities (2000-2004)*

USAID's ongoing activities contributed significantly to the conduct of the 2003 elections. However, USAID's decision to focus program resources on elections activities resulted in a postponement of other activities in the areas of constitutional reform; transparency and accountability; institutional strengthening of labor unions; and economic policy reform. The Partnership for Advocacy and Civic Empowerment (PACE) activity focused the majority of its efforts and resources on civil society's initiatives to support a more free and fair national election. Through civic awareness campaigns, domestic monitoring workshops, women's leadership activities, and conflict mitigation initiatives, PACE contributed to the success of Nigeria's 2003 elections. The Labor Advancing Democracy, Development, and Economic Reform (LADDER) activity implemented by the Solidarity Center (SC), also played a significant role in the improved election environment. The SC supported labor unions in their work to effectively monitor the elections and promote peace in the post-election period. The LADDER activity made a significant impact by strengthening the capacity of 4,000 monitors and ensuring that every state was included in the domestic monitoring plan. Furthermore, the absence of widespread violence in the 2003 election was due in part to LADDER's post-election conflict mitigation activities. The Promoting Stakeholder Participation in Economic Transition (PROSPECT) activity, implemented by Management Systems International (MSI), has set the groundwork to achieve results in the area of civil society's advocacy for economic reform. However, there has been a significant delay in implementation. Given this delay, impact in the area of economic policy reform has not yet been made.

Based on self-assessments and outside evaluations of USAID/Nigeria's completed civil society activities, both the Center for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA) ENABLE activity and John Hopkins University/Center for Communications Programs (JHU/CCP)'s media programs were successful in meeting their objectives. The timing of the activities was opportune, since they coincided with an overall expansion in freedom of the press and an increase in women's participation in civil society and political life.

## *General Findings and Recommendations*

Given the prospect of shrinking US budgets for democracy assistance in Nigeria, USAID/Nigeria must target its resources carefully and streamline its grant-giving process. The Mission has therefore decided to focus its support in this sector on efforts to develop the capacity of civil society groups to conduct advocacy (particularly in regard to transparency and accountability) and to build civic awareness at the national level. This programmatic focus will support a critical area of civil society need. CSOs participating in the present assessment consistently identified as priorities increased advocacy for transparency and accountability, gender equity, women and youth empowerment, and conflict mitigation. These CSOs also emphasized the need to develop better relationships between the government and CSOs. They further described a need for a neutral space in which CSOs and the government can have a dialogue on areas such as elections, transparency and accountability, and conflict.

## *Conclusions*

### **Management of IP and CSO Networks**

USAID grantees expressed a general satisfaction with USAID's support for civil society in Nigeria, but also expressed a range of concerns regarding the structure and content of the relationships among USAID, its implementing partners (IPs), and the CSO networks. While USAID's focus on elections proved fruitful in terms of election-specific results, other sectoral objectives were not fully achieved. IPs lost several months of 2002-2003 working with USAID to prepare for initiatives related to the 2003 elections. However, if the IPs and CSO networks are given proper advance notice, this may not prove to be a problem in the future as USAID's focus areas—anticorruption and advocacy—overlap with civil society's concerns.

The adoption of an effective structure to manage the networks will be a determining factor in the establishment of effective coalitions among civil society groups. Depending upon how a network is structured, civil society groups themselves will gain critical democratic experience simply by participating in the network. Moreover, since IPs absorbed large portions of program funds, USAID may want to explore allocating a larger portion of the funds directly to the CSO networks in order to enable them to more effectively implement activities.

This leads to the recommendation that USAID consider desegregating the functions of the IPs into several different roles so that Nigerian groups can take greater part in management of the effort. Capacity remains a critical problem for some organizations, but others are capable of providing management functions. An international or American IP can manage the funding and provide important oversight, but programming decisions, network management, and skills training can be managed by Nigerian organizations in democratically structured coalitions. The

driving force in the networks should be leaders elected from the organizations involved in the network.

## **Identification of Local Partners**

Given its focus on supporting civil society's role at the national level, USAID can explore the possibility of working with two types of partners that are capable of some measure of national influence. The first type is the "great federations" of Nigerian civil society. These include the trade unions; the Bar Association; the academics; business associations; and special interests like the Federation of Muslim Women's Associations of Nigeria (FOMWAN), or perhaps even some of the major religious organizations like the Christian Association of Nigeria or the Nigerian Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs (NSCIA). Each of these groups was formed of their own initiative to forward the interests of a particular sector of society, and most are democratically structured.

The many existing coalitions of NGOs and CBOs constitute a second type of potential partner. Most of these groups focus on localized issues, face significant capacity problems, and typically do not have the ability to impact national policy on their own. Collectively, however, their impact could be greater. USAID and other donors have encouraged the formation of coalitions of these groups around several issue areas of national importance (e.g., election monitoring) but these have faced great problems in coordination and management, especially in terms of funding.

## **Program Options**

In light of the deep power imbalance working against civil society in Nigeria, USAID could support a broad advocacy network that would organize some of the great federations of Nigerian civil society together with the smaller and issue-targeted NGO coalitions. Prime candidates for such an advocacy network include the NLC, FOMWAN, the Bar Association, NCWS, the Nigerian Union of Journalists, business associations, and others. These large groups could be linked with some of the targeted NGO coalitions already built with USAID assistance to work on USAID/Nigeria's priority sectors of transparency, and accountability, civic awareness, and possibly conflict resolution and elections. See Figure 1 on page 30.

Another option is for USAID to focus on developing the advocacy capacity of NGO coalitions it has supported for the past several years. USAID could select one IP, for example a strong partner within PACE and one or two coalitions of local CSOs (such as the Transition Monitoring Group or the Zero Corruption Coalition). The IP will then support the coalitions of local CSOs in the identification, development, and implementation of one or two issue-driven activities that will affect legislation at the national level. See Figure 2 on page 30.

The third option is for USAID to build a larger advocacy network along the lines of option #1, but reduce the role of some of the more politically difficult partners such as the NLC, to one of observation or as an invited participant at critical events. In addition, NGO coalitions could also feature more prominently in such a network if the number of great federations were reduced and/or given observer status. If necessary, more executive control could also be allotted to the IP, depending upon the network membership and needs.

The Assessment Team recommends that regardless which of the above choices are considered, USAID should integrate the following components into the overall activity:

- 1) Build the capacity of a training committee within the selected local coalitions to provide advocacy workshops and technical assistance to other coalitions of CSOs working to achieve objectives in other SOs (e.g., HIV/AIDS);
- 2) Support a government liaison committee within the supported network(s); and
- 3) Reactivate a media component to support civic awareness and advocacy goals.

## **1.0 Background**

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### *1.1 Context*

After decades of struggling with military rule, Nigerian civil society has emerged as a vibrant, battle-hardened force for change in the nation's young democracy. Yet civil society in Nigeria developed in relation to the beleaguered State. Thus the diversity and many complexities that characterize Nigerian politics are reflected in its dynamic civil society, including the contradictions that result in seeking to build a democracy out of a polity that is not a single coherent nation.

The Nigerian State began as a colonial imposition on a wide range of polities existing within Nigeria's current boundaries, making it in many ways a nation of nations. Several decades of irresponsible military rule, after the exit of the colonialists, left the country as deeply divided as it was prior to independence. Military leaders and their civilian allies exploited ethnic differences to prolong their stay in power and to capture the vast oil revenues that had been centralized under state control since the 1970s. As the mismanaged economy nose-dived with oil prices in the 1980s, the handful of elite with access to the State grew fabulously rich while the number of Nigerians living in poverty rose shockingly from a quarter of the population in the 1970s to three-quarters of the population in the 1990s. The elite—known as the “Big Men”—have massive networks of clients dependent upon them for channels to state largesse.

Nigerian politics is primarily a game of Big Men seeking to recoup their election investments and to expand their access to state resources; it often has little to do with improving the lot of the vast majority of Nigerians. The great promise of civil society for democratic development in Nigeria, therefore, is that the sector as a whole has the potential to reverse this growing political distance between the powerful elite and the largely disenfranchised masses. Civil society's strength is in preserving a plurality of aggregated interests to balance those of the elite and to check the elite's excesses on specific issues on occasion. The latter role, however, depends upon a unanimity among civil society groups that is difficult to forge and even harder to maintain beyond the political moment.

The political elite has long recognized both the promise and problems of civil society, and since the 1960s they have used a combination of repression and co-optation to bring the most powerful and representative of these groups into the orbit of the state. Trade unions, for instance, bear heavy state regulation and are partially dependent upon the state for funds. Nonetheless, unions and other great associations like the Bar Association fought military rule throughout the 1980s and 1990s, and suffered as a result.

As these massive civil society groups were hobbled by military interference, many Nigerian activists turned to a new type of organization that began to proliferate in the late 1980s, the NGO. It is important to remember that NGOs are one sub-category of CSOs. NGOs at first were often small and structured undemocratically in that their executives were not elected by the members of the organization or by the populations they sought to serve. Yet NGOs offered services and skills to replace those abandoned by the receding state, and provided critical platforms for dissent against the military that international donors could readily recognize and support.

Thus civil society in Nigeria has come to include a vast array of associations playing an intermediary role between the State and its citizens. These include trade unions; business associations; community-based organizations (CBOs) such as town unions; professional associations like the Bar; ethnic associations; religious institutions; and the vast array of NGOs such as human rights groups, conflict resolution NGOs, women's interests groups, health and education organizations, development NGOs, and so on. CSOs "balance the strength and influence of the state; they are supposed to protect citizens from abuses of state power; they play the role of monitor and watchdog; they embody the rights of citizens to freedom of expression and association; and they are channels of popular participation in governance."<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the end of military rule in 1999 opened political space and provoked a civil society renaissance. The older, massive, interest-based associations like the trade unions and professional associations have rebuilt their structures and reasserted their former dominance of the political scene. Meanwhile, NGOs have proliferated across the country, and many have begun the process of democratizing their own structures and developing mechanisms of representation and accountability. Some NGOs have also formed coalitions and networks to advance a variety of issues.<sup>2</sup>

Civil society has the potential to reverse the growing political distance between the powerful elite and the largely disenfranchised masses. However, CSOs are not of one mind on issues, nor do they speak with one voice. CSOs represent issues from nearly all sides and speak with a cacophony of interests and demands that overlap, compete, and/or contradict one another. In this context, can CSOs bring the government to reflect citizens' interest? Support for civil society's role in building democracy in Nigeria thus raises three fundamental questions:

1. How can civil society's meta-role in restoring the interests of the public on the priority agenda of the political elite be strengthened?
2. How can the centrifugal forces among civil society groups be best managed so that coalitions advocating priority public issues can be maintained?
3. How does the structural division within civil society between interest-based organizations and the NGOs impact USAID strategy for assisting civil society's role in building democracy in Nigeria?

USAID and other donors seeking to support the role of civil society groups in building democracy in Nigeria face a daunting task. Given the challenges of supporting civil society with a sharply reduced budget, USAID has decided to focus its support in this sector in a manner that develops the ability of civil society groups to conduct advocacy (particularly in regard to transparency and accountability) and to build civic awareness at the national level. With these goals in mind, the ARD Assessment Team was asked to evaluate past USAID support for Nigerian civil society and to make recommendations that identify opportunities and appropriate modalities for the design and implementation of USAID's 2004-2009 civil society program.

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<sup>1</sup> Mogadam, Valentine. 2002. "Citizenship, Civil Society, and Women in the Arab Region," *Al-Raida* 19 (97-98): 12-21.

<sup>2</sup> This report will use the words "network" and "coalition" interchangeably.

## *1.2 Scope of Work and Methodology*

The essential objective of this assignment, as outlined in the Scope of Work (SOW), was the completion of two interrelated tasks:

1. An assessment of USAID's completed (2000-2002) and ongoing (2002-2004) portfolio of civil society activities; and
2. Recommendations for the design and implementation of future civil society interventions (2004-2009).

The purpose of the assessment is to answer USAID's key questions contained in the SOW through an analysis of USAID's past civil society program in order to incorporate lessons learned into future programming.

The analytical and research methodology undertaken for the assessment and future directions included the following complimentary efforts:

- a literature review encompassing the documents as requested by USAID, as well as Nigerian publications and background reading from academic sources;
- interviews with CSOs in Lagos, Pt. Harcourt, Kaduna, Kano, and Abuja;
- interviews with donors and USAID staff;
- a Future Directions for Civil Society Workshop with Abuja-based representatives from national-level CSOs and members of CSOs from different regions of Nigeria; and
- a fully participatory, team-based approach to methodology development, problem solving, analysis and synthesis, and logistics.

The Assessment Team members had unique as well as overlapping and complimentary skills and experiences; this contributed to making the team approach a highly efficient, cross-fertilizing, and motivating mode of operations. Both interview questions and workshop sessions were derived from the original nine SOW questions, and included some additional key interest areas as expressed by the USAID Mission.

The 44 CSOs participating in the research and analysis were very diverse, and included CSOs that had not received USAID support. The sampling included professional associations, federated structures, faith-based organizations, sectorally focused CSOs, special interest groups, and CSOs in regional and/or national networks. The Future Directions Workshop used the "open space" and "marketplace" participatory methodologies to gear three sessions specifically to USAID needs and open up discussion on topics of interest to the 22 participating CSOs.



## ***2.0 Assessment against Objectives***

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The Assessment Team reviewed the following USAID-sponsored activities to determine whether they met their objectives:

- Partnership for Advocacy and Civic Empowerment (PACE);
- Labor Advancing Democracy, Development, and Economic Reform (LADDER);
- John Hopkins University/Center for Communications Programs (JHU/CCP);
- Promoting Stakeholder Participation in Economic Transition (PROSPECT); and
- The Center for Development and Population Activities' Creating an Enabling Environment for Women's Effective Participation program (ENABLE).

In the activities where measurable impact was not achieved, obstacles to their achievement are identified. The results of this assessment will lead to an analysis of lessons learned in order to provide sound recommendations for USAID's future civil society program.

### ***2.1 Ongoing Activities***

#### **2.1.1 Partnership for Advocacy and Civic Empowerment**

The PACE consortium (2002-2004), implemented by Global Rights: Partners for Justice (formerly International Human Rights Law Group), the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA), and the Center for Development and Populations Activities (CEDPA), has worked toward results in four focus areas:

1. elections and electoral reform;
2. constitutional reform;
3. transparency and accountability; and
4. conflict management.

PACE identified the crosscutting themes of women's participation and organizational and technical capacity building, and aimed to integrate them into the overall program. The Assessment Team found that PACE achieved solid results in the areas of elections monitoring and civic education, voter registration, and conflict prevention and mitigation during the election period.

PACE supported the training of 2,800 monitors and deployed 4,620 monitors in 19 of Nigeria's 36 states. In four of the five critical states identified by USAID as the primary focus for conflict management interventions, the 2003 elections recorded no major incidence of violence. Community mobilization against violence encouraged voter vigilance and mitigated destabilizing factors. Additionally, PACE increased the participation of women in the elections. Although women did not reach the goal of representation within the Nigerian population or as a percentage of the voting population, the number of women in the State Houses of Assembly almost doubled and there were significant gains in the House of Representatives.

The shift to the elections focus, which included a conflict component, resulted in delayed implementation of two of the four focus areas. Much of the work on transparency and accountability shifted from legislative issues to focus on transparency in the conduct of the general elections. PACE was unable to deliver meaningful results in the areas of constitutional reform, transparency, and accountability, as well as the crosscutting theme of capacity building.

One exception to this overall finding is the efforts of PACE working with the National Assembly to pass a Freedom of Information (FOI) Act and a “Whistleblowers” bill. The FOI bill was the first bill sponsored by a CSO since the restoration of democratic rule in 1999. The FOI Act nearly passed in 2002. However, it was stopped on procedural technicalities in its final reading in the House. Then on April 12, more than 80 percent of incumbents in the National Assembly were voted out of office. PACE responded by reconstituting the civil society coalitions supporting these bills and has resubmitted them to the new legislature.

Results were not achieved in the area of constitutional reform, again for reasons beyond the PACE consortium’s control. The American Embassy requested that PACE not focus on constitutional reform during the national elections. The urgency of the election work required that many key organizational capacity-building activities be delayed. Weak gains were made in the area of capacity building of CSOs and networks as less resources and time were committed to this area.

### **2.1.2 Promoting Stakeholder Participation in Economic Transition**

PROSPECT (2002-2004), implemented by Management Systems International (MSI), aims to identify and prioritize stakeholder participation in key economic policy reform; and to improve capacity of selected economic stakeholder organizations to participate in economic policy dialogue. PROSPECT has set the groundwork to achieve these results through an assessment that selected five CSOs and provided some capacity building to these organizations. Additionally, PROSPECT has assisted in the research and development of reports related to economic reform. According to the Anpep Center for Environment and Development (ACFED), PROSPECT’s capacity-building workshop improved their internal governance and organizational structure. However, the Assessment Team believes that the nine remaining months of the PROSPECT activity is insufficient time to achieve results and measurable impact. Based on interviews with USAID Strategic Objective (SO) teams and PROSPECT staff, this time constraint was a result of absent activity leadership and a one-year delay in approval of the annual plan and related disbursements.

### **2.1.3 Labor Advancing Democracy, Development, and Economic Reform**

LADDER (2002-2004), implemented by the Solidarity Center (SC), focuses on four objectives in its work with labor unions:

- Strengthen the capacity of selected labor unions to play a more effective role in public policy development, implementation, and oversight of public institutions;
- Increase gender equity in selected labor unions;

- Assist labor unions in the promotion of free and fair elections and in the mitigation of conflict;
- Increase institutional and financial viability of select labor unions.

The SC is on track and has made impact at the national level, especially in the area of elections monitoring and peace building.

The SC promoted greater gender equity through workshops and conferences that resulted in the development of a sub-group in both federations of women leaders, called the National Women's Commission. The Commission developed gender policy for labor unions and is currently working on action plans to implement and monitor gender policies in all labor organizations. In light of the gender policy, the Nigerian Labor Congress (NLC) has increased the percentage women of its staff to 30%. In addition, the NLC elected its first woman to national office as National Auditor of the NLC.

In the area of economic reform policy, the SC is assisting in the development of a simplified manual to explain economic policy to labor unions. The SC is also active in the development and advocacy for individual economic policies, including fuel policies and pension issues. Capacity-building activities address internal democracy and issues through workshops and fora on gender equity, information sharing, and consensus building. According to the SC, the LADDER activity improved the internal communication system of several labor unions through more effective collection and dissemination of relevant information. However, several local organizations believe that much more needs to be done to promote internal democracy of labor organizations such as the NLC.

## *2.2 Completed Activities*

### **2.2.1 John Hopkins University/Center for Communications Programs**

The media activity implemented by JHU/CCP (1997-2002) worked to fulfill the following objectives:

- Educate women about democratic participation;
- Empower women to participate in politics at the local, state, and national levels;
- Educate women about their fundamental human rights;
- Facilitate and motivate advocacy on key reform issues; and
- Enhance civil society's participation in governance and public debate.

Based on MSI's evaluation of the media activity, JHU-sponsored activities were successful in meeting their objectives, and recommendations were made for future media activities.

JHU/CCP worked with several Nigerian NGOs to use media-based programming as a means of achieving several DG objectives, including women's empowerment and advocacy. The program was implemented in four distinct phases and evolved with the easing of restrictions on conducting explicit pro-democracy activities. Many CSOs such as the National Association of

Women Journalists played a pivotal role both in the success and the sustainability of the program. JHU assisted in increasing the capacity of local NGOs to improve and expand coverage of women’s issues in the media as well as in assisting other NGOs in accessing the media and establishing networks among grantees and other NGOs. According to MSI’s evaluation, the activity would have been even more successful if JHU/CCP had focused more attention on building the institutional capacity of the CSOs with which they worked.

## **2.2.2 Creating an Enabling Environment for Women’s Effective Participation**

ENABLE (1998-2001), implemented by CEDPA, had the following activity objectives:

- Strengthen civil society to increase democratic participation;
- Promote increased respect for fundamental human rights and the rights of women;
- Increase women’s political participation and empowerment through the agency of “100 Women Group.”

Based on CEDPA’s self-assessment, CEDPA reached their objectives and supported civil society’s contribution to sustainable democracy and good governance in seven states. The activity’s nine key CSO partners worked to promote women’s representation and engagement in governance through the use of multiple approaches including workshops, television, radio, publications, drama, and advocacy. Media efforts—including over 256 radio and 64 television programs, as well as the dissemination of thousands of publications—is estimated to have reached approximately two million people. CEDPA’s efforts contributed to increased political participation by marginalized groups in the following elections.

## **2.3 Conclusion**

Based on the USAID documents and interviews with Nigerian CSOs, the LADDER and PACE activities were successful in contributing to the achievement of USAID’s strategic goal of “Transition to Democratic Civilian Governance Sustained.” In the context of the LADDER activity, trade and labor unions have shown significant ability to consistently influence government policy, primarily concerning the pricing of petroleum products and workers’ wages. Through PACE, a network of coalitions managed to get the FOI Act through several readings in the National Assembly. The progress of this advocacy process shows some success, despite falling short of the final objective. Both LADDER and PACE activities achieved significant impact in the areas of elections monitoring, civic education, and conflict management. Many CSOs that work with PROSPECT are involved in cost sharing, an element that promotes commitment and sustainability. However, given a one-year delay in implementation, the PROSPECT activity has been less successful in contributing to USAID’s SO.

## ***3.0 Findings and Lessons Learned***

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### ***3.1 Overview***

Few of the Nigerian organizations that USAID supported in the past have demonstrated the power or capacity to influence the national government on par with their civil society counterparts in South Africa, Kenya, or Ghana. However, the Nigerian legislature and to some extent the judiciary have been notably more accessible to civil society groups than the executive has so far been, although overall many officials remain reluctant to recognize a substantive role for civil society. Only the trade unions under the mantle of the NLC have shown the ability to influence government policy consistently, primarily in terms of the minimum wage and the price of fuel. NLC strikes forcing the government to revise these policies have gained much attention in the press, but the unions have also sought to regularize their relationship with the government through bargaining and improved expertise in economic policy. USAID-sponsored coalitions of NGOs through PACE managed to get a FOI Act through several readings in the National Assembly, but the Act remains frozen in committee. USAID-sponsored election monitoring networks were effective in providing elections oversight and defusing local election-related conflicts, but generally did not succeed in influencing policies regarding the electoral system. These setbacks are less the fault of USAID's hardworking CSO grantees, however, and more a function of the elite character of Nigerian politics. Nigerian political outcomes at the national level are determined primarily by the clashes and bargaining among the Big Men at all levels who are not generally interested in the priorities of their formal constituents.

These limits on the impact of civil society activity at the national level pose some challenges for USAID objectives, especially in light of dwindling budgets. Most of the success stories from the grantees are found at the local level, particularly in terms of election monitoring and election-related education. Yet USAID's focus is shifting to national advocacy, where organizations such as the trade unions among USAID grantees have had substantial influence. A review of these lessons learned filtered through USAID priority issues offers some direction for addressing this dilemma.

The Assessment Team finds the current civil society objectives still to be valid. However, USAID's decreased budget for civil society activities requires that the Mission sharply target its resources and increase SO program synergy. The Assessment Team believes that the Mission's Country Strategic Plan (CSP) for 2004-2009, which focuses support to the ability of civil society groups to conduct advocacy—particularly in regard to transparency and accountability—and to build civic awareness at the national level, is a reasonable and achievable goal as long as limitations of civil society impact are kept in mind.

### ***3.2 Elections***

Given the intense USAID focus and subsequent flow of resources to support this objective over the 2002-2003 period, it is not surprising that work in this sector achieved much of the intended goals in terms of election education, monitoring, and conflict mitigation. Yet these successes came with a significant cost, changing the focus and timing of PACE and LADDER's non-election objectives. Both PACE and LADDER agreed that the sudden focus on elections affected the other objectives of their activities. Although the shift of focus created difficulties for

implementing partners (IPs) with local CSOs and delays in work plan, budget, and performance monitoring plan approval, elections activities achieved the ultimate result of an improved election context with higher participation and decreased post-election violence.

PACE focused the majority of its efforts and resources toward supporting the 2003 national elections. Through PACE, USAID contributed to the success of Nigeria's 2003 national elections and relatively peaceful transition to a civilian government. Capacity-building assistance to CSOs fostered their ability to support and participate in the electoral processes. Increased engagement of CSOs with electoral bodies, notably the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), contributed toward improved electoral administration, increased domestic monitoring, and reduced electoral violence. The absence of widespread violence in the 2003 elections was due in part to conflict mitigation activities supported by USAID. This was especially the case in volatile states where USAID supported civil society engagement of security agencies and community-based initiatives for conflict mitigation. USAID's assistance for voter education and coordinated voter-mobilization campaign covered over 45% of the country's population.

USAID-supported CSOs engaged the National Assembly to advocate for electoral reforms. However, few electoral reforms have occurred. Specific emphasis was made to increase voter turnout among women, the number of women and women-focused organizations monitoring the elections, and the number of women elected and appointed to public office. Assistance to women's organizations resulted in political parties expanding support for women. Additionally, through a voter registration exercise, the number of voters registered in 2003 increased by close to three million voters (or 5%) compared to the 1999 level. The shift in focus to elections affected the PACE consortium's other objectives, especially in the area of transparency and accountability and capacity building.

The LADDER activity assisted labor unions to play a significant role in elections monitoring during the election and conflict mitigation in the post-election period. The SC strengthened the capacity of approximately 4,000 domestic monitors and ensured that every state of Nigeria was included in the monitoring plan. Labor unions were trained in how to effectively monitor and report on electoral manipulation. In the post-election period, the SC played a key role in the areas of conflict management and mediation. The SC assisted the monitors in compiling information on election mismanagement and presenting the information to tribunals. This outlet for post-election participation decreased the likelihood of mass protests. Although the focus on the election and post-election activities did not seem to significantly divert attention from other objectives, they will need more time to achieve desired results.

The late start on planning by the donor community and the CSOs and much confusion among Nigerian election officials regarding election processes and resources made the environment for election-related programming very challenging. Information, education, and communications messages and materials need to be developed in advance of elections events to avoid last-minute logistical problems and decisions that increase costs and reduce effectiveness of voter education and mobilization activities.

## 3.3 Relationships

### 3.3.1 USAID and IPs

USAID grantees expressed a general satisfaction with the thrust of USAID's support for civil society in Nigeria, but many expressed a range of concerns regarding the structure and content of the relationships among USAID, its IPs, and the networks.

In terms of USAID's role in the process, two chief criticisms surfaced. The first encompasses a range of concerns that could be summed up as a tension over civil society autonomy and leadership. Depending upon the organization and the issue in question, a number of groups—including the IPs but among the networks as well—expressed concern that USAID had too much influence regarding setting organizational objectives and related work. Under each organization's cooperative agreement, USAID has “substantial involvement” responsibilities, including approving annual work plans. In general, groups acknowledged USAID's contractual role and that it had a right to its own priorities, but that once the general objectives of projects were negotiated, some groups felt that USAID should refrain from changing them. Some of these frustrations resulted from USAID's midstream shift to election issues in 2002, but other projects also reported some frustrations over autonomy.

One element of these autonomy concerns centered on USAID's communication policy with its grantees. USAID insisted that all communications from grantees be channeled through their respective IPs. This created two problems:

1. Grantees had to rely upon their IP to forward their concerns to USAID, even though the IP might not have shared the same interests as the grantee on the matter or have had the technical expertise to properly convey the issue (the latter was particularly an issue within PACE).
2. USAID occasionally broke its own rules and communicated directly with grantees, but then insisted that the grantee still communicate through their IP.

These breaches raised concerns of unequal treatment and left some grantees feeling under-represented in the network.

On the other hand, USAID faces the problem that some of its grantees do in fact need to be monitored. Several of the organizations performed far less than they promised, and the constant concern remains that some groups were primarily “contract chasing” rather than providing optimal services or activities. Several of the grantees expressed doubts about the credibility of other organizations in the networks, and even called for USAID to take more of a hands-on role.

A second criticism raised regarding USAID was that its grant-planning process proved particularly burdensome. For instance, groups lost five to six months (or more) of 2002-2003 working with USAID to prepare for monitoring the 2003 elections. The SC, on the other hand, was able to arrange its agreement with USAID within a week, indicating that some measure of streamlining is possible. Critical elements in the SC's relative efficiency in this regard were its larger staff and the fact that its partner groups are the trade unions, which are themselves large structures capable of producing reports and other data fairly quickly.

Different IPs have different views on whether Mission support and managerial oversight contributed to effective implementation. These views depended upon their previous experiences with funding agencies. Those that have worked with bilateral organizations were comfortable with the support, and those that had a history limited to multilateral and foundation funders found USAID to be demanding. However, most groups interviewed said they would like to have more regular contact with their USAID counterparts.

Regarding the IP consortium members, one fundamental problem undermining network efficiency is that large portions of the funds allocated to the IPs are absorbed by the IPs themselves, rather than enabling the grantees to do the targeted work.

The PACE consortium had a number of unique issues to address given its structure of three equal implementing partners, with only CEDPA having management responsibilities. The other members commended CEDPA for its great efforts to keep harmony and efficiency in the consortium, but both Global Justice and IDASA felt that the different functional expertise and orientations of the three partners kept the consortium as focused on internal management issues as on the substantive projects. In addition to the communication problems mentioned above, the different interests of the organizations created tensions over programming priorities and funds management. CEDPA was responsible, as leader of the consortium, for collecting data from all partners to meet USAID's accounting requirements. This was not an easy task, because consortium partners did not always respond in a collaborative manner to requests for expenditures and financial projections as they might have with USAID. On the other hand, some of CEDPA's partners felt that CEDPA had too much control.

USAID selected the IPs primarily because their specific talents and skills matched the proposed activity. Their technical skills, however, are applied less within the context of the administrative demands that make up their key roles as IPs. IPs have thus primarily served as intermediary bodies that have expertise in meeting USAID monitoring, evaluation, and accounting requirements. The IPs' functional expertise (e.g., in economic policy or human rights) became of secondary importance to their network management skills, which was not their primary strength, although some brought more experience than others and all learned on the job. The IPs in turn built their consortiums more on the strength of having a common source of funding rather than a common interest among the selected CSOs, most notably in regard to PACE's partners.

### **3.3.2 CSOs and IPs**

Regarding CSO and IP partnerships, many USAID-supported CSOs could not trace themselves to their USAID-funded consortiums, like PACE. Most do not describe their activities with any knowledge of or links to USAID project indicators. Furthermore, there is little evidence of networking between CSOs within the consortium, such as documentation of meetings between network members and IPs.

Overall, most CSOs engaged in IP activities require more technical assistance to achieve the desired project results. Some coalitions have great problems in coordination and management, especially in terms of funding. Often the coordinating secretariat of the coalition itself becomes a CSO, creating problems of competition and funds management with the members.

### 3.4 CSO Capacity-building Activities and Needs

A near-universal theme among USAID grantees' assessments of their own activities was the need for assistance in building their organizations' capacities to do their work. Poverty, infrastructure problems, and needs for specific skills frequently limited the capacity of groups to achieve desired goals. Most of these groups looked to USAID for some help in this regard.

It is interesting to note that many local CSOs are concerned with their own sustainability. Several CSOs requested assistance on independent financing in order to sustain activities beyond the period of donor funding. Additionally, few CSOs interviewed have integrated transparency and accountability into their activities.

The three IPs have had limited progress in introducing skills or leadership that did not already exist in Nigerian civil society. The IPs have instead served more as grant managers, with expertise in meeting USAID accounting requirements and oversight. They built their coalitions as much on the strength of having funding as on the fact that the network shared a common interest in the targeted issue. IDASA brought experience in conflict resolution training—although it also relied on local expertise—and MSI brought a useful self-assessment process, while Global Justice has recently trained partners in a “report card” assessment of local officials. Overall, however, the IPs have spent the majority of their time managing the relationships with USAID and the specific network in question. Some of the IPs made promises to the networks that were not fulfilled, and there was little follow-up to ensure sustainability of the projects or to determine if subsequent actions were necessary once the primary project goals were completed.

In order to provide activities in advocacy, transparency and accountability, and civic awareness, these organizations share several capacity needs:

- **Management consulting:** Many of the organizations in the networks expressed a desire for consulting assistance in the management of their own organizations (e.g., how personnel decisions could best be handled, finances managed, and clerical work best distributed).
- **Revenue-producing activities:** Many of the groups have interesting ideas on how their organizations can arrange business activities on the side to produce increased revenues, and they all could use additional guidance on the matter.
- **Accounting assistance:** Some groups expressed the need for accounting skills overall, and training in USAID accounting practices and requirements in particular.
- **Budgetary skills:** Transparency and accountability work in particular demands intricate budgetary knowledge in order to “follow the money.” Even the trade unions expressed a need for assistance in this regard, as did several groups with an invitation to join President Obasanjo’s due diligence officer in monitoring government procurement.

Civic awareness and advocacy needs centered primarily on developing relationships with the media and with targeted government offices. The media itself has critical skill and infrastructure needs that could be addressed, and its links with civil society groups have gone largely unattended since the JHU project ended.

Advocacy with government officials, however, typically requires an asset many civil society groups do not have: power. The power of a good idea can sometimes open doors in government for some organizations, but given the poor credibility of the election system in Nigeria, most groups cannot rely on public pressure to move favored policies forward. The support of formal constituents was not and still is not the primary determinant of how most nominally elected officials attained their offices. The trade unions' power to bring the economy to a halt is the principal reason that its advocacy has been the most successful, and when union strikes are unable to be sustained or remain consistent, union-advocated policies or issues fall to the wayside.

Regarding sustainability, one critical finding was that the democratically structured groups representing a particular interest sector (the great federations as well as some of the NGOs and CBOs) tended to continue the implementation and development of projects even after USAID funding ceased. In contrast, groups and coalitions that provided specific expertise or services (primarily NGOs) tended to work only when donor funds were available. Projects would cease when funds dried up, and the NGOs would wait until more funds arrived or would move to new donor-supported projects.

### *3.5 Participation and Women's and Youth Political Empowerment*

Findings on how CSOs supported broad-based participation were reviewed to better link common concerns to future national advocacy efforts. Documentation did not provide detailed information on the rates and quality of participation by the populations in the CSO activity areas. However, interviews and the Assessment Team's combined experience in Nigeria generated some important considerations regarding support to participation and its potential for national influence.

The CSOs that determine their own issues, find funding outside of donors, are membership structured, have internal democratic processes, and include a livelihoods element have the most consistent and most broadly based rates of participation. This includes CBOs that focus on localized issues and nationally federated structures. In some cases, these types of CSOs have implemented innovative approaches for influencing national policy and legislation. For example, after conducting participatory rural appraisals, some environmental CSOs in the Niger Delta region successfully sought funding from Shell Oil and through E-mails and letters gained national and international support for these popularly held concerns. A local CSO initiative on environmental education was brought to the attention of a national decision maker in the education sector and ended up influencing national policy. Another CSO created two boards. One is a functioning board to guide the organization, and the second board is made up of public figures that help the CSO to gain access to and influence state and national law and policy makers. These approaches are replicable and deserve attention under the advocacy focus of the new CSO programming.

CSO interviews and a review of activities indicate that ensuring participation by women and youth requires a direct and targeted effort, as the larger activities do not "naturally" address obstacles to their participation. For example, PACE's assistance to women's organizations resulted in political parties expanding support for women (e.g., waiving registration fees for

women candidates). Likewise, the LADDER activity undertook a specific effort to develop gender equity in selected labor institutions. The African Center for Democratic Governance (AFRIGOV) advocated passing legislation to have Al Majarris (an unemployed and under-educated youth in Kaduna) integrated into the educational system.<sup>3</sup> This does not suggest a women or youth only component for future activities; it indicates that all activities need to make better effort to address those obstacles and create incentives that support participation by youth and women.

### *3.6 Synergy*

The CSP highlights the importance of synergy among the entire SO programs. Interviews with various SO teams indicated a range of engagement with CSOs and attention to women and youth. The health sector largely targets women and children and works with CSOs to successfully implement grassroots outreach for prevention, treatment, and public education. The economic development efforts partner with government institutions. Unfortunately, most state institutions under-represent and under-address the concerns of civil society, youth, and women.

The Assessment Team noted that synergy support for advocacy and transparency and accountability needs wider Mission attention. USAID's interpretations of its own budget categories also occasionally stifled synergy among civil society activities. Transition Monitoring Group (TMG), for instance, was prevented from taking IDASA funds for election violence prevention because TMG was already receiving assistance. In other cases, synergy was identified when activities are co-funded by SOs. Synergy needs to move beyond co-funding and be supported by organizational practices and incentives.

Synergy can be supported at many levels, from efforts at the activity level to supportive coordination practices within USAID. Findings from activities-level synergy research note that a livelihoods component, complimented by a limited set of additional objectives, is a very potent and successful approach. Examples of such approaches follow under Section 4.4.

### *3.7 Enabling Environment and Donor Coordination*

The Constitution of Nigeria creates the legal rights and duties of civil society in terms of governance and development of the nation. National policy implementation of these laws, however, has not seen the same spirit of partnership. Broad civil society gains and consolidation have yet to occur. However, relative to many donor development activities, the donor budgets and support for civil society as a functioning aspect of an emerging democracy remains low. These budgets and supports do not correlate with the status of CSOs in Nigeria's democracy. In addition, donor funding is less than 4% of Nigeria's national economy. Low levels of donor funding create a particular challenge in terms of donors being able to leverage government. This has significance regarding improving the enabling environment for a vibrant and thriving civil society.

Donor coordination on democracy and governance (DG) has been largely episodic (e.g., coordination on elections). However, the coordination around elections proved to be effective in

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<sup>3</sup> This activity was not USAID-funded.

terms of donor leverage and focusing CSO efforts. The Assessment Team was unable to find a set of “donor reference tools,” (e.g., lack of a legitimate Poverty Reduction Strategic Plan). The United Nations Development Program is finalizing a governance paper intended to guide donor DG coordination. Donors and development partners do not yet have a coordinated strategy for their support to Nigeria’s civil society. Such a strategy is critical to ensure that scarce resources are allocated efficiently, to prevent redundancy, to minimize uncreative competition among civil society recipients over the funds, and to pass lessons learned by one donor on to the others.

### *3.8 Future Directions Workshop Findings*

Outcomes from the Future Directions Workshop provide nuances and some divergences to the findings from the interviews and literature review. These workshop findings express the views and experiences of a wide range of CSOs and were derived spontaneously and independently of the assessment focus questions through open space methodology.

For example, CSOs do not view civic education as a separate activity, but as a methodology to enhance all areas of knowledge regarding rights and responsibilities under a democratic system. This awareness is targeted to specific concerns (i.e., rice growers’ access to fertilizer), or broader concerns (i.e., access to information with regards to government budget allocations).

CSOs had a number of issue areas they are supporting in their work; they believe these are critical issues regarding the future of democracy and development in Nigeria. These issues are:

- the future of youth,
- the rights and representation of women,
- conflict,
- special interest group rights,
- the environment,
- transparency and accountability of government, and
- HIV/AIDS.

The highest priority was youth—particularly as it linked with conflict—followed by women, then transparency and accountability, with the environment ranking last. There was no clear consensus on the priority given to HIV/AIDS. However, many said that this issue requires civil society leadership such as religious leaders, school administrations, and teachers and parents in order to be properly and fully addressed. In other words, the government role in HIV/AIDS was not detailed as central to addressing the problem. All participants agreed that the environment was extremely important for the quality of life of Nigerians, but that this ranks lower than other concerns because there is a lack of understanding regarding how it is linked to other development concerns.

As with civic education, advocacy was not seen as a separate activity for the successful CSO or CSO network. It is seen as another method by which to achieve the desired results. The understanding of advocacy and its various methods was high and well articulated, whereas concrete definitions and examples of engagement regarding transparency and accountability were low and generalized.

It should be noted that many of the workshop findings dovetail with USAID’s interest in transparency and accountability, advocacy on specific issues, and national impact. However, the CSOs do not see themselves as prioritizing budget and financial transparency and accountability

above other concerns. Furthermore, participants told stories and expressed concerns on backlash as it relates to pushing for government transparency and accountability. Divergences between USAID foci and CSO interests do not outweigh the areas of overlap; these provide sufficient opportunity for partnership and success under the new directions.

### *3.9 Conflict*

The potential for conflict in Nigeria remains high. USAID-supported CSOs have worked to mitigate conflict in the post-election period. Many local CSOs emphasized that transparency and accountability interventions will more likely increase conflict between the government or other powerful parties and CSOs. Therefore, there is a need to merge conflict-related activities into transparency and accountability activities in order to reduce, rather than increase, this potential for conflict.

Additionally, the demilitarization process is far from completed. CSOs activities have helped to mitigate the militaristic legacies (e.g., CSOs' efforts have opened up a space for dialogue between citizens and the State). Donors tend to overlook the continuing role of civil society in dismantling the legacy of military rule.

### *3.10 Indicators*

The transitional CSP and 2004-2009 CSP indicators selected for monitoring program implementation and measuring progress towards results have differing levels of applicability. Of the different DG measurements, the elections indicators (“number of reported electoral irregularities,” “number of reported infractions,” and “numbers and percentages of voters correctly registered”) are most easily captured and best indicate progress. The indicators for transparency and accountability are the most removed from the planned and implemented activities. Review of government budgets by CSOs is a long way from the law enforcement suggested by the indicator “numbers of corrupt officials prosecuted.” The indicator “citizen awareness of public officials’ roles and responsibilities” will be difficult to measure without a rather expensive survey instrument. The conflict indicators need a baseline to show gains. The advocacy indicators will make use of an advocacy index and capture “the numbers of targeted policy reflecting CSO input.” The second indicator is quite reasonable; however, the advocacy index is an unwieldy tool that uses abstract mathematical weights to measure real actions. A more appropriate and realistic milestone indicator for advocacy should be adopted. Milestone indicators measure gains in process, which is essential in capturing progress in the areas of advocacy and transparency and accountability.



## ***4.0 Future Directions and Recommendations***

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### ***4.1 Future Relationships***

#### **4.1.1 USAID and CSOs**

The tight window for civil society access to national policy has expanded somewhat since 1999 as democratization has brought more actors into the policymaking process and other levels of government have begun the long struggle to wrest power from the presidency. Nonetheless, the window remains narrow, and only the groups who are able to impact the interests of the political elite in some manner will be able to see their groups' issues on the national agenda.

Thus, if national advocacy is the centerpiece of USAID's 2004-2009 civil society strategy, then several paths forward, based on the experience of USAID's grantees in 2001-2003, appear most likely to enable civil society groups to succeed.

First consideration must be given to the power imbalance between civil society and the State. Civil society has made important gains in the political space that has opened since 1999, but these groups remain largely marginal players at the national level. Legal frameworks are developing but weak. Elected officials are only remotely accountable to their formal constituents, and Nigerian politics remains dominated by the power struggles among the Big Men. Thus the typical tools of civil society influence—legal challenges and raising public awareness through issue advocacy—are for the short term likely to be useful for incremental change at best. Such change is still very important and deserving of support, but civil society groups must also be able to tip the balances among the Big Men in order to have some influence. The trade unions have the powerful tool of strike actions, but these blunt instruments are difficult to organize, sustain, or focus on more than a handful of issues.

In the larger picture of Nigerian political development, the real solution to the dominance of the Big Men is the development of a stable balance of power among them, with most of their struggles fought within the contours of the political system, primarily through the vehicle of formal political parties. Thus the critical "next step" for the nation's political development is the rise of a viable, loyal political opposition movement, as has happened in African nations further down the democratic road such as South Africa, Kenya, and Ghana. Without such an opposition, voters do not have a viable alternative at the ballot box, which is in part why Nigerians supported the military in the past. A strong opposition is the most important vehicle for transparency and accountability in any democracy because it is an institutional actor with great interest in exposing the corrupt practices of the party in office and in balancing its powers.

An essential link in such a movement will be with civil society groups. As governing and viable opposition parties battle for voter support, they will have to produce policies that better serve the interests of the public, and civil society groups will play important roles in informing the public—and government—whether those interests are being served.

This ideal competition among the Nigerian political parties to woo the favor of civil society groups and, by extension, the voters, has begun to take some shape in national politics, but only in rudimentary forms lacking the deeper substance of serious public service. In the short term,

therefore, civil society groups have only one remaining solution to correct the power imbalance between them and the Big Man-dominated State: they must build broad coalitions among themselves and with actors in political society, particularly the political parties. Some groups may have limited success on their own at the national level based on the strength of their skills and good ideas, such as in regard to constitutional reform. However, as the fate of the FOI Act has so far demonstrated, politicians view such initiatives as far secondary priorities compared to efforts to capture state largesse.

Technical support to improve the capacity of civil society groups to engage in issue advocacy and other activities that foster incremental changes remains central to any sound democracy promotion strategy, but it must be viewed through the lens of how they impact the political power structure of policymakers. Without vast financial resources, civil society groups must turn to the numbers of people they can represent, sensitize, and mobilize. Thus USAID support should move into the realm of building relationships among civil society groups and between civil society and the State, particularly in terms of the political parties.

## *4.2 Building and Managing the Networks*

Central to building effective coalitions among civil society groups will be the structures chosen for these networks. In considering how to structure its networks, USAID should weigh not only the impacts such networks have on their target policies or communities, but also the fact that the participation of these groups themselves in the networks can serve USAID's DG goals. Depending upon how a network is structured, civil society groups themselves will gain critical democratic experience simply by participating in the network. Thus, networks based on democratic structures and principles should be a high priority.

The first step that USAID should consider is to disaggregate the functions of the IPs into several different roles so that Nigerian groups can take greater part in management of the effort. Capacity remains a critical problem for some organizations, but others are capable of providing management functions, such as leading trade unions, the Bar Association, some of the business associations, or (in some contexts) think tanks like the Development Research and Projects Center in Kano or NGOs like the Center for Democracy and Development. An international or American IP can manage the funding and overall activity, provide an important oversight role, and communicate with USAID, but programming decisions, network management, and skills training can be managed by Nigerian organizations in democratically structured coalitions. IPs can play advisory roles in these coalitions and oversee their work, while local consultants can be hired for skills training and management development. The driving force in the networks should be leaders elected from the organizations involved in the network. In addition, network partners can advise and train each other on a wide range of skills and activities. In the first stages of the activity, USAID, the IP, and the network should define roles and responsibilities in a collaborative manner, such as through a stakeholder workshop.

In addition to democratically structured coalitions, USAID is left with two possible types of partners to choose for these coalitions that are capable of some measure of national influence.

### **4.2.1 Great Federations of Nigerian Civil Society**

The first type of possible coalition partners is the great federations of Nigerian civil society. These are dominated by the trade unions under the aegis of the NLC. They also include the other longstanding associations that have dominated critical sectors of the economy and society for a generation:

- the Bar Association,
- the academics (ASUU),
- business associations (NACCIMA, MAN, and others), and
- special interests like the Federation of Muslim Women’s Associations of Nigeria (FOMWAN) or perhaps even some of the major religious organizations like the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) or the Nigerian Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs (NSCIA).

Each of these groups was formed of their own initiative to forward the interests of a particular sector of society, and most are democratically structured.

Because of their size, these groups help to address the power imbalance between civil society and government, and the prevalence of democratic structures helps to address concerns over sustainability and civil education through democratic participation. Yet working with these interest-based groups would pose some challenges for USAID. First, their size makes these groups powerful, which means they are politicized to some extent. Second, because these organizations represent specific sectors of society or communities, USAID support for them risks association with these interests.

### **4.2.2 NGOs and CBOs**

The many coalitions of NGOs and CBOs are the second type of partners. Most of these groups focus on localized issues, face significant capacity problems, and typically do not have the ability to impact national policy by themselves. USAID and other donors have encouraged the formation of coalitions of these groups around several issue areas of national importance (e.g., election monitoring) but these have faced great problems in coordination and management, especially in terms of funding.

In addition, all the networks interviewed indicated the critical importance of personal relationships in the effective management of the networks. Work with the trade unions in particular required that the IP have a longstanding relationships with union activists, but all the networks were facilitated when groups with strong personal ties to others in the networks took leadership roles. USAID should consider any future IPs in this regard and consider supporting Nigerian groups for leadership roles that already have built ties and good reputations with others in the networks.

## **4.3 Sustainability**

One critical finding in terms of sustainability was that the democratically structured groups representing a particular interest sector (the great federations as well as some of the NGOs and

CBOs) tended to continue the implementation and development of projects even after USAID funding ceased. In contrast, groups and coalitions that provided specific expertise or services (primarily NGOs) tended to work only when donor funds were available. Projects would cease when funds dried up, and the NGOs would wait until more funds arrived or would move to new donor-supported projects.

Given the current limits of USAID assistance, these findings indicate that democratic groups serving the interests of specific constituencies are more likely to build on the initiatives that USAID provides well past the specific confines of supported projects. This is not to say that service or skill-oriented NGOs do not have a role to play, but that the driving force in advocacy and civic awareness initiatives should be the interest-led groups. The skill providers are more likely to be effective in providing technical expertise for coalitions or other groups leading these initiatives.

#### *4.4 Synergy in Support of Civil Society, Participation, and Women's and Youth Political Empowerment*

USAID has numerous opportunities through which to promote synergy. Beyond the important ripple effect of maximizing impact through synergy, the synergy rationale includes a holistic view of civil society's unique niche in promoting democracy and the rights of the under-represented. These opportunities include activities and operational modalities, management of mission programs, and monitoring and evaluation frameworks and practices.

Broad-based promotion of democratic practices could be enhanced by developing a clear set of selection criteria describing CSO internal democratic practices. This filter could be applied across all the SO-CSO partnerships and CSO networks. In addition, since civil society is the governance area that most readily lends itself to participation by and representation of youth and women, selection criteria for all CSOs and networks should include concrete demonstrations of this commitment. An indicator capturing the numbers of CSOs employing democratic practices across SOs would provide an impressive reporting figure, underscore CSP linkages, and capture issue-based advocacy impact.

USAID's partnership with CSOs is being realized in a very particular political context that demonstrates fluctuations in the enabling environment and political will. In this context, strengthening civil society is an ongoing need. USAID could support a more systematic strengthening of civil society by ensuring that technical expertise related to key themes (e.g., CSO representation in policy development through advocacy, its roles in transparency and accountability engagement with the Government of Nigeria, and revenue raising and allocation) is regularly shared among its CSO partners across the SOs.

CSO partners and networks could integrate a "Grameen Bank-type" modality in many activities supported by the SOs. The Grameen Bank model captures the scope of the 2004-2009 CSP on a replicable micro scale, is extremely cost-effective, and has been successfully adapted to many different cultural contexts. Its clients address poverty through income-generating activities and group savings and loans, and training and support for internal DG practices, particularly those related to representation, decision making, gender equity, and transparency and accountability.

The model reinforces attention to the myriad conditions that create poverty and supports grassroots problem-solving skills. For example, members adopt a core set of behavioral practices in order to address health and hygiene; the education of children, particularly girls; the promotion of natural resource management, particularly sources of water and trees; and, among its membership, the abolishment of key cultural practices that plunge families into economic straits and/or discriminate against females. Worldwide, these empowerment strategies have led to many groups mobilizing for political representation and advocating change at a national level.

The modality just described is not limited to the Grameen Bank. The Grameen Bank has been cited because its modalities for empowerment are widely recognized by development practitioners. In fact, many women's CSOs in Nigeria are practicing elements found in the integrated Grameen approach; these groups could add certain components and maintain their sectoral or target groups focus. Variations of the Grameen model could be rather easily integrated across all SO-CSO efforts and multiply impacts related to the CSP program goals.

In Nigeria, the majority of demonstrations have been over economic pressures and losses. Improving participation by poor people across all the SO-CSO activities would be much enhanced if economic incentives were built into all mobilizing frameworks. The emphasis on the generation of more resources and employing them effectively remains a necessary and core aspect of supporting community-level DG, provides an economic base for future political empowerment, and promotes the self-sufficiency of communities to initiate and respond to their own needs. Increased support for self-governing, revenue-generating, community-based approaches will also assist in conflict prevention.



## **5.0 Recommendations**

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### **5.1 General Recommendations**

The Assessment Team recommends the following actions for USAID’s consideration:

1. Disaggregate current functions of the IPs in the current consortium arrangement in order to create a new consortium model that provides leadership and implementation roles for Nigerian CSO members. For example, these new CSO coalitions should be structured democratically, with all the members electing the lead groups, and the lead groups themselves sharing important checks and balance powers. Other civil society groups or consultancy outfits can be employed to provide specific skills training or activities. IPs should primarily play accounting and financial oversight roles, and be able to “speak USAID’s language.” Elected network leaders should be the key communication points with USAID, but a network ombudsperson (or organization) should be elected who can also be a communication channel to USAID in case a member group has a dispute with one of the lead organizations. See Figure 1 on page 30.
2. Increase support to the great civil society federations made up of trade unions under the aegis of the NLC and other longstanding associations that have significant influence in critical sectors of the economy and society (see Section 4.2.1: “Great Federations”). Each of these groups was formed of their own initiative to advance specific interests of a particular sector of society. They could provide the backbone of sustainable civil society coalitions.
3. Work with national level cross-sector forums that already exist and are not donor-driven. Three formal civil society forums already exist to facilitate coordination and cooperation across different sectors of civil society. The NLC has a civil society forum designed to coordinate labor activities with other non-labor organizations. In addition, the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria has started a civil society forum that includes many human rights and other pro-democracy groups. More recently, a business association, the Convention on Business Integrity, has started an innovative “civil society club” as a vehicle for linking businesses and CSOs in coalitions to fight government corruption.
4. Identify and support activities in the area of advocacy that are issue-driven and limited to one or two goals (e.g., passing the FOI Act).
5. Assist local initiatives that establish sustainable forums and processes to promote government-CSO relationships and the roles of CSOs in advocacy and transparency and accountability. Critical governmental actors in this regard are the political parties and their members in the National Assembly. For example, provide assistance for an organization that could serve as a neutral “space” where government officials and CSOs could dialogue and prioritize issues on politicized matters of dispute. Nigeria’s burgeoning number of think tanks could possibly provide such neutral forums.
6. Promote coordination between the DG and other SO teams to enhance capacity for synergy on crosscutting DG elements (e.g., civic awareness, transparency and accountability, and advocacy). A training committee from the Nigerian coalitions could serve as “advocacy

trainers” for other SO-supported groups interested in getting their issue (such as HIV/AIDS) on the national policy agenda.

7. Provide advocacy skills to the CSOs supported under the HIV/AIDS initiative. This might be done as a buy-in to the DG civil society portfolio to access this assistance.
8. Identify and develop indicators that further promote synergies across SOs, as well as transparency and accountability and advocacy indicators that measure gains in process, which is essential in capturing progress. Milestones on progress should be used. Internal democratic and accountability reforms encouraged in DG grantees should also be encouraged among the grantees of other SOs.
9. Provide clear guidance regarding criteria for internal democratic practices for IP and CSO selection across all SOs.
10. Focus transparency and accountability activities on specific financial oversights. These may include the budgeting process in the National Assembly, the work of anticorruption units that have been established in some of the ministries (such as the Finance Ministry), or the anticorruption units in the bureaus (most notably the Bureau of Public Enterprises—the vehicle for privatizing state-owned industries—and the President’s Budget Monitoring and Price Intelligence Unit).
11. Provide capacity building to CSOs with substantial experience in the areas of civic awareness and advocacy, and to those that have internal democratic practices. Where appropriate, encourage civil society groups to democratize their own decision-making processes and provide greater transparency and accountability to their target communities.
12. Integrate civic awareness and conflict mitigation components into CSO transparency and accountability activities to prevent backlash and assist victims of backlash.
13. Borrow CSO empowerment approaches from other countries that have successful models that promote synergy at the CSO activity level. For example, the Grameen Bank approach integrates income-generation and savings activities with improved health and hygiene practices, reform of harmful traditional practices, and civic and voter education.
14. Explore the possibility of continuing support to media activities that promote civic awareness for transparency and accountability and advocacy.

## *5.2 Program Options*

The following options are based on the findings and parameters defined by USAID/Nigeria. The Assessment Team recommends that USAID/Nigeria consider choosing one of the following options. The first outlines a strategy for engaging the powerful civil society groups, the second focuses on the technical, issue-oriented work of the NGOs, while the third is a pick-and-choose hybrid of the first two options.

### 5.2.1 Program Option #1

In light of the deep power imbalance working against civil society in Nigeria, USAID could support a broad advocacy network that would organize some of the great federations of Nigerian civil society together with the smaller and issue-targeted NGO coalitions. Prime candidates for such an advocacy network include the NLC, FOMWAN, the Bar Association, the National Council of Women's Societies (NCWS), the Nigerian Union of Journalists, business associations, and others. These large groups could be linked with some of the targeted NGO coalitions already built with USAID assistance to work on USAID/Nigeria's priority sectors of transparency, and accountability, civic awareness, and possibly conflict resolution and elections. An international or American IP could partner with a Nigerian technical advisor such as one of the democracy-building think tanks (for example the Center for Democracy and Development or the Development Research and Projects Center in Kano). The partners would work together to organize the network until proper governance structures were in place (see recommendation #1 above, and Figure 1 on page 30), and then the IP should recede to an advisory, management, and financial oversight role.

The first effort of such a network should be to link with coalitions such as the Zero Corruption Coalition and the FOI Coalition to push the National Assembly to pass an FOI Act. Second, this network should accept the open invitation to civil society groups given by the head of President Obasanjo's Budget Monitoring and Price Intelligence Unit to monitor her office's oversight of the government's public procurement process. Although her office only reviews a small percentage of the overall budget (she cannot review the massive reoccurring expenditures), this opportunity is unprecedented and, if successful, could lead to greater civil society oversight of the executive's management of public finances. The network could also focus advocacy initiatives on other SO priorities such as a comprehensive Nigerian HIV/AIDS policy.

Such an advocacy network composed of both the great federations and issue-driven NGO coalitions would doubtless be in need of expert facilitation and management skills in order to navigate the powerful interests that would not always overlap, even though they will presumably organize along several issues of common interest. Local business and management consultants or NGOs with relevant experiences, recruited and managed by the IP, could provide such expertise, although leadership in the network will naturally have to come from the members themselves. The NLC's great size and proud organizational culture will compel it to seek a dominant position in any network, which USAID will have to consider and address when fostering network development.

Many Nigerian organizations have experience in rallying diverse organizations around specific advocacy issues. The NLC has a "civil society forum" that went dormant when donor funds expired, but it could perhaps provide a model for building such a network. Two other civil society forums also exist. The Catholic Secretariat has organized one with a broad range of human rights and CBOs, while a business initiative to fight corruption, the Convention on Business Integrity, has a civil society "club" designed to provide a similar networking vehicle. Just as the NLC will dominate any forum it joins, these other two will naturally be strongly influenced by the interests of their organizers. Alternatively, an IP could perhaps facilitate merging these three fora into *one* comprehensive forum.

### **5.2.2 Program Option #2**

USAID could instead choose to focus on developing the advocacy capacity of NGO coalitions it has supported for the past several years. USAID could select one IP, for example a strong partner within PACE and one or two coalitions of local CSOs (such as the Transition Monitoring Group or the Zero Corruption Coalition). The IP will then support the coalitions of local CSOs in the identification, development, and implementation of one or two issue-driven activities that will affect legislation at the national level. The coalitions will work in the areas of advocacy, transparency and accountability, and civic awareness to advance toward their goal. Additionally, the IP could assist the coalition in facilitating government-CSO relations in order to improve communication practices between CSOs and government on the issue-driven campaign. See Figure 2 on page 30.

### **5.2.3 Program Option #3**

USAID could build a larger advocacy network along the lines of option #1, but reduce the role of some of the more politically difficult partners such as the NLC to one of observation or to an invited participant at critical events. In addition, NGO coalitions could also feature more prominently in such a network if the number of great federations were reduced and/or given observer status. If necessary, more executive control could also be allotted to the IP, depending upon the network membership and needs.

### **5.2.4 Additional Program Options**

The Assessment Team recommends that regardless which of the above choices are considered, USAID also undertake the following options:

- Build the capacity of a training committee within the selected local coalitions to provide advocacy workshops and technical assistance to other coalitions of CSOs working to achieve objectives in other SOs (e.g., HIV/AIDS). Again, the IP could recruit and manage a local organization to develop a training program, train the trainers, and monitor their performance. Additionally, the training committee could facilitate fora to share lessons learned in the areas of advocacy, transparency and accountability, and civic awareness among CSOs working with other SOs. The outcome of such a forum could be the development of criteria for internal democratic practices for IP and CSOs working across sectors.
- Build a government liaison committee within the supported network(s). This could be part of the technical committee above, or a separate group of organizations with specific expertise and/or political connections to build relationships between the network(s) and executive officials, members of the National Assembly, and political party leaders. This committee could play a dual role of expert political advisor/strategist for the network and communication facilitator with government officials targeted for advocacy.
- Finally, no civil society coalition with advocacy and civic education goals is complete without a strong media component. The Nigerian media has been one of the staunchest advocates for democracy promotion and transparency and accountability, but it is in dire need of capacity-building assistance. Several Nigerian NGOs are working on media development issues and could provide important training roles in networks such that media

participation and assistance is assured. One of the sub-grantees should have experience working with the media and focus on the media.

### *5.3 Expandable Model*

In the event USAID acquires supplementary funds to support civil society activities in the areas of elections and conflict, the Assessment Team recommends the following program options.

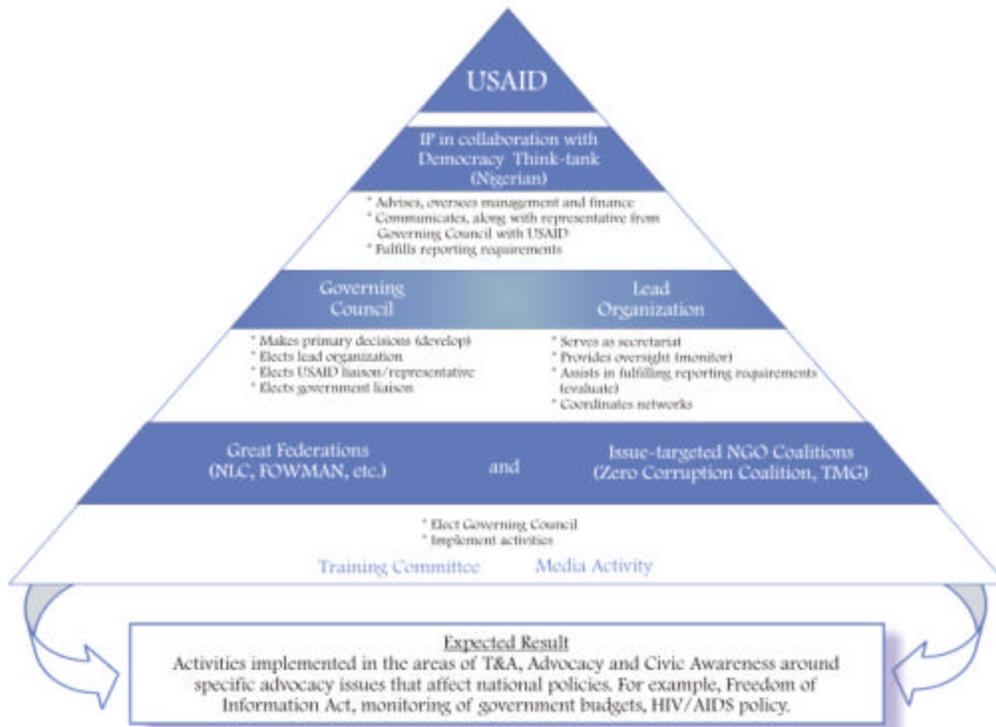
#### **5.3.1 Elections**

USAID could support a local coalition of CSOs that already have the capacity to conduct successful civic/voter awareness campaigns. It is critical that USAID build on the past success of the PACE consortium and work with the most successful of the local CSOs. It is recommended that this coalition be different than the coalition working on the issue-driven activity to avoid the implementation problems of the past. Additionally, USAID should explore the possibility of continuing support to local organizations that worked with the JHU/CCP media activities and use media activities in these campaigns.

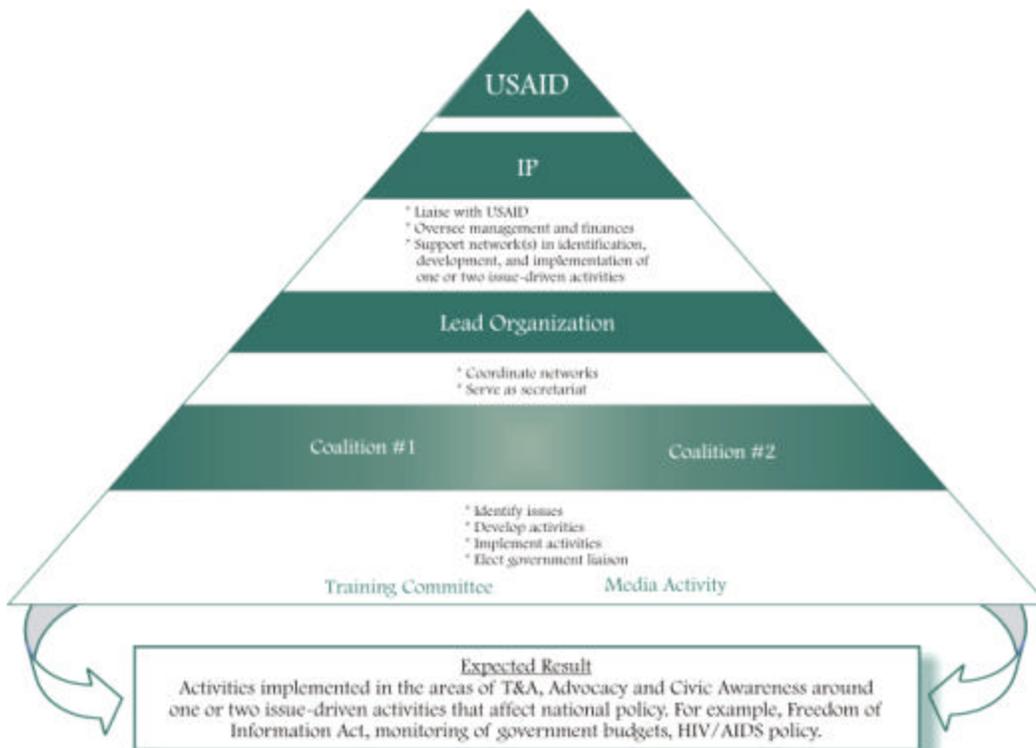
#### **5.3.2 Conflict**

It is recommended that USAID sustain a good working relationship with labor unions—if not through direct support, at least through the organization of fora to discuss past and future election activities—to implement a domestic monitoring activity. Capacity building could include workshop on conflict mitigation for both during and post-election periods. Based on the findings of the Assessment Team, the LADDER activity was the most successful and provided the most coverage in the area of domestic monitoring and conflict mitigation.

**Figure 1. Program Option #1**



**Figure 2. Program Option #2**



## ***Annexes***

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*Annex 1: Contact List*

*Annex 2: Workshop Participants*

*Annex 3: CSO and Network Profiles*

*Annex 4: Bibliography*



## ***Annex 1: Contact List***

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Please see the following table for a list of contacts made during this assessment.



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|---|--|--|--|
| Muslim-Christian Dialogue Foundation                          | conflict resolution                                    | local, state, occasionally national      | Kaduna                                       |
| Federation of Muslim Women's Associations of Nigeria (FOMWAN) | women's interests, religion                            | local, state, and national               | National office Abuja, branches in 34 states |
| Development Research and Projects Center (DPRC)               | think tank   | local, state, national                   | Kano   |
| Conflict Resolution Network (CRESNET)                         | conflict resolution network                            | national                                 | Kaduna                                       |
| CEDPA/Kano  | women's interests; development                         | national                                 | Kano   |
| Youth and Environmental Development Association (YEDA)        | youth empowerment, environment, elections and conflict | local, state                             | Kano   |
| Democratic Action Group (DAG)                                 | youth empowerment; elections and conflict              | local, state                             | Kano   |
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## ***Annex 2: Workshop Participants***

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Please see the following table for a list of the workshop participants.



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## ***Annex 3: CSO and Network Profiles***

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Please see the following table for a list of CSOs and networks.



| Name of CSO   | Acronym | Sector  | Profile   | Level of Operation                                    |
|---|---------|---|---|---|
| Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People               |         | Grassroots Movement, Mobilization, Awareness Creation, Governance | The group was founded in 1990 with a vision to engage the government in better resource management and control. Till date most of its activities center on peace building, civil awareness and grassroots mobilization  | Niger Delta Region                                    |
| Niger Delta Human and Environmental Rescue Organization | ND-HERO | Environmental Education   | ND-HERO is located at Block 3b, Road 10, Federal Low – Cost Housing Estate Rumueme Port – Harcourt. Its activities revolve around promoting the general well being of the Niger Delta people using issues of environmental conservation in addressing broader development problems. | Niger Delta Region                                    |
| Entrepreneurial Development Initiative                  | ENDIP   | Income Generation, Livelihood Security, Education and Research    | ENDIP focuses on providing skills needed to start and run successfully small - scale business to unemployed youths in the Niger Delta. It was established in 2000 and is more concerned with developing the organization.   | Niger Delta Region                                    |
| Anpez Center for Environment and Development            | ACFED   | Environment & Research  | The center began as Anpez Environmental Law Center in 1992. It focuses on environmental law, provision of services needed for economic growth, environmental education and research. ACFED is a consultant NGO  | Local, State, Niger Delta, national and International |
| Save the Earth Nigeria                                  | SEN     | Environment   | SEN addresses the challenges of over thirty years of environmental neglect associated with the oil extraction in the Niger Delta. Through education, advocacy, research, networking and approach SEN works to protect and preserve environment..                                    | Niger Delta Region                                    |
| International Federation of Women Lawyers               | FIDA    | Women’s Human Rights  | FIDA advocates for women’s rights using legislative process, paralegal training and legal counseling.   | National  |

| Name of CSO                                | Acronym | Sector  | Profile  | Level of Operation  |
|--|---------|---|--|---|
| International Press Center                 | IPC     | Media, democracy, and governance  | Media resource center for advocacy                                     | State / Regional  |
| Citizens' Forum for constitutional reform  | CFCR    | Constitutional reform   | Coalition of NGSs for advocacy on constitutional reform                | National  |
| African Strategic and Peace Research Group | AFSTRAG | Conflict  | Action-oriented research group on security and development             | International/<br>National  |
| National Council of Women Societies.       | NCWS    | Women's Human Rights  | Coalition of women society   | National  |
| Zero Corruption Coalition                  | ZCC     | Transparency and Accountability   | Network of NGOs advocating for transparency and accountability         | National  |
| Social-Economic Rights Initiatives         | SRI     | Economic reform, transparency and accountability  | NGO with strong research base on advocacy for transparency on reforms. | National  |
| Coalition of Eastern NGOS                  | CENGOS  | Community/Rural Development<br>Environment, Human Rights, Democracy & Governance, Youth and Educational Development, Public Health, Micro Credit, Poverty Alleviation | Coalition of a broad variety of NGOs with strong women's rights focus  | Areas of coverage include: South-Eastern Region/National eg. Covering states of Anambra, Abia, Imo, Enugu, Ebony, Cross Rivers, Bayelsa, Rivers & Akwa Ibom |

| Name of CSO                                  | Acronym | Sector  | Profile                                    | Level of Operation   |
|--|---------|---|--|--|
| Rahama Women Bauchi                          | RWDP    | Reproductive Health, Education Micro Credit, Good Governance, Mobilization, Youth Programs & Developmental Work which benefits women and families | Women's Rights, Democracy and Governance   | Regional e.g Bauchi, Yobe, Gombe, Adamawa, Borno, Taraba, Kano, Plateau, Jigawa, Nasarawa. |
| Nigeria Union Of Local Government Employees. | NULGE   | Public Sector   | Union of local government employees        | National   |
| African Women Agribusiness Network           | AWAN    | Agribusiness<br>Agricultural Production<br>Agricultural Processing<br>Agricultural Export   | Women's Rights and Agriculture             | International, National & Regional   |
| National Council Of Women Societies          | NCWS    | Child /Mother Care, Development, Micro-credit<br>Community Development  | Women's Rights and Empowerment             | National   |
| Federated Anglican Women's Groups            | FAWWOG  | Women Empowerment, Public Health<br>Vocational Skill Training, Child Care<br>Micro Credit, Democracy and Governance and Moral Training            | Women's Rights<br>Democracy and Governance | National mostly Christian states   |
| Rice Farmers Association Of Nigeria          | RIFAN   | Agriculture Grassroots Empowerment  | Agriculture                                | National   |
| Center For Constitutional Gov. & Dev.        | CCGD    | Women Rights & Empowerment<br>Child Right & Care Dev.<br>Youth Empowerment  | Women's Rights                             | 2/3 States   |

| Name of CSO   | Acronym | Sector  | Profile   | Level of Operation             |
|---|---------|---|---|--------------------------------|
| Nigerian Association Of Chambers Of Commerce, Industry, Mines & Agriculture | NACCIMA | Business Advocacy & Economic Empowerment  | Economic Growth                                   | West Africa & Nigeria          |
| Nigeria Bar Association   | NBA     | Legal Services  | Legal   | National                       |
| Transition Monitoring Group   | TMG     | Civil Education Election Monitoring   | Elections   | National                       |
| Women Environment Program   | WEP     | Gender Imbalance In Environment Issues, Social & Economic Rights Of Women Of Women And Youths.                            | Women's Rights                                    | National                       |
| Women Development Project Center  | WDPC    | Income Generation, Public Health, Democracy & Governance, Human Rights and Environment                                    | Democracy and Governance<br>Health<br>Environment | Regional- South Eastern States |
| International Federation Of Women Lawyers                                   | FIDA    | Legal Services for the less privileged especially women & children. HIV AIDS Awareness                                    | Women's Rights                                    | International                  |
| Abantu for Development  | AFD     | Gender and<br>- Poverty<br>- Conflicts & Peace Builders<br>- Governance<br>- Information & Communication Technology (ICT) | Women's Rights                                    | National                       |
| Church Of Christ In Nigeria Women Fellowship                                | COCIN   | Democracy & Governance (Pace)<br>Micro Credit   | Democracy and Governance                          | National                       |

| Name of CSO  | Acronym | Sector   | Profile                                  | Level of Operation             |
|--|---------|--|--|--------------------------------|
| Community Action For Popular Participation             | CAPP    | Advocacy<br>Training<br>Research<br>Publication<br>(Pace & Prospect)     | Advocacy, Democracy and Governance       | National                       |
| African Center For Democratic Governance               | AFRIGOV | Advocacy & Research<br>On Governance<br>Democracy<br>Gender/Human Rights | Advocacy, Democracy and Governance       | Abuja                          |
| Medical & Health Workers Union Of Nigeria              | MHWUN   | Labor Activities<br>Advocacy For Workers<br>Rights                       | Labor                                    | National                       |
| Nigeria Union Of Teachers                              | NUT     | Education  | Education, Labor Union                   | National                       |
| Federation OF Muslim Women Association In Nigeria      | FOMWAN  | Religious & Non Formal   | Democracy and Governance, Women's Rights | National, mostly Muslim States |
| Women's Rights Advancement And Protection Alternatives | WRAPA   | NGO  |  | National                       |



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