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JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY/POPULATION COMMUNICATION SERVICES
(JHU/PCS)**

DRAFT CONCEPT PAPER

**INCREASING DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION AND RESPECT
FOR FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHTS IN NIGERIA**

I. INTRODUCTION AND PROGRAM JUSTIFICATION

Nigeria has been under military rule for approximately 25 out of its 35 years of independence. The 10 years of democratic experiment have been checkered with military influence and interventions. The longest period of democratic practice in the country was between Independence in 1960 to 1966 when the first military coup was staged removing the civilian administration. The second significant democratic experiment was between 1979 and 1983, also truncated by a military coup. The effect of the military dominance in Nigeria is the absence of a generation of Nigerians with experience in and basic knowledge of democratic values. This fact permeates not only the political scene but, in some important respects, the behavior of Nigeria's civil society.

The current military regime of General Sani Abacha came into power when the 1992 national election, often referred to as the fairest in Nigeria's history, was annulled and democratic institutions dissolved. On October 1, 1995, General Abacha announced a 3-year "transition period" to return power to a democratically elected civilian government. There is widespread skepticism as to reality of this transition, both in content and timing. Contrary to world-wide democratic values, the regime has continued to place onerous restrictions on the mass media and labor unions; crack down on human rights and environmental activists; arbitrarily detain and imprison opposition leaders; and conduct executions without due process. The last months, however, has seen some modest efforts by the regime to respond to international pressure by releasing a few political detainees.

This harassment and intimidation of citizens and lack of respect for fundamental human rights has resulted in political apathy and a concomitant lack of broad participation in advocating a sustained democratic process. However, women's groups and decentralized community based organizations are less subject to government attention and intimidation. At this time in Nigeria's history, it is these organizations and the independent media that are the most viable avenues through which a reasonable program can be evolved to promote democratic governance in this nation.

Within the current national circumstance, civil society¹ organizations including women's and community mobilization groups, in spite of their numeric strength, have been disadvantaged. They have inadequate material resources, and little input into the majority of decisions and policies that affect the lives of the citizenry. Despite the multitude of women's organizations, few women have ever occupied decision-making positions; even fewer participate in politics.

This non-partisan DG program - a component of the larger USG DG strategy - is envisioned to give a voice to and strengthen the capacity of civil society, especially women's and community mobilization groups, to participate in the democratic process and develop increased understanding of and respect for fundamental human rights. This in turn, can increase the demand by civil society for greater adherence to the universal values of democracy, good governance and fundamental human rights. The sustenance of these values will, in the longer run, support the emergence of a stable democracy in Nigeria.

The DG program is structured as a field-based small grants program to Nigerian NGOs, with supporting technical assistance, training, networking and commodities. The assistance grants will be awarded, monitored and evaluated by CEDPA and JHU/PCS in accordance with established procedures. A bi-annual workplan will be prepared to guide the program, complemented by USAID/Nigeria's Rapid Response Fund (RRF) mechanism. Further details on program management are set out in Section VI.

II. PROGRAM GOAL, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

A. Program Goal

The goal of the program is to strengthen civil society's contribution to increased democratic participation and respect for fundamental human rights in Nigeria.

B. Specific Objectives

Based on the goal of the program, the Specific Objectives to achieve the goal include:

1. To broadly inform, educate and internalize in Nigerians and Nigerian civil society, the concepts/values and practices of democratic participation.
2. To increase democratic participation at the local, state and national level.
3. To increase women's political participation and empowerment.
4. To broadly inform, educate and internalize in Nigerians and Nigerian civil society,

¹ Civil Society is the broad term given to voluntary associational groupings which inhabit the space between individuals and the state. In the democracy and governance context, they consist of non-state organizations engaged in or have the potential for championing the adoption and consolidation of democratic reforms, and broadening democratic participation. They include: women's organizations, independent mass media, human rights organizations, business and professional associations, community mobilization organizations, religious organizations, policy think tanks and individuals.

the concepts and values of fundamental human rights.

5. To increase adherence to fundamental human rights, through effective civil society advocacy.

C. **Program Strategies**

The program strategies to achieve the Specific Objectives include:

- Network and coalition building within the established and nascent DG NGO community; and between Nigeria DG NGOs and other broadly based women's and community mobilization organizations.
- Strengthen advocacy, communication and lobbying skills of DG NGOs and women's community mobilization organizations.
- Capacity building of select DG, women's and/or community mobilization organizations having longer-term DG potential; strengthen leadership, internal governance and accountability of DG NGOs, with special attention to democratic practices.
- Increase community involvement in decision making in the civil, political and governance processes.
- Political education/awareness creation.
- Women empowerment and gender sensitization.
- Documentation/information dissemination on democratic participation and fundamental human rights.

III. **ILLUSTRATIVE ACTIVITIES**

The illustrative activities for this program are separately grouped under **Democratic Participation** and **Fundamental Human Rights**. The program is necessarily Nigerian NGO driven and adaptive and, therefore, this listing must be illustrative only. Participatory outreach with Nigerian NGOs will define the program specifics within the framework outlined earlier.

A. **Democratic Participation**

1. Support non-partisan civic advocacy organizations in providing neutral arenas for discussion, maximizing media coverage.
2. Strengthen the role and contribution of independent media through journalist training, gender sensitization, building internal/external networks (to be coordinated with USIS).

3. Support NGO community outreach programs in democratic participation and fundamental human rights education.
4. Support inter and intra school club "debates" and video showings on democratic participation targeted at youth.
5. Establish a basic "Democracy and Human Rights" library at community mobilization NGO centers.
6. Train politicians, NGO leaders (including women's groups) and others in conflict resolution as an element of political and democratic participation.
7. Support DG NGOs and women's community mobilization organizations common fora/meetings and publications.
8. Support training of women leaders in advocacy, lobbying and interest representation, including training Women's Spokespersons.
9. Development of Women's political resource kits and skills handbooks.
10. Support male/female dialogue on DG.
11. Support observational study tours by women political leaders and professionals.
12. Support community theater groups to develop programs that address DG, human rights and women empowerment themes.
13. Support to women NGOs and CMOs to strengthen their internal democratic and participatory decision-making structures.
14. Develop and produce a video documentary on women involvement and participation in Nigeria's political emancipation.

B. Fundamental Human Rights

1. Strengthen DG NGO capacity and skills to monitor, reliably investigate and report (locally and internationally) on fundamental human rights violations.
2. Support fundamental rights advocacy training for politically active professional associations.
3. Support institutions that give intellectual content to increased respect for fundamental human rights.
4. Support participation of human rights activists in local and international fora.
5. Strengthen public interest law groups by supporting workshops targeted towards fundamental rights issues, and to encourage pro bono human rights work.
- 6.- Establish an NGO/HR fund for emergency assistance to families of human rights activists, DG implementors and other victims of government's sanctions/harassments.

7. Support NGOs providing assistance to "in-prison" well-being of detainees e.g Nigerian Medical Association, Red Cross.
8. Support dissemination of information on human rights abuses, distribution of HR educational materials, and training of HR monitors.

IV. EXISTING AND POTENTIAL NIGERIAN NGO PARTNERS

Illustrative present and potential Nigerian NGO partners for the DG and women's empowerment program include the Country Women's Association of Nigeria (COWAN), Women in Nigeria (WIN), Federation of Muslim Women's Associations (FOMWAN), Gender and Development Action (GADA), Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ), Performing Musicians Association of Nigeria (PMAN), International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), Nigerian Organization for Solidarity and Development (NOSAD), Market Women Associations, etc.

Criteria used for participation in the program include:

1. Politically non-partisan.
2. Demonstrated accountability at both the financial and programmatic levels.
3. Non-involvement in, or support of the annulment of the annulment of the June 12, 1993 elections.
4. Non-governmental in substance, perception and influence.
5. Demonstrated commitments to DG and women empowerment programs in Nigeria.
6. Broad membership.
7. Demonstrated high level of professionalism.
8. National and/or local recognition as campaigners or supporters of DG and women's empowerment ideals in Nigeria.
9. Grassroots acceptability and sensitivity to cultural norms
10. Potential to influence national opinions and agenda.
11. Recognition as unbiased and democratically-oriented.
12. Media-related partners that have a regular focus on grassroots/professional women as role models.

V. PROGRAM CONSTRAINTS AND RISKS

A. Government Reaction

Both CEDPA and JHU/PCS, as primary implementors of the DG and women's

empowerment program, acknowledge that the implementation of this open and public program will be subject to the constraints and risks associated with operating under an oppressive and totalitarian military regime. Recognizing that any overt effort to influence the course of political change in Nigeria, no matter how genuine, presents a very real risk to all involved, JHU/PCS and CEDPA strongly believe that their established program relationships and interventions are an appropriate entry point. Through activities such as strengthening women's empowerment networks, broadening the scope of advocacy efforts and dissemination of DG and women's empowerment related informational materials at the grassroots level, the diverse communities in Nigeria can be assisted in finding their voices and having them heard.

The implementation of the DG and women's empowerment program in Nigeria, during this turbulent political period, presents certain risks to CEDPA and JHU/PCS staff, consultants and to collaborating NGOs and CMOs. Harassment, arrests and possible detentions in the hands of the security agents is possible. Planned meetings, conferences and seminars could be stopped. USIS, the British Council, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and others have already had their public presentations aborted; DG and women activists have had their passports seized.

In addition, the current tensions between Nigeria and the US poses its own risks to program implementors as they may be wrongly perceived as part of US plans to interfere with the transition program.

The situation will have to be carefully, continually and systematically monitored by the implementors, USAID and the US Embassy. The implementors of the program will rely on the Embassy, USIS and the Mission for briefings and guidance on security issues and in dealing with the risks associated with program implementation. The USG should be prepared to ameliorate the inconveniences associated with arrests and detentions. Program adjustments will undoubtedly be periodically required.

B. Staff Awareness to Risk

It is necessary to ensure that CEDPA and JHU/PCS Nigerian staff be fully aware of program risks. A disclosure of the inherent risks in the implementation of the DG and women's empowerment program will be made to all DG staff and consultants engaged to work on the program.

C. NGO Accountability

The capacity of the smaller DG and CMOs to assure fiscal accountability is highly variable. Therefore, total fiscal integrity cannot be guaranteed even with the most rigorous screening. Total accountability may be difficult. This risk factor can be reduced by assuring an adequate staffing and management presence by the USIPs. In some cases, the grants may have to include financial support for internal or external financial capability, e.g accounts staff and/or external audit/accountant.

D. Contribution to Factionalization

Given the complexity of Nigeria, it will be important to avoid any activity that can even give the appearance of partisanship e.g supporting a particular candidate, ethnic group or political ideology. It is equally important that the program not be compromised by

perceived government linkages. It is recognized that to the extent the DG and women's empowerment program is implemented within the framework of the on-going political transition program in Nigeria, will be seen as less threatening.

E. Distorting the NGOs Agenda

Participation in DG activities can compromise the non-DG portfolio of an NGO and have negative impact on an NGOs overall organizational objectives and operations. Where a non-DG NGO is involved in DG activities a disclosure clause will be included in the MOU.

F. Impact

Progress in DG can be expected to be only incremental, and immediate impact is less likely than longer term changes. There are many external political and international variables that can affect program impact which are beyond the control of CEDPA and JHU/PCS or its partner NGOs. Development of a few key process indicators may be the best guide.

VI. PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

A. Coordination with Embassy and USIS

The larger USG Nigeria Democracy and Governance program is expected to be implemented by the combined efforts of the Embassy, the United States Information Services (USIS) and USAID. The USAID component of the program will be implemented through CEDPA and JHU/PCS. The Post Democracy Committee will establish overall policy and guidelines for the US Government DG program and will serve to coordinate and evolve common strategies and address major concerns that may arise. USAID will facilitate IP linkages with the Post Democracy Committee, the Embassy and USIS. It is anticipated that continuous consultations will be held with USAID/Nigeria on program progress and status update. In turn, it is anticipated that USAID/Nigeria will maintain continuous consultations with the Post Democracy Committee (of which it is a part) and the Regional Security Advisor. JHU/PCS and CEDPA will liaise closely with USIS in order to build upon USIS' traditional strengths with the mass media, human rights groups and through earlier funded activities on women's empowerment. Efforts will be made to ensure that the JHU/PCS and CEDPA programs complement and support USIS and Embassy DG activities.

B. Implementation: Staffing and Workplans

Current CEDPA and JHU/PCS staffing does not include adequate professionals with strong DG skills and experience. Each organization is recruiting a senior level DG Advisor/Coordinator to work under the Resident Advisor on a full-time basis. The DG Advisor/Coordinator will be assisted by program staff and local consultants with DG experience. There will be close collaboration between the two organizations to ensure the necessary DG experience at the Lagos and the field level (Kano, Ibadan and Enugu). In addition and with the assistance of USAID DG Consultant, CEDPA and JHU/PCS will develop a data-base of regional consultants able to provide the necessary and relevant skills and local perspective for planning and implementing the program. Technical assistance and backstopping will be provided by CEDPA and JHU/PCS home offices.

Prior to developing its first workplan to guide implementation of the DG program, CEDPA

and JHU/PCS will convene a two day meeting of a small number of key DG consultants and experts to review this DG concept paper and expand the specific activities in support of the described strategies. To ensure that the processes, activities, content, and products of project implementation are targeted to the needs and dynamic nature of the Nigeria environment, a DG Advisory Committee will be established. This will include the CEDPA and JHU DG Advisor and Resident Advisor, USAID's AAO and DG Advisor and USIS and Embassy resources (as needed). During workplan development, CEDPA and JHU/PCS will review the existing NGOs within the CEDPA Alumni network, and using the developed criteria, identify both existing and new NGOs for collaboration.

C. Capability Statement of CEDPA and JHU/PCS

CEDPA, established in 1975, is a private voluntary organization (PVO) with a mission to empower women at all levels of the society. It has international experience in mobilizing women's participation at both policy and grassroots level. CEDPA has strong long-term and credible linkages to the Nigerian NGO sector, particularly grassroots-oriented NGO networks and has an alumni network of over 400 Nigerians. All CEDPA's programs in Nigeria have included major advocacy and community mobilization components. A detailed Capability Statement is on file with USAID/Nigeria as part of its Country Proposal for work in Nigeria.

JHU/PCS

JHU/PCS, an affiliate of the Johns Hopkins University, has longstanding international experience in communications, advocacy and work with the media. With more than 10 years experience in Nigeria, JHU/PCS is uniquely positioned to provide the communication instruments, tools and support for community mobilization efforts by NGOs and women grassroots NGOs to strengthen democratic participation and respect for fundamental human rights. A detailed Capability Statement is on file with USAID/Nigeria as part of its Country Proposal for work in Nigeria.

In support of the post-Beijing activities, CEDPA and JHU/PCS have sponsored and collaborated with Gender and Development Action (GADA) - a Nigerian organization - to convene a series of meetings and political summits designed to enhance Nigerian women's participation in the political process and address their issues and concerns in this arena. These interventions established a strategic coalition, action plans to carry the process from a national and zonal level to the grassroots, and a Women's Political Agenda presently being published and distributed. CEDPA and JHU/PCS maintain a continuing involvement with this process.

In addition, both CEDPA and JHU/PCS have supported a number of important DG precursor projects (NOSAD; Women's Spokespersons; post-Beijing workshops; IEC Resource kits) which have served well to build a range of DG contacts and reservoir of DG experience.