

The Civility



- 1 Editorial**
- 2 Katsina CSOs Working Group Learning Session on Open Government Partnership (OGP) Supported by OCCEN**
- 3 Defending West Africa's Democracy in Challenging Times**
- 4 Commulative Assessment Report On Strengthening Youth Civic And Political Participation In Northwest Nigeria**
- 5 Radio Program On Civic And Political Education**

From the Publisher's Desk



Dear Readers,

Welcome to this edition of The Civility Newsletter, where we report on the impactful activities and initiatives carried out to promote democracy and good governance.

Recently, As a results of OCCEN support to civil society advocacy on OGP, Governor Dikko Umaru Radda of Katsina State announced the state's intention to join the Open Government Partnership (OGP). This decision came after a series of sessions at Murjan Suites, which increased stakeholder awareness and understanding of OGP, showcased successful initiatives, and explored collaboration opportunities. This move highlights Governor Radda's commitment to transparency and accountability, reflecting a significant step forward for the state.

In Jigawa State, we conducted a thorough review of elected officials' performance to acknowledge those excelling and encourage improvements where necessary. This initiative aims to foster a culture of accountability and transparency among leaders, ensuring they meet the expectations of their constituents.

Furthermore, our radio programs on Vision Radio and Arewa Radio have been pivotal in spreading awareness and engaging the public on key democratic issues. Experts have discussed a range of topics including corruption, the rule of law, peace, and women's empowerment, providing valuable insights and fostering informed civic engagement.

Additionally, in a compelling article, Abdulrazaq Alkali emphasizes the critical role of civil society organizations in supporting and defending democracy in West Africa. Alkali calls for unity and collaboration to create a positive narrative and uphold democratic values in the region.

Through these initiatives, OCCEN remains dedicated to empowering citizens and promoting a transparent, accountable, and democratic society. We extend our deepest gratitude to the National Endowment for Democracy for their support in making these efforts possible.

Stay informed and engaged. Together, we can shape a better future.

Happy Reading!

Josephine Eche Omajari

Activity Report:

Katsina CSOs Working Group Learning Session on Open Government Partnership (OGP) Supported by OCCEN



Event Overview

The Katsina Civil Society Organizations-Open Government Partnership (CSOs-OGP) Working Group in collaboration with Organization for Community Civic Engagement (OCCEN) with support from National Endowment for Democracy (NED) hosted a learning session on May 13, 2024, at Murjani Suites, focusing on the principles and benefits of the Open Government Partnership (OGP). The event aimed to increase awareness, share best practices, and foster collaboration among stakeholders to advance open government principles in Katsina State.

Attendance

A total of 53 participants attended the event, including government officials, civil society representatives, academics, and media professionals. This diverse group of stakeholders contributed to rich discussions and networking opportunities.

Objectives

The session aimed to:

- Increase awareness and understanding of OGP among stakeholders in Katsina State.
- Explore the benefits of OGP implementation in Nigeria.
- Identify evidence-based arguments and showcase successful OGP initiatives from other states and countries.
- Discuss best practices and lessons learned from OGP initiatives.
- Identify opportunities for collaboration to advance open government principles in Katsina State.

Methodology

The learning session employed a combination of presentations, and interactive discussions. Experts in the field of open government and OGP implementation shared their insights and experiences, which facilitated dynamic exchanges of ideas and strategies.

Key Activities and Sessions

1. Opening Remarks and Keynote Speech:

The session opened with remarks from Team Lead, where he thanked the participants for attending. Also, a keynote speech by an OGP expert, emphasizing the importance of transparency, accountability, and citizen participation in governance.

2. Presentations:

The presentations by Dr. Abdulsalam Kani, OGP Expert highlighted successful OGP initiatives from other states and countries, providing evidence-based arguments for the adoption of OGP principles in Katsina State.

In summary, the first presentation titled; Understanding the Concept of OGP provided a comprehensive overview of OGP, including its history, principles, and co-creation process. It highlights the importance of transparency, accountability, and citizen participation. The presentation also covers Nigeria's journey with OGP, detailing the steps for states to join the initiative and emphasizing the role of the OGP Secretariat in coordinating activities. It concludes by encouraging Katsina State to sign up for OGP, highlighting potential benefits like increased citizen engagement and international support.

While the second presentation titled; Experience Sharing in Kano and Kaduna States outlines the Open Government Partnership (OGP) experiences in Kano and Kaduna States. Kano joined OGP in 2017, focusing on fiscal transparency, citizen engagement, and anti-corruption, among others. Notable achievements include improved citizen participation and establishment of anti-corruption units. Challenges include a weak secretariat system and failure to adopt e-OGP. Kaduna, the first Nigerian state to join OGP in 2018, emphasizes open contracting and social protection. Achievements include increased health and education budgets and a Citizen Feedback App. Challenges include inadequate public inclusion and insufficient procurement transparency.

3. Interactive Discussions: Questions, Answers and Recommendations:

Participants engaged in interactive discussions and provided actionable recommendations for advancing OGP efforts in Katsina State.

Outcomes

The learning session achieved the following outcomes:

- **Increased Awareness:** Participants gained a deeper understanding of OGP principles and their potential benefits for governance in Katsina State.
- **Sharing of Best Practices:** The event facilitated the sharing of best practices and lessons learned from OGP initiatives within Nigeria and globally.
- **Networking and Collaboration:** New networks and partnerships were established, fostering collaboration on OGP-related activities.
- **Actionable Recommendations:** The session concluded with the development of actionable recommendations to strengthen OGP efforts in Katsina State. These are:
 - a. There is need to organise a sensitization session (Retreat) for heads of agencies on the importance of OGP in Katsina State
 - b. Develop strong partnership with the ICPC and Katsina State Anti-Corruption Agency
 - c. Organise a Learning visit for some selected members of OGP to Kano and Kaduna States
 - d. Collaborate with the media to create awareness on the importance of OGP in Katsina State.

Closing

The representative of ICPC gave the closing remark where he reiterated the commitment of ICPC to collaborated with OGP working group and other relevant bodies towards promoting OGP principles in Katsina State.

Conclusion

The learning session was a significant step towards promoting open government principles in Katsina State. The active participation and engagement of diverse stakeholders underscored the importance of collaborative efforts in enhancing transparency, accountability, and citizen participation in governance. The CSOs-OGP Working Group remains committed to continuing its advocacy and capacity-building initiatives to ensure the successful adoption and implementation of OGP principles in Katsina State.

Defending West Africa's Democracy in Challenging Times

Democracy in West Africa is currently facing significant challenges resulting largely from loss of trust from citizens against semi-democratic leadership in the region and influence from communist and authoritarian states of China and Russia. Likewise high rate of poverty, illiteracy bedevilling a large percentage of citizens as well as lack of understanding and or will to protect democratic ideals and rule of law by people in leadership positions is slowly killing democracy and giving room for dictatorial and military regimes to snatch power.

In the last 3 years, four West African countries have experienced military coups namely – Guinea, Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, with Mali and Burkina Faso suffering 2 coup d'état within this period. Most worryingly is how much support some these juntas received from the citizens where in some instances military coups are celebrated and welcomed without regard to the repercussions and long term economic and social effect that comes with coups and dictatorial regimes. An example of

Page 4 such repercussions is how these coups have created cracks within the ECOWAS which have currently weakened the regional integration undermining both security and economic co-operations between member countries. Historically, ECOWAS which has been previously quite effective in sustaining culture of multiparty politics across the region as it stands is currently facing an existential threat as attempts to nudge the juntas in Mali, Burkina Faso and

Niger into agreeing credible timetables for restoring electoral democracy have failed miserably. Similarly, diplomacy, sanctions and military threats have all proved ineffective. What is currently clear is that the only way out of this mess is persistent efforts from citizens in coming together to come up measures and approaches to increase awareness of the benefits of building and protecting democratic ideals and values and the dangers of supporting or encouraging dictatorial regimes.

On the other hand, international players particularly in China and Russia are playing a significant role in supporting these military juntas and further emboldening them into making damaging decisions of severing ties with democratic states. These juntas have moved to replace foreign military bases from western countries with Russian military whom they believe will protect their selfish interest. They have denounced security partnerships with France, European Union, United States and United Nations. They have also rebuff invitations from other ECOWAS members' states invitations to cooperate in the fight against armed groups and terrorists across the Sahel. All this have further weakened the capacity and unity within the ECOWAS members states to the extent that the military juntas have announced withdrawal from the Union as a result sanctions imposed on them by the Union. Although the union have now relaxed these sanctions in order to bring these states back to the negotiating table, overall, little has



**By Abdulrazaq Alkali
Executive Director
OCCEN Nigeria**

been achieved to return these countries to democracy. It is imperative for citizens of these states to understand these decisions taken by the military juntas will be destabilising and highly costly to economic and security of the union in the long run.

However, ECOWAS in itself is sometimes accused of failure to enforce compliance to democratic values and rule of law among even democratic member states. Cases of abuse of office by political leaders, corruption, impunity and lack of respect for rule of law, human rights abuses against civil liberties and political opponents are quite common in many of member countries, this have not make its case attractive to the common citizens thus a point the military juntas capitalised on to rubbish the sincerity of the union.

With the lack of trust from citizens against politicians and to some extent ECOWAS union, the responsibility of steering the minds of the citizens to support democracy falls on civil

societies and other friends of democracy. It is quite visible that citizens of West African states, especially the youth are disillusioned with the existing civilian political class. However, civil societies are the closes organisations to youth in our societies and have the ability to come up with strategies and messages that resonates well with youth in the societies while at same time proving a safe environment for youth to critically discourse politics and leadership and devise ways for which they can help upheld democracy in their societies and elect competent leaders. This is because defending democracy can in a way be similar to fighting colonialism and apartheid, thus we strongly need civil societies and youth to devote themselves to upholding it. Civil societies need to work with youth in fostering democratic culture in every aspect of life in the society. There is need to involve citizens on the virtues of democratic values and commitment as this will help shape how citizens and society act and make political decisions. Civil societies can help youth understand the power of standing for democracy and taking responsibility, fighting the dangers of populism by heaping every blame on established elite groups as well as the believe of blaming those different from them for the challenges bedevilling their societies.

Thanks to Ford Foundation and West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI) for their generous and unwavering support for democracy in African continent, and it has been a light giving the civil societies the strength and courage to keep defending democracy even when things get tough. The two co-convended Civil Society Roundtable on Democracy in West Africa on 4th April

2024 in Lagos, Nigeria which facilitated discussion on the state of democracy and the resurgence of military coups in the region between the Vice President of Ford Foundation and leading civil society actors. The West African region is currently navigating through complex political landscapes informed by unprecedented democratic decline in the last two decades, the roundtable discussion brought together pro-democracy actors within the civic space and shared their perspective on emerging issues including the role of ECOWAS, prevailing challenges and potential pathways towards democratic stability and security.

The Lagos roundtable was a groundbreaking event that marked a significant stride towards safeguarding democracy in West Africa, aimed at preventing and responding to unconstitutional changes of government and abuse of power, this initiative brought together a diverse thoughts from civic actors, united by a common goal: to fortify the foundations of democracy and promote peace and security across West Africa. Thanks to the participant organizations:

- Ford Foundation, West Africa
- West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI), Ghana
- CONIDE, Niger Republic
- OJEPC, Burkina Faso
- FNDC, Guinea
- WANEP, Nigeria
- MFWA, Ghana
- Africtivists, Dakar, Senegal
- LEDAP, Nigeria
- CISLAC, Nigeria
- YIAGA, Africa
- OCCEN, Nigeria

The gathering marked a significant stride towards safeguarding

democracy in West Africa and reinforces the saying that “Democracy is never guaranteed; generation must preserve it and defend it to survive”. In an era marked by rising authoritarianism, declining trust in institutions, and erosion of democratic norms, countering the negative narrative surrounding democracy has become an urgent matter. Democracies worldwide face unprecedented challenges, including disinformation campaigns, polarisation, and threats to fundamental human rights and the rule of law. Amidst these challenges, the role of the civil society and youth generation in upholding democratic practices and values has emerged as crucial.

While countering the negative narrative surrounding democratic systems requires concerted efforts from all stakeholders, it is of utmost importance to engage and empower the younger generation by investing in youth participation and civic education, societies can nurture a generation of informed and active citizens who are committed to upholding democratic values and practices for generations to come.

Civil society effort in deepening democratic tenets in West African region must continue to foster a positive narrative on democracy, demonstrating the universal value of democracy, promoting proactive engagement and education on democratic processes, practices and responsibilities and highlighting the value of democracy in order to respond to the vicious cycle of political apathy, disengagement and declining trust observed in many countries across the region.

COMMUNALATIVE ASSESSMENT REPORT ON STRENGTHENING YOUTH CIVIC AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN NORTHWEST NIGERIA

NED Grants No. 2020 – 2021 - 13636



Despite the overall good performance shown, there are some areas for potential improvement which includes the setting a well articulate agenda for Democracy drivers' networks, as well as documentation of success stories.

Cumulative Assessment

Cumulative Assessment carries out around seven strategic areas and involves field trips and consultations with youth audience, civil society organizations and other relevant stakeholders.

1. Youth civic engagement trainings
2. Advocacy campaigns
3. Democracy town hall meetings / Policy dialogue events
4. Media programs
5. Democracy drivers network
6. Youth Internship
7. IEC Materials and NED visibility

Executive Summary

The purpose of this Cumulative Assessment is to objectively self-evaluate the performance of previous OCCEN – NED projects between 2020 and 2021. The Assessment review the information provided in the project periodic reports, with particular focus on project results, impact achievements and lessons. The assessment is carried out as a desk study, after gathering relevant information from target audience, collaborating partners, youth networks and other relevant documents of the projects. For each grant, OCCEN Assessment team conducts comprehensive desk studies drawing on resources, strategies, outreach activities, product and lessons learned, mainly through looking at project files as well as interviews with sample of audience. Essentially, the assessment methodology relates to youth beneficiaries, consultant performance, fulfillment of objectives, products, as well as visibility of NED.

Assessment result shows that OCCEN has achieved greater results in delivering the project objectives in the areas of youth participation in training events, networking and active engagement in civic life, town hall meetings, policy dialogue, and media programs on civic and political education, internship program, and other outreach activities were overwhelmingly positive.

OCCEN has evaluated each project under the CA requirement through desk studies, field visits, interviews with the main stakeholders and beneficiaries and occasionally with consultants of the projects. The results are based on independent evidence obtained by the evaluation team from project sites. In addition, the Cumulative Assessment provides a comprehensive overview of OCCEN four year grants projects evaluation.

Overall Assessment

The overall assessment shows the strategies and quality of program activities have done their self-evaluation work reasonably well within the project objectives focuses on the analysis of both qualitative and quantitative aspects of the project implementation.

Output and Impact Fulfillment of the Project Objectives

This assessment found that in most cases the original description of individual grant objectives were sufficient to permit change in youth civic behaviors. The objective was fulfilled as envisaged, and the resulting assessment enables OCCEN to continue build strategies for more youth activism in target communities. The report of



individual projects has been used as information input by other projects.

Promoting Youth Civic Engagement and Democracy values

The four year circle of OCCEN civic education projects has promoted youth civic activism in respond to government policies and legislation on good governance, with monitoring and evaluation of human rights issues, political participation, and with resolving religious or political conflicts at local level when they arose through youth peace motivators' initiative. The projects also created an enabling environment for youth CSOs to participate in policy and budgetary decision-making, and in creating focus on inclusion of women in the decision-making processes. Several initiatives were carried out on important issues of national interest including anti corruption campaigns, voter education, political participation of young people and organizing public event that generate opinion in a manner that created public awareness on the civic role in government affair. OCCEN through its youth network organized and conducted a number of Town hall meetings in order to promote civic participation in the delivery of social services in their communities through formation of local committees for health, education, water supply and security vigilante.

The local committees constitute members who are nominated from among community members, they offer advice to decision makers at local level on delivery plans and on the allocation of financial and other resource for delivery of social services and they monitor and evaluate the quality of services delivered by the authorities. OCCEN is currently working to strengthen this initiative to be one of the legacies of the projects.

Youth Networks (Democracy Drivers Network DDN)

There has been enduring activism and participation in all program activities by youth networks, while OCCEN maintain its supporting and guidance role for their activities through project team visits, organization of town hall meetings, policy dialogues and advocacies during grant period and afterwards. The youth networks have been fully supportive and committed to the planned activities in their communities, and it is reported with evidence that they have conducted a number of events on their own in order to promote youth participation in democracy,

demand for political accountability and call for good governance in their respective communities. They provide a great assistance in outreach multiplying the number of youth beneficiaries of projects activities.

Media Program

The impact of media in OCCEN civic and political education program is enormous considering the role it plays in public information dissemination to creating awareness, educate and sensitize citizens on participation particularly the young people. OCCEN Radio program provide youth audience with opportunity of learning and opinion sharing on political happenings, youth rights and participation in matters that affect them. Also through the media program OCCEN was able to helped CBOs, to identify and prioritize locally based social, political, economic, infrastructure and environmental concern of communities, and mobilized community to hold elected officials accountable and mobilized resources for service delivery and other projects.

Youth Internship Program

A number of institutions played important roles in the capacity building of youth participants under OCCEN led



civic education program. The internship program provides young people with a space of learning and connection to relevant institutions of democracy and human rights. It provides youth with technical skills development, trainings and carrier building and open of space for direct interaction with policy makers and other high level officials. It is a medium through which young people explore their potentials as well as promoting broad-based learning and volunteerism. Target Audience Behavior

In all of the four grants projects, the Assessment team was unable to assess the general behavioral change of target audience. But there are some specific events that occurred as a result of OCCEN program which signify behavior change among young voters. This is in reference to Kano state 2011 general election, OCCEN radio program influence young voters to cast their votes on issues affecting them and their communities as against voting on the influence of God fathers and money. Other evidence of behavior change can be traced back to OCCEN ability to mass mobilized young citizens' participants in demand for good governance in their respective communities like active participation in Open Government Partnership (OGP) in Kano, Kaduna and Jigawa state, as well as working with community groups monitoring and tracking public expenditure.

NED Visibility

The recognition of NED as the funding source for OCCEN civic education program is a legitimate action which make us free from partisan politics and that is in the interests of OCCEN as an non-governmental organization. Program audience are of the opinion that

donor visibility should therefore be maintained where possible and reasonable. More especially, for accountability purpose OCCEN is always keen to let NED know stakeholders engaged in the projects: (i) the beneficiary: youth, civil society and political parties; (ii) collaborating actors: Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), National Orientation Agency (NOA) Democracy Think Tank and media organizations, or citizens concerned with the issue at stake; and the public at large.

Impact of the Projects on Nigerian Northwest Youth

- Young people are encouraged to, and they participate in policy and budgetary consultations at the states and local council level, helping build opinions and consensus on key public issues as it affect youth generation.
- Youth partisan roles were also encouraged at the grassroots with informed mind where political manipulations and differences are potentially divisive.
- Direct involvement of youth in grassroots meetings to discuss and prioritize community problems, and propose solution to the government underpins and gives legitimacy to the OCCEN programs.
- As a result of OCCEN intervention, youth contribute resources in kind through volunteerism to the realization of service delivery and other projects in their communities, and by dint of their presence on the ground, they monitor and evaluate on-going programs and projects through physical inspection.
- Youth have also played an important role in generating local information on security and peace building efforts in communities with potential of conflict violence; especially the evidence based information to supplement government effort in maintaining law and order.

Impact of the projects on OCCEN as an organization NED supported Civic education program in the last two years had many positive consequences on OCCEN effectiveness, capability and structure of expanding outreach coverage of its activities and these includes the following benefits to the organization:

- Increased in the number of states implementing OGP benefiting from the projects (from two in 2020 to three states in 2021)
- Improved relations with other Civil Society organizations with a new spirit of cooperation in different programs and projects, with OCCEN playing the leading role.
- Increased level of skills to analyze and prioritize problems and issues, and increased capacity to design and program interface dialogue between citizens and elected officials and other power holders
- Increased level of youth involvement in monitoring and evaluation of projects during implementation, OCCEN recognized the importance of bringing them as stakeholders
- OCCEN earned official recognition as a contributor to the community projects that are now incorporated into the government development plan, which encourages more contributions of non-state projects and gives hope to citizens concerns over poor civic enlightenment program
- Increased participation of women and youth in decision-making at family, community and public spaces by raising awareness focus on the

needs of the groups

- Increased interest of OCCEN in governance affairs and greater participation in grassroots democratic processes and playing leading role in northwest Nigeria.

Factors of Success

An enduring will of OCCEN and steadfast support from NED to implement democracy and human rights activities were the key factors of success in the OCCEN led civic education program under the grant 2020-2021 -13636. Other key factors of success include extensive and continuous awareness creation and public education, sensitization of various youth groups, policy makers and local community leaders on the bottom-up processes, training of youth leaders, democracy drivers, working with coalition of CSOs on participatory approach and in planning advocacy and techniques for influencing public policies. The deliberate action taken by OCCEN on youth empowerment through establishment of networks has built their capacity for community organization and equipped them with technical skills for analysis, planning and advocacy for change in their respective constituencies was also a major factor in ensuring the success of the projects.



RADIO PROGRAM ON CIVIC AND POLITICAL EDUCATION

Through this program OCCEN educated the public and the youth community on their rights and need to actively participate in the political and electoral processes in Nigeria.



This publication has been produced
with the funding support from

