

Approaches to Community Engagement and Voice Enhancement for Marginalised People – Lessons from V2P

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Authors:

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List of Acronyms

CA	Christian Aid
CBM	Community Based Monitor
CDC	Community Development Committee
COMEN	Community Empowerment Network
CSO	Civil Society Organization
GEADOR	Gender Empowerment and Development Organising Resource
GSP	Gender Sensitive Programming
KAP	Knowledge, Attitude & Practices
LG	Local Government
MDA	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
MRBUP	Monitoring and Reporting Budgets using Pictures
V&A	Voice and Accountability
V2P	Voice to the People
WDC	Ward Development Committees

Introduction

Exclusion is a major challenge in the Nigerian context to such an extent that groups are excluded from participating in decision making processes, hence undermining their voices. This leads to dissatisfaction among the people as their needs are not met and services are not provided. Voice can be said to be a source of empowerment. When people have a voice¹, there is evidence that they tend to be more proactive, making more impact on their lives and on their communities; this was the sole aim of the voice to the people project in Anambra state. Like most locations “where political illiteracy thrives – where people see nothing and take no part in political life, without knowing that the costs of living, food, rent, drugs all depends on political decisions, without knowing that from his political non-participation comes the armed robbers, prostitutes, the abandoned child and worst of all, corrupt officials, the lackeys of exploitative multinationals” (Bertolt Brecht), people in Anambra state, were apathetic to governance issues and hardly participated in any government process, they were disinterested because their entire experience of the political system was that of promises made but not delivered. However, this political non-participation and non-engagement leaves leadership to the whims and caprices of duty bearers and elected representatives and this was the problem the V2P project sought to address such that the lives of citizens and communities are improved and people take ownership of their lives.



Training of election observers in Anambra State through the V2P project. Photo Credit: Christian Aid/Tom Saater

The Voice to the People (V2P) project supports vulnerable communities in Anambra state Nigeria, to hold state and local government and their leaders to account, take part in the decision-making that affects their lives and raise their voices to demand the rights and services to which they are entitled.

The programme runs in 12 Local Government Areas of Anambra's 21 LGAs where it is implemented by six indigenous partners with a diversified portfolio: a gender focused partner at the national level, Development in Practice (DiP), three community based partners – Justice, Development & Peace Commission Awka, Justice, Development & Peace Commission Onitsha and Justice, Development & Peace Commission Nnewi, one state level partner Civil Rights Concern (CRC) and one national level partner, Centre for Leadership Strategy and Development (CLSD) to provide state and national support and linkages.

Goal

The overall goal of the V2P project is Improved Social, Economic and Political wellbeing and better quality services in Anambra state.

Objectives of the V2P project

- To improve skills, organisation and confidence of marginalised groups, communities and civil society to enable them to demand their rights
- To increase participation and representation of women and adolescent girls in informal and formal decision making structures in Anambra State.
- To improve institutionalised dialogue and interaction between marginalised groups, community groups, civil society and authorities at local and state levels
- To effectively share lessons learnt to enable CS partners to achieve increased linkages and leverages between V&A programming across Anambra State

Approaches

Major Approach- Coordination, Synergy and Partnership

A key component of the V2P project is the coordination, leveraging and linkages among partners and other development programmes such as State Accountability and Voice Initiative (SAVI). Christian Aid provides technical and granting support to its partners on the understanding that they deliver on their commitments and on the objectives of the project focusing on their areas of expertise as agreed in the partnership agreement.

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- The three community-based partners work strongly at the community and Local Government levels, with some presence at the State level, interacting with key community groups, leaders, stakeholders and influential individuals to identify key issues in their communities as well as those reflected in their Charters of Demand. These community priorities run across key focus areas for intervention: health, agriculture, infrastructure and education. Other issues range from certain traditional norms and practices that need to be changed.
 - LGA/Community networking and collective evidence gathering and lesson sharing build voice and confidence, enabling both parties to have an understanding of their roles and responsibilities as well as their tangible touching points. This process is led by the Community Empowerment Network (COMEN) at the local government level. The COMEN is a composition of all community based monitors from various communities within the local government.
 - The state level partner, Civil Rights Concern (CRC), takes up issues raised at the community level, engages with a wide range of stakeholders at the state level, depending on the issue, as well as shares information on state government provisions and policies with community partners, who in turn share such with communities.
 - CLSD and DiP work across vertical and horizontal lines providing community-state-national linkages as well as engage with identified stakeholders for effective policy implementation to enhance participatory governance. All partners leverage on each other's work, with constant learning and experience sharing, which they replicate in their communities. Community and state partners also leverage on each other's activities where the output of one is the input of the other and vice versa. In addition, the state level partner leverages on the activities of the national partners and their outputs serves as a catalyst for action. The national level partners liaise with the state and community level partners in policy and budget analysis, gender empowerment and development organising resource (GEADOR), supporting the community level voice and advocacy activities

Other Approaches

The model adopted an integrated approach during the implementation of the project and a common feature of the entire approach was a broad based participation. These approaches include:

1. **The Problem Solving Approach¹:** This entails collective action research and iterative power analysis, where communities identify and map out their issues, recognize it as a problem and chart a way forward.
2. **The Information Self-help Approach:** This involves a process of capacity building and information provision with mutual support between communities and civil society. It empowers communities, by assisting them to acquire knowledge, skills and confidence required in addressing their issues and challenges.
3. **The Demonstration Approach:** This approach entails showing how things are done, handholding and demonstrating, learning and results as a catalyst for other actions by community groups.

A break-down of these approaches is entrenched in the following strategies:

- i. **Community Mobilization and Intense Continuous Community-Driven Engagement Working with Existing Community Structures – Town Unions, Community Development Committees and Traditional Rulers**

Working on the V2P project entailed intense community mobilization and engagement. Community members were used to identify various groups in the community that had influenced decision making at the community level. In the 48 target communities, more than 240 community groups were identified to be influential. These groups include; town unions, women wing of the town union, religious groups, traditional authority, youth groups, umuada and village heads. The process of identification of these groups was done during the baseline survey.

Core project intervention keyed into existing community structures such as; Town Unions, Community Development Committees (CDC), Ward Development Committees (WDC), youth groups and Igwe-In-Council. These structures were engaged to sustain community ownership, though some modifications were made in some communities to refine their ways of operation. Through these groups Community Based Monitors (CBMs) and Community Empowerments Network (COMEN) emerged to intensify actions around community project monitoring and reporting. The CBMs were constituted by the town unions, across sectors, following stipulated criteria. The COMEN a network of all the CBMs in a particular local government work together to advocate on particular issues that cut across their communities. The Traditional Authority and Town unions were key drivers of community actions in their areas. They were engaged in programmes planning, formulation of advocacy strategies, designing of tools, evaluation of programme and leading formal presentations in the LG and MDAs.

¹ Long, Huey B. (1973), *Approaches to Community Development*; American Coll. Testing Programw Iowa Citf, Iowa.;National Univ. Extension'Association,Minneapolis,Minn.



Amaetiti Community (V2P community) conducting a community score card exercise to map the community's needs. Photo Credit: Christian Aid/Tom Saater

- ii. **Capacity Building/Knowledge Management, Learning and Periodic Internal Reviews:** A key component of the V2P project was building the skills, organisation and confidence of community groups. In other to do this, several strategies were deployed to reach targeted groups and keying into existing meetings to reach a wider audience.

The community animators gained knowledge on power and gender analysis, gender sensitive programming, knowledge, attitude and practice analysis, project monitoring and reporting, right based approach, budget monitoring and advocacy. Partners at the local level promoted learning and sharing to ensure that knowledge gained was sustained and utilized.

Communities that learnt faster were used to transfer learning to other communities in form of mentorship and handholding especially for those in the same LGA. The quarterly community review meetings was also an experience sharing session which served to challenge other communities, following learning from their counterparts making them more proactive. Individuals who demonstrated what they learnt were 'installed' as Champions and encouraged to mentor other community stakeholders. Through this, many champions emerged across both V2P project site and non V2P project sites.

The partners' monthly reflection meetings facilitated learning and sharing among partners and added a lot of value to the success of the project. It was learning and sharing platform for weak and strong partners to meet and exchange experience and share challenges.

iii. **Charter Approach: Needs Assessment, Community Action plans:**

The new demand tool known as 'Community Charter of Demand' was introduced on the project. The demand tool is a document that contains prioritized community needs addressed to duty bearers for redress. After capacity strengthening on the development and use of this tool, communities started using the charter approach as a formal way of making official demand. More than 230 demand charters were developed and used in making requests from Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs).

The charter approach promoted community action and participatory governance process in most of the communities since Demand Charters are developed through community effort, and all community groups are part of the process. Sequel to this, V2P records show government have responded to more than 75% of the submitted charters. The charter approach was also adopted by the State government; during the 2015 Budget forum, the Budget Office requested Community Charters to be submitted by communities.

Community Action Plans (CAP) was also developed by communities, as a framework for the implementation of a set of actions agreed on by community members. Communities were supported to develop this and use it for their development.

iv. **Partnership Approaches in Engagement with Identified Stakeholders: Community + CSO, Community + Media, Media + CSO, Community+ Media + CSO:**

Increased responsiveness has been linked to effective advocacy of groups rallying around a specific issue and constructively engaging with appropriate authorities. Several approaches were deployed to merge communities, CSOs and media, depending on the issue to be addressed. They became part of a common group, planning and working with partners, gaining trust, confidence, as well as building good relationships. The relationship with the media, as a "mouth piece" of the common man, strengthened their resolve to protect and defend the interest of the poor and marginalized. This blend among CSO's, communities and the media facilitated various engagements and achievements across the program.

v. **Policy/Budget Engagement: Budget Analysis, Budget Process Monitoring, Budget Tracking, Procurement Reviews:**

The budget serves as a policy document which informs the direction of growth in any economy. It is a key government tool for the implementation of social, political and economic policies and priorities. However, people have little or no influence on decisions around allocation of public resources. Thus, people centred budgeting is both about the content of budgets and the process of formulating budgets in ways that are transparent and participatory.

Working on the budget was a major focus of the V2P project, it was important to get involved in the budget process, from the onset of sharing the call circulars. The budget was simplified in such a way that communities could relate with it, understand and use it to track projects being

implemented in their communities, findings from the tracking informed issues for engagement with stakeholders. Communities were also educated on analysing the budget document and monitoring the allocation and following up to full implementation.

In the course of the project implementation, an analysis of the Anambra state budgets and spending was done for the period of ten years (2003 – 2013), with emphasis on the overall budget thrust. The findings from this research informed several dialogues with the state authorities. Other policy briefs were developed on Anambra state procurement law and its operationalization and the Anambra state 2014 approved budget, with recommendations, informing the advocacy work of partners.

- vi. **Community Based Monitoring (CBMs/COMEN), Monitoring and Reporting Budgets using Pictures (MRBUP), Community Score Card, and Citizens Report Card:** This is a follow up strategy to the budget engagement above. The focus on Voice and Accountability (V&A) triggered mobilization of communities to monitor and measure the performance of budgets and its deliverables. Communities were engaged in performance monitoring and evaluation using community scorecard system. Findings from the baseline report showed that community needs were centred more on health, education, agriculture, infrastructure and water and sanitation, thus these became the project's sectorial focus. The budget implementation around these sectors was evaluated and scored by the right holders. The scorecards were then analysed by the communities and further used to make official requests of the most needed services. Score sheets from these processes serve as evidence during interface meetings at both local and state government levels. Mutual agreements were also reached with concerned agencies on service standards. MRBUP approach was also an evidence based approach where the budget implementation was reported using pictures and this was used for presentations to ministries with the commissioners and directors as targeted audience. In other to effectively understand power relations in the V2P communities, the V2P intervention adopted the above listed strategies as recurrent desk/peer review mechanisms that informed planning and implementation.
- vii. Engagement with all the key religious leaders and groups as influential gender, inclusion and community development actors in the communities and at state level. In this approach, partners leveraged on existing synergies within church structures and other religious platforms, collectively sensitizing the various groups.

- viii. **ACCOUNTABILITY FORUMS: INTERFACE MEETINGS, CONSTITUENCY BRIEFINGS, TOWN HALL MEETINGS, DIRECT SERVICE PROVIDERS MEETING:** V2P Supported the communities to create and claim formalized spaces for dialogues and interactions between citizens, policy makers and service providers at the local and state levels. Collaborative governance procedures were adopted such that the state ministries can adopt the practices in the exit of the program.
- ix. **Media Campaign/Advocacy: Live Radio Programs, Media Network: MeP4D, Social Media, Print and Electronic Media, SMS, Twitter Conference, Publications:** This approach entailed working with and using the media as a platform for information sharing, education and engagement. The Peoples Voice Radio programme was put together by partners to highlight human rights issues, gender, community demands, government performance and responsiveness. These issues are discussed on radio with the relevant stakeholders present at the programme; 'listeners' call in to make their contributions and air their views on the various topics being discussed. Communities were also supported to form a radio listeners' group. Campaigns on other identified issues like scorecard, charter of demands, irregularities in the state, tax issues etc were also done through the media, IEC materials, traditional and social media as well as public campaign.



The Media Platform for Development (MeP4D) set up through V2P to beam the light on pressing issues in the State. Photo Credit: Christian Aid/Nneoma Anieto

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- x. **Power and Gender Analysis: Power Mapping, Regular and Iterative Power Review, Gender Sensitive Programming (GSP), Knowledge, Attitude & Practices (KAP) Analysis:** The introduction of Power Analysis in the entire community mobilization processes helped the V2P project promote learning and engagement. Power mapping became a veritable tool of planning engagement and advocacy. In the general application of the Power Concept, communities' animators were able to identify new actors around their issues of concern. The Age Grade, Umuada, student unions, tradition authority, Priests, social clubs and other institutions were identified to be more influential outside the known town unions.
- xi. **Safe Spaces: GEADOR – Gender Empowerment and Development Organising Resources, Girls-Parliament, Idikacho-Women in Governance:** Understanding the patriarchal nature of the communities being targeted and the issues around gender integration and disparity, V2P initiated exclusive platforms as a way of engagement to allow for in-depth and detailed contributions from marginalized groups in the communities. The platform enabled the V&A project to understand the critical issues around gender and implication of such issues in community development. Exclusive platforms were initiated through community support; Girls Parliament, Women in Governance and GEADOR circles. The project enjoyed full participation of women and girls as a result of these platforms which have been strengthened to make meaningful contributions in community development.
As part of the V2P output 2 strategies, V2P adopted the use of creating safe spaces for gender facilitators and women to ensure the success of improved women engagement and inclusion in governance and community decision making.
- xii. **Tooling:** Working Aids were developed to suit specific approaches, eg monitoring tools, evaluation tools, advocacy plan, advocacy track sheets, quality monitoring tool, reporting tools etc - with an understanding of community structures and literacy levels, V2P adopted the use of practical working aids to ease tracking and reporting of progress and documenting project monitoring reports.
- xiii. **Learning and Sharing:** Publications, policy and issue briefs, newsletters, manuals, guides, review meetings were also developed in the course of the project to share lessons and learning.

MAJOR Achievements of V2PI

- **Response of Government to Community Needs:** V2P project fostered a good relationship between government representatives and communities. Positive relationship developed between duty bearers and citizens to work together to solve problems as evidenced in the working relationship between communities and local governments, legislators and respective ministries, departments and agencies. Communities are better informed and are involved in decisions pertaining to them and are allowed to make contributions.

V2P has created access to state actors and effectively provided interface between CSOs, marginalised groups and government authorities at both state and local levels, which has in turn led to changes in government response to the needs of communities, enhanced service delivery and citizens' participation in the budget process.

- **Changes in Policy:** In the course of the project, effective engagement with duty bearers led to the reversal of negative policies by government such as the compulsory procurement of laptops by teachers and multiple taxation issues; a new policy proclamation emerged to address the incidence of illegal tax operation and citizens' exploitation among others.
- **Adoption of Demand Charters:** The Community Charters of Demands along with the Community Action Plans developed in gender sensitive ways by all 48 V2P communities have been used as engagement tools with the local and state governments as a result of the increased awareness and confidence gained by community members on power analysis, RBA, score card among others. **73%** of community needs in all V2P target communities has so far received government's attention.
- **Gender Responsiveness:** V2P project activities have contributed immensely to women's interest and participation in both formal and informal decision-making structures. Gender sensitivity has also increased in decision making in communities, with more women and girls participating in governance processes. There has been an increase in the number of women and adolescent girls engaged and participating in decision making processes and elections across V2P communities. Women and girls now have improved confidence to engage, speak (freely and openly) on issues that affect their lives in the presence of men and community stakeholders. They participate in community activities and take up leadership positions in Community Development Committees (CDCs). There has also been increased acceptability, visibility, awareness creation and leadership roles for these women.
 - a. Acceptance: Increased acceptance of women and girls amongst men (safe spaces) to participate and raise issues that concerns them.
 - b. Visibility: Women and girls are now visible in community activities, are bold to speak out and challenge community ills and vices.

- c. Awareness Creation: Girls see themselves as part of the community and play roles in community development.
- d. Leadership: Girls skills, knowledge, belief and zeal has been improved as girls are now taking leadership positions



The Idikacho Women in Governance Platform set up through V2P on a courtesy call to the Commissioner for Women Affairs in Anambra State. Photo Credit: Christian Aid/Tom Saater

- **Behavioural and Attitudinal Change:** The project has witnessed higher level of citizens' participation in governance processes especially in budgets, elections, legislative engagement and public sector engagement. These behavioural changes are also seen across sectors where state actors are becoming more receptive to communities and their demands. Negative traditional practices have also been abolished in some communities.
- **Effective Sharing of Lessons Learnt:** The V2P project has identified that continuous collaboration with other development partners such as State accountability and Voice Initiative (SAVI) and State Partnership for Accountability, Responsiveness and capability (SPARC) is crucial to the achievement of the overall objective of the programme. This has helped to harmonise the delivery of development aid for better results and has helped to avoid overlaps and duplication of project intervention. This is especially evident through the relationship/partnership with SAVI in Anambra state. V2P provided a good platform for SAVI's work with civil society and citizens especially at local level while V2P has equally benefitted from technical capacity building processes led by SAVI and SPARC to the partners. So far, V2P-SAVI partnership has been mutually reinforcing.

- **Elections and Civic Engagement:** V2P partners made a significant contribution to the promotion of free and fair national and state elections in Anambra state. Through voter education activities and public awareness-raising, particularly through public outreaches and weekly radio programme, the project reached an estimate of over **2 million** people with information and responses to questions about election processes. **10,068** persons were trained and deployed as election observers and **11** debate/interactions were held between citizens and potential candidates in Anambra State. Citizens became active participants in some state/local decision-making processes such as Town Unions, Community Development Committees as well as deepening accountability through social accountability. Project partners used the elections as an opportunity to mobilise communities to engage with duty bearers and build platforms for further engagement.

Lessons

Specific lessons from the intervention; including challenges and how they were addressed

1. V2P activities have emphasised constructive engagement over confrontation. To this end, V2P partners were focused on working with and strengthening the capacity of community groups, marginalized groups and civil society to chart the course for making governance work for the poor and marginalized in Anambra state. Engagement with government and other duty-bearers/power holders opened up spaces of communication, collaboration and trusted interaction.
2. Power and gender analysis have been found to be an effective development tool which has facilitated a community approach to governance issues. Collaborative activities are also of vital importance where partners leverage on each other's work and where the output of one becomes the input of another.
3. The engagement and participation of women in informal structures has demonstrated that, when given the opportunity, women actively participate in decision making structures of their communities. For example, the 42 women admitted in the cabinet meeting across five V2P communities (Umuoba-Anam, Nando, Ebenebe, Umueri and Akwukwu) have improved the quality of meeting at the Igwe-in-council where women present and discuss their issues directly at such forums.



GEADOR circle meeting in Umueri Community Anambra State. Photo Credit: Christian Aid/Tom Saater

4. Safe spaces and KAP strategies improve women and girls interest and participation in governance processes. GEADOR circles (Safe spaces) and innovative participation of women in leadership and community engagement continues to build learning and ensures the women, men, girls and boys go from strength to strength. It also exposed some harmful cultural practices that the communities were not willing to let go of, but, engaging with men and building the confidence of women and girls went a long way to addressing most of the harmful norms and practices. One positive outcome has been that following engagements, traditional rulers/chiefs have become willing and even promote the wider inclusion of women in their councils, which has been a key learning point and good practice in application of power analysis. Because we believe that a programme which: (1) builds the capacity of poor and marginalised people to know and claim their rights, (2) provides them with information to look after themselves better, and (3) which strengthens and unites civil society to work together, has the potential to deliver lasting change. Thus, sensitive gender issues needs wider consultations (power analysis) and getting community stakeholders to be at the forefront yields more results.
5. Working with partners and communities to make them aware of their rights is a crucial part of building a strong civil society. Provision of basic needs can better be achieved when people are informed about basic provisions and entitlement as contained in implementation framework such as budget and procurement provisions. This in turn helps them hold governments and other service providers to account. As a result of budget advocacy at local government level, local government officials are now prepared to use the laid down procedures of planning and budgeting rigorously. Trust in these laid down processes arises from the

involvement of the citizen in planning and budgeting processes as well as monitoring and evaluation.

6. Involving government departments and agencies in activities has potential to institutionalize gender sensitive programming. For example, 100 women have participated in the development and rollout of charters of demands across 32 communities and 20 women presented them during the official presentation of Charters to the new LGA leadership in 8 LGAs.
7. The understanding and application of power analysis has been of great use to partner organisations as it also helped to resolve a lot of management issues, within the office and in the field. Other lessons revolve around operation-do-no-harm in tackling issues around gender, and the use of power analysis to resolve power tussles between president generals and traditional leaders as seen in communities like Utuh, Ichi and Ihembosi.
8. Anambra is a state with difficulties working with women because of the patriarchal nature of its society. Women accept every situation that befalls them and attribute them to fate and culture. The project has however worked well thus far through the leadership of the gender focal partner (DiP). Involvement by the men, clarity in message and confidence building in women through known local CSOs has helped to create a working environment and establish the fact that the change sought is not about usurping power from men but empowering women to becoming active citizens and contribute to their communities. Partnerships with existing structures and Civil Society Organisations known to the communities, like Anambra State Association of Town Unions (ASATU), Women Action Committee (WAC) and the involvement of men leaders in gender issues has helped to build courage and boldness among women as well as created opportunities for them to be heard through such platforms. The process of changing this behaviour and norms is still a work in progress, however the creation of GEADOR and the on-going successes shows a huge potential for change.
9. Integrating a strong communication element into the V2P project has created increased visibility. The project's visibility puts a "face" to giving voice to the people, and subsequently brings a new awareness of how 'Voice to the People' will deliver strong results in the area of community-driven accountability in Anambra State. The V2P website has allowed CA to better document and disseminate project resources, tools and reports and to capture the project's progress for a wider audience (www.voicetothepeople.org).
10. V2P and SAVI collaboration has helped to maximise the project impact due to the following reasons: 1) Both programmes have a systematic alignment of clear and specific goals, 2) Decision making and communication structure between the two programmes and 3) frequent information sharing and programme planning between the programmes 4. Co-habiting in the same office makes for easy sharing and planning. By sharing ideas, information, and knowledge with SAVI and partners, CA has increased shared knowledge about legislative issues, and deepened understanding of community needs. Collaborating to learn/work together typically requires little financial or no investment.

11. The V2P project has recognised the need to nurture relationships not just with government but also non-state actors including the media, CSOs and other programmes on voice and accountability. This relationship has further helped to make strategic links, build collective action and thus amplify the voices of the poor and marginalised in Anambra state.
12. Programming during elections besides observation and voter/civic education is unproductive. Some of the activity timelines clashed with election, like the planned targeted advocacy. The elections were also a ready excuse for politicians who prior to the elections had been contacted for some activities to abdicate their commitment. This led to series of postponement. Flexibility in planning and programming helped to address this.
13. Community mobilisation, demands and advocacy can be misconstrued to have political bearings by stakeholders. Clear understanding of political and power relationships at all levels by stakeholders and community-based partners helped to rigorously explain the programme approach and invite all actors to meetings. This has helped in disabusing the minds of people of suspicion of political motivations.
14. Synergy, collaboration and networking of CSOs promote learning, results and value for money (VFM). Joint advocacies by CSOs and media rallying around a particular issue are more impactful
15. Lack of LG autonomy negatively affects the development of local communities

Challenges & Mitigations

- Lack of LG autonomy – this affected responsiveness of LG to community needs and demand charters submitted.
- Community members find it difficult to engage LG officials with their charters of demands since the local governments lack the needed finance to undertake any kind of project. To address this, the capacity of community members has been built to take up their advocacies (charters of demands) to the state government.
- Some V2P communities are yet to adopt gender equality and balanced representation in decision making platforms. There is increased sensitization, exclusive meetings and power mapping still going on to get the buy-in of the communities' leadership.
- Inaccessibility of some state actors and duty bearers during advocacy visits, which tends to consume a lot of time, was mitigated through power mapping and targeted advocacies to enable more successful routes and tactics for influence.

- Refusal to change harmful widowhood and traditional practices by traditional rulers in some communities, due to their strong belief in their traditional system and the ways of their fore fathers was conquered through exclusive meetings and engagements with the community/ religious leaders, elderly men, women and youths; power mapping, trainings on right based approach and widowhood rights.
- Convincing community members especially women in changing long held practices and beliefs is work in progress. One strategy that was helpful in this process is the use of community Facilitators/champions/change agents to convince others.

Way forward

- ✓ There is need to increase stakeholder mapping to enhance their understanding of the project objectives through use of media, advocacies and campaigns.
- ✓ Working on attitudinal/cultural change is very difficult and time consuming. For change to happen as such, more time is needed to change the culture, belief and practice of the people towards issues of cultural and traditional norms that hinders a certain set of persons (especially women and girls) in developmental issues such as representation and participation in both formal and informal decision making structures.
- ✓ V2P's focus on local level governance has raised issues of common concern affecting all communities, in particular the weakness of local government in Anambra State, which has effectively been starved of operating budgets for nearly a decade. There is a need to link local level engagement with state level engagement to address these issues of common concern.
- ✓ The V2P Programme should address weaknesses in accountability within local institutions like Town Unions and Traditional leadership, as well as Government
- ✓ More mentoring of community members on occupying created spaces in focal and non-focal communities is needed.
- ✓ Moving forward, the V2P programme should involve more academics, students and professional bodies through dialogues, interactive sessions, think tanks and resource persons in other to have a pool of more stakeholders involved in making inputs in policy and programme development.
- ✓ The iterative paths/ power analysis process that has been established has to be worked on to effectively routinize them into the normal programmes/activities of stakeholders in areas of livelihoods and community process, deepening the engagement with new evidence and information to get the duty bearers to act.
- ✓ To sustain community interest in any programme, there is the need to introduce economic empowerment programmes as incentives.

Case Studies from the V2P Project

Below is a collection of some stories from the V2P project. More case studies can be found on the V2P website.

1. Improvement in Service Delivery:

Improved health care services

Through V2P activities, citizens which includes, community members, civil society organisations and community groups have had their capacity strengthened to effectively engage with their duty bearers, standing for accountability and the resultant community development. In the two and a half years of the project, communities have increasingly become sensitive to community development issues and local governance, taking charge of their oversight roles, monitoring community projects resulting from capacity building actions in the areas of participatory governance processes.

Read more <http://www.voicetothepeople.org/improved-health-care-services>

2. CHANGES IN POLICY

Education policy reviewed

A new policy unpopular with teachers across Anambra has been reviewed after an advocacy visit, a press conference and an appearance on the V2P radio programme by the state's Commissioner for Education encouraged dialogue. The teachers had been compelled to buy laptops from the Ministry of Education, with the cost being deducted from their salaries. But this will now be a voluntary purchase with a greater emphasis placed on teachers' computer literacy.

Read more <http://www.voicetothepeople.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/J4470-V2P-Newsletter-issue-6-AW-WEB.pdf>

3. ADOPTION OF DEMAND CHARTERS:

Charters of demand help drive community development

All 48 target communities developed their charters of demands and have made their demands known to duty bearers and there are good examples of government meeting these demands. These include the provision of personnel - school teachers, health workers, and infrastructure such as roads, drainages, water rehabilitation, fertilisers and seedlings for farmers.

Read more <http://www.voicetothepeople.org/charters-demand-help-drive-community-development>

4. GENDER RESPONSIVENESS:

Heading off harmful practices

The GEADOR approach has recorded series of changes in the community. The approach has successfully created a safe space where women and girls speak out without fear, threat, discrimination and persecution. It has also built the confidence of women and girls to speak out and engage with community stakeholders through groups and one on one advocacy. With support from V2P and members community women have been spared from further dehumanising treatment to which many widows are subjected.

Read more <http://www.voicetothepeople.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/V2P-Case-Study-Widowhood-Edited.pdf>

5. GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO COMMUNITY NEEDS:

Local government working for the people

V2P has shown a strong potential synergy between citizens and duty bearers/ Citizen Engagement and beneficiary feedback. Citizen Engagement has become a high-level priority across the 48 communities in 12 LGA of V2P's intervention. This engagement also takes place directly with sector ministries and public service providers. In some cases this builds on prior engagement and evidence of results achieved through this process. This is best illustrated by the impressive responses from duty bearers using social accountability to improve on infrastructures, health, education and agriculture among others which in turn provided a strong foundation for citizen-duty bearers' interaction and willingness of the government to engage with the citizens.

Read more <http://www.voicetothepeople.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/V2P-CaseStudy-LocalGovernmentChangesfinal.pdf>

6. ELECTIONS AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT:

Free and fair:

The V2P partners made a significant contribution to the promotion of free and fair national and state elections in the state. V2P has supported a range of voter education activities. Radio programme on voter education/sensitization in Anambra state has reached over 2 million people (based on statistics provided through radio station coverage), V2P partners led a continuous massive citizens elections awareness support programmes such as voter information sharing, political manifesto tracking, election observation/monitoring and non-violence election education that contributed to increase in voter turnout - eligible citizens especially women participated and voted in the elections.

Read more <http://www.voicetothepeople.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/V2P-CaseStudy-Election2013.pdf>

End notes

¹ 'The Impact of TAI' Gaventa and McGee
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² Long, Huey B. (1973), Approaches to
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