

V2P VOICE TO THE PEOPLE

Making governance work for poor and marginalised people

Improved government responsiveness

After more than 20 years in abandonment, the repair of the road linking Ossomaala, Obeagwa, Ogwuanaocha and Akili-ogidi, in Anambra State, is finally underway.



CBMs across Anambra State are more aware of government policies and procedures and as a result are increasingly engaging with the government for improved service delivery.

For more than 20 years, the road linking Ossomaala, Obeagwa, Ogwuanaocha and Akili-ogidi, in Anambra state, has been abandoned, but this is set to change, after community-based monitors (CBMs) drew public attention to the plight of the poor state of the road.

The CBMs of the affected communities (Ossomaala, Obeagwa, Ogwuanaocha, Akili-Ogidi) raised attention through social media, used community demand charter – an advocacy tool – and led advocacies to the traditional

rulers of all the communities and the ministry of works. They wrote a letter to the state governor, copying in the Commissioner for Works requesting that the road be repaired. After receiving the letter, the governor called for a contractor to be sent to the site with the mandate to complete at least 5km of the road before the next rainy season.

Engineer Omebu, one of the CBMs from Akili-Ogidi and Community Empowerment Network (COMEN), Ogbaru Local

Government Area (LGA), said: 'We are happy to witness the commencement of work on the road after various engagements through V2P. The road is cleared and the bulldozers have arrived to start the sand filling of the road.'

The repair of the road would ease transportation of people and food, which is being produced in large quantities in the area.

Ifeanyi Mercy, a CBM from Ossomala, said: 'The knowledge and skills I gained through the V2P

project from Justice Development and Peace Commission (JDPC) Onitsha, has taught me to ask questions, monitor and report happenings in my community and local government with regards to community projects and development. As work has commenced on this road we shall continue to ask questions, monitor the work being done and report to the community leaders and other stakeholders as we continue to pray that the road will be completed.'

Turning knowledge into action for community development



Drainage was identified as one of the problems in Down Quarters. After sensitisation by V2P, there was interaction between community members and the member of the House of Assembly, which has resulted in engineers being sent to assess a suitable site to build the drainage.

V2P has successfully created platforms for communities in Kaduna South local government, Kinkinau and Down Quarters, to collectively discuss their development issues. The project has also increased their knowledge about the rights of citizens as well as the responsibilities of the government towards them. Alhaji Danjuma, village head of Down Quarters said the sensitisation from V2P is: 'giving us the awareness and bringing us together to speak as one voice.'

Balarabe Mohammed, the youth leader of Down Quarters, has also felt the benefits from V2P: 'Before, we did not even know our rights. V2P taught us how to

fight for our rights, and now we know who we are in the community and where to go when we have problems.'

An interaction between the community members and the member of the House of Assembly, provided useful information to both parties about the state of one of the main roads, which the community rely on for trading, and plans for addressing it. In addition, the community presented other community development issues they had identified collectively – drainage, water supply and the repair of a transformer for electricity supply.

Samson from Down Quarters, said: 'We gave him [member of the house of Assembly] the letter on Monday, and on Tuesday he sent engineers to come and see where they will build the drainage.'

Other results from this unprecedented engagement were the instruction to the vice-chairman of the local government to include the community in their next budget to address water supply and power issues. The community wrote a formal letter to the chairman of water resources and local government, respectively.

The community members lauded V2P intervention as timely considering the number of issues in the communities and are grateful for the support they've received in demanding improved delivery of services

News in brief

Building capacity to foster networking

Community Empowerment Network (COMEN), set up by V2P, have jointly carried out an intervention with Women Action Committee (WAC), targeting girls, boys and women in the prevention of teenage/unwanted pregnancy. Working specifically in two communities in Ihiala and Issekke LGAs, they visited school authorities and community leaders to introduce the project and get their approval to sensitise school girls and women in the schools, market places, health facilities and other public places.

Comrade Chris Onuchukwu, Chairman of Ihiala COMEN, said it is thanks to V2P's support and training that has made the collaboration with WAC possible: 'The exposure and connection from V2P gave us the confidence and opportunity to be part of the Coalition of Non-governmental Organization in the Southeast (CANGOS); the public speaking skills and sensitisation methods we learned from the various trainings organised by JDPC Onitsha really helped us. We were able to connect with WAC through the V2P project network.'

He adds: 'At the moment, COMEN is also registered with another coalition group working on cancer prevention and treatment and we are hopeful that we shall receive funding to carry out another intervention.'

Encouraging community dialogue and representation of women

V2P project has succeeded in bringing men and women of Fagachi Sabuwa and Sohuwa villages in Maigana, district, Soba LGA, Kaduna State, together.

'Fagaci is now more united than ever, thanks to the V2P project,' says Bello Aliyu from Fagaci Sabuwa. Daharatu Sani, from Fagaci Tsohuwa, added: 'People can now achieve their goals easily when they come together.'

In the first of its kind in the communities, women were allowed to contribute to V2P planning and sensitisation meetings. The Sarkin (village head) of Fagaci said: 'Now women can sit side by side to contribute to issues that affect our wellbeing, also my daughter can now express herself in front of guest and bigger audiences.'

and responsiveness from the government. Balarabe said: 'As a community we are very happy about the V2P project. Before we did not know where we were going, but now we do. Now, we are not going to the duty bearers

begging, we are demanding our rights. With V2P, we know who we are and our rights.'

Girls' Parliament: increasing knowledge and building confidence

Girls' Parliament member Afubera Kelechi became more confident after V2P training and is now supporting other girls in her community to speak up and fight for their right to education.



Christlan Aidi/Adebola Fallawa

Afubera Kelechi is sharing the information she has learned from Girls' Parliament training with others within her community.

Afubera Kelechi, 18, testifies that being a member of the Girls' Parliament has improved her confidence as other girls in her community now look up to her for guidance.

'I have been a member of the Girls' Parliament for three years now, and it has been a good experience. It has really changed my life and had a great impact on my way of thinking and the way I see myself. Before, I used to care only about myself, I did not think that I could make any impact in my community,' she said.

The training Afubera received from Girls' Parliament helped her to intervene in two cases of early and forced marriage within her community.

Afubera stepped in for a young girl whose family was about to force her into marriage with a man who had been caring for her financially. The girl wanted to continue her education and identified Afubera as someone with knowledge to help because of her participation in the Girls' Parliament. Knowing that the girl had the right to refuse marriage, Afubera

approached the girl's parents and took further steps when that did not work. She explained: 'Her parents did not listen to me, so I took the case to Catholic Women's Organization (CWO). I did this because they taught us at Girls' Parliament that if you cannot do something on your own you should take it to higher people.'

Using her knowledge on power, Afubera identified the CWO as having a huge influence on the girl's mother, considering the context of the environment – with the church and its organisations as a strong

influencer. This proved to be a successful strategy as the CWO convinced her to let her daughter continue her education.

Afubera said: 'Now she is at university studying law. That was my first achievement, and I thought to myself: "Did I really do this?" After this, my confidence level increased; knowing that I can actually affect someone else. This meant that the skills [confidence and public speaking] and teaching from the Girls' Parliament trainings are improving me.'

Monitoring, reporting and influencing improved service delivery

V2P training and support strengthens and facilitates interaction between citizens and government.

Community-based monitors (CBMs) are individuals resident within the community who are selected to monitor and report public service delivery. Community monitoring is a vital element of the V2P model, ensuring accountability of the government on issues of budget implementation and service delivery that would benefit the community. Using their community charter of demands, CBMs ensure that government intervention and service provision is driven by community needs.

Eucharia Akanite, a CBM in Ezinifite community of Nnewi South LGA, said: 'Because the [state] election is coming, the government sent people to paint the primary school in the community, but

we [CBMs] complained that the main need is not painting, but fencing and toilets. They are working on these now.'

Eucharia revealed that before V2P's trainings and mentorship support to communities, there was little interaction between citizens and the government over public service delivery. Projects were embarked on in communities without the knowledge of its citizens and often it was without the knowledge or consideration of the needs of the community. 'If it had not been for V2P, we could not challenge them. We would have been afraid, but now you cannot just step into our community and do whatever project you like. We will challenge them, we will make sure the project is good,' she says.



Christian Aid/Faith Abobo

CBM Eucharia Akanite fights not only for the good of the community but also for poorly-treated widows in the community. This interest started after she participated in a V2P training on knowing ones rights.

Partner profile

Gender Awareness Trust (GAT) formerly known as Gender Action Team, is a non-governmental, non-religious, non-partisan and non-profit organisation established in 2000 and is based in Kaduna State. The organisations' vision and goal is to advance a just and

developed Nigerian society, free from all forms of discrimination through democratic development, gender equity and empowerment of poor, vulnerable and marginalised groups.

GAT is implementing the V2P project in Kinkinau and Down Quarters

communities in Kaduna South LGA. They bring on board their expertise in gender and inclusion to the successful implementation of the project across the communities.

Contact us

Christian Aid
Plot 802,
Ebitu Ekiwe Street,
Jabi, Abuja
Nigeria

E: info-nigeria@christian-aid.org
W: www.voicetothepeople.org



Follow us on Twitter:
[@V2Pnaija](https://twitter.com/V2Pnaija)

