

Developing Community Charters for Citizen Participation in Development

Guidebook series to V2P approaches



The Voice to the People partners are:

National

- Africa Centre for Leadership, Strategy and Development
- Development in Practice, Gender and Entrepreneurial Initiative

Anambra state and the Southeast region

- Hope Givers Initiative
- Justice, Development and Peace Commission Awka
- Justice, Development and Peace Commission Enugu
- Justice, Development and Peace Commission Nnewi
- Justice, Development and Peace Commission Onitsha
- Women Aid Collective
- Youth Education on Human Rights and Civil Responsibilities

Kaduna state

- AID Foundation
- Gender Awareness Trust
- Legal Awareness for Nigerian Women

Developing Community Charters for Citizen Participation in Development Guidebook series to V2P approaches

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This document was revised to reflect the Kaduna experience as a result of the difference in context from the Southeast States.

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This revised version combines the experiences across all the six V2P states of implementation, while riding on the lessons learnt from the implementation of the first phase of the project in Anambra State. We sincerely thank all our partners for the hard work, efforts and commitment to improving community participation in governance through this process, and in the lessons learnt and documented.

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List of Acronyms

CDC	Community Development Charter
CLSD	Africa Centre for Leadership, Strategy and Development
CRC	Civil Right Concern
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
DFID	UK Department for International Development
DIPGEI	Development in Practice, Gender and Entrepreneurial Initiative
GTF	Governance and Transparency Fund
JDPC	Justice, Development and Peace Commission
PERL	Partnership to Engage, Reform and Learn
PFM	Public Finance Management
PG	President General
P2P	Power to the People
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
V2P	Voice to the People

Introduction

Citizens' engagement and participation in governance processes is critical for sustaining the development of any society. These actions ensure the voices of the people are heard, and that they are able to take part in decisions about the issues that affect them. Lessons from development interventions have shown that these are critical in achieving lasting outcomes as the real needs of the people are addressed in ways that are suitable and adequate. To encourage citizen participation is to recognise citizens as active participants in driving development rather than as passive beneficiaries, and therefore places the focus on bottom-up and people centred approaches to development.

Citizen participation is also critical in ensuring transparency and accountability in governance; key attributes of good governance, which remain critical to Nigeria's development. Issues of good governance have been the bane of the Nigerian system for years. Beginning with the years of military dictatorial rule to the transition into democracy, issues of corruption and impunity on the part of government officials and elected leaders have derailed the country's socio-economic and political progress. This is in part fuelled by a high level of citizen apathy to issues of governance. As witnessed in recent times, these can be addressed through effective social mobilisation of citizens to participate and ask questions of their leaders. These actions to promote good governance are led by civil society and other development practitioners who now realise the importance of citizen-state engagements for effective public service delivery and sustainable development. Also critical to note is that if Nigeria is to achieve the global development agenda represented by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which seeks to "end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity

for all” (United Nations, 2016¹), all groups of people need to be involved in governance and development processes.

The need to effectively engage with duty-bearers in either created or open spaces of power and enhance people’s voices within these spaces has led to the adoption of various initiatives to institutionalise participation and citizen-state engagements. Working at the community level, these initiatives include the use of tools and platforms such as community score cards, budget forums, town hall meetings for interactive sessions between citizens and the state. Despite being useful tools in implementing the Christian Aid led demand-side governance project, ‘Power to the People’ (P2P) funded via the DFID Governance and Transparency Fund (GTF), lessons from the project led to the need for an alternative approach to working with communities to drive accountability in future interventions. It is in this context that the Voice to the People (V2P) project was built, drawing on lessons from P2P to seek out an all-inclusive tool that would empower citizens and reflect the development needs of all members of the community in their engagement. This led to the integration of charters, known either as Community Demand Charters/Community Development Charters as a tool for citizen-state engagements to ensure that everyone is involved in the engagement and participation, all voices are heard, and to ensure proactive engagement of citizens in demanding for their rights to development while driving the process.

¹ United Nations. Sustainable Development Goals: 17 Goals to Transform our World. 2016. <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/> (accessed September 18, 2016).

Purpose

This learning document describes in detail the process of developing charters for the first time, based on the experiences and learning from communities in Anambra – in the first phase of V2P – and other South-eastern States of Nigeria where V2P was implemented, and also highlights its adoption in Kaduna state; a region with a slightly different socio-political context, during the extension phase of the project. It also presents evidence of success of this approach through a sample of case studies drawn from across different geographical locations.

Below: The first secondary school in Echara community, Ezza South LG of Ebonyi State was constructed after engagements by the community based on the identification of a secondary school as their priority development need.



The revisions made to this edition are based on the Kaduna experience of implementing V2P in the State, and facilitating the use of the charters for state engagement by community members. Due to the difference in context between Kaduna and the Southeast region, the steps in developing and utilising the community charters are slightly different, and this difference has been reflected in the ‘Developing Charters’ section.

As with the Anambra State government, the charter has been recognised by the Kaduna State government as a document to be used for the budgeting and planning process of the State. It was in working closely with the State government to adopt the process for the state that the name “*Community Development Charter (CDC)*” was officially adopted for use in Kaduna State.

Case Study

Charters of Demand: Addressing Development Needs

Developed in a participatory way, considering the needs of all groups within the community, demand charters in the first phase of V2P's implementation proved to be an important advocacy tool for all 48 V2P communities in Anambra as they engage with their local governments and state lawmakers.

Austine Agwuncha, who was involved in the development of the charter of demand in Utuh community, Anambra said:

'We went round the community to inspect schools, roads, health centres and put the needs into the demands which were submitted to the State House of Assembly.'

Water, education and construction of roads were at the top of the list of identified needs by a majority of the communities, and they did not stop at simply presenting their needs on paper. They have used new advocacy and negotiation skills to secure appointments with their representatives and push for these needs to be addressed.

Utuh has since had two blocks of its secondary school renovated and new toilets built in its market, while some needs identified by the community were included in the 2014 budget.

'These were all contained in the charter of demand. Now the entire community knows that the person representing us is not God, he is a human being like us that you can talk to, [and] call,' Austine added. **'Because of the programme [V2P], we can interact one-on-one.'**

Progress on on-going projects is also being checked and followed-up by Community Based Monitors (CBMs) and other community

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members, with support and guidance from V2P partners to ensure real, sustainable results.

'They [government officials] became more conscious of people's knowledge of their rights and the responsibilities of government,' said Ajih Louis, programme officer for V2P partner JDPC Nnewi.

Uche Madubuko, V2P programme manager for JDPC Onitsha, said two key elements have contributed to the responsiveness of duty bearers to the needs of their people.

'Power analysis helped to identify stakeholders who were close to the government, some working at the state level. The town unions and CBMs presented their charters to these people. The communities worked together to identify those within their communities that could help drive the process,' he said.

He added that having an elected local government was a key element in driving participatory governance. In 2014, Anambra held its first local government elections in more than a decade, one of the major contributions of the project that preceded V2P – the Power to the People project.

'The ward councillors and supervisory councillors are all from the communities,' Uche said.

'Having a democratic leadership as opposed to career civil servants has helped to ensure there is a closer relationship with the government,' he added.

The project has used individual relationships and connections to ensure the needs laid out in the charters of demand are met. In some communities, councillors are also CBMs.

Charters of demand are regularly updated; needs that have been addressed are removed and new needs included.

Note: The charters are referred to as Community Demand Charters in the Southeast region.

What is a Community Charter?

The Community Development Charter or the Community Demand Charter is a written document containing the development needs of a community listed in order of communal priority - as agreed by all groups within the community.

Also referred to as a Charter of Demand or Development Charter, it is a tool for citizen-state engagement and participation as it contains the representative needs of a community; gathered and compiled in an inclusive and participatory way.

How do citizens use the Charter?

It is used to support advocacy and citizen engagement with the state and other leaders for improved service delivery. In some communities, the charter has become a representation of the social contract between elected leaders and their constituents. Communities use their charters to advocate for their needs across different levels of government; including at the federal level in some cases through engagement with their senators and representatives.

This documentation of communal needs is presented to the government as an official request of the community for its development. This is done through several means including visits to constituency representatives, local government officials, advocacy and through interpersonal networks of influential members of the community. Traditional rulers and all leaders within the community endorse the document, ensuring that it is a community owned process and document before it is used for any engagement. Lessons from V2P have shown that the official documentation signed and acknowledged by leaders of the community makes the process of demanding accountability from government more effective and transparent.

Why do we use the Charter?

In the context of the Voice to the People project, a community refers to a group of people that live together in the same area or neighbourhood, town or village, and have shared interests. Communities share common social, political and economic interests, and in some cases, the same religion. Given that, communities usually share the burden of underdevelopment, which can be addressed with increased engagement with their leaders for participation in decision-making and an improvement in accountability for resources.

In order therefore to raise their voices and effectively participate in decision-making, it is essential that communities are organised to participate and drive the course of their own development. Using the demand charter approach, citizens are able to participate effectively in making decisions on issues of their livelihoods and development in their community.

V2P as facilitators of this self-sustaining process ensures that every group within the community is identified and given space for meaningful participation in the process. This participation seeks to transcend existing power dynamics that may keep some groups excluded from participating in decision-making or having their needs represented.

Below: Renovated laboratory at Yakawada Secondary School in Giwa LGA of Kaduna



Case Study

Potable water supply reaches Amaetiti people

When Amaetiti community, located in Orumba North LGA of Anambra state developed their charter of demand, one of their top priorities was the provision of potable water supply to the community. Less than two years later, the community has a functional borehole provided by the government, a feat they had thought was impossible after years of neglect.

“I never knew that we could demand for anything from the government and receive it until now. Though it was not easy as we made a lot of efforts and expenses at advocating and lobbying our representatives, we succeeded.”

Alloysius Ayamelu, Secretary General of Amaetiti community

By articulating their needs in the demand charter, community members are able to have their voices represented by those they have nominated to engage with government on their behalf. However, it is not an end in itself, but is the starting point to driving community development.

Experiences from the project show that capacity and confidence building of community members to engage with their duty bearers is a crucial aspect to effective utilisation of the demand charter strategy. Given the participatory and empowering nature of the approach, the role of the V2P partner, JDPC Awka in this process was as a facilitator in the process of capacity and confidence building of community members like Alloysius who ordinarily did not think that demand-side governance was possible.

Other needs prioritised in their charter of demand included: the approval for election of a traditional ruler, access roads,

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renovation of primary school building, posting of teachers and health workers to their facilities and approval for a secondary school. These needs have been responded to positively by the concerned duty bearers and were captured in the 2014/2015 annual budget.

Adapting Learning to Context

Demand Charters proved to be an effective tool in driving vertical integration and ensuring inclusive development in Anambra state, particularly recording huge successes in participatory budgeting. However, Kaduna state has a markedly different socio-political context from Anambra, so implementing the Demand Charter process required an adaptive learning process.

Although Kaduna State and development partners invested in the State recognised the process as an innovative governance reform worthy of replication in Kaduna, it was clear that there was a need to adapt elements of the Demand Charter process as practised in Anambra state to suit the sensibilities in Kaduna state and ensure that it makes sustainable impacts. Based on this, a consensus was reached to change the name from Community Charter of Demand (CCD) to Community Development Charters (CDC). This name change was done in consultations with the Ministry for Rural and Community Development (MRCD). The adaptation process also saw a streamlining of the processes used by the different programmes (V2P, SCEEP and M4D) into a harmonized Community Development Charter process which was endorsed by all stakeholders and documented. Consequently, the CDC has become adopted as part of the budget process in Kaduna state and has been effective in ensuring that the LG budgets reflects the true needs of citizens at the grassroots.

As a result, 263 CDC capital projects were incorporated in 18 LGAs' 2018 budgets, constituting 36% of the total capital projects in the LGAs and implementation has started on over 100 projects. Further, the CDC projects constitute 71.6% of the capital projects in the Local Government Development Plans of 19 LGAs. Citizens' groups from 255 Wards have also mobilized and are presently tracking and monitoring implementation of projects in their communities and are reviewing and preparing their charters for the 2019 Budget.

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Below: Progress of CDC as a budgeting and planning tool in Kaduna State

Tracking progress of CDC inclusion in budget in Kaduna State



36%

of capital projects in 2018 LGA budgets were incorporated from the CDCs



18/23 LGAs

in Kaduna State incorporated the CDCs into their 2018 budget



100/263

community-identified projects are being implemented



71.6%

of capital projects in the LGA development plans for 19 LGAs were incorporated from the CDCs.

Citizens' groups from 255 Wards have also mobilized and are presently tracking and monitoring implementation of projects in their communities and are reviewing and preparing their charters for the 2019 Budget.

Below: Visual representation of the stages to developing and utilising a community demand charter in the South East context



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Below: Visual representation of the stages to developing and utilising a community development charter in the Kaduna context



Developing Charters

The five steps from development to utilisation of charters are outlined below. Although the details contained in each step may differ according to context, these are the general stages to go through to achieve a community participation in the budget and development process using charters.

Step 1: Release of Budget Call Circulars by local government

This signifies the ***first step in the budgeting process***, and the first opportunity for communities to participate in the process. This does not affect the development of charters as they can be used in advocacy at different levels, but the institutionalisation of charters as a tool for State and LG planning and budgeting as seen in Kaduna and Anambra States is achieved when communities are aware of budget call circulars.

Step 2: Community Mobilization

The first step in the ***development of a charter*** is the mobilization of communities for collective action towards development and to create awareness about charters and their uses. In the V2P context in Anambra, this took place during town union meetings with the leadership of the community and all village heads present. As with other locations, the communities were mobilised through announcements via the traditional head and the public relation officer of the town unions, and in some cases, town criers. Community and religious heads played a key role in mobilisation, and therefore have to be fully informed and aware of the process and its benefit to the community.

Step 3: Needs Assessment in separate community groups

Community mobilisation and needs assessment can occur simultaneously. The needs assessment seeks to identify community development needs within the community. It is essential to ensure the representation of men, women, persons with disabilities, young men and young women in order to ensure that the needs of every group is taken into consideration before a decision is made about which is of most priority to the community. For this reason, needs assessments are carried out in separate community groups of men, women, young men, young women and persons with disabilities in order to create a safe space for all groups to identify the development needs peculiar to them. It is important to take note of, and address power dynamics that may be at play even within those community groups.

Step 4: Prioritization of needs

The prioritisation of needs within the different communities is the fourth stage, and is also carried out within separate groups. Each group has to agree on the most significant need(s) that if addressed will benefit the community. It is recognised that despite similarities and shared interests, communities and sub-groups are not homogenous; therefore, priorities will differ as development issues affect them differently. Hence, the process can be strenuous. It should thus be facilitated in the most participatory and inclusive way possible for the context. It is beneficial that this process is carried out strategically, and that community members are encouraged to visualize their scenarios from different perspectives.

Step 5: Harmonisation and documentation of needs at community and ward levels)

For inclusion of community needs in the budget, harmonisation of their identified and prioritised needs happen at both community and ward levels. At the community level, the prioritized needs as identified by the community members are generally agreed on, compiled and signed off

by the leadership or representatives of the community. In Anambra, these are the traditional ruler, the President General (PG) of the town union and the woman leader of the community, while in Kaduna, representatives of all the community groups sign off on them. Further to this, harmonisation is also done at the ward level during a ward level meeting that brings together communities within the ward to harmonise respective community needs. At both levels, there is also a need for prioritisation which must be on the bases of fairness.

Step 6: Presentation of needs to relevant authorities and agencies

For follow up with the budget process, the harmonized needs to are submitted to the relevant LG authorities, such as the Community Development Officers (CDO) and LG Planning Committee in Kaduna State. These officials are responsible for incorporating these needs into the LG budgets, development plans and for onward forwarding to the state level. In addition, depending on the issues, community representatives meet with relevant stakeholders at different levels – local, state and federal – to present their charters. In some instances, stakeholders use the charter to engage more than one stakeholder, especially where the identified need has traction at the LGA level and the state level or with some government agencies.

Steps 7 - 9: Follow Up

Communities after this visit follow up with the officials involved based on the feedback or response received. They also involve their state legislators also presenting the charter to them so that they can as well facilitate the process as the case may be. The follow up includes to ensure charters are included in the budget, to ensure that the budget is implemented and that the desired and requisite community development is achieved.

Case Study: Impact of Demand Charters in Budget Planning and Public Finance Management

Demand charters are used as a tool to integrate community needs into the state budget, and inform budget planning

As a demand-side governance project, one of the key approaches to V2P is the participation of citizens in governance processes, including the budgetary process. The development of a demand charter, which reflects the real needs of members of a community, therefore provided a sustainable and strategic way of ensuring that the budget reflects community development needs.

Through the involvement of people in the budget process – using the demand charter as a tool –, the V2P project sought to facilitate locally driven accountability to enhance Public Finance Management (PFM) and budget performance. PFM entails budget fiscal responsibility, procurement processes and public expenditure management. It is central to improving efficiency, transparency and accountability in the budget process, ensuring that public resources are managed for the benefit of all citizens.

In practical terms, V2P's work with demand charters improved effective public finance management and entailed the following:

- **Participatory Budgeting:**

The development of the charters of demand and community engagement with authorities helped to feed community articulated needs into the state budget. Information gathered through the demand charter process became part of the evidence for citizens'

request for items in the budget. The development of demand charters is the logical initiation of the participatory budgeting process, and this ensures that the needs of various communities are adequately represented.

■ **Citizens demanding accountability:**

Citizens at the community level were empowered to demand accountability through project monitoring led by Community Based Monitors (CBMs). Using the federal budget (relating to constituency projects) and state budget document pull out, scorecards, town hall meetings and other interface forums, specific budget lines are identified for community monitors to compare budget performance to field evidence. Such activities have brought contractors back to project sites and led to the engagement of new contractors.

■ **Inclusion and Gender based budgeting:**

V2P through its partners has been advocating for inclusion of all stakeholders and groups in the budget process, especially women & girls, people living with disabilities and other marginalised groups. Through the creation of safe spaces, the specific priority needs of all groups (men, women, boys, girls, people with disabilities) are clearly identified and all form part of the charter of demand developed by the community. This method of developing the charter of demand ensures that the needs of all groups are represented and that development does not favour the needs of one group over the other regardless of gender or social inclusion status. In addition, the V2P generated data of all persons with disabilities was used to advocate for the use of such data in budget planning.

Case Study

Systematically addressing community needs

Through the charter process led by Echara Community Based Monitors (CBM), the absence of a secondary school in the community located in Ezza South Local Government Area of Ebonyi State was unanimously identified and prioritised as the most pressing community development need. This is given that children of secondary school age within the community have to walk as far as 15 km, or for 3 hours – at the very least, given the terrain – in order to access education, and this has for years been a source of concern for the community, according to IK Ochiagu, the CBM and cabinet secretary of Echara community.

Given this, several efforts had been made in the past by Echara's major stakeholders to address this issue, but to no avail, however, the support provided by V2P partners, HOG-I and YEHCRC to the community in the development of their charter of demand and advocacy activities to address the issue led to remarkable success. On the 4th of September 2017, Echara secondary school commenced its first academic session with 10 students enrolled for Junior Secondary School I (JSS I). Within a month the number enrolled increased to over 30 students, and before the end of the year, this number increased to 79 students across JSS I, II and III.

Advocacy visits were paid to the Chairman of the Universal Basic Education Board (UBEB) Ebonyi State and the State Commissioner for Education; two key stakeholders in the educational sector. Through the collective action brought on by the charter process, through the needs assessment, prioritisation and harmonisation, the community led by their CBMs came up with community-led solutions to some of the hindrances to achieving their needs. For example, because of the embargo placed on the

construction of new secondary schools in the state due to the lack of funds to do so by the state, the community requested that some unused blocks of their primary school building be converted to secondary school in the interim while waiting for total lifting of the ban placed on establishment of schools. They also provided a permanent site for the establishment of the school.

Beyond this, the CBMs follow it up with several visits to the Ministry of Education and other relevant stakeholders even within the community, and frequent calls to ensure that the mandatory inspection of the proposed site was carried out. Working collaboratively with the government, the community was able to achieve the solution to its need, although they had to take up some added responsibilities.

The establishment of a secondary school in Echara is a good example of active citizen participation and citizen owning their development.

Conclusion

This approach to community participation in development has served as a mode of organising communities for collective action. It has generated interest in decision-making and governance processes, opening up to communities a possibility for driving their own development – a concept that many had never imagined was possible.

Community members have been empowered through the process of developing their demand charters, as it is a strategic process that involves lengthy dialogues and a recognition of the needs of the different groups within the society. Vulnerable groups are not excluded from this process, therefore giving them a sense of empowerment that their voices can be heard within the community. This sense of empowerment also occurs among the more powerful groups within the community as they find that through the process of engaging with the government, their voices are heard, and they are able to take part in governance.

The process is self-sustaining and the role of civil society is to facilitate the process of communities coming together to identify their own needs, and more importantly prioritise these needs in a practical way for engagement with the government. It is also the role of civil society to build the capacity of community members to effectively engage with the right people concerning the right issues and at the right time if their needs are to be planned for and included in the government budget.

In a place like Anambra, based on the capacity built and the voices enabled, government on its part has recognised this as a good development tool and has thus created a unit in the Ministry of Budget and Planning that interacts with representatives of communities to receive the charters in an agreed format. Thus, informing development planning/budget for the state.

Addendum: Sample Demand Charter Documents

NNOKWA IMPROVEMENT UNION

Date.....

Dear Sir,

CHARTER OF DEMAND FOR NNOKWA COMMUNITY

We the members of Nnokwa Community are submitting the following Charter of Demand (attached) to solicit your support on assumption of office while we offer you our support and mandate during the electoral process.

These demands are not exhaustive, but only reflect our prioritized needs which will impact positively on the lives of our community members. Thus, we appeal that it goes into the budget during the budget planning process.

Thank you in anticipation,

Yours sincerely,

Signed,

Secretary

President-General

Traditional leader

The Receiver:

**COMMUNITY ACTION PLANNING AND PARTICIPATORY BUDGET
PLANNINGS AND DECISION MAKING PROCESSES IN IHALA
COMMUNITY**

We, the members of Community in submitting this charter of Demand hereby solicit your support on assumption of office (elected or appointed).

We declare that this is a non-partisan, non-political, non-religious and not affiliated to any one single ethnic group, but this is an inclusive representation of the interests/needs of the entire ethnic and religious groups in this community.

These demands are by no means exhaustive but only reflect our prioritized needs for now which will impact positively on the lives of our community members. Thus, we appeal that it goes into the budget during this upcoming budget planning process.

Thank you in anticipation,

Yours Sincerely,

Signed

President-General

Secretary

HRH (Trad. Ruler)

Receivers name: _____

Name of political party or organizational affiliation: _____

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Find out more about V2P on
our website **voicetothepeople.org**
or on Twitter **@V2Pnaija**

About Us

Voice to the People (V2P) is a project supporting vulnerable communities in Kaduna State and the Southeast region of Nigeria to hold service providers, local authorities and state government 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.

It is delivered by a consortium of national and state organisations, led by international development agency, Christian Aid. The programme began in 2013 in 12 of Anambra's 21 local government areas. It was extended in 2016 to cover Kaduna and the rest of the Southeast region, including the whole of Anambra.

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