



# Roundtable On CSO Participation and Rights-Based Approach In Lawmaking By the Legislature

A Programme Organized in commemoration of  
International Human Rights Day

**PLAC**

POLICY AND LEGAL ADVOCACY CENTRE





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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC) is a non-governmental organization committed to strengthening democratic governance and citizens' participation in Nigeria. PLAC's work enhances citizens' engagement with State institutions and promotes transparency and accountability in policy and lawmaking processes.

With several successful interventions under its belt, PLAC's main focus has been on legislative strengthening and advocacy. However, over the years, PLAC has delivered cutting-edge research, policy analysis and credible resources on elections in Nigeria. In addition, PLAC has produced several practice models in legislative processes, as well as deepening citizens' understanding of policy barriers and enablers

Part of the cooperation strategy of the Cooperation and Cultural Department of the Embassy of France in Nigeria is to strengthen its relations with the civil society and support its work through interventions such as: awareness and sensitization programmes, training and capacity building with a view to attaining the globally acclaimed "Sustainable Development Goals" (SDGs).

Human rights are a priority for France's foreign policy and as such the Embassy of France in Nigeria commemorates the international human rights day every December 10. Consequently, the Embassy partnered with PLAC to organise a Roundtable on CSOs' Participation and Rights-based Approach to Lawmaking on December 6, 2017 at the Institut Français, Abuja. This year's theme was designed in furtherance of SDG 16 – "Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions."

## 2. BACKGROUND

PLAC and the Embassy of France in Nigeria partnered to commemorate the 2017 human rights day by organising this CSO Roundtable in order to raise awareness on the current gaps that exist in the advancement of human rights in the Nigerian Legislature. As human rights day marks the end of the 16 days of activism, which starts every November 25, the purpose of commemorating this year's human rights day was to enable CSOs working on human rights issues to share challenges and opportunities in the field, while advancing human rights.

## 3. TECHNICAL EXPERTS

Two experts helped participants explore ways of engaging with the legislature and with other stakeholders. To discuss best practices for engagement with

lawmakers, Ms. Seember Nyager led an interactive session, detailing citizens' rights under the law while drawing on their perspectives to explore next steps. Participants discussed stakeholder engagement with Mr. Oke Epia, who used the grid map to showcase where CSOs' priorities should lie.

- **Ms. Seember Nyager**

Ms. Nyager is the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Public and Private Development Centre (PPDC) in Nigeria. Through her organization, she successfully advocates for open contracting data standards by the Nigerian government, using a platform called "Budeshi". Ms. Nyager is a lawyer and an open government fellow at Open Knowledge/Code for Africa.

- **Mr. Oke Epia**

Mr. Oke Epia is the Executive Director and Publisher, OrderPaper Nigeria. Mr. Epia is a journalist and media entrepreneur, and former chief press secretary to the Deputy Speaker of the House of Assembly in 2013.

## 4. PRESENTATIONS

### 4.1. CSO ENGAGEMENT WITH THE LEGISLATURE: Best Practices for Inclusive Lawmaking. <sup>1</sup>

by **Seember Nyager**

*The paper reflects on inclusive law making, the legal framework of human rights in Nigeria, rights that are protected and less protected, roles of human rights in law making; challenges and gaps to engaging with the legislature and provides examples of good practises for inclusive lawmaking.*

#### **Overview**

The Nigerian constitution, which is the supreme law of the land, safeguards the participation of people in their government and also requires laws to be made with respect to human rights. Although there is a legal basis for participation and for a human rights approach in lawmaking, knowledge gaps and inaccessibility to the legislative process hinder maximum participation by CSOs. There are however, good practises being adopted in Nigeria and beyond that are expanding inclusive lawmaking which need to be sustained.

#### **The Constitution, Human Rights and Participation in Lawmaking Processes.**

The primary purpose for which government exists is best captured by the

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1 This research was prepared by Seember Nyager for the Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre in Abuja.

Nigerian Constitution; which is for the security and welfare of the people. This is met through the 3-arm structure of government consisting of the executive, legislature and the judiciary.

For the legislature whose primary purpose is to make laws, the Nigerian constitution as amended also sets some principles for law making. Central to the principles for law making in Nigeria is inclusivity and the respect for human rights.

As a safeguard for inclusive government processes, chapter II of the Nigerian constitution as amended also assures the participation of the people in their government.<sup>2</sup>

### ***Fundamental Rights in the Constitution.***

Similarly, Chapter IV of the Nigerian Constitution as amended provides fundamental rights that must be preserved when laws are being made. These fundamental rights which are derived from the international human rights framework, are inalienable; and as such cannot be restrained by other legislation except to the extent that the constitution allows.

#### **Fundamental Rights in the Nigerian Constitution**

- The Right to life
- The Right to dignity of human persons.
- The Right to personal liberty.
- The Right to a fair hearing.
- The Right to private and family life.
- The Right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion
- The Right to freedom of expression and the press
- The Right to peaceful assembly and association.
- The Right to freedom of movement.
- The Right to freedom from discrimination.
- The Right to acquire and own immovable property.

Ideally, therefore, any legal provision that contravenes or denies the fundamental rights of an individual would be struck down by the courts.

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2 See Section 14(2) a & c of the Nigerian Constitution. Available here [http://www.nigeria-law.org/ConstitutionOfTheFederalRepublicOfNigeria.htm#Chapter\\_2](http://www.nigeria-law.org/ConstitutionOfTheFederalRepublicOfNigeria.htm#Chapter_2)

### **Illustration I: The Police Act and Female Marriages**

Regulation 124 made pursuant to S19 of the Police Act required female police officers to seek permission from the commissioner of police before embarking on a marriage. The Courts nullified these regulations on the basis that they contravened the female officers fundamental rights against discrimination.<sup>1</sup>

Although fundamental rights are enforceable, they are only so to the extent that people know these provisions and have the capability to rely on them. Two challenges therefore, to fully enforcing fundamental rights is knowledge and access to justice. Similarly, the more stakeholders are aware and involved in the lawmaking process, the higher the likelihood of creating laws that respect fundamental rights provisions.

It is also worthy of note that these enforceable fundamental rights are civil and political in nature and owing to the hierarchy of needs that determines people's priorities, may be most applicable and appreciated by the ruling class.

### **Socio-economic Rights in the Nigerian Constitution**

For the majority of Nigerians social and economic rights, enable the achievement of fundamental rights. Chapter II of the Nigerian constitution takes these socio-economic rights into account.

#### **Socio-Economic Rights in The Nigerian Constitution<sup>2</sup>**

- The right to security and welfare (primary function of government)
- The right to political participation/participation in government
- The right to education
- The right to health
- The right to environment,
- The right to secure and adequate means of livelihood
- Right to suitable and adequate shelter
- The right to suitable and adequate food
- The right to reasonable national minimum living wage
- The right to old age care and pensions
- The right to unemployment, sick benefits and welfare of the disabled and other vulnerable people.

The constitution obliges the legislature and other arms of government to ensure national prosperity by ensuring that these rights are catered to within government processes; and in this case, the law making process. The biggest challenge to achieving this however, is that socio-economic rights are non-justiciable. As such, the government need only try to achieve these objectives within resources available and there is hardly any legal recourse if one's Section II right is denied .

### ***The African Charter on Human and People's Rights***

In addition to the provisions of the Constitution, the Nigerian Government, by an Act of parliament, has ratified and domesticated the African Charter on Human and People's Rights; so that it is enforceable in Nigeria. <sup>3</sup> The charter is divided into sections for civil and political rights, economic, social and cultural rights, people rights and groups rights and duties.

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3 See the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (Ratification and Enforcement) Act. <http://www.nigeria-law.org/African%20Charter%20on%20Human%20and%20Peoples'%20Rights.htm>

## **Rights Framework within the African Charter on Human and People's Rights**

### **Civil and Political Rights**

- Freedom from discrimination
- Equality
- life and personal integrity
- dignity
- freedom from slavery
- freedom from cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (Article 5),
- rights to due process concerning arrest and detention (Article 6),
- the right to a fair trial
- Freedom of religion
- Freedom of information and expression
- Freedom of association
- freedom to assembly
- Freedom of movement
- freedom of political participation
- The right to property

### **Socio-economic and Cultural Rights**

- The right to work
- The right to health
- The right to education
- Right to housing and right to food found to be implicit in the charter based on the decision of the courts in SERAC v Nigeria (2001)

### **People's Rights and Group Rights**

- family protection by the state
- The right to equality
- The right to self-determination
- The right to freely dispose of their wealth and natural resources
- The right to development
- The right to peace and security and a generally satisfactory environment

### **Duties**

- The duty to preserve the harmonious development of the family.
- To serve the national community by placing both physical and intellectual abilities at its service.
- Not to compromise the security of the State.
- To preserve and strengthen social and national solidarity.
- To preserve and strengthen national independence and the territorial integrity of one's country and to contribute to its defence.
- To work to the best of one's abilities and competence and to pay taxes in the interest of society.
- To preserve and strengthen positive African cultural values and in general to contribute to the promotion of the moral well-being of society.
- To contribute to the best of one's abilities to the promotion and achievement of African unity.

Interestingly, the African Charter on Human and People's rights was adopted in its entirety by the National Assembly. However, the provisions relating to social and economic rights are restrained from being justiciable as a result of Section 11 of the constitution.

### **The Freedom of Information Act, 2011**

One of the bigger impediments to inclusive lawmaking is access to information. The Freedom of Information Act, has however provided a framework for access. This framework not only includes access to information based on requests but also requirements for the government; in this case, the legislature to proactively disclose information. Judicial recourse can also be sought for both access to records based on request and for proactive disclosure.

### **Challenges and Gaps to Engaging with the Legislature**

*Inadequate Knowledge of the Legislative Process:* Very few Nigerians can currently engage with the legislative process because there is inadequate knowledge of the various stages within the law making process.

#### **The Legislative Process - In Brief**

- Stage 1: Identification of the need for a bill
- Stage 2: First reading - second reading - public hearing/bill killed - third reading
- Stage 3: Clean copy - joint conference committee
- Stage 4: Presidential assent

*Inadequate Access to Timely Legislative Information:* Many CSOs and other stakeholders who may or may not have good knowledge of the legislative procedure, are not aware of the legislative timetable. As such, important bills may have been introduced in the house without their knowledge.

*Inadequate Access to the Legislative Representatives:* Access to members of the National Assembly and State Assembly is a major challenge to inclusive law making.

In spite of these challenges, there are efforts to improve CSO and stakeholder engagement with the legislative process.

*Non - Involvement of CSOs in Drafting Bills:* CSOs are often excluded or exclude themselves from the bills drafting process. However, involvement in drafting bills

is part of the advocacy to include rights-based provisions in proposed legislation. It may be less easy to get rid of rights based provisions than it may be to introduce them to existing legislation.

### **Illustration II: Rights-based Provisions in Existing Legislations and the Role of CSOs in the Process**

**The Public Procurement Act 2007:** The Public Procurement Act was signed into law by the Late President Umaru Musa Yar Adua and contained several provisions that enabled citizens to participate in Government. These provisions include:

- The obligation for civil society organizations and professional bodies to be invited to every bidding process
- The right for every interested member of the public to witness bid opening procedures
- The right for every bidder to simultaneously access adverts on government tenders.

These sunshine provisions as they are called, were introduced by CSOs who worked pro bono on the bill and ensured that these were included.

**The Freedom of Information Act, 2011:** The Nigerian FOI bill spent 11 years at the National Assembly before it was finally signed into law by President Goodluck Jonathan. The law provides unprecedented access to publicly held information and does not require the requester to demonstrate any specific information in the information being requested for. CSOs led by the Media Rights Agenda were primarily responsible for the initial and subsequent drafts to the then FOI bill; before it became an Act of the National Assembly.

**The Digital Rights and Freedom Bill** is currently awaiting third reading at the House of Representatives. Since its inception, it has been spearheaded by the Net Rights coalition which is convened by Paradigm Initiative Nigeria.

*Limited Collaboration between CSOs:* Engaging the lawmaking process requires multiple skills, resources and is better achieved when various CSOs work together

at each stage towards achieving rights based legislation. At the moment, however, there is insufficient collaboration between CSOs and this affects the outcome and sustenance in following up with the law making process.

### **Current Efforts/Best Practices to Improve Inclusive Lawmaking.**

- *Televised/Live streaming of Legislative Sitings:* Currently, the senate livestreams some of its sessions. This can be extended to other sessions in both the Senate and the House of representatives to enable more access to the lawmaking process.
- *Bills tracking and information sharing:* The Policy, Legal and Advocacy Centre (PLAC) currently tracks bills going through the National Assembly and shares with the wider CSO community through text messages and on web-based platforms.
- *Analyses of bills in the National Assembly:* In addition to tracking bills that go through the National Assembly, PLAC currently analyzes legislative bills and shares on social media platforms. PLAC also sends text message, twitter and facebook notifications on public hearings. These efforts provide avenues for people to summarily understand the implications of a bill and an opportunity to engage on the issues. Similarly, organizations such as BudGIT analyze budget proposals and put these out in the public domain to improve public discourse and engagement with the budget making process.
- *Publication Notices for Public Hearings:* Sometimes, the National Assembly publishes notices of public hearings in newspapers to inform stakeholders of public hearings. This is a practise that should be sustained for more inclusive lawmaking.
- *Campaigns for Increased Political Participation:* YIAGA currently convenes the **#NotTooYoungToRun** campaign which encourages youth participation in the political process. This provides an avenue for more diversity and representation within the legislature.
- *Town Hall Meetings and Public Debates:* This is arguably one of the oldest modes for engaging the political process and to a large extent, it is an effective means for inclusive law making. It serves as an effective dialogue and feedback mechanism with stakeholders on proposed laws.

The effectiveness of town hall type meetings is often hinged on prior access of all stakeholders to documents (in this case bills or proposals) to be deliberated

upon. This enables informed dialogue from various perspective; thus improving feedback. ]

- *Use of Web-based platforms:* In an effort to increase citizens participation in lawmaking, groups in several countries are taking advantage of web-based platforms to “crowdsource” comments, suggestions on legislative bills and proposals. Such platforms could be bespoke or could be based on existing technologies such as Google docs and wikis. This could be an avenue to include more people in the lawmaking process in Nigeria irrespective of geographical location.
- *Proactive Disclosure of Lawmaking Proceedings:* The National Assembly currently maintains a website and social media accounts. These platforms are useful sources of information and dialogue and could be utilized to increase dialogue with CSOs on public interest lawmaking.

### **Guidelines for Inclusive Law making.**

The findings above show that although the landscape is imperfect, there is room within our legal framework and from best practises to strengthen legislative engagement. Some guidelines to help achieve this include:

1. *Rely on the Constitutional Right to Participate in Government:* Although Section II is non-justiciable, its provisions can be relied upon as legitimate ground for participation. Section 14(2)(c) says that *the participation of the people in their government shall be ensured by the provisions of this constitution*. Whether through dialogue, memos or otherwise, knowledge of this is useful to establish your right to participate in the lawmaking process.
2. *Harvest and Use Information to engage lawmakers:* CSOs would need to always seek avenues to harvest information on legislative proceedings. At the moment, several outlets exist including the National Assembly website, PLAC's web and text based platforms to name a few. These contain useful information that can prepare CSOs to ensure that legislative bills and proposals are rights based. By infusing practical mechanisms of socio-economic rights into Acts of parliament, these rights become more achievable.
3. *Seek Meaningful CSO Collaboration for Increased Impact:* Given our different skill sets, knowledge bases, achieving your rights based legislative agenda requires collaboration among CSOs. Collaboration enables information sharing, thorough analyses and increases the potential for

strategic engagement at every stage in the process. It could also help to conserve resources. So be ready to share credit!

### ***Get Ready to Share Credit!***

At a public hearing for example, it may be beneficial for CSOs to strategize on how maximum attention can be brought to their issues.

The strategy may address:

- a. A general overview of the proposed bill or legislation
- b. The main points of concern/importance too CSOs
- c. Whether all the points of importance should be raised by one person or by different people.

Strategizing along these lines is necessary to avoid repetition but to ensure that all points are covered. Sometimes, this may require various appointed speakers who complement each other; nevertheless hold on to their organization's affiliations. This may be important so that 2 minutes is not given to the entire CSO community thus making it impossible for all points to be covered.

4. ***Initiate Rights-based Legislation:*** or at least be actively involved in the initial draft of the legislation. That way, the required human rights provisions are inserted in the draft and would be difficult to get rid of
5. ***Seek a Private Sponsor for the Bill*** who would champion its movement through the National Assembly.

### ***Did you know that.....***

**Honourable Dabire Abike** was the long time sponsor of the then FOI Bill (now an Act of parliament), and

**Honourable Chukwuemeka Ujam** is the private sponsor of the Digital Rights and Freedom Bill?

6. ***Use Online Platforms such as Google Docs*** to get many more CSOs involved in the consultative process for the bill. That way, the legitimacy of the bill increases and it may be easier to get a sponsor.

Finally, increasing the space for CSO engagement in the lawmaking process requires constant engagement and strategy review. If CSOs get too comfortable with available information, even that which is available may no longer be. So always seek out new ways to engage or revisit old ways depending on the context and this would have an impact on the quality of legislation that is enacted.

#### **4.0.1. Discussion on the first presentation**

1. On the issue of best practices in inclusive lawmaking, participants expected to have a session with lawmakers around the table. They felt that it would have been more engaging having lawmakers explain why there are challenges with civil engagement and perhaps inform participants on how better to approach the Legislature.
2. On the legal framework of rights, participants felt that the “catalogue of laws” was not Nigeria’s challenge; however, it was the lack of implementation of the laws that continuously deny “justice” to citizens.
3. A suggestion to have human rights desks in every government agency, especially law enforcement agencies like the police, could help address the “lack of justice” challenge.
4. Another recommendation by a participant was to have aggressive human rights education/enlightenment/awareness campaign across the country, in order to enrich citizens’ knowledge in human rights. Participants felt that ignorance was a great factor to the injustice and instability in Nigeria today.
5. Participants shared their experiences while doing advocacy for rights such as child’s rights, and expressed the difficulty they faced at State level to get the lawmakers at the Houses of Assembly to pass the Child’s Rights Act. They pondered on how adults could become insensitive to the rights of children, despite the fact that they could be parents and were once children.
6. Participants expressed frustration at the way their efforts are being stifled by the system. Some of them said that they were still operating because of the passion they have for the work that they are doing; and not because the civil space was conducive for them.
7. Finally, participants agreed that lobbying was the most effective way of engaging with the legislature.

## **4.2. OPEN DISCUSSION: – Experience Sharing on Legislative Engagement Session facilitated by Brenda Anugwom**

The session featured experience sharing by the participants on their engagement with the legislature at both national and state levels, in citizens' rights protection. The organizations that shared their experiences were –

- **Girls Power Initiative (GPI)**

Girls Power Initiative (GPI) is a youth development organization working on the socialization of girls for a future where women are visible and valued.

GPI laid down its guideline for engaging with State Legislators as follows:

- a) identify stakeholders on the matter/issue at hand;
- b) form a coalition with other organizations that share the same thematic focus;
- c) lead advocacy campaigns to the relevant committees within the state assembly;
- d) start civil engagement by organizing rallies to enlighten the public. Delegates would have advocacy materials like flyers, T-shirts, caps, etc. for distribution
- e) consult with stakeholders to learn if there are sensitive provisions within a proposed legislation, which could pose a stumbling block to its passage. For instance, the Sexuality Education Bill in Edo State was re-named Family, life and HIV Education Bill before it was passed by the Edo House of Assembly. The reason for the change of Bill title was because the initial title did not convey correctly the objective of the Bill
- f) re-strategize if the advocacy style is not working, and be passionate about the cause.

- **Order Paper**

Order Paper is a social enterprise, which serves as a legislature and citizens' interface on the activities of the legislature as an arm of government in Nigeria. The form of engagement with the legislature is information sharing. Order paper obtains information from the legislature and shares it with the citizens using its online platform.

- **SOAR Initiative**

SOAR Initiative trains girls as peer educators to address sexual and child abuses in schools, encourages girls to remain in school and promotes girl-education in northern Nigeria. SOAR Initiative's engagement is with stakeholders at the grass root level and not directly with legislators yet.

- **Nigerian Women's Trust Fund (NWTF)**

The NWTF works with the political class and the electorate to strategically

put more women in leadership positions. NWTF works with women who can make significant contributions to education, health care, voting rights, economic and gender equality. Its engagement was focused on the Gender Policy benchmark of 35% minimum female gender representation in governance.

#### **National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)**

The NHRC is a Nigerian government body established in line with the United Nations General Assembly resolution, which enjoins all member States to establish institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights. It serves as an extra judicial mechanism for the enhancement of the enjoyment of human rights in Nigeria.

The Commission's engagement with the legislature has been on the following:

- a) identifying obsolete laws and liaising with the National Assembly to amend them;
- b) providing advisory support to legislators on issues of human rights;
- c) initiating panels to allow for dialogue;
- d) engaging communities on issues relating to human rights;
- e) collaborating with state and non-state actors on human rights campaigns.

In every engagement with the National Assembly, the Commission allows the legislators take ownership, especially when the campaign or strategy will help their political profile.

#### **Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD)**

CDD is a not-for-profit research and training organization, which mobilizes global opinion and resources for democratic development in West Africa. The Centre anchors "Buharimeter" which is a monitoring tool that enable Nigerians to keep tab on the status of the implementation of over 200 campaign promises of President Muhammad Buhari.

#### **International Centre for Advocacy on Rights to Health (ICARH)**

ICARH works to ensure that all persons, irrespective of their sexual orientation and gender identity, have access to adequate legal and health care services. Its core mission is to improve human rights and reduce the impact of HIV/AIDS amongst vulnerable groups.

Recognizing that the rate of HIV/AIDS is high among young persons in Nigeria, and that a group of persons are denied access to health care as a result of their sexual orientation are some of the drivers of ICARH's interventions. In order to engage with the lawmakers, ICARH:

- a) builds alliances with other NGOs/CSOs to build a strong voice in order to have conversations with state actors about the impact of health care denial on the lives of citizens;
- b) advocates that Men who have sex with Men (MSM) access medical treatment, as good number of them also have wives;
- c) educates the public on tolerance of persons living with HIV/AIDS;
- d) records and keeps data on the rate of human rights abuses overtime.

#### **NACCRAN/Child Rights Brigade**

National Council of Child Rights Advocate of Nigeria (NACCRAN) works to provide individual and systemic advocacy for children receiving services under the Child Rights Act. NACCRAN represents and promotes the rights, interests and viewpoints of children.

NACCRAN's advocacy has enabled:

- a) Separation of youth ministry from the ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development;
- b) A bill for the establishment of the National Child Protection and Enforcement Agency (sponsored by Hon. Beni Lar)

NACCRAN's work is marred by financial constraints, and as a result, it is unable to effectively deliver on its child-protection programmes like school quizzes and other children's activities.

#### **Women Trafficking and Child Labour Eradication Foundation (WOTCLEF)**

WOTCLEF is dedicated to the eradication of trafficking in persons, child labour and abuses against women. A significant landmark result of WOTCLEF's advocacy was the enactment of the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act, 2003. WOTCLEF continues to advocate for the rights of victims of human trafficking.

#### **Oak TV**

Oak TV is a media platform with a huge online presence. It reports on the daily occurrences at the National Assembly and leverages on its reach of 15.5 million smart phone users and more than 50% of Nigeria's population on social media, to promote accountability in governance.

Oak TV's engagement involves alerting citizens on bills before the National Assembly and their contents as well as what the legislators are working on.

### **4.3. Enhancing CSO Engagement with Stakeholders to Advance Rights-based Policies**

**Presented by Oke Epia,**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

The contemporariness of the topic of this paper imposes the need to be perspicuous without being audacious. This is because the target audience comprises experts and practitioners on the civic space, some with decades-long experience. Let me therefore humbly declare from the beginning that my duty is to espouse on the issues at play and open up perspectives that can stimulate a healthy conversation going forward. It is my aspiration that this intervention will help galvanize our thoughts and words as well as sufficiently stimulate creative imaginations in a bid to enhance and operationalize concrete engagement of stakeholders towards advancing rights-based policies. I would have satisfactorily discharged my task if this discourse serves as a reference point in the quest and ultimate actualization of effective, effectual and results-based engagements in the civil society space.

I thank therefore, the Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC) as well as the Embassy of France in Nigeria for granting this opportunity to discuss an all-time pressing issue of rights and civil society activism in the country. Before I proceed to brass tasks, let me outline the paper in the following manner: This presentation will begin with definition of key terms identified in the topic in order to put the issue in clear perspective. This will be followed by situating the topic within the Nigerian context; and then making recommendations that can serve as basis for continual conversations going forward.

#### **2.0 Definition of Terminologies**

The topic throws up four key words that need to be defined and/or clarified in order to contextualize the rest of this presentation. These are: **CSO; Engagement; Stakeholders;** and **Rights-based Policies.** We shall now take them one after the other and in a collective thereafter.

#### **2.1 Stakeholder, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Engagement:**

The term 'stakeholder,' according to the Encarta dictionary means 'somebody or something with direct interest; a person or group with a direct interest, involvement, or investment in something, e.g. the employees, stockholders, and customers of a business concern.'<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Microsoft® Encarta® 2009. © 1993-2008 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.

In another definition, Wikipedia defines a stakeholder as “an accountant, group, organization, member, or system that affects or can be affected by an organization’s actions.” Albeit suited for the corporate world, this definition can be stretched to accommodate the purposes of this discourse in a sense.

However, for a more contextual analysis, a definition of the term provided in a briefing paper by on ‘Engaging civil society stakeholders in FLEGT Voluntary Partnership Agreement processes’ is considered suitable. It says “a stakeholder is anyone who can affect or is affected by a process or action.”<sup>3</sup> This definition broadens the scope of engagement than if one was to rely on the dictionary definition alone. And in this broadened scope, the understanding of who a stakeholder is (on any matter) can be better understood by introducing the concept of ‘mapping’ into the terminology. As the briefing paper referred further explains, “a mapping exercise can help outline the stakeholder landscape and situation...can also describe and analyze relevant and current issues that may affect stakeholders’ engagement, such as knowledge, standing, expectation and readiness to participate. It may provide information to mobilize external support. Stakeholder mapping can therefore inform the design and establishment of a multi-stakeholder process.”<sup>4</sup>

Having secured an understanding of the term ‘stakeholder,’ next step is to identify who is or are ‘Civil Society Organizations’ (CSOs). CSO is an abbreviation containing three words, viz: Civil; Society; and Organization. In order not to dwell much on the dissection of disparate vocabularies, this paper will focus on the usage of the words ‘civil,’ ‘society,’ and ‘organization’ together in the sense implied in the topic.

The term ‘Civil Society Organization’ (CSO) can therefore literally mean a group of persons held together in a civil, voluntary or non-compulsive relationship in pursuance of a collective interest or goal(s) within the public space. The ultimate motivation for a CSO is to seek to influence decisions, actions, processes, individuals or institutions in a manner that protects or promotes its interests or those of its members on one hand; and on the other hand, affect a public good purportedly in the larger interest of society. This broad definition is meant to account for the fact that although all CSOs are assumed to act in the public interest, the reality is that there are those which promote narrow interests of

their members in spite of public posturing. The National Rifle Association in the United States for instance, is a powerful influence on the debate on gun laws even though a predominant strand of public opinion is clearly against the interest promoted by the group. Yet the association can be described as a CSO!

In narrowing down to our purpose here however, a paper by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) offers a definition of CSO by DFID that is useful. It defines CSO as 'any organisation that works in the arena between the household, the private sector, and the state, to negotiate matters of public concern'. This presupposes that these are organizations that mediate between the state and citizens, in the interest of a better life for the latter and improved efficiency and efficacy of services provided by the former. It is thus assumed that between the 'public' and 'private sector, CSOs are the 'third force' at play in the constant interaction of interests, actors and forces in society. This is a perspective reinforced by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) which views CSOs as 'a third sector, existing alongside and interacting with the state and profit-seeking firms.'

CSOs could therefore be Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), grassroots groups, faith-based organizations and professional and trade unions and even academic bodies, among others. These organizations operate at different levels whether global, regional, national and/or local and are categorized by the duty they bear or niche occupied. According to the ODI, CSOs can be categorized into six by the functions they perform. These are: **representation** (those involved in citizens' voice aggregation), **advocacy** (issues-based lobbies), **technical** (those involved in provision of expertise information and advisory), **capacity building** (building the competencies and capabilities of stakeholders), **service delivery** (those with mandate for providing certain services in collaboration or consultation with the state), and those that perform **social functions** (including recreational activities, for instance).

Given the importance of CSOs, the UNDP affirms that these stakeholders are so imperative to the delivery of its mandate. "Given the collective power of CSOs in building social, economic and political agendas — both locally and globally — it is clear that strengthening partnerships with CSOs is crucial if UNDP is to remain a relevant and effective development player. CSOs are a crucial resource, constituency and partner for UNDP in advancing sustainable human development goals and principles."

In the public policy arena, CSOs belong to the stakeholders' loop that aggregates, enables, and either energizes or enervates the momentum of the demand-side of the value chain. That is why the UNDP described them as "participants, legitimizers and endorsers of government policy and action, as watchdogs of the

behaviour of regimes and public agencies, and as collaborators in the national development effort.”

It states further that “over the last decade, CSOs, including NGOs, peoples’ movements, trade unions, women’s federations, formal and informal associations, grass-roots coalitions and indigenous peoples’ organizations, have emerged as a powerful force for social justice and equity across and within borders.”

Scholars have gone a step further to create a correlation between democratic practice and the role of civil society with respect to citizens’ mobilization and government accountability.

Along the same plane, CSOs have been imbued with values as social capital and trust which when transmuted into the political environment help in creating bonds and interconnectedness in society.

The third leg of this troika of terminology in this sub-section of the paper is the word ‘Engagement.’ This term has been copiously implied, suggested and recommended in the foregoing paragraphs that it is trite at this point to offer a definition. What is important to note is that between stakeholders and CSOs, the word ‘engagement’ is actively thrown in the mix because whereas CSOs are a part of stakeholders in the context of this paper, the interrelation between and among them cannot occur if there is no ‘engaging’ taking place.

## **2.2 Rights-based Policies**

It is necessary to know what the meaning of the term ‘policy’ is before the phrase ‘rights-based policies’ can be fully appreciated. The term ‘policy’ denotes ‘a purposive course of action followed by an actor or set of actors’.

Thus, in a broad sense, the word goes beyond the documents or legislations to “include activities on the ground” as well as “changes in the behaviours of the key policy actors.” It is in this manner therefore that the ODI describes ‘policy influence’ as to how “external actors are able to interact with the policy process and affect the policy positions, approaches and behaviours in each of these areas” while explaining that the ‘policy process’ itself includes a set of components, viz: agenda setting, policy formulation, decision-making, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

In the context of this paper therefore, a rights-based engagement can be defined as a “conceptual framework for the process of human development that is normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed to promoting and protecting human rights.”

In operationalizing the term, the UNDP says “a rights-based philosophy of development challenges CSOs, particularly intermediary NGOs, to reflect on their own obligations as duty-bearers.”

To stress this point, the Programme makes the point about being careful to “ensure that its development programmes do not become vehicles for human rights abuses — for example, in countries that exclude women, indigenous peoples or ethnic minorities from the benefits of development. In such countries, economic, social and cultural rights provide the obvious entry point for human rights-based sustainable human development programming.”

### **3.0 CSO, Stakeholders’ Engagement and Rights-based policies in Nigeria**

This section of the paper attempts to contextualize the topic and set the tone for the kind of recommendations that would follow in a subsequent section. Relevant questions include: How do stakeholders engage around rights-based policy? What has been the practice? What has worked and what has not and why? How do we make the engagements better and more results-oriented? As hinted in the introductory note, this paper does not pretend to have all of the answers- at best, it seeks to stimulate your imaginations and engage the gear for the conversation going forward.

#### **3.1 Public Policy and Human Rights in Nigeria**

Conversations around rights in Nigeria are mostly anchored around relevant constitutional provisions, notably, the Fundamental Rights Provisions guaranteed under Chapter IV of the 1999 Constitution (as amended). These rights are articulated and enshrined in the groundnum to mirror the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). These are right to life; human dignity; personal liberty; fair hearing; privacy; freedom of thought, conscience and religion; freedom of expression and the press; freedom of peaceful assembly and association; freedom of movement; freedom from discrimination; and right to property. As the law itself (Section 45 of the Constitution for instance) and practice have shown, there is however nothing like absolute freedom as far as these rights (or some of them) are concerned in Nigeria. I take the view that this is a settled academic point that needs no further interrogation in this paper. Needless to add that, fundamental human rights and of course other genres of rights including political, economic, cultural and social, are inconsequential in military dictatorships as the country has experienced painfully in past decades. Indeed, the story of Nigeria’s democratic practice since 1999 till date is incomplete without the appropriate background factor of the military incursion into the polity and the damages done in that regard. But to focus attention on that would be diversionary as it would be more meaningful to engage the current practice of democracy and the role of CSOs in engaging rights-based policies as the topic of this paper rightly instructs.

It is noteworthy that the country has a vibrant civic space that has engaged vigorously in terms of protecting and promoting the fundamental rights of citizens over the years, even during the harsh years of military dictatorships. The body of case laws in this regard copiously attests to this. But then there are other legal instruments that have reinforced these fundamental rights. One of such is the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (ACHPR) which has been ratified and domesticated in the country since the 1980s. In fact, the 'African Charter on Human and Peoples (Ratification and Enforcement) Act, Cap 10, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 1990' is one of the most potent instruments in the realm of rights jurisprudence in Nigeria. The foregoing however, there are lacunae in rights advocacy and adjudication that offer challenges and opportunities for civil society to engage. This is where we now turn attention to in the next section.

### **3.2 Unenforceable Constitutional Rights**

There is a very critical aspect of citizens' rights that presents a call for deeper, coherent, sustained and systematic engagement among stakeholders in the civic space. I refer to these other sets of rights in the national existential realm which have to do with political, economic, social and cultural aspects of the country. Chapter II of the 1999 Constitution (as amended) which outlines the Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy is in ready reference here. This gamut of rights covers the Political, Economic, Social, Educational, Cultural and Environmental obligations of the Nigerian State to citizens. The culmination of these rights in a sense can approximate to a literal expression of the social contract between the government and the people. Unfortunately, this very important 'contract' attracts no sanction for breach by those entrusted with the responsibility for minding them – the government.

This is by reason of the non-justiceability of this part of the most fundamental law of the land. For me, this is one area where civil society has its job cut out even though it must be admitted that some work has been done already. But there is much more work undone! Especially if Nigeria must succeed in the pursuit of a just, equitable and egalitarian society of equal opportunities for all without limitations as to circumstances of birth, creed and tongue- factors which are unfortunately key drivers of injustice, oppression and deprivation in today's Nigeria.

Non-justiceability of chapter II has very dire consequences for nation-building in the long run and it is a situation that "leads to limitation to development and accountability of the government" in the short and medium terms.

According to Ikpeze, "non-justiceability presupposes limitations on the organ of government entitled to interpret the constitution, which is the

judiciary. It further amounts to denial of the rights (albeit; the economic rights) of Nigerian citizen who upon infringement of rights as provided in chapter II CFRN 1999 ought to seek redress in Courts of law.”

In zeroing in on Section 6(6)(c) of this chapter, Ikpeze further argues that it is “an aberration which, in a constitutional provision, rocks the root of its constitutionality and runs contrary to the preceding provisions of section 6 (a) (b) and indeed against public policy whereby a fundamental policy that cuts across economic rights purports to be created. It limits the extent to which the courts of law in Nigeria use their inherent powers to adjudicate on any matter and give sanctions where necessary to all matters between persons or between government, or authority and persons in Nigeria for the determination of any question as to civil rights and obligation of that person.”

### **3.3 Window of Opportunity**

There is however a glimmer of light in this seemingly dark cloud of non-justiceability of Chapter II of the Constitution. And if stakeholders can hang on to this streak and engage vigorously on the lead provided by the small shine, civil society may invariably find a tipping point to change the status quo. I make reference here to a declaration by the judiciary that right to free and compulsory primary education, and free junior secondary education is a constitutional right that must be observed by government, even though it falls within the cluster of rights captured in Chapter II.

In March this year, a Federal High Court in Abuja presided over by Justice John Tsoho declared that the federal and state governments have constitutional duties to provide adequate fund for free and compulsory education as provided in the Constitution. The judgment was delivered in a suit filed by a CSO, the Legal Defence and Assistance Project (LEDAP) against the Federal Ministry of Education and the Attorney General of the Federation which asked the court to determine whether by the combined effect of section 18(3)(a) of the 1999 Constitution and section 2 (1) of the Compulsory, Free Universal Basic Education Act, (UBE) 2004, the right to free and compulsory primary education and free junior secondary education for all qualified Nigerian citizens are enforceable rights in Nigeria. In its judgment, the court stated that even though the right to free education was not justiciable being under Chapter II of the Constitution but by virtue of the enactment of the Compulsory, Free Universal Basic Education Act, of 2004, by the National Assembly, that provision of the constitution approximates to an enforceable right.

Germaine questions necessarily arise from this landmark judgment: what has been the follow-up by stakeholders in civil society? What can be done to raise momentum and reap more benefits from this kind of judgment? Has civil society

primed itself sufficiently in the task ahead especially in using the window of opportunity provided by a landmark development as Justice Tsoho's bold and courageous pronouncement? These posers have been raised to prepare our minds to appreciate the direction of the next section of this paper.

#### **4.0 Engaging the Right Gears**

What is the best way to engage on rights-based policies? I believe there are no straightjacket paths to stakeholders' engagement. Several factors including (but not limited to) particularity of issues involved; the political economic context; capacity and capability of CSOs and other stakeholders; interest and willingness to engage; as well as strategies and platforms, all play different roles in determining the success of engagement. By successful engagement, I refer to a process and/or outcome that all stakeholders involved have agreed to be open, meaningful and productive. These intervening variables will be highlighted and illuminated as much as possible in this and the concluding section of this paper.

#### **4.1 Some Success Stories**

As stated in a preceding section of this paper, engagement on human rights, especially advocacy in Nigeria has been quite robust and productive. There has been a notable advancement from raw activism dictated by the background of past military dictatorships into the policy arena where civil society actors have increasingly engaged with the institutions of state at several plains. The Legislature has been a major focal point of this engagement, especially in the last two decades since Nigeria's return to civilian rule. Many CSOs have engaged the law-making institutions in areas as diverse as constitutional amendments, elections and the electoral system, transparency and accountability in government, political inclusion, gender issues, and social services like health, education, among others. There are enactments, statutes and administrative policies that stand to the credit of civil society engagements over the period, including the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 2011; the Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI) Act, 2007, the Fiscal Responsibility Act (FRA), 2007, the Child Rights Act, 2003, and the recent case of the Not-Too-Young-To-Run Bill that though is still in the works, has witnessed some defining success to push it through finality in its journey to become a constitutional amendment. The notable work of CSOs in pushing for reform of electoral procedures and election monitoring are also very telling in advancing the frontiers of political rights especially with respect to voting and gender inclusion. The sterling contributions of PLAC in birthing and sustaining the Situation Room is an innovation that has made tremendous impact in real-time election observation and monitoring in the country.

#### **4.2 The Modus and Lessons Learned**

In the cases mentioned above, the roles played by civil society actors cannot be over-emphasized. It all boiled down to successful engagement of stakeholders

across board in the specific issues concerned. For those familiar with the long and sometimes frustrating process of lawmaking on one hand, and getting state actors and institutions on the other hand to reform processes and service delivery, those examples of successful engagement provide beacons of hope and inspiration for more engagement in other areas of work that need to be done in enhancing rights-based policies in the country. But what were the defining factors that led to or contributed to those successes? How did the Media Rights Agenda (MRA) pioneer and coordinate the huge task of setting off and organizing a demand for Freedom of Information (FOI) law and running through the rough rides of getting the relevant institutions, actors and processes to engage, commit and achieve one of the most critical legislations of the Fourth Republic? How did the PLAC come off with the idea of election observance aggregation that is real-time, factual and verifiable in a manner that tilts the scale strongly against electoral malpractices and sundry other ills of elections in the country? How did YIAGA pull off the record passage of the Not-Too-Young-To-Run Bill in an otherwise cumbersome and tricky constitutional amendment process in a National Assembly that resoundingly killed a similar bill less than four years ago?

## **5.0 Recommendations and Way Forward**

In suggesting recommendations on enhancing stakeholders' engagement for rights-based policies, it is important to identify lessons learnt in achieving the success stories as highlighted in the preceding section. We already highlighted and/or implied some key factors that can make for productive engagements when thrown into the mix in the work that civil society does. Some common threads in all or most of them are the ingredients of CONSENSUS, COLLABORATION and ALLIANCES. For clarity and conciseness, it is my submission that the following variables (which are by no means exhaustive) are key for successful engagements built around these ingredients:

### **5.01 Scanning the Environment:**

We already talked about Stakeholder Mapping earlier on in this paper. A careful scan of the context of an issue will reveal all the stakeholders involved or concerned; and so identifying them makes a first necessary step in the journey to success. A careful stakeholders' scan makes for a reliable SWAT analysis which helps to make adequate preparation for the task ahead. It also makes for escaping the convenient complacency trap of engaging only known stakeholders. What this means is that a good scan can inform the right choices in respect of Consensus, Collaborations and Alliances. A worthy point of note is that since the context is driven by a fluid political economic environment, a scan should not be a one-off activity as changes that are ignored equates to missed windows of opportunities and in some cases, avoidable endangerment of the engagement. This is especially true for the policy terrain which is however one looks at it, is political in nature and accordingly driven by the nuances and intrigues of politics.

### **5.02 Identification of Prospects:**

A good scan result inevitably leads to identification of prospects and landmines for the ensuing engagement. From this kind of picture, a workable results-driven strategy of engagement could be drawn and implemented. It must be noted however, that nothing should be cast in stone in engaging in the civic space. Alliance partners today can become hurdles to engagement tomorrow.

### **5.03 Approach and Outreach:**

When prospects and threats are identified and an engagement strategy is built therefrom, care must be taken to make approaches and outreaches that are suitable, attractive and engaging (and not enraging). Factors like **mutual respect, trust, inclusion**, and a regularly updated sense of **shared values and aspirations** are key elements in building and sustaining collaborations and coalitions. In outreaches, innovation is key in taking advantage of opportunities brought about by technology (especially ICT) and positive developments in the political economic environment.

### **5.04 Feedback and Sustain Interest:**

This aspect of the engagement is very important because the last impression stakeholders like to get is one of having been used and dumped to achieve a goal. Keeping stakeholders abreast of developments in the engagement whether they remain relevant or not going forward validates their decision to get involved in the first place. Assumptions can be counter-productive to a successful engagement.

### **5.05 Empowerment and Value Addition:**

Whether it is by way of enhanced capacity or just a sense of pride of being (or having been) part of a successful engagement is a value stakeholders in a partnership can cherish and should not be taken for granted. This is something the strategy must take into account from the beginning and on which regular evaluation is required.

### **5.1 Gains of a Successful Engagement**

From all that has been discussed in this paper so far, it is not hard to conclude that the gains of engagement built around Collaboration cannot be over-emphasized. These include (but not limited) the following: availability of the best possible information and advice; proper understanding of stakeholder concerns; ease of implementation; sense of ownership; credibility; limitation/elimination of friction and conflicts.

## **6.0 Conclusion**

This paper has examined the topic, 'Enhancing CSO Engagement with Stakeholders to Advance Rights-based Policies,' and made some recommendations that focus on the key ingredient of collaboration among CSOs and other stakeholders in the civic space. As stated in the introduction, the minimal expectation is that this contribution will spur further conversations around the topic and ultimately help advance human rights conditions in Nigeria.

### **STAKEHOLDER GRID MAP EXERCISE**

Participants had to identify relevant stakeholders in the discussion of the Non-governmental Organizations Regulatory Commission Bill (HB 585), popularly known as the "NGO Bill". They placed the stakeholders in the boxes labelled "High power, high interest", "High power, low interest", "Low power, high interest", "Low power, low interest" (see Annex C).

## **5. CONCLUDING DISCUSSIONS/NEXT STEPS**

The discussions around stakeholder engagement highlighted the magical 3 "Cs" as part of tips to being successful at it. However, discussions on engaging with the legislature did not have clear-cut identified standards or "rules" as different experiences requiring different approaches were shared. One approach was however constant among the experiences shared – "be rational, not confrontational" as confrontations have NEVER worked.

Participants' experience-sharing on the carrying out advocacy visits to lawmakers raised pointers like identifying "issue champions" within the legislature to act as the middle person between the CSOs and the lawmakers. Girls Power Initiative pointed out that understanding the provisions of a bill and the impact on citizens as well as social/cultural sensitivities were crucial in advocacy.

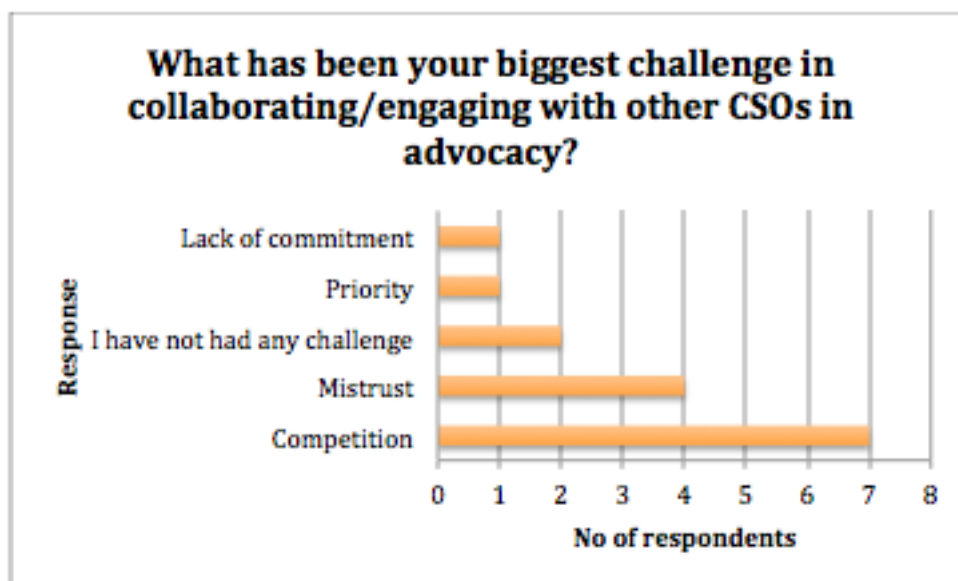
Questionnaires were administered to participants, who admitted that competition was the biggest impediment to CSO/stakeholders engagement (Annex A). Participants however admitted that they would prefer to carry out advocacy visits as a coalition than as individual organizations. While the CSOs are willing to work together, the next steps to engaging effectively would be to identifying priorities and focusing on the collective priorities rather than individual goals.

**ANNEX**

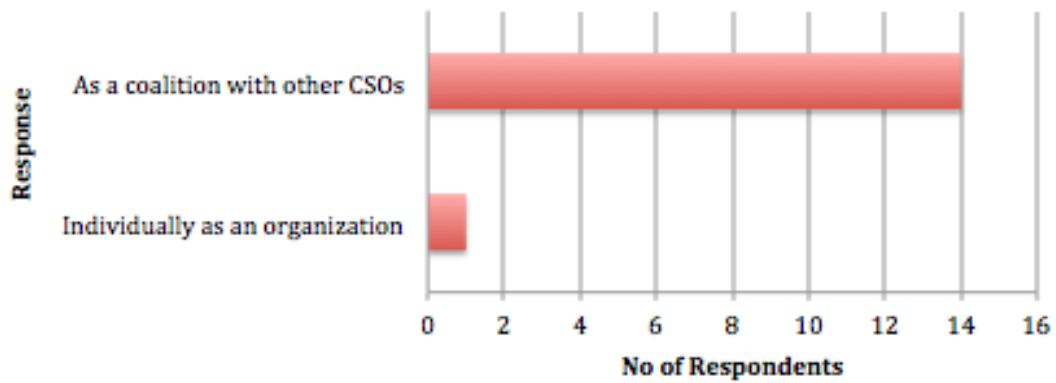
## ANNEX A – Participants’ List

S/N	NAME	ORGANIZATION
1	Mr. Rotimi Olatunji	International Advocacy on Rights to Health (ICARH)
2	Mr. Archibong Anderson	Child Rights Brigade International/NACCRAN
3	Ms. Mayowa Ani	Nigerian Women Trust Fund (NWTF)
4	Ms. Sefiya Suleiman	Nigerian Women Trust Fund (NWTF)
5.	Ms. Olufunke Baruwa	Nigerian Women Trust Fund (NWTF)
6	Mr. Smith Omotayo	Youth Transparency Initiative (YTI)
7	Mr. Oghenevwede Ohwovoriola	ThisDay Newspapers (Media)
8	Ms. Minoe Duamwan	Partners West Africa
9	Ms. Bunmi Okesola	SOAR Initiative
10	Mr. Halilu Adamu	National Human Rights Commission (Government)
11	Ms. May Ekido	Girls Power Initiative (GPI)
12	Mr. Mej Obada	OrderPaper Nigeria
13	Mr. Abiodun Olakunle	Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD)
14	Mr. Samuel Vincent	Oak TV (Media)
15	Mr. Abayomi Rotimi Mighty	WOTCLEF
16	Ms. Roseline Aghabalu	WOTCLEF
17	Ms. Chigozirim Okoro	CLEEN Foundation

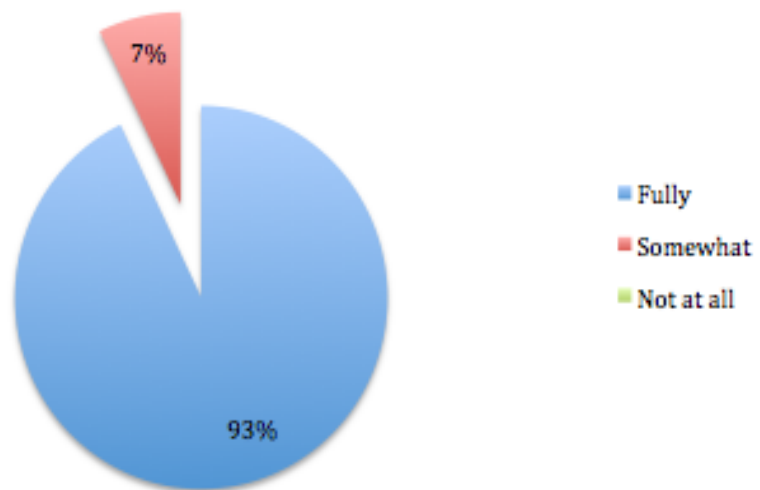
## ANNEX B – Programme Evaluation



### How best would you prefer to engage the Legislature on rights-based issues?



### How has your knowledge of stakeholders' engagement improved as a result of the program?



## ANNEX C – Stakeholder Grip Map Analysis for the NGO Bill

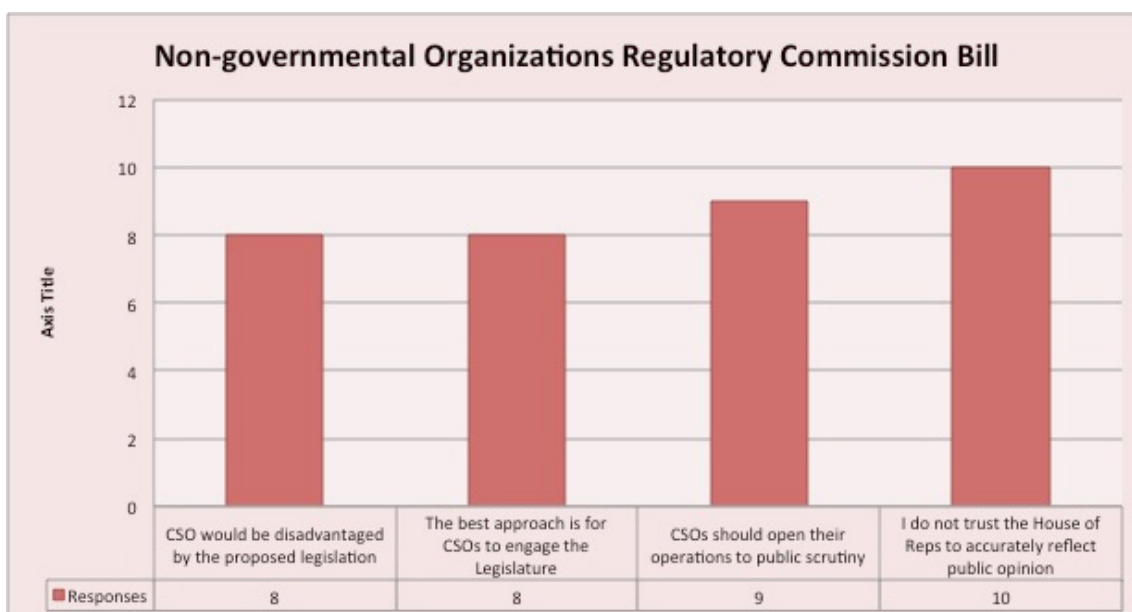
S/N	Identified Stakeholders
1	Legislators
2	Researchers/Academia
3	Private sector
4	Civil Society Organizations
5	Media
6	Religious leaders
7	Trade Unions/Pressure groups
8	Lawyers
9	Non-governmental Organizations
10	Development partners
11	International donor agencies
12	Social enterprises
13	Executive/Policy makers
14	Government agencies/Public sector
15	Judiciary

### 2) Grid Map as identified by participants

<p>High power, high interests</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Legislature</li> <li>2) Executive/Policy makers</li> <li>3) Trade unions/Pressure groups</li> <li>4) Civil Society Organizations</li> <li>5) Media</li> <li>6) Non-governmental organizations</li> <li>7) International donor agencies</li> </ol>	<p>High power, low interest</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Government agencies/ Public sector</li> <li>2) Judiciary</li> <li>3) Private Sector</li> <li>4) Religious leaders</li> </ol>
<p>Low power, high interest</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Social enterprises</li> <li>2) Researchers/Academia</li> <li>3) Development partners</li> </ol>	<p>Low power, low interest</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Lawyers</li> </ol>

### 3) Public confidence on the House of Representatives regarding the NGO Bill

The NGO bill in the House of Representatives is enmeshed in controversy including a virulent opposition from CSOs. This background informed the administration of a Questionnaire on the bill at the PLAC/Embassy of France forum which held on December 6, 2017 in Abuja





### **ABOUT PLAC:**

Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC) is a non-governmental organisation committed to strengthening democratic governance and citizens' participation in Nigeria. PLAC works to enhance citizens' engagement with state institutions, and to promote transparency and accountability in policy and decision-making processes. The main focus of PLAC's intervention in the democratic governance process is on building the capacity of the legislature and reforming the electoral process. Since its establishment, PLAC has grown into a leading institution with capacity to deliver cutting-edge research, policy analysis and advocacy.

