



STRENGTHENING ADVOCACY AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT SUSTAINABILITY EVALUATION

Background, Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

EVALUATION PURPOSE

This evaluation is intended to ascertain the progress made by the Strengthening Advocacy and Civic Engagement (SACE) partners toward sustaining goals and objectives after closeout of the SACE Activity. USAID intends to use this evaluation's findings to inform the design and implementation of a new civil society activity.

SACE IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

- 16 Anchor CSOs Partners (comprising 7 National CSOs and 9 Niger Delta CSOs);
- 57 National Cluster Members;
- 48 Niger Delta Cluster Members.

ACTIVITY BACKGROUND

In December 2013, USAID awarded Chemonics International a \$19.3 million, five-year contract, January 2, 2014 – January 1, 2019, to strengthen the ability of Nigerian civil society organizations to influence the development and implementation of key democratic reforms at the national, state, and local levels.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The evaluation employed a mixed-rapid-appraisal approach that included qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis. Respondents, engaged in 11 of the 25 SACE Activity states, carried out:

- 35 Key informant interviews (KIs) with key stakeholders including Implementing Partners (3) Cluster Members (3), Cluster Anchors (14), Innovation Spread the Word Fund (ISWF) Partner (6) and Policy Makers (9).
- 10 focus group discussions (FGDs) with SACE Cluster Members and one FGD with SACE Beneficiaries.
- Administration of two questionnaires - CSO Successes, Challenges and Sustainability Issues Survey and Challenges and CSOs share-out survey, and an Organizational Capacity Assessment.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

EVALUATION QUESTION (EQ) 1 – To what extent has the implementation of SACE been successful in promoting achievement of the activity's goals and objectives post close-out?

The SACE Activity had many achievements while it was implemented, and beneficiaries continue performing well since close-out. Achievements include upgrading the organizational capacity of anchors and advocacy capacity of clusters. Institutional capacity gains were matched with important policy-reform gains to the benefit of vulnerable populations, budgetary transparency, education, and health, among others. CSOs have continued advocating for reforms, often seeking to deepen their impact. Nevertheless, in some cases, advocacy efforts did not yield desired results because policymakers were not receptive to engaging with CSOs, claiming to be too busy, not authorized to speak on some issues, or were unwilling to discuss policy-reform issues with CSO representatives. SACE performed well at building organizational ("Capacity 1.0") and advocacy capacities ("Capacity 2.0") for most anchors and some cluster members; the capacity "gains" varied across the CSOs as initial conditions differed from CSO to CSO. Some of the former SACE staff members noted that toward the end of the program, some initially quite weak anchors were performing rather well. Although cluster members benefited too, anchors were the primary object of attention (e.g., in terms of training and funding). Since close-out, several of the anchors have secured grants from international donors such as Department for International Development (DFID), MacArthur Foundation, the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung etc.

Innovation and Spread the Word Fund (ISWF) grant recipients have continued implementing their innovations, with one, ConsTrack, having the potential to increase transparency of government operations across Nigeria. Conclusion: The SACE model and methodology have achieved the intended results and continue being utilized post SACE close-out. Although most anchor CSOs were satisfied with advocacy capacities (“Capacity 2.0”) provided by SACE it appears more time is needed to get optimum results. Recommendations: Conduct a needs assessment to determine CSO requirements and tailor training programs specific to the competencies of different CSOs; develop training programs specifically designed to educate elected officials at all levels of government about the citizens’ role in the formulation of public policies; select good governance-oriented CSOs as providers of such trainings; and implement training programs for career-level public officials at all echelons of government.

EQ 2 - How have SACE partners’ financial and technical advocacy skills (Capacity 1.0 and 2.0) influenced their capacity to engage with government regarding reforms? What has worked and what has not worked?

Several SACE tools, such as System for Transformation and Results Network (STARNET, now PANDO), Cluster Coaching, Outcome Harvester, and Policy Tracker proved to be useful. Some anchor/clusters took greater advantage of some tools than others, as some were more user-friendly such as Policy Tracker, Outcome Harvester, and Cluster Coaching. However, the use of STARNET was limited by poor Internet access. The power of collective advocacy, speaking with one voice, and “leading from behind” (the notion that anchors encourage cluster CSOs to take the initiative in certain advocacy efforts) proved beneficial. The relative capacity of the various anchor CSOs has changed but little since the previous 2018 assessment. Seven out of the fourteen CSOs assessed appear to be qualified to receive direct USAID funding. Conclusion: SACE tools have played a useful role in enhancing the advocacy capacities of the partner CSOs; these skills and related tools are likely to continue to be used in policy-reform advocacy. Recommendations: Impart intensive training to CSOs regarding financial and fund-raising skills, including proposal writing; provide support for the establishment, maintenance and update of a clearly identifiable, user-friendly website to inform CSOs about the availability of the SACE methodology

EQ 3 – What impact has SACE had in influencing government policy development and implementation regarding vulnerable populations such as women, youth, and persons with disabilities within the last six months post-SACE?

SACE succeeded in increasing participation of marginalized populations, helping formulate policy reforms to their

advantage. After close-out, most SACE anchors/clusters have repurposed their advocacy strategies to some extent while continuing to foster sustainable relationships with policymakers, building on policy achievement milestones that are partly attributable to SACE interventions. The sustainability of Media activities appears to be mixed, being more favorable with respect to traditional in contrast to social media; some social media applications have faltered, such as use of Twitter #MINDSET2.0, while others are poised to exceed initial expectations, such as use of WhatsApp for communications and networking. Conclusion: SACE increased participation of marginalized groups and helped to formulate policy reforms to their benefit. It also contributed to many reforms in the areas of maternal and child health, education, budget transparency, marginalized women farmers and stall sellers, and many others. Recommendations: Consider having USAID play a decisive role in increasing a Nigeria-wide advocacy policy-reform initiative based on the principles of the Open Society Partnership; be more sensitive to the unique concerns of the Persons with Disabilities (PWD) community, as well as youth and women to increase their participation in decision making, policy formulation, and implementation; and increase media engagement and support a public awareness campaign to educate the public on women and PWD issues.

EQ 4 – How has SACE’s support for Niger Delta implementing partners contributed to their advocacy for economic reforms/growth in that region?

In the Niger Delta, SACE was instrumental in facilitating economic development through its overall policy reform achievements as evidenced in several policy reforms such as Akwa Ibom Youth Dev. Fund Bill, etc. The SACE/PIND partnership in the Niger Delta achieved some results including advocacy for reforms in budgetary transparency that will favorably impact living conditions for marginalized populations in the region. Among the results are the establishment in all six states of Oil Producing Areas Development Commissions (OPADECs), designed to harness oil revenue to enable the government to meet the financial needs of the citizens. Some of the anchor CSOs have also managed to attract grants from agencies such as DFID. Conclusion: In the Niger Delta, SACE was instrumental in facilitating economic development through its overall policy reforms achievements. Recommendations: Continue and expand the policy reform advocacy process in the Niger Delta. Consider maintaining the mutually supportive relationships with PIND; and expand, to the extent possible, future CSO activity collaboration with other international donors.