

MacArthur
Foundation



FCT
Original
Inhabitants

Empowering communities to sustain livelihoods

YOU ARE WELCOME

PROMOTING THE POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL RIGHTS OF ORIGINAL INHABITANT PEOPLE (OIP) OF FEDERAL CAPITAL TERRITORY (FCT), ABUJA

Amplifying Voices, Strengthening the Resilience of Abuja Original Inhabitant Organizations

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS



**SOCIO ECONOMIC
RESEARCH AND
DEVELOPMENT CENTRE**

**ORIGINAL INHABITANTS
WITH DISABILITIES
MULTIPURPOSE
COOPERATIVE SOCIETY
FCT**

**MAIRO WOMEN
FOUNDATION
USHAFA**

**CENTRE FOR
ENVIRONMENTAL
SUSTAINABILITY &
DEVELOPMENT
AWARENESS**

AWTR

AOIYEO
ABUJA ORIGINAL INHABITANTS
YOUTH EMPOWERMENT
ORGANIZATION

REIG
ABIODUN ESSIET
INITIATIVE FOR GIRLS

CENTRE FOR TRANSPARENCY ADVOCACY
SERVICE DELIVERY
WATCHDOG

HELPLINE
FOUNDATION, ABUJA
For the needy

HIP CITY HUB

**FCT
Original
Inhabitants**
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MAIRO WOMEN FOUNDATION USHAFA

BACKGROUND TO THE CONTEXT:

social, cultural, economic, and political situation of the Original Inhabitants.



The original inhabitants (OIs) of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) suffered disruption and displacement as a result of the territory's move from Lagos, resulting in the loss of their basic political, cultural, and economic rights. The transfer of national capital had a terrible impact on the indigenous peoples of Abuja's lives, livelihoods, economic possibilities, and cultural treasures. Their fortunes worsened because of the denial of their fundamental rights and the confiscation of their resources, particularly prime lands, with little or no recompense. Abuja indigenes face increased rates of poverty, homelessness, insecurity, and starvation as a result of their loss of land following the forceful acquisition of their ancestral homelands. Low literacy rates and a lack of access to basic services such as health and education all led to a deterioration in their quality of life. Before the move of the nation's capital from Lagos to Abuja, the original Inhabitants possessed vast tracts of territories rich in natural resources. Predominantly living in farming communities, FCT indigenes owned cash crops, including economic trees of immense value. They also had a wealth of intellectual and cultural property and could continue with their main occupation of farming without being disrupted by their contact with the federal government and other dominant groups that moved aggressively into the new Federal Capital Territory.

The original inhabitants have endured the most injustices in the form of political marginalization, electoral disenfranchisement, and induced cultural atrophy, despite yielding massive land of not less than 8,000 square kilometres to accommodate the nation's capital city and its adjoining territories. The plight of the Abuja people was further accentuated by acts of state-sanctioned discrimination, such as the denial of political and economic rights, which other Nigerians enjoy to the fullest.

While Nigerians in the 36 states have the inalienable right to elect a governor to preside over the affairs of their respective states, indigenes of the FCT do not have this right, which other Nigerians take for granted. In addition, each state within the federation appoints a Minister to the Executive Council of the Federation, also known as the Federal Executive Council (FEC). This privilege is not extended to the residents of FCT, who made enormous sacrifices to make Nigeria's "centre of unity."

The fact that the National Assembly legislates for the Federal Capital City and the rest of the FCT, whereas other Nigerians have their own State Houses of Assembly, is another aspect of the FCT's political suffocation. Similar conditions pertain to the statutory bodies in the bureaucracy, as agencies such as the Federal Capital Development Authority (FCDA) and the Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA) report to the Federal Government, alienating and remaining impervious to the democratic aspirations of the FCT natives. Although the FCT is recognized to appoint a Commissioner to the Federal Character Commission (FCC), there have been numerous complaints that the individuals occupying this position are not indigenous to the territory.

ABOUT THE OI PROJECT

The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation is supporting the two-year CHRICED project of "Promoting the Political, Economic, and Cultural Rights of Original Inhabitants of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja". The project is to strengthen the technical, programmatic, and financial capabilities of FCT Original Inhabitant groups to make them more resilient and enable them to build a sustainable citizen-led framework to advocate for their rights and interests. The project addresses decades of marginalization, human rights violations, economic deprivation, social emasculation, and other historic injustices against FCT original inhabitants. The program offers complementary group mobilization and capacity building to assist inhabitant groups in utilizing evidence-based methodologies, targeted advocacy, and timely information to influence key governance processes to address historical injustices committed against them since the relocation of the FCT. To advocate for marginalized and vulnerable citizens, CHRICED explores synergies and partnerships with other MacArthur Foundation's grantees and frontline organizations with similar missions for marginalized citizens and groups.

The project amplifies the voices of OI groups in the FCT-Abuja by empowering them to influence critical governance processes, particularly those connected to the attainment of their political, economic, and cultural rights. CHRICED collaborates with several FCT indigenous communities to build capacity for meaningful programming, strategic and targeted messaging, and accountability of government institutions. The project identified the most significant impediments to effective mobilization, advocacy, and outreach and employs participatory processes to help marginalized FCT inhabitants to develop strategies for sustainable advocacy and campaigns that address their needs and interests through their organizations.

Ten organizations were supported with funding provided by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. These include:

01

Abiodun Essiet Initiative for Girls (AEIG)

AEIG was supported to: (a) enhance dispute resolution mechanisms of OI traditional institutions across 6 area councils for social justice delivery on SGBV with focus on people with disabilities (b) increase awareness and understanding of sexual and gender-based violence by original inhabitants in six area councils in the FCT, acting as actors and Anti-GBV ambassadors in the fight against SGBV, especially on people with disabilities (c) improve the capacity of OI ward health system committees to promote access to efficient healthcare service delivery in six Primary Healthcare across six area councils of FCT (d) intensify dialogue between OI citizens, FCDA, Ministry of Federal Capital Territory, Area councils, and political representatives at the National Assembly on SGBV and primary health care service delivery in the FCT OI communities and (e) administer community score cards in 20 PHCs across the FCT area councils to improve access to quality healthcare, as well as reduction in morbidity and mortality rate especially amongst the vulnerable groups – women, children and PWDs.

02

Abuja Original Inhabitants Youth Empowerment Organisation (AOIYEO)

AOIYEO was supported to: (a) increase knowledge and awareness around marginalization and statelessness of FCT Original Inhabitants (OIs) (b) facilitate collective participation of FCT OIs in actual governance processes, encouraging among them the development of the knowledge, ethics, and practice of democracy. (c) equip FCT Original Inhabitants (OIs) with the skills and knowledge necessary for effective participation in key governance processes (d) create a forum for regular and structured interaction between elected and appointed political office holders and their constituencies, allowing the former to report on their work and the latter to freely express their views on their performance and raise pertinent issues and (e) contribute to improving indigenous communities resilience and mitigation capacities for environmental sustainability, and preservation of OI culture and heritage.

03

Association of FCT Traditional Rulers Wives (AWTR)

AWTR was granted to (a) enhance traditional justice systems for effective inclusive dispute resolution for justice delivery on gender discrimination, early marriage of girl-child and SGBV; (b) increase awareness and understanding of gender discrimination, sexual and gender-based violence in the six area councils in the FCT, acting as actors and ambassadors in the fight against gender discrimination, early marriage of girl-child and SGBV; (c) improve indigenous communities' resilience and mitigation capacities for environmental sustainability; and (d) intensify dialogue between OI citizens, FCDA, Ministry of Federal Capital Territory, Area councils, and political representatives at the National Assembly on gender discrimination, early marriage of girl-child, and SGBV.

04

Centre for Transparency Advocacy (CTA)

CTA received support to: (a) improve awareness and voice of FCT original inhabitants about their rights, responsibilities, and options through community theatre group; (b) improve level of responsiveness of government institutions and actors to address the injustices arising from extractive mining through advocacy for mining contract transparency; and (c) improve basic service delivery and accountability for the benefit of Original Inhabitant peoples of the FCT through a Community information Centre established.

05

Centre for Environmental Sustainability and Development Awareness (CESDA)

CESDA was awarded to: (a) improve integrity of elections through voter education and impartial observation and reporting by domestic electoral observers during the 2022 FCT Area Council election; (b) reduce risk of electoral violence through increase participation by OI marginalized groups (women, youth and persons with disabilities) in the 2022 FCT Area Council election; and (c) intensify dialogue between FCT Original Inhabitants and appointed/elected political office holders around participation, affordable and sustainable access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), accountability, SGBV and GESI.

06

Helpline Foundation for the Needy

was chosen to: (a) economically empower and support 300 vulnerable women and marginalized youth of the FCT Original Inhabitant Communities (OICs) through entrepreneurial development; (b) pursue the resettlement and or adequate compensation of at least 300 Original Inhabitants (OIs) whose ancestral lands was forcefully taken over by urbanization; (c) intensify dialogue between OI citizens, Federal Capital Development Authority (FCDA), Ministry of Federal Capital Territory, Area councils, and political representatives at the National Assembly on basic education and primary healthcare service delivery in the FCT OI communities; (d) ensure OI disadvantaged groups have equitable access to government healthcare as part of the response to COVID-19 pandemic; (e) preserve FCT-OI cultural heritage through training, documentation, and production of Aje-Sinda cloths, reviving the Asumbo Dye pits, and skills Transfer.

07

Hipcity Innovation Centre

was selected to: (a) improve FCT Original Inhabitants (OIs) access to quality and inclusive basic social services delivery in the implementation of Health, Water, and Education spending in OI communities; (b) improve accountability of political and civil society leaders in the target OI communities; (c) strengthen the engagements between the OI constituents and political representatives in the six area councils of FCT; and (d) contribute to improving indigenous communities' resilience and mitigation capacities for environmental sustainability, marginalization, statelessness, land compensations, service delivery and political representation.

08

Mairo Women Foundation, Ushafa (MAWOFU)

MAWOFU was granted to: (a) revamp the dying OI cultural values, treasures, and repositories through pottery, crafts, visual arts, festivals and other cultural forms; (b) empower young Original Inhabitant women through pottery apprentice system; (c) increase the knowledge of OI women and girls about preventive measures, reporting channels and existing redress mechanisms on sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV); and (d) promote collaboration and involvement of Government, civil society organizations, professional bodies, and art society in mainstreaming and protecting of pottery as an art and cultural heritage of the Original Inhabitants.

09**Original Inhabitants with Disabilities Multipurpose Cooperative Society - FCT (OI-PWD)**

OI-PWD was supported to: (a) ensure youth and adults with disabilities have access to a range of training opportunities and acquire marketable skills, decent work (waged employment or self-employment) and income; (b) girls and women with disabilities have equal opportunities for skills development with boys and men; (c) increase information flow on economic rights of FCT OIs with Disabilities between duty bearers and citizens; empower 200 FCT Original Inhabitants with Disabilities with viable economic and livelihood skills; and (e) promote opportunities for sustainable expansion of livelihood options for FCT OIs with Disabilities through advocacy.

10**Socio-Economic Research and Development Centre (SERDEC)**

SERDEC was supported to: (a) empower unemployed young women and men in the FCT-OI communities to participate actively in the formulation and implementation of employment and empowerment programs; (b) support government target employment and empowerment programs to enhance transparency, accountability, and openness of their operations; (c) enhance equitable access by all sections of OI unemployed young women and men to the livelihood opportunities and other benefits accruing from the programs; (d) contribute to addressing gender imbalance in the provision of employment and empowerment programs by the government; and (e) minimize among the OI unemployed youths, feelings of alienation, frustration, and bitterness arising from inequitable access to these opportunities, thus contributing to reduction in grievances amongst them.

PIA**FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT****EVALUATING IMPACT**

CHRICED supported, strengthened, and improved program outcomes and financial management processes for the original inhabitant organizations through sub-grants and capacity building by employing an iterative approach across four programmatic phases to strengthen the capacity of inhabitant groups (OIs) associated with the program. This strategy entails: 1) administering a participatory institutional analysis (PIA) framework to identify the specific organizational capacity needs of original inhabitant organizations as they engage in self-determination initiatives; 2) strengthening these areas, with an emphasis on financial management and sustainability, through targeted interventions and the provision of grants; and 3) evaluating the impact of interventions and identifying new priorities using the PIA as well. Additionally, CHRICED provided training in accounting, budgeting, financial and inventory control, compliance, financial reporting, and auditing. The process enhanced both financial management and organizational development capabilities. Improving the financial management and organizational capacities of OIs helped them accomplish programmatic objectives more effectively and efficiently, and institute solid policies and procedures for them to account for funds received, thereby positioning them to receive funds directly from donors.



ABIODUN ESSIET INITIATIVE FOR GIRLS



ABIODUN ESSIET INITIATIVE FOR GIRLS

Gender-based violence may be viewed as normal by some, and it takes a gradual shift of mindset to change this view. Most cases of sexual and gender-based violence go unreported. Often, the perpetrators of SGBV are close family members, like a spouse or a relative, or are well-known to the victim. Assaults go unreported and unaddressed because of ignorance, naivety, fear instilled by the assailant, threats, stigma and shame. Victims of gender-based violence often are unaware that the abuse is wrong, and even when they know, they do not know where, to whom or how to report it. In some communities, families further traumatize instead of protecting the victims.

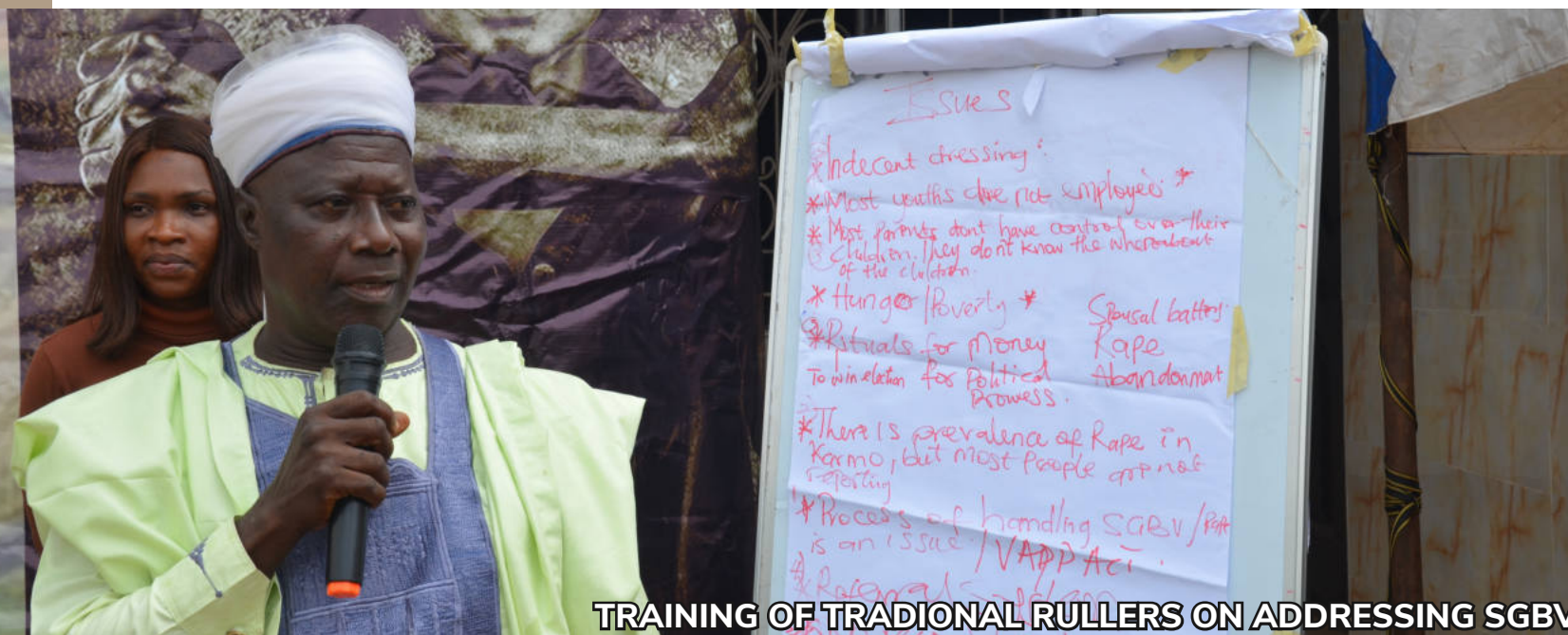


Educating and Empowering Community Members

I don't believe in marital rape. Such a thing does not exist. If I paid the bride price, I could have sex with my wife whenever I wished. Why would she deprive me? She can't say no because it's not rape; it's normal – a participant in a community group discussion..

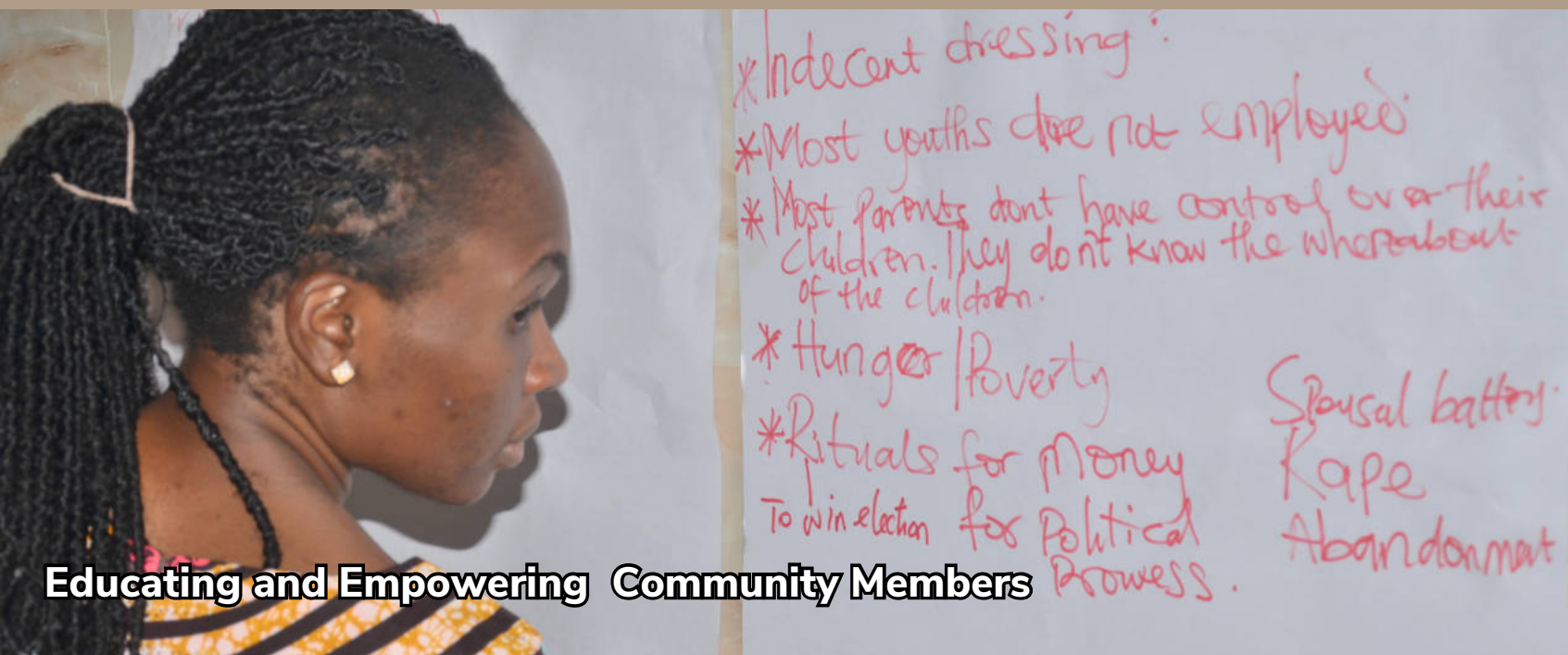
Abiodun Essiet Initiative for Girls is an organization that fights for the rights of women and girls. They are keen on putting interventions to prevent and handle SGBV cases among women, adolescents and young girls. They do this through capacity building activities, partnerships with other organizations and relevant government agencies, as well as various media outlets.

“We were trained on how to handle the issues of rape. (If) Somebody rape (a) teenage girl, or even if (It) is a husband that rape his wife or the wife rape the husband, we were told how to approach the issue and using those pattern we have been achieving a goal and the crimes has drastically reduced to the barest degree.” -- Umar Gani, Sarkin Karmo.



TRAINING OF TRADITIONAL RULLERS ON ADDRESSING SGBV

DEBUNKING THE MYTHS AND THE MISCONCEPTIONS OF WHAT CONSTITUTES SGBV



Educating and Empowering Community Members

Through CHRICED and Macarthur Foundation funding, Abiodun Essiet Initiative for Girls has partnered with traditional rulers to improve how traditional justice systems deal with sexual and gender-based violence. To begin with, Abiodun Essiet Initiative for Girls held community meetings to examine traditional rulers' and community members' understanding and underlying views on SGBV.

When Suleiman spoke at the community meeting, he was sure he had every right to demand sex from his wife. To him, his wife had to do what he demanded because she belonged to him. Many men in the group agreed with him.

In a parallel community meeting for women, Khadija was astounded to learn she could report her husband for beating her or forcing her into having sex without her consent. While most of the women in the group had endured the pain of such violence, they never considered it abnormal.

SGBV cuts across geographical, cultural, socio-economic, ethnic or other lines. However, its prevalence and effects cut deeper for the poor and marginalized communities. The poor indigenous communities within the FCT struggle with basic amenities and lack the knowledge and resources to report or follow up on cases of abuse once in court. Without legal support, the cases drag, and most complainants give up or "settle out of court" -the latter being code for the assailant going scot-free or paying a token fine.

In addition, the misperception of what constitutes gender violence or abuse and the mishandling of cases keeps gender-based violence going. The lack of proper training of the law enforcers, health workers and those involved in reporting cases of abuse is a significant contributor to the mishandling of SGBV cases. Finally, social attitudes and norms that condone gender violence are a great hindrance to justice.

SUPPORTING, EDUCATING AND EMPOWERING TRADITIONAL RULERS



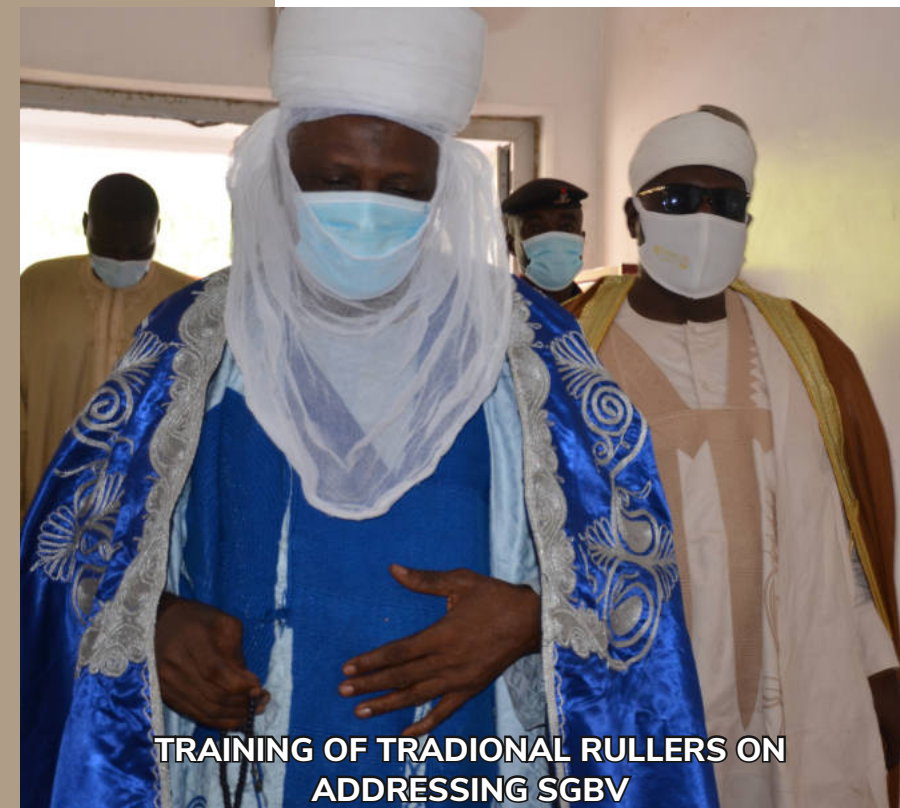
We train traditional rulers on the sensitivity of sexual and gender-based abuse cases; for example, we cautioned that addressing rape or other sexual abuse cases in a town-hall meeting was more likely to traumatize the victim further. We teach people to report cases of abuse. However, some believe that abuse in marriage is culturally allowed, and they should remain silent about it— Josephine Emeghoghena, Project Manager, Abiodun Essiet Initiative for Girls.

In most indigenous communities, traditional rulers are the first and sometimes the only point for reporting gender violence cases. This is because the people trust the community chiefs and rulers, and getting justice is faster and less costly. But unfortunately, most traditional rulers are not acquainted with how to handle cases of gender-based violence.

Educating and Empowering Traditional Rulers



TRAINING OF TRADITIONAL RULLERS ON ADDRESSING SGBV



TRAINING OF TRADITIONAL RULLERS ON ADDRESSING SGBV



RECOGNITION OF THE IMPACT AGAINST SGBV

Abiodun Essiet Initiative for Girls has trained over 150 traditional rulers and chiefs from the six area councils within the FCT on case management, reporting, and addressing the survivors of SGBV.

With support from CHRICED and MacArthur Foundation, the organization has addressed over 25 cases of wife battery and child rape in partnership with other organizations, such as the Association of Wives Of FCT Traditional Rulers (AWTR), NAPTIP and other relevant government agencies.

In addition, they drew up a community scorecard that most traditional rulers and community members have been using to check how well they are handling cases of SGBV within their communities.

"Gender-based violence has been reduced because community members can now observe how well the traditional rulers handle cases. In addition, watching the abuse perpetrators go to prison has made people even more vigilant. I am always thrilled when community members call us to give positive feedback on how their chiefs trained them and or handled an abuse case", says Josephine.

RECOGNITION OF THE IMPACT AGAINST SGBV

Abiodun Essiet Initiative for Girls was recognized at NAPTIP's 20th anniversary and given an award for its strides over the years in the fight against sexual and gender based violence, especially in rural and hard to reach communities

ENDING SGBV IS A COLLECTIVE MISSION.

Abiodun Essiet Initiative for Girls has trained over 800 students and teachers in government schools within FCT. Among them, they have selected five ambassadors in each school to report and speak up about cases of SGBV. In addition, they have held radio programmes in partnership with the Chief's Wives Association – also supported and funded by CHRICED and MacArthur Foundation.



SECONDARY SCHOOL SENSITIZATION

CAPACITY BUILDING FOR HEALTH MANAGERS

Abiodun Essiet Initiative for Girls also conducted capacity building training for Ward Health Committees and managers of primary healthcare centers which has improved access to efficient healthcare service delivery and effective management of SGBV cases, especially rape.



CAPACITY BUILDING FOR HEALTH MANAGERS



AOIYEO

ABUJA ORIGINAL INHABITANTS
YOUTH EMPOWERMENT ORGANIZATION

**ABUJA ORIGINAL INHABITANTS
YOUTH EMPOWERMENT
ORGANISATION**

AOIYEO



ABUJA ORIGINAL INHABITANTS YOUTH EMPOWERMENT ORGANISATION

"Makaranta! Makaranta! (School! School!), screamed the young girl as she tugged at her mother's skirt. She pointed at the lady in line at the polling station where they had gone to cast their votes, "Mummy, look at her, School!" she said. The girl finally had her attention.

"You're the one who brought us bags, books, pens, and 'sentence'. You are the one who came to our school and spoke to us. You brought desks too, remember?" the girl explained.

Sylvia Sarki comes from Igu, a remote village in the Bwari area council. Her community has no phone network, passable roads, piped water or school. As one of the few educated people from her village, Sylvia plays the role of Ambassador – championing the needs of the people in her community. She has always sought ways to help more children from her community get an education. In her search, she came across the KAF form – Know-Ask-Follow – whose trail led her to Abuja Original Inhabitants Youth Empowerment Organisation (AOIYEO). AOIYEO is a youth-led organization with a heavy presence in the indigenous communities within the FCT.



KAF (KNOW, ASK AND FOLLOW)

KAF is a platform to advocate for the fair distribution of government interventions in communities. A civil accountability platform - people can sign a query online and offline to have the government intervene or respond to an issue within the community, for example, flooding.



Community engagement by AOIYEO

"For the communities that are too far and without access to digital technology, like Sylvia's, one of the community coordinators brings the signed manual forms to our offices, and we upload them on the platform. In addition, we have built partnerships with the responsible Agencies, which makes advocacy and communication easier", says Blessing Moses, the Communications Officer of AOIYEO.

Knowing this, Sylvia printed the form, had her community members sign it, and delivered it to AOIYEO. This initiative earned her community sponsorship for thirty children through primary and secondary school and basic facilities for one of the schools in her community.



Blessing Moses, Communications Officer, AOIYEO

In a project funded by MacArthur Foundation through CHRICED, AOIYEO works with 858 communities within 17 chiefdom's and 62 Wards within the six area councils in FCT. They have mobilized the youth and recruited ambassadors and community champions from among them. They have also created digital platforms to increase knowledge and awareness around the marginalization of FCT Original Inhabitants. They also encourage collective participation in governance processes among the Indigenous communities and preserve their culture and heritage.

FCT YOUTH NETWORK

"My community is divided into six areas. One of the areas, my area, got affected by demolitions. We didn't know where to move as we had been here all our lives. Women and men could not go out to the market or work for fear that their houses would be demolished while away. So all six areas collaborated and reported to the Youth Network. AOIYEO intervened, and the demolitions stopped", says David Bakut, an original youth Inhabitant from AMAC.



AOIYEO has created the Youth Network by bringing indigenous youths from every part of FCT. The Network - modelled after the UK youth parliament - serves as a bridge between the young people and the government, with no affiliations with any political party.

They have adopted by-laws, inaugurated elected youth leaders and six area council representatives to serve as spokespersons at the community level. This process of appointing representatives has ensured that when a youth leader speaks, they represent the collective concerns of all Abuja youths.

So far, the Network has close to 1000 community champions who are actively involved in identifying and reporting their community needs. With one representative selected from each area council, and a leader for all six, they have devised an efficient way to identify, investigate, document and report issues in real-time.



OIPEDIA

The launch of the OIPedia as part of the project execution was aim to revamp the OI culture, is an open-source platform, which means persons can contribute to it, as long as their content is rich, credible, and promotes OI culture.

The OIPedia is an extensive cultural repository for the Original Inhabitants of Abuja; where one can search and find diverse things about Abuja's nine (9) indigenous tribes



Cultural Dance by Original Inhabitants of Abuja



Cultural Dance by Original Inhabitants of Abuja

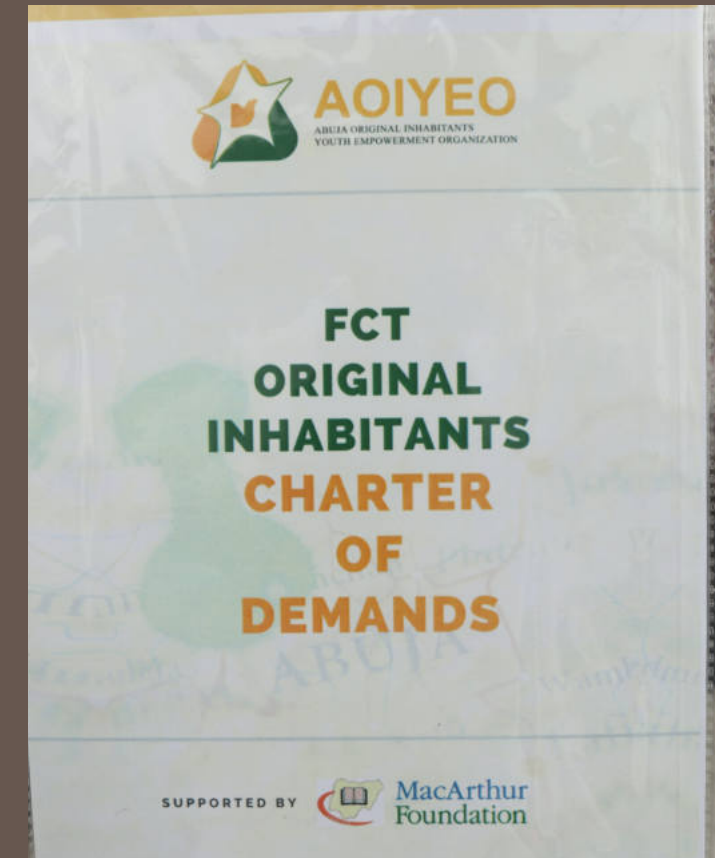
CHARTER OF DEMANDS



My proudest moment as an Original Inhabitant and a member of the Youth Network was the day we launched the Charter of Demands. It felt like heaven. AOIYEO stepped down to our level and worked with us through listening and compiling all the issues, having them validated by experts, and finally obtaining a signed commitment from political aspirants. I am grateful to AOIYEO and trust the document will work for us – David Bakuf, Youth Network Representative, Bwari Area Council.

Ahead of the 2023 presidential election, Original Inhabitants of Abuja with support from AOIYEO presented a Charter of Demands to all the presidential candidates. They also obtained signed commitments from political aspirants and serving officials as a sign of goodwill towards addressing the need of the Indigenous people while in office.

For the first time, all the Indigenous communities had come together in one voice to articulate their needs and have them in writing and compiled into an official legal document.



WWW.ABUJAOIPEDIA.ORG

A SWIFT SPIRIT

Youth possesses a swiftness and vitality of spirit. And this is well conveyed by AOIYEO and their commitment to fighting for the rights of the Original Inhabitants by utilizing the energy, enthusiasm, and skills of the youth within their organization and the indigenous communities of Abuja to educate, mobilize and create change.

The support from CHRICED and MacArthur Foundation has enabled them to actualize their vision to empower young Indigenous people to live, thrive and lead. They have utilized digital technology to ensure that the work moves swiftly, reaches all 858 communities, connects all stakeholders, and provides openness and transparency.



ASSOCIATION OF WIVES OF FCT TRADITIONAL RULERS

AWTR

AWTR



AWTR

When 14-year-old Fatima showed up at the Chief's palace two years ago, she was physically weak, emotionally beaten and mentally exhausted. A 40-year-old man had sexually abused and threatened her and gone into hiding upon learning she was pregnant. After listening to Fatima's story, the Chief's wife took her in, and placed her in a Safe space within the palace. The safe space is reserved for women and girls like her, who, after being abused, have nowhere to go for support. She then reported the case and followed up with the police and the relevant government agencies until the man was apprehended, taken to court, sentenced and ordered to pay child support for the child he fathered. Today, Fatima is back in school. She is among the over 80 girls and women rescued by the Association of Wives of FCT Traditional Rulers (AWTR) from abuse or early child marriages between November 2022 to January 2023.

**"I would advise any girl going through what I went through not to be afraid to speak up and seek help"
– Fatima, SGBV victim.**



FROM PASSIVE OBSERVERS TO AMBASSADORS OF JUSTICE, BREAKING THE SILENCE ON SGBV

AWTR

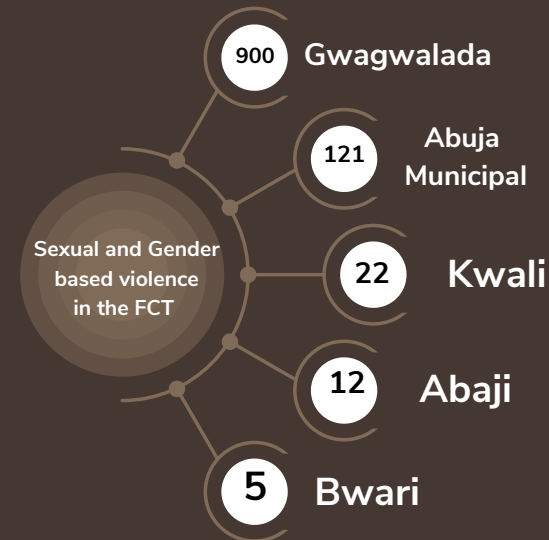
Upon observing the gender imbalance in the traditional courts and how this translated to highly skewed rulings against women, the Chiefs' wives decided to take on an active role in preventing, protecting, and seeking effective justice for the abuse victims.

Since their intervention, more abused women and girls have been speaking up and seeking help.

"When the Chiefs' wives came on board, and CHRICED and MacArthur Foundation partnered with them, we received much training on handling cases of abuse and proper record keeping. Before, I referred all the cases to the royal majesty, and he and his council members listened to the cases and made the judgement. But the victims could never express themselves in front of the men. Now I can identify the cases of gender violence and refer them to the Association of Chief's wives. As a result, the victims feel safe explaining what happened freely, and they receive a fair hearing - Ahmed Madaki, the secretary of Garki Chief's palace.

For the past two years, over 10 women and girls have walked into the palaces every week to report cases of sexual and gender-based violence. This is unlike before, when they were too shy or afraid to report or talk about abuse. Many have called for help through the Association's hotline or phoned the radio and TV stations to ask questions or weigh in on the discussion during the weekly radio and TV program aired by AWTR.

THE PREVALENCE OF SGBV IN FCT



Source: Gender Violence: Women groups record 1000 FCT cases
<https://punchng.com/gender-violence-women-groups-record-1000-fct-cases/>

Adult education class



Adult education class

Over 1000 cases of Sexual and gender-based violence get reported annually within the Federal capital territory. Most of these cases are reported through the traditional justice system, which has existed for many years among indigenous communities.

This is because, traditional justice systems offer a community-friendly, timely, cost-effective, and well-trusted channel to resolve and prevent disputes. However, due to their patriarchal leanings, women seeking justice in these systems have minimal and often superficial participation in the hearings. As a result, most of the rulings passed are often biased and based on the Justice Administrators' cultural beliefs and attitudes towards women's status in society.

“When girls and women call or come to us, we reassure them of confidentiality. We counsel them and let them stay with us at the safe house. And because they feel safe and not stigmatized, they open up to us about the abuse they have been through. As they recover and as we train them, they start to know their rights. They feel empowered, go out, tell their stories, and encourage others to speak up. And this is helping to end the culture of suffering in silence.” - HRH Halima Mohammed, AWTR Secretary

Resolved cases	52
Referred cases	11
Open cases	18

With support from CHRICED and MacArthur Foundation, the Association has established safe houses in all the Chief's palaces in the six Area Councils of the FCT – Abaji, Bwari, Abuja Municipal, Gwagwalada, Kuje and Kwali., providing them with a secure environment to recover and resume their education. The association has also recognized the needs of adult survivors of SGBV and has set up dedicated adult classes to cater for their education.

In addition, they air weekly one-hour radio and TV interactive programmes to educate and sensitize the public on SGBV and early child marriages. The Association has conducted campaigns in 6 government schools within the FCT to sensitize students and teachers on SGBV, educate them on the proper channels to follow, and seek support if abused.

An Evolved Traditional Justice System: Way Forward

With constant training for the Association and palace staff members on handling SGBV cases and intensified publicity on the subject, gender violence cases have reduced. In addition, the action taken against perpetrators has served as a deterrent to potential perpetrators.



Traditional Chiefs

“CHRICED and MacArthur Foundation support has enabled us to fight against SGBV and in rebalancing the traditional justice system. As chiefs' wives, we feel at peace, knowing we are doing something to support the traditional rulers and end gender-based violence. We are also pleased to see other non-indigenous communities copying our model, indicating that it's working” - Amb. Hannatu Usman, executive Director, AWTR. The Association has created a code of conduct to ensure uniformity in handling SGBV cases across all the palaces.



CESDA

**CENTRE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL
SUSTAINABILITY AND DEVELOPMENT
AWARENESS (CESDA)**



CESDA

In 2022, during the months leading to council elections, 29-year-old Francis Duzaho was going about his business, unbothered by the excitement surrounding election campaigns. To him, elections and anything to do with politics were "old people" concerns. He knew about vote buying and that most people in his community were ready to relinquish their vote for some cash from politicians. He, too, though not actively looking to sell his vote, wasn't strictly opposed to the idea. After all, the little cash might be the only benefit to gain from politics. Once the election was over, the politicians would go their merry way and only return during the next round of elections.

Voter apathy and indifference to political leadership matters are typical attitudes many citizens express, especially in marginalised communities. And the despair, resignation and cynicism borne from government neglect of these communities are passed down the generations.

The Indigenous communities of Abuja are rarely included in the political process; this has alienated them and made them even more economically marginalised. The Centre for Environmental Sustainability and Development Awareness (CESDA), through support from CHRICED and MacArthur Foundation, has been working with the Original Inhabitants communities in Abuja to promote their political rights.

Last year, CESDA engaged the communities in all six area councils and held discussions and civic education training for the community members. In addition, they approached party leaders and political aspirants and had them listen to the Original Inhabitants and their community issues in their manifesto.



Mindset & Attitude Shift - From Passive to Proactive Political Mobilizers

"The training opened my eyes. For the first time in history, we held councillorship debates for aspiring leaders. I will carry on the sensitisation across all other area councils", says Francis

In this training, CESDA incorporated short videos on vote buying, which gave a poignant visual of what it meant to sell a vote and the long-term on the community - particularly the marginalised ones.

Until this moment, vote buying was a "harmless" activity – but upon watching the video and engaging in the training, something shifted in Francis. At first, it was a vague stir in his mindset, but soon it turned into a burning fire in his conscience. He needed to do something, not just for himself but for his community.

He returned to his area council, Kubwa, a different person, his eyes open to tactics politicians use to exploit the people's desperate plights. In the few weeks leading to the council elections, he organised training for the youths in his community.

He mobilized over 300 young people to vote and be proactive in whom they chose to represent them.

The youths, now awake, were starting to look closer to see how their indifference to who represented them at the council and Senate had cost them – isolation and a perpetual lack of basic amenities. As a result, the voter turnout increased.



Community Involvement in Politics & Governance, Bringing Stakeholders on Board

One of the most effective ways that CESDA reached most of the original inhabitants was through radio programs aired on the local radio stations to get them involved in the day-to-day governance of the country.

They brought in political and leadership stakeholders onboard to engage directly with the Indigenous community members. But the most notable was INEC officials, who created more awareness of civic rights and the need to cast votes. The people would call for guidance with technical issues, for example, PVC or change of location.

As a result of the attentiveness the INEC officials accorded them and the patience and respect with which they engaged them, people started to call more and more. They called and asked for help, and as their issues got resolved, they called to give feedback. Their antagonistic stance was beginning to mellow, and the indifference slowly turned to curiosity.

"At first, we discovered that the interest in the day's politics was low, but the listeners warmed up over time as we began to bring key stakeholders on board", says Rachael Chidimma Obi, Project Officer, CESDA.

The community members have created a Charter of Demand to keep their leaders accountable for what they said they would do. CESDA also held election observation training and sent observers to monitor the 2022 council and 2023 general elections. They deployed people, mainly from the Indigenous communities, to monitor elections and report back.

AFTER THE ELECTIONS. WHAT NEXT?

CESDA has conducted a total of 12 town hall meetings, six (6) across the Area Councils before the 2022 FCT Area Council Elections, and six (6) after the elections. The Original Inhabitants express concern that the senator-elect is not from their community and may not understand their needs. However, with what they have learned and the legal tools at their disposal, they're confident and optimistic that they will get to communicate their needs to her and that she will understand and represent them and table Original Inhabitants' issues to the Senate.

They consider the events of the recent elections a learning curve and are now keen on their community needs and keeping the leaders accountable.

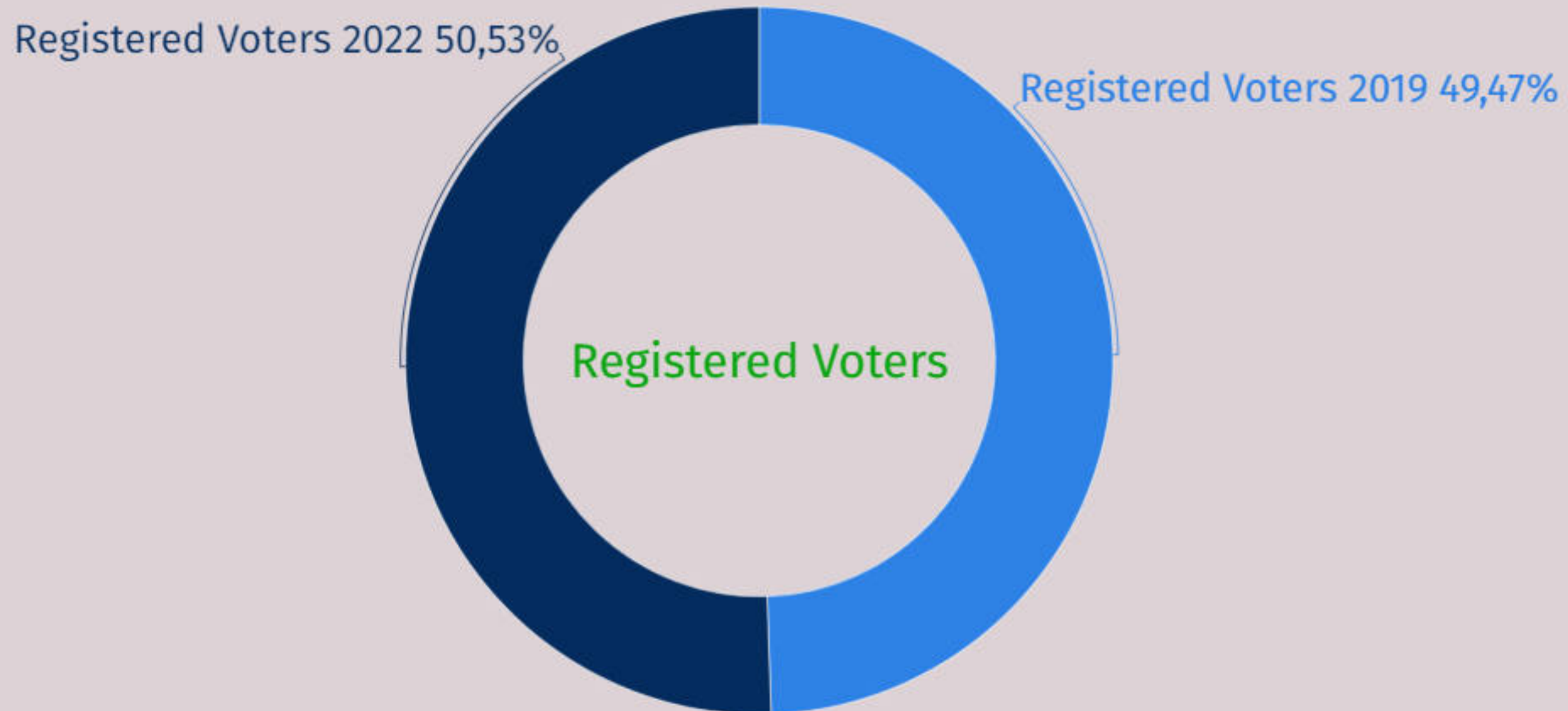
After the elections, another round of Community Town Hall Meeting was held across the six Area Councils. In one of the Area Councils, Abaji, complaints were made on basic amenities and employment. As a result of this, CESDA formed an eight (8) man advocacy technical group to follow up with the factory in Abaji.

"This is one step in the proverbial journey of a thousand miles. We still have much ground to cover, but this program, funded by CHRICED and MacArthur Foundation, has helped kickstart the political involvement process of the Original Inhabitants of Abuja," concludes Olusola Babalola, Executive Director, CESDA.

FCT Registered Voters

Election Observers Training/Deployment:

To encourage FCT Original inhabitants (OI) to participate in the 2022 FCT Area Council election, CESDA trained and accredited a total of 108 FCT OI observers and supervisors to observe the Area Council election. They were then deployed to their assigned polling units with with the aid of election checklist to observe and report on the election day processes and incidence to the election day situation room. These activities have led to increase in the number of FCT registered voters.





CENTRE FOR TRANSPARENCY ADVOCACY

CTA



Faith Nwadishi, Executive Director, Centre For Transparency Advocacy (CTA)

We stumbled upon a sacred rock in Abuja during our work. It used to be the abode of the famous Garki People. The hill popularly known as Apo – but whose original name is not Apo – is where 16 traditional Rulers who have ruled the Garki Kingdom lay buried.

The people are yet to bury the 17th Chief because the government has denied them access to the land. The deep history of the Garki people lies buried below that rock, whose original name is almost lost.



Few people know about the history of Abuja and its people before the city became the Federal Capital of Nigeria. As a result, indigenous people's history and traditions are almost extinct, while others lie, not so peacefully, under falling rocks.

Centre for Transparency Advocacy (CTA) is an organization that serves as a watchdog – ensuring that there's openness and transparency regarding how the government operates and spends money on projects. CTA has been at the forefront of fighting for the rights of the indigenous people of Abuja, especially regarding mining within their land.

The adverse effects of extractive mining within community land go beyond the apparent destruction of the environment and extend to the people's culture and heritage- a degradation of their identity.

Mining companies' indiscriminate blasting of rocks has violated many Indigenous people's sacred sites. Because of this, CTA has been seeking to defend, preserve and promote these cultural sites, focusing more on the areas where extractive mining is most intense – Mpape, Karshi, and Kubwa.

With support from MacArthur Foundation through CHRICED, CTA has devised means to teach people about the original inhabitants' history and reclaim access to their land.

TELLING THE STORIES OF THE PEOPLE, BY THE PEOPLE

"After hearing about the story of the indigenous people, I got curious and did more research on my own. That's why I wrote a poem for the schools' Art and Drama Festivals - about a people stripped of their identity and dignity. Though my family and I are not Original Inhabitants, I felt deep sadness and empathy for the Indigenous people of Abuja when I learnt about their history. I want them to know they are not alone in their struggle", says Okunso Abayomi, SS3.



VISIT TO A SCHOOL IN FCT



By positively utilizing the principle of "catching them while young", CTA has used the strategy of having the Original Inhabitants tell the stories of the people by themselves. Last November, they organized an Art and Poetry competition to have the children express their understanding of the people of Abuja.

"It was mind-blowing. The children captured the indigenous people's culture's beauty in poetry and artwork, moving us all to tears. Even when the project ends, we will continue. It's going to be an annual competition", says Faith Nwadishi, Executive Director of CTA.



The purpose of these competitions and art festivals is not only for the indigenous people's consumption but also for public enlightenment. Through drama, other non-indigenous people living or visiting Abuja can understand and appreciate the plight of the original inhabitants and join in the campaign to protect the latter's rights to preserve their cultural heritage.

"When people see the stories of Indigenous people on social media, they're amazed - they go, 'Wow, we didn't know this!' says Khasim Musa, an original inhabitant of the Mpape community.

Through these festivals, young people learn and internalize the values and culture of the original inhabitants of the FCT.

EMPOWER PEOPLE TO NEGOTIATE FAVOURABLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENTS.

"We didn't even know the extent of damage done by the mining companies. As indigenous people, and women, we were not allowed to say anything. CTA gave us a voice and opened our eyes in many ways", says Rebecca from Kubwa Area Council.

The law requires mining companies to agree with the community members within whose area the company intends to conduct mining activities. Community Development Agreement (CDA) is an agreed-upon document that safeguards both parties' interests and, more particularly, ensures that the communities benefit from the extraction of their resources. In addition, the mining companies need to be conscious of the culture, heritage and values of the communities surrounding the mines.

Unfortunately, this has not been the case in the past. Upon checking, CTA discovered that most of the CDA's signed before this were erroneously drafted and signed by traditional leaders, some of whom signed on their behalf rather than on behalf of the community.

CTA has trained representatives from all the Indigenous tribes within the FCT to negotiate. Each community selects five people covering various demographics – women, men, youth, elderly and people living with disabilities. The chosen people know their community issues, live among them, and understand the community's needs. The training equips them with skills to negotiate good CDA's that benefit their community and different groups within the community.

CDA's also serve as a tool to negotiate for promoting and preserving cultural sites and keep the mining companies accountable.



RETURNING THE LAND TO THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

When you strip a man of the land, it's the same as killing him. We cannot survive without land. We don't belong to Abuja, implying we are stateless and not Nigerian citizens - even though we live in the heart of Nigeria and on the land owned by our fathers and forefathers - says Lazarus Nyaholo, Secretary Garki Chiefdom, FCT.

The law that led to the creation of Abuja as the Federal Capital dictated that the government relocate the Original Inhabitants. However, most of the original inhabitants were neither relocated nor adequately compensated. Despite this, the government has yet to amend that law to accommodate them as residents of FCT.

The training received by the indigenous people has also turned them into community champions advocating for access to community land and resources like water. With CTA. on board to help engage the relevant ministries, the trainees are training their community members to legally fight for the return and access to land fenced off by mining companies and private developers, depriving them of basic amenities and freedom of movement.



A MINING LOCATION IN FCT

Abuja was never a “No-Man’s Land” – acknowledge our forefathers – and us.

CTA is currently engaging the Government Art Council to have the government allocate a budget to have a significant piece of art at the city gate - a visual that will tell the story of the original people – and as a result, promote peace and restore their pride and dignity. They're also working with the Minister for Environment to curb the environmental degradation caused by extractive mining within the indigenous communities.

"We are grateful for the support we have received from CHRICED. Their commitment to working with us as a team has been valuable. We especially appreciate their quarterly mentorship for the M&E staff and having one of their board of directors' legal advisors review and analyze the CDA's. In addition, we can call the Executive Director of CHRICED anytime; he is always ready to help us. It has been a great experience working with CHRICED and the MacArthur Foundation", says Faith.



ART AND FESTIVAL COMPETITIONS

HELPLINE FOUNDATION FOR THE NEEDY

HELPLINE FOUNDATION FOR THE NEEDY

REVIVING THE TRADITIONAL ATTIRE OF THE NINE INDIGENOUS TRIBES OF FCT



Two years ago, the traditional cloth of the Original Inhabitants of Abuja was on the brink of disappearing, taking with it a significant mark of cultural identity. Now, intergenerational transfer of knowledge is evident as the OI youth are engaged in attire production and are taking ownership of other key cultural aspects. This was achieved through the intervention by Helpline Foundation for the Needy

Helpline Foundation for the Needy is an organization that supports children, youths, women, and vulnerable people, equips them with entrepreneurial skills, and seeks to ensure they have access to basic amenities and opportunities.

Helpline Foundation for the Needy realized that the ORIGINAL Inhabitants of Abuja were losing out on their heritage, especially the traditional attires which were becoming extinct. With support from CHRICED and MacArthur Foundation, Helpline has trained nine master trainers and two hundred trainees, ensuring the preservation and revival of these cultural garments. The feat achieved through this would continue to be multiplied as three trainees have been enrolled by the government and engaged by Small and Medium Enterprises Development(SMEDAN) as trainers.

THE TRADITIONAL ATTIRE OF THE NINE TRIBES OF FCT

"When I gave my elderly father the Gade's tribe traditional attire, he was overjoyed and embraced it like a dear friend he had lost touch with. He asked me where I had found it, and I informed him we had started making the dress ourselves. He cherished the clothing so much that he wore it for almost two weeks straight" - Agabe Yusuf Musa, Gade Tribe Coordinator.

Ajesinda, the dress worn by the Gbagyi people within FCT, is predominantly blue, black and white. Navy blue represents royalty and is worn by the king or on royal occasions. The Gbagyi people wear black to funerals and white to weddings and during celebrations. Most times, though, you'll find them wearing this tie and dye fabric in a mix of all three colours – varying only in creative designs and beautiful stripes. And for hundreds of years, they weaved and dyed the cloth in their numerous dye pits built on the community land.

TRAINING OF ORIGINAL INHABITANTS



The Koro tribe's Gwodo attire is a vibrant mix of maroon, green, light pink, and white, made using the Dojo – a bamboo loom. Maroon signifies beauty, inspired by the traditional beauty cream used by Koro women. Green represents agriculture, while white represents peace. Although the Koro people reside mainly in the Tunga Maje area of FCT, the Koro ethnic group is also present in Niger, Nasarawa, and Kaduna States. While dressmaking for the Koro tribe continued unimpeded in those states, the Godo vanished in Abuja for an extended period after Abuja became the federal capital. Consequently, many young people had never seen it or had forgotten how it looked.

And so is the case for all the traditional attires of the nine tribes of the Original Inhabitants of Abuja – The Gade tribe's attire is Agbidiliyabade, Koro tribe-Gwodo, Bassa cultural attire is Gboro, Egbura cultural attire-Kadigo, the Gbari's have Godo as their traditional attire, the Ganagana tribe's cultural attire is Kpassa, the Gwandara cultural attire is Ogodo, Gbagyi tribe's cultural attire is Ajesinda and the Amomoa tribe's cultural attire is Dabo. Until, recently, their attire was disappearing in the wake of marginalization.

"Before, no person younger than 30 knew what an Ogodo is, now they do. So, the young people see it and are beginning to ask questions, and we get to teach them about our history". - Abubakar Yahuza, Gwandara tribe Coordinator



Human treasure of the culture



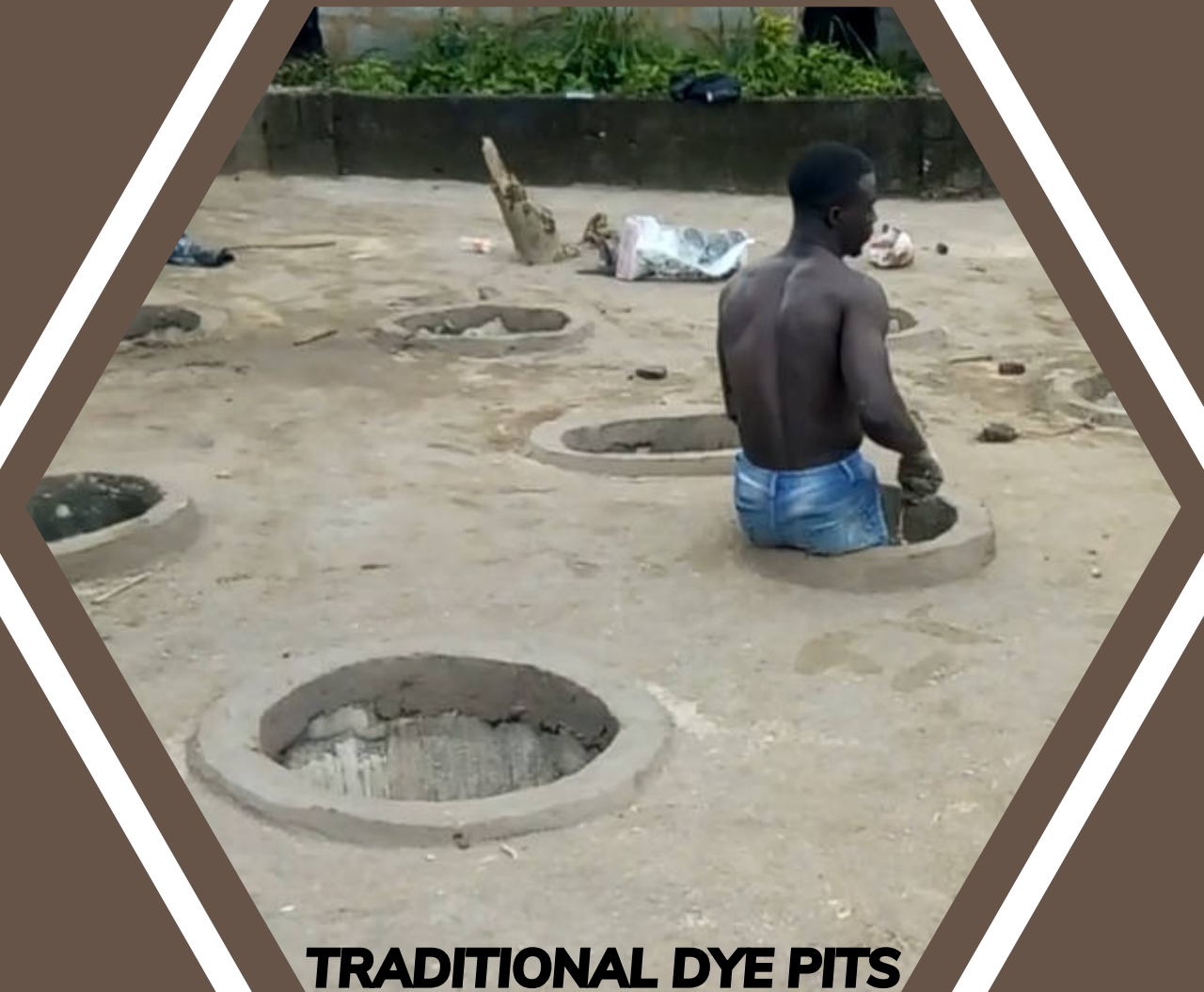
Weaving Koro traditional attire

A Tool for Preserving Cultural Values, and an Avenue for Economic Empowerment.

Before this project, many dye pits were abandoned or used as dumping sites, rendering them economically useless and an eye sore. Additionally, 85% of the land surrounding the Ushafa dye pits had been encroached upon.

Helpline Foundation has advocated with the responsible agencies to stop all development and further encroachment. As a result, they fenced off the remaining 15% of the land, cleaned up, and restored some dyeing pits – and they continue to advocate and work to recover the other over 800 dyeing pits within FCT.

This project has not only revived the culture of the Original Inhabitants of Abuja, but it's also teaching young people entrepreneurship skills.



TRADITIONAL DYE PITS

A MARK OF UNITY - PEOPLE RECOGNIZE US

"With this project, over 50 women groups/associations in Kuje meet to weave, bond, and earn a living" - Agabe Yusuf, Gade Tribe.

In the past the nine tribes struggled to survive and hardly worked together due to their singular focus on their challenges. However, this project brought them together as one. As a result of their collective voice and vigorous campaigns conducted through weekly radio programmes, potential land buyers and investors have become more attuned to their cultural rights. People now actively inquire before purchasing land or investing in areas occupied by OIs.

Through this process, they realized that they not only share a common history but also face similar challenges of poverty and marginalization. Therefore, by collaborating, they stood a better chance of finding solutions. As a result, regular meetings and celebrations have united the indigenous communities in FCT, and now they can speak with one voice.

In addition, the Foundation has conducted town hall meetings to teach cultural values related to attire, incorporated youth programs, and brought together girls to learn various skills like solar panels, reproductive health and ICT skills. The Foundation plans to bring the boys together too.

I thank CHRICED and the MacArthur Foundation for allowing us to be part of the 10 Sub-grantees. Tomorrow, the children of the Original Inhabitants of FCT will want to learn the story of their forefathers and the values they held dear, and we need to preserve that for them. So, we are happy the attire has returned, Says Dr Jummai.



HELPLINE FOUNDATION



Women weaving the Bassa traditional attire



Traditional attire for Amwama tribe



Egbira Women weaving their traditional attire



Woman weaving the Ganagana traditional



Human treasure of the culture



Traditional attire for Koro tribe

HIPCITY

HIPCITY INNOVATION CENTRE

Tanko Madakin Jiwa experience as a Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) chairman in his community school in Jiwa, Abuja, has given him firsthand knowledge of students' struggles. Overcrowded and unequipped classrooms have forced many students to sit on the floor during lessons. However, the challenges facing his community go beyond the school system.

The Original Inhabitants' communities have also experienced the frustration of not having access to clean water and primary healthcare. These unmet needs and the lack of knowledge about addressing them or where to turn for help have left the communities feeling hopeless.



COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL, JIWA



COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL, JIWA



COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL, JIWA

When Hipcity, a research, development, and advocacy organization, visited Tanko's community, the community members were skeptical. In the past, other aid organizations had come and gone, taking pictures and making empty promises.

However, Hipcity took a different approach. They focused on the people, listened to their needs, and followed their lead without making assumptions. Hipcity had partnered with CHRICED and MacArthur Foundation to improve access to primary education, healthcare, and water supply for the Original Inhabitants of Abuja. Before the project implementation, they conducted a baseline study to understand the challenges faced by the Indigenous communities of Abuja. They did this by consulting with the people to determine their needs before acting.

STANDING IN THE GAP

“We acknowledge that the government may not be able to provide all the services required by all the people due to sundry reasons and other competing needs. However, with support from CHRICED and MacArthur Foundation, we at HipCity Innovation Centre ensured that those in dire need are known by the relevant government agencies and receive essential services as resources become available”

The struggle for basic amenities is common among many communities, but the situation for the Original Inhabitants of Abuja is particularly unique. This is because the city of Abuja directly reflects how the Nigerian Government values the dignity of its people.

“Abuja is the federal capital of Nigeria created as a centre of unity to serve all Nigerian citizens. Meanwhile, the original inhabitants who sacrificed their land for the city’s development do not benefit much from the government. Instead, they have been marginalized and pushed to the periphery” says Bassey

-HIPCITY Executive Director, Bassey Bassey.



COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL, JIMVA



HIPCITY SIGNS MOU WITH RUWASSA

HIPCITY

With support from CHRICED and the MacArthur Foundation, Hipcity engages relevant government agencies in FCT, such as the Education Secretariat and Water and Health Boards. For example, in their engagement with the Education Secretariat, they advocated for the provision of adequate classroom infrastructure, educational materials, and teaching staff. In their meetings with the Water and Health Boards, they advocated for the provision and rehabilitation of boreholes and for providing primary healthcare services, such as health insurance to reduce out-of-pocket spending and increase access to quality healthcare, healthcare facility upgrade/maintenance alongside provision of WASH facilities.

Hipcity also recognizes local government officials' crucial role in addressing the community's needs. As such, they work closely with the Area Council chairpersons and councilors in all six area councils in FCT to advocate for community development projects and ensure that government policies and programs are responsive to the community's needs. They also consult the 17 community chiefs to guide them in approaching their community challenges.

As a result of their advocacy, this project has consistently pressured the Government to improve health infrastructure; one PHC in each ward across the 6 area council has accessed the basic healthcare provision fund with no backlog; therefore ensuring that OI children, pregnant women and the elderly have access to medicare covered by the fund.



HIPCITY SIGNS MOU WITH RUWASSA



HIPCITY

They have also worked with FCT Rural Water Supply & Sanitation Agency (RUWASA) to ensure rehabilitation and construction of 15 boreholes across the six area councils, including two boreholes in Leleyi Gwari in Kwali Area Council, and Pyakassa in AMAC.

They have formulated a Charter of Demand, a document compiling and collating the needs of the Indigenous communities. The document has been validated, printed and distributed to relevant stakeholders in the areas of education, water supply and health with the original inhabitants using it for advocacy to their elected representatives in government.

But perhaps most importantly for Tanko and his community, Hipcity had intervened in their school's lack of chairs and desks, which the Government provided. As a result, the students no longer sit on the floor while learning or spend hours after school looking for water. And in the process, the community members have learnt how to advocate for their rights and now know which Government Agencies to follow up with to address their community needs.



COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL, JIWA



COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL, JIWA

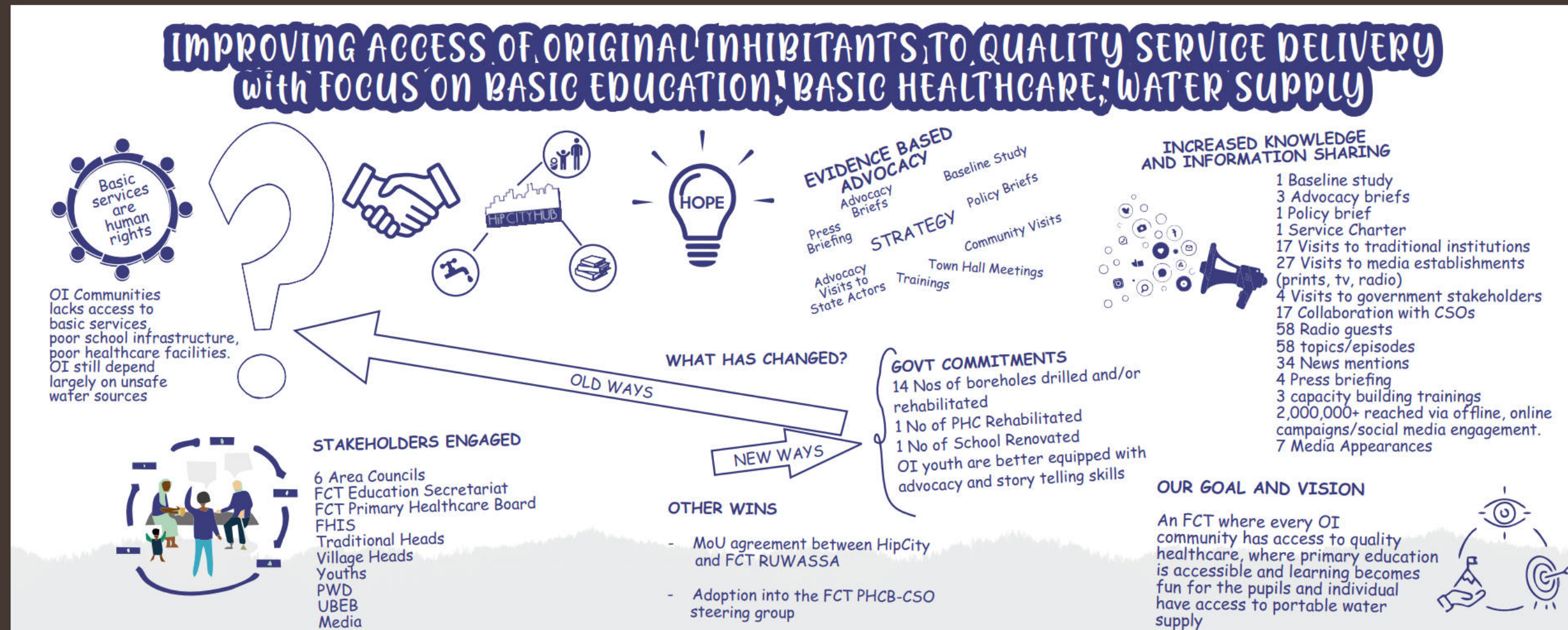


COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL, JIWA



COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL, JIWA

HIPCITY



"I thank Hipcity, CHRICED, and MacArthur Foundation. They advised us on what to do. With their help, we informed the Government about our problems so they could do something. And we thank God that this happened, as they are now renovating our classes. Hipcity also intervened in the water issue, and RUWASSA fixed the borehole down the street ", says Tanko.

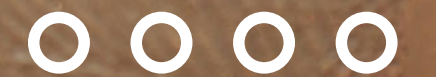
Though the work goes beyond the lifespan of the project and requires continuous and consistent engagement with all stakeholders, the project and the support from CHRICED and MacArthur have gone a long way to help fast-track the access to some basic amenities of the Original Inhabitants,

"We are happy to know that through our involvement, the child of an Original Inhabitant can go to school, sit on a proper chair, bath and eat food cooked with clean water", concludes Bassey.



PRESENTATION

MAIRO WOMEN FOUNDATION





REVIVING THE CULTURE OF POTTERY

Nestled in the heart of Abuja lies a cultural treasure - pottery. For centuries, the Indigenous people of Abuja have been known for their fine pottery-making skills, creating beautiful pieces that they traded throughout the land. The secret to their success lay in the abundance of high-quality clay that blessed the land and the cultural pride they derived from the practice. To the indigenous people of Abuja, pottery was more than just a trade; it was an integral part of their heritage, a tradition passed down from generation to generation.

However, the turning of Abuja into a federal capital disrupted the cultural rhythm of the Original Inhabitants. The rapid urbanization and encroachment of their community's land began to disrupt their way of life, causing a decline in their pottery-making. Without a well-defined community structure that taught the value of tradition, young people were no longer interested in what they considered an old peoples hobby. As the years passed, the skilled potters grew old and frail, and one by one, they passed away, taking their invaluable skills and knowledge with them. This decline in experienced potters meant the extinction of deep cultural heritage and erasing of the Original Inhabitants history.

Upon noticing this dangerous decline, Mairo Women Foundation, an NGO committed to preserving the heritage of the indigenous people of Abuja, decided to act.



FROM MISCONCEPTION TO PRIDE: SAVING A PEOPLES HERITAGE

While the government may have neglected Indigenous inhabitants, we can reclaim our dignity and pride through pottery – Maryamu Isa Barnabas: Executive Director, Mairo Women Foundation.

In partnership with CHRICED and MacArthur Foundation, Mairo Women Foundation worked tirelessly to - revamp the dying original Inhabitants cultural values, treasures, and repositories of crafts, visual arts, and other cultural forms and empower young Original Inhabitants through the pottery apprentice system.

First, they launched a state-wide campaign to educate and sensitize people on the beauty and value of pottery-making. The campaign was consistent and widespread and used local media to reach as many people as possible, particularly the youth.

Gradually, young peoples perception towards pottery-making began to shift. What they learned and discovered through these radio and TV programmes inspired them. They started expressing interest and curiosity about their heritage through enquiries on how to learn the craft. In addition, they also recognised the economic value of pottery - that it wasn't just an old persons hobby but a potential source of income and employment.



POTTERY IS HERE TO STAY: AS A BUSINESS, A SOURCE OF PRIDE, AND A MARK OF CULTURAL HERITAGE !

When President Bill Clinton visited Nigeria in 2000, he visited the Ushafa pottery centre. Guests and people from Lagos and other states come to the pottery centre to buy souvenirs to take back home. Most of the pottery you see within FCT has come from or through Ushafa Pottery Centre - says Maryamu Isa Barnabas

Before this project, the Ushafa Pottery Centre was in disrepair. The equipment needed to be upgraded, and there needed to be a proper storage for the leftover clay. The clay pit was nonexistent, leading to a significant waste of clay, and as a result, the Centre was only producing pottery at a meagre 35% of its capacity.

With the support of CHRICED and the MacArthur Foundation, they bought two new electric wheels, and five kick wheels, two electric clay mixers, two clay bed's boosted, and built a new clay pit to store and preserve leftover clay. In addition, the pottery installed a solar backup system to ensure work runs unhindered when there is a power outage. As a result of the ease and efficiency of this upgrade, production at the Ushafa Pottery is back to 100%.

CHRICED supported The Mairo Women Foundation to upgrade their equipment at the Ushafa Pottery Centre. This shift from the use of fossil fuels to gas kilns, the production of pots has increased from 35 big pots and 100 small pots in 48 hours to over 300 big pots in 8 hours. In addition, this improved the working conditions for the potters as they no longer inhale the smoke, and this has also ensured the preservation of the environment. The new technology is better for the environment and less burden and stress for the potters.



USHAFA POTTERY CENTER

MULTIPLIER EFFECT

The foundation trained 250 potters, including 35 master trainers. These potters have started businesses and can now provide for their families. The master trainers have also gone ahead to train others independently, and some have joined government Institutions and other pottery Centre within FCT as trainers.

“I am delighted to have progressed from a novice trainee to a skilled trainer in pottery. Passing on my skills to younger generations brings me joy and helps preserve our cultural heritage” - Ndazhi Kenneth Trainer



TRAINING IN PROGRESS



NDAZHI KENNETH TRAINER

Initially, it took considerable time for people to see pottery as a viable business. In the past, many would give away their pottery pieces as gifts. However, with the recent training, the trainees have realized the profitability of pottery as a business - they have also learnt entrepreneurial skills such as marketing, pricing, and selling, which are essential for running a successful pottery business.

The Foundation continues to air weekly radio programmes and one TV show, Potters Treasure. These programmes continue to drive home the value of pottery, spread this awareness to others outside the community, and broadcast the beauty, talent and cultural heritage of the Original Inhabitants of Abuja to the international community.

This project has also revived three more pottery centres within FCT- Kuchiko, Kuje and Kwali.

I would like to thank the MacArthur Foundation and CHRICED for giving the Mairo Women Foundation a chance to provide training to the indigenous people of FCT. They have enabled us to impart valuable skills, revive pottery and provide employment to young people. I thank them from the bottom of my heart says Maryamu Isa Barnabas, Executive Director of the Mairo Women Foundation.





ORIGINAL INHABITANTS LIVING WITH DISABILITIES

OIPWD



We do not beg. Any beggar living with a disability you see on the streets of Abuja is not an Original Inhabitant.

As an association, we look out for each other, and if we see one of us begging, we find out why and try to assist them - Yakubu Azaki Zamulawosayi, the group secretary, Original Inhabitants with Disabilities Multipurpose Cooperative Society FCT (OIPWD)

Weaving chairs made by PWD



For years, people living with disabilities in FCT's Original inhabitants' communities were overlooked and marginalized. While the government allocated funds for people living with disabilities in other states, not a penny was given to those within FCT.

In 2015, they formed a support group - Original Inhabitants with Disabilities Multipurpose Cooperative Society FCT (OIPWD) – which provided its members with a means of survival and belonging.

"As people living with disabilities from all the six area councils, we came together and tried to find more meaningful and productive activities to engage in - other than roaming the streets. That was the first step towards changing our mindsets. This Association gives us a sense of belonging and identity," says Communications Officer Henshi Zeichibu.

Together, the Association members sought ways to support one another. For example, they ensured every member had a gainful occupation and did not resort to begging on the streets. And, through coordinators in each area council, they reached out to all disabled persons in FCT's indigenous communities.

However - without external assistance - supporting their members and trying to keep them off the streets was difficult. In addition, COVID-19 worsened the situation, leaving many members needing more support from the government or non-profits - and neither was forthcoming.

Fortunately, the Association received crucial support through a project funded by the MacArthur Foundation and implemented by CHRICED. With the funds and support, 200 Association members would train in skills such as soap-making, tailoring, shoemaking, bag making, metal fabrication and crafts.

Wearing a dress made by PWD

WITH NEW SKILLS, WE HAVE BECOME VISIBLE AND MORE CONFIDENT.

"Before, all I did was sit. I had little to do, and very few people knew me. Now I have something to do; many people know me through this. Some give me contracts to supply them with soap and shampoo in bulk. And I do it", Mangpu Peter, Person living with a disability.

So far, they have trained 120 members in soap making, crafts, and tailoring. The graduates are already making a living; some have started thriving businesses.

Though he never begged on the streets and made some little money mending shoes, Peter still depended on his father and brother to provide for most of his needs. However, his financial ability expanded when he enrolled in this training and learnt to make detergent, shampoo, and bathing soap.

He bought a machine for his shoe-making business from the profits he made from his soap-making business. Now Musa runs two successful businesses.



shoe making by PWD

"Thank you to CHRICED and MacArthur Foundation for assisting us the original Inhabitants with disabilities. Now my father does not suffer trying to help me as he did before. I make my own money - and I also wish more people could get the chance to learn, as these are life skills that will not go to waste", says Peter

Grace, who is visually impaired, used to farm before enrolling in this training. Farming was challenging for her, and she barely made any income except food.

"Though I struggled with farming, I had to do it because I needed to eat, and I didn't want to beg. I also didn't think I had another option besides farming or begging. But then I learnt to make crafts. So now, I feel empowered I make and sell my crafts, and people are buying a lot", says Grace.

Grace adds that getting the support gave her confidence and made her discover abilities she never thought she had.

And that is the story of many people living with disability, especially within the Original Inhabitants' communities. Without support, they stay unseen and unable to see and utilize their potential.



Grace, a beneficiary of the training

DISABILITY IS NOT INABILITY.



The Association's objective is for each member to acquire one or two practical skills that will enable them to earn a living.

Before this project, some trainees were out of school for lack of fees, but they have re-enrolled as they now have an income. These trainees will, in turn, become master trainers to train others.

"There is an ability within disability. Some people with disabilities don't want to stop begging. As for others, their families have forced them onto the streets - this is dehumanizing. We have trained and continue to train them on different levels and skills depending on their interest and abilities. Instead of waiting for them to beg on the streets and giving them sympathy alms, now the people are coming to them to buy their products, says Dr Ibrahim Zikrullahi, Executive Director, CHRICED.

To avoid moving the trainees around from one location to another, CHRICED and MacArthur Foundation have expanded the existing Centre in Kwali School for the Blind. The centre is fully equipped with all necessary equipment to cater for the various skills they've been trained on.

Eventually, the Centre should be self-sustaining. Then, fully equipped with a pool of trainees turned master trainers, everyone living with a disability among the original Inhabitants will have an equal opportunity to learn a skill.



Sewing machines provided by CHRICED



PWD's weaving chairs



Sewing machines provided by CHRICED



PWD's who have learnt soap making

OIPWD



PWD's weaving chairs



PWD's weaving chairs

SERDEC

SOCIO-ECONOMIC RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CENTRE

PROMOTING OI YOUTH EMPLOYMENT AND PARTICIPATION





BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND ORIGINAL INHABITANTS YOUTH TOWARD ADDRESSING ECONOMIC MARGINALISATION

Socio-Economic and Development Centre (SERDEC) aims to empower the FCT Original Inhabitants youth by amplifying their voices and fostering participatory governance. Their approach seeks inclusion and promotes Original Inhabitant Youth Economic Rights by facilitating access to Employment and Participation. With support from the MacArthur Foundation through CHRICED, SERDEC implemented the two-year project to promote the political, economic and cultural rights of the Original Inhabitants (OI) of the Federal Capital Territory.

Through this project, SERDEC worked to ensure indigenous unemployed women and youth within the six area councils of the FCT benefitted from fair and equitable processes and allocation of government-run employment and economic empowerment programs. They ensured that the OIs were actively involved in formulating and implementing economic empowerment programs and policies. Through engaging relevant government and other stakeholders and using other creative technological means, they addressed gender balances and the inclusion of Original Inhabitants in the provision of employment and empowerment programs.

THE MOBILIZATION

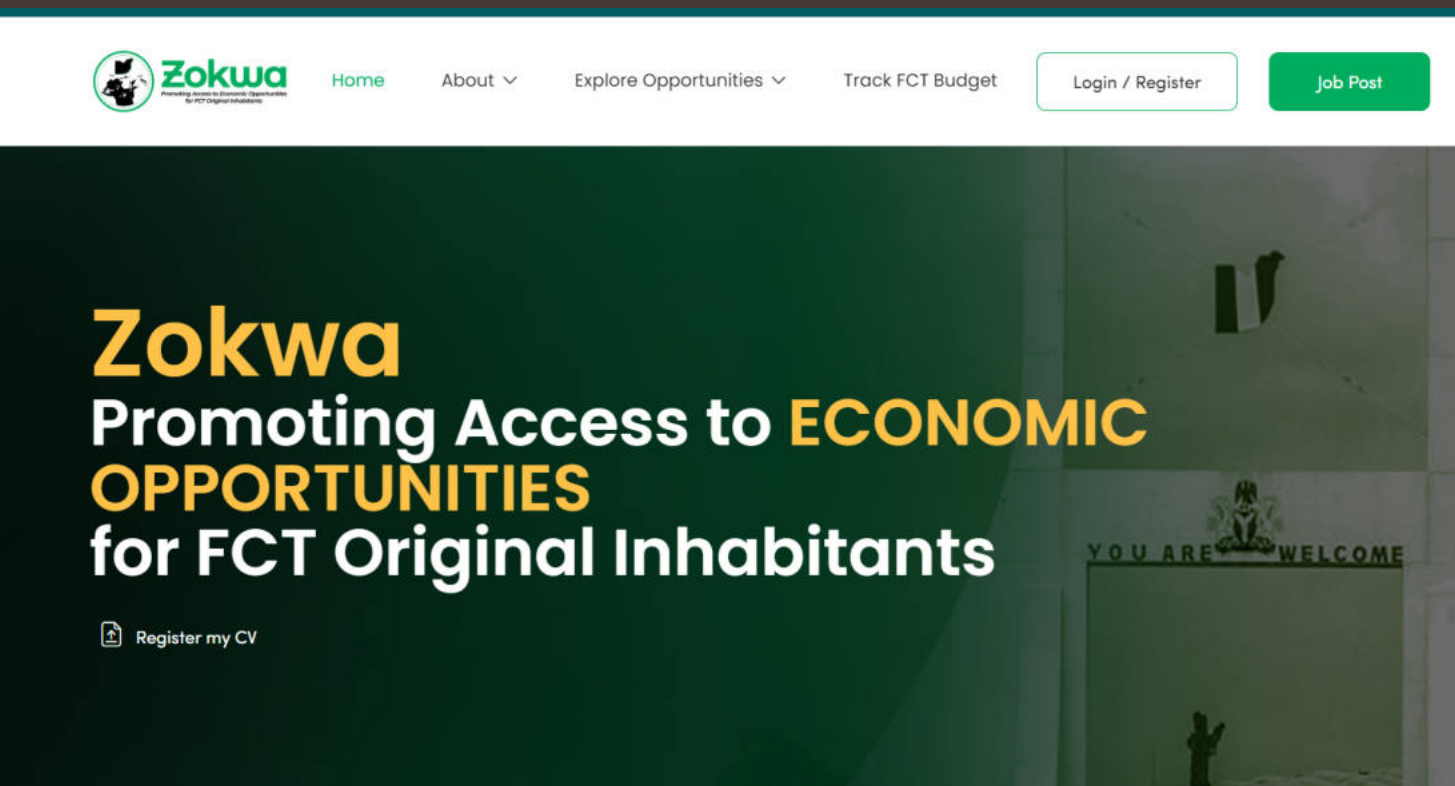
SERDEC conducted research and baseline studies and trained and engaged community leaders, media, and the OI youth. They held a series of Advocacy meetings with stakeholders. They conducted six town hall meetings across the six area councils where over 600 OI youths, women and government agencies such as the National Directorate of Employment and the Small Medium and Enterprises Development Agency (SMEDAN) provided information on the skill empowerment program. This resulted in the enrollment of participants leading into the Agency empowerment program.

Their advocacy and collaboration with the Youth desk of the FCT Social Affairs Department of the Social Development Secretariat led the Agency to commit to increasing the quota for more original inhabitants to participate in FCT youth employment programs.

This resulted in the increase in quota from 5 to 15% slot for FCT's original inhabitants for any employment and empowerment program.

Their Weekly Radio program Dateline with Abuja OI's became a platform that provided space for FCT Youth to call in and engage representatives of government who appeared as guests to discuss their organizations employment and empowerment programs and to advise on how OI Youths can participate. As a result of the awareness created during the radio program, ten original inhabitants youths were enrolled on the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) skill acquisition program. The radio program also opened the eyes of mass listeners to the economic marginalisation of the Abuja Original Inhabitants.

ZOKWA PLATFORM



To improve youth participation and prompt access to information, ZOKWA, a digital platform created by SERDEC, became a tool for interaction for OI Youth to share information and access economic empowerment and employment opportunities to improve their livelihood.

The platform ensures OI youths have real-time access to information government agencies share on employment and empowerment programs. It also shares information on budget allocations for FCT Empowerment programs and encourages youth to participate in governance by holding political leaders accountable for constituency projects for the FCT. There are 1500 Original Inhabitants currently registered on the platform.

SERDEC – THE BRIDGE

Before this project, SMEDAN had no contact with FCT Original inhabitants especially those in rural communities. Most Original Inhabitants reside outside of the Abuja Municipal Area Council, and as a result, when the Agency rolled out empowerment programs, the Original Inhabitants missed out on the opportunities, or FCT non-indigenous residents took up their slots. The agency needed a link to guide them when undertaking employment and empowerment programs.

SERDEC Advocacy engaged with the Agency built a partnership and became involved as training and resource persons. They provided a means to meet with the OI Youth to share information on their programs. So far, this collaboration has resulted in the enrollment of 50 Original Inhabitant Youth into the SMEDAN Skill Acquisition Program and the Training of Over 120 Youths and Persons with Disability (PWD) on business management and access to loans.