

# Advancing Citizens' Participation:

An ambitious project to bring marginalised groups into the political process in Nigeria





# Introduction

Since 2007 ActionAid Nigeria has been engaged in mobilising communities to participate in electoral processes and to protect their votes. Between 2014 and 2018 this essential governance work was undertaken as the [Strengthening Citizens' Engagement in the Electoral Process](#) (SCEEP) project – an ambitious undertaking with the objective to support citizens, particularly women, young people and people living with disabilities (PWD) to participate in and influence the electoral process. SCEEP aimed to sensitise citizens through the entire election cycle starting from registration of voters, collection of permanent voters' cards, identifying of candidates and making demands of them, voting and beyond. In the post-election period SCEEP worked with communities to follow the process until declaration of results and then holding those elected accountable for their manifesto commitments and subsequent actions. As well as grassroots sensitisation and empowerment the project also engaged in working with partners to lobby for equitable reform of electoral processes at state and national levels.

After the 2015 General Elections, a detailed review – [Space, Access and Influence in Nigeria's Electoral Process – How Youth, Women and Persons with Disability Fared in the 2015 General Elections](#) – set out to understand the level of citizens' participation, particularly those from marginalised and under-represented groups, and to identify the barriers that prevented them from fully participating and influencing decisions that affect them. The lessons learned would be used to further develop the SCEEP project to advance citizens' participation in the next electoral cycle and beyond.

SCEEP was implemented in 180 communities in 10 states across Nigeria, in a wide variety of contexts, both urban, rural, in the many different ecological, social, political and cultural landscapes of Nigeria. To maximise effectiveness, SCEEP worked with partners including BBC Media Action and many Civil Society and Community Based Organisations (CSOs and CBOs) utilising existing methodologies and platforms for citizens' engagement.

This case study examines the effectiveness of the SCEEP project and assesses the tools and approaches that were utilised and will continue to be valuable for the future of this work.

## Context and Background

Citizens' participation in Nigeria's electoral process has historically been a huge challenge for three broad reasons: first, the long periods of military and authoritarian rule; second, a culture of impunity that has led to massive electoral malpractice - vote rigging, violence and institutional manipulation; and third, a poor policy and institutional framework which has failed to promote inclusion. All of these factors have undermined citizens' participation, particularly those from marginalised groups.

Against this backdrop, there was great apprehension about the possibility of violence and a disputed outcome of the 2015 General Elections. Despite an initial delay in holding the poll, once the election processes had been completed, they were celebrated as one of the most credible ever conducted in Nigeria. For the first time in Nigeria's electoral history an opposition party had defeated a ruling party, an incumbent president was defeated and the transition successfully managed. However, the process was still far from perfect and the total votes cast in the presidential election were less than 50% of the registered voters indicating a high level of voter apathy or disenfranchisement.

Having analysed the experience of the 2015 Elections, the SCEEP project immediately engaged in the next electoral cycle. The project had many core elements and a key strategy was to deploy state-specific approaches with local partners whose experience, understanding of the context and networks were essential to reaching the most marginalised in their communities.

**The core elements were:**

- **Organising communities through a Community Development Charter (CDC).**
- **Mainstreaming disability inclusion.**
- **Integrating Gender Equity concerns into elections and accountability.**
- **Media engagement and agenda setting in election accountability.**
- **Establishing and participating in multi-stakeholder platforms for accountability.**





Participatory processes at the heart of community engagement

## The Community Development Charter

as a tool for citizens' participation in governance

The Community Development Charter (CDC) is a tool that the SCEEP project built its community engagement around. The charter, devised during structured community meetings was used to empower marginalised groups across a broad spectrum of issues in all the states where the project was implemented. The CDC is an accountability book that provides a documented and structured approach to community development and holding elected officials accountable. It helped communities to build consensus on their development issues and approaches to engaging duty bearers in meeting their development needs. After the end of the SCEEP project the CDC has remained an effective tool for community engagement with their elected representatives in some states. For example, the Kaduna State Government has adopted CDCs as a tool for aggregation of community needs in preparation for the annual budget.

At the heart of CDCs is transparency, accountability and inclusion for all marginalised groups in decisions that affect them. It is democratisation at the grassroots, and has been useful across the three stages of electoral cycle, the pre-, during and post-election phases. The CDC has been used to address major barriers to political participation, including illiteracy, lack of awareness and/or apathy. The CDC approach was used to mainstream a human rights-based approach, and encourages citizens at the grassroots level to speak out on the socio-political and economic development of their communities. Overall, the CDC helped in building capacity of community members to demand accountability, design action plans at the grassroots level, and document their achievements for replication and adaptation by others.

### How CDC works - Methodology

The CDCs were developed using ActionAid's Reflection Action (RA) methodology. RA is a participatory methodology that involves community-led analysis on key areas of their socio-economic and political conditions. The RA process facilitates comprehensive analysis by communities of power relations, rights, vulnerabilities, actors and institutions, their own communication skills and risks. As part of the CDC development a capacity building programme was designed to deal with the gap of understanding of governance and its processes including elections to ensure effective utilisation of the CDC as a tool for holding elected leaders to account.





The CDCs were developed with the active participation of all groups in the community including women, young people and PWD. Numerous participatory tools were involved including:

- **Transect Walk** – the group took a brief walk through the main roads of the communities surveyed, where the topography, certain landmarks and infrastructure were identified.
- **Use of Maps** – from the observations from the transect walk, each group drew maps of the communities surveyed.
- **Rights Analysis** – the rights issues identified by the community members were analysed using the Rights Register.
- **Simple Ranking** – simple ranking was therefore used to prioritise the many issues identified by the community.
- **Women’s Rights Analysis** – a daily activity chart was used in conducting women’s rights analysis.
- **Seasonal Calendar** – the seasonal calendar looked at the volume of work of the participants on a monthly basis (January – December).
- **Problem Tree** – this tool was used to list and highlight the causes and effects of the issues identified.
- **Actors and Institutions Matrix** – actors and institutions matrix was used to identify the relevant actors and institutions to be targeted in the pursuit of the issues identified for intervention and to know their power to effect change or their level of influence (High, medium or low).
- **Venn Diagram** – this tool was used to look at the power relations at the community, local government, state and national levels among the actors and institutions.
- **Communication Matrix** – the communication matrix analysed how the community members pass on and receive information among themselves and neighbouring communities.
- **Risk and Vulnerability Matrices** – these tools were used to analyse hazards and susceptibility of the community to natural and man-made disasters.
- **Community Action Plan** – after three days of work, a Community Action Plan was designed to help the community members follow on the issues identified, looking at timelines, persons responsible, targeted duty bearers, enabling factors, collaborators and allies, resources required and indicators of achievement.



Devising the Community Development Charter



## CDCs contributions to the SCEEP Project

The development process was an empowering experience as it helped to break down barriers in communities where inclusion was a challenge. Through the process communities were able to build consensus, set a development agenda, set the basis for effective accountability and inform legislators of priorities to lobby for their communities. CDCs other specific contributions were:

- **Community Action Plans** integrated the collective interest of all, including women, men, youth, PWD and elderly so that 'no one is left behind' in community social cohesion and promotion of inclusive elections.
- **Communities documented their experiences**, methodologies, list of participants, leaders, successes and challenges for lesson learning and sharing (Village Book/Charter of Demand). They used this for their advocacies and engagements with elected representatives.
- **Inter-state lesson sharing** and cross-fertilization of ideas for replication.
- **CDC has been institutionalised** in Kaduna state as trained communities under the platform of 'Village Groups' partnered with several other projects, including Voice to the People (V2P) and Mobilising for Development (M4D). These 'Village Groups' were eventually adapted by the State Government as a platform for aggregating community needs for budgetary purpose across political delineations or wards.
- **Citizens, following series of enlightenment and collaborative actions** became more involved in social services to monitor, supervise or observe processes, including electricity provision, road construction, school rehabilitation, amongst others, A few examples from Lagos State include construction/repair of road in Surulere, Makoko, Erejuwa and the rehabilitation of Obele Odan Municipal Primary School).
- **Two SCEEP communities** - Agbede Olushugbo and Offin/Lajo/Oreta in Ikorodu - emerged 1st and 5th position respectively out of about 3,500 Community Development Associations in Lagos State and received State recognition and cash award from the Lagos State government during the 2017 community week festival for their community organising efforts in contributing to government plans on grassroots development.

## Mainstreaming disability inclusion

There are about 27 million people in Nigeria living with disabilities, around 15% of the total population of the country. Disabilities cut across classes and other strata of the society: male, female, adolescents, children and the aged. Irrespective of the discrimination that their gender, age or class may place on them, disability opens people to further discrimination and disadvantages in Nigerian society. Over time there have been multilayer efforts to address discrimination and marginalisation of persons with disabilities (PWD) in Nigeria, including in areas of effective political participation and socio-economic inclusion. Results have been slow, inadequate and uncoordinated. SCEEP made significant contributions to political participation and enlightenment of PWD in Nigeria through training. It strengthened coordination for PWD in target states to support their participation, contestation and improved awareness of their human rights and socioeconomic justice.

The major barrier to PWD participating effectively in politics is the lack of understanding of disability issues in Nigeria. There is no periodic disability auditing to measure the level of disability understanding as a human rights and development issue by key decision-makers, therefore, there are no adequate and targeted efforts to identify adaptive and problem-solving approaches to disability issues.



Encouraging PWD to participate in the political process





## CDCs contributions to the SCEEP Project

A Persons with Disability Charter on Elections was developed, mirroring the CDC process which provided a clear articulation of the rights of PWD to actively participate in the electoral process.

**Training:** A series of trainings were conducted during the project targeted at PWD to improve their participation in political processes, improve their capacity to demand for accountability and support agenda setting to ensure issues of disability are integrated into political processes. PWD mainstreaming was included in all facets of trainings provided for SCEEP project beneficiaries, at grassroots and state levels, with institutions across arms of government.

**Coordination:** PWD as groups, participated in SCEEP project. For instance, SCEEP coordinated effectively with the national body of the Joint National Associations of Persons with Disabilities (JONAPWD) and with its state members in states where SCEEP was implemented. SCEEP reached out to other PWD groups that are leading in advocacy of disability issues in Nigeria, including Centre for Citizens with Disability (CCD) among others.

**Awareness:** Information, Education and Communications (IEC), media broadcasting, social media, workshops, frequent and structured meetings, amongst other methodologies were used to create more awareness about disability and why it is important to include PWD in governance programmes for more effectiveness in poverty reduction and participatory democracy.

**Mainstreaming disability issue into development issues:** Disability auditing, analyses, advocacies, etc. were used to improve citizens' knowledge on the importance of mainstreaming disability issues in elections, accountability and development programmes at all levels.

**Space for PWD to contribute and participate in governance:** SCEEP being a project concerned with inclusion of marginalised groups in governance and participation in making decisions that affect them, created space for PWD to be more involved in governance.

## Key outcomes as a result of disability integration

PWD received training on mainstreaming disability issues into an 'integrated development plan' of local and state government annual budgets. In the 10 target states, and other states that the project extended to, including in schools of higher learning. PWD were part of the various trainings on human rights, budget development, and community development advocacy. PWD representatives participated in media advocacy and sensitizations on radio and TV to talk about disability and inclusion in political participation in Nigeria. All these experiences cumulated into SCEEP's PWD Charter on Elections, based on direct learning, lessons, adaptations from the 10 states of operation.

The SCEEP project contributed to the development and advocacy, at the state level, towards the signing of the Disability Bill into an Act on January 23, 2019 by President Muhammadu Buhari. In states, such as Lagos, and Plateau, the SCEEP project popularised the Disability Act as a human rights issue. After persistent advocacy, public non-violent protestations and other direct engagement with state actors. Nigeria passed the Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, 2018; which strengthens legal rights of PWD to participate in electoral contestation. To further strengthen this, the Election Management Body: INEC released a guideline to improve the participation of PWD in the 2019 election. SCEEP does not claim sole attribution for this, having worked alongside many other organisations including, JONAPWD, Centre for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD), and other CSOs in its selected states and at the national level.

SCEEP supported a broad-based National Forum on PWD that supported calls for reforms in electoral processes through campaign and advocacy at state level. This contributed ultimately to the guideline issued by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to mainstream disability issues into the 2019 elections. The guideline stipulated the use of braille ballot papers to guarantee secret balloting rights of voters with visual impairment. It required that voting centres were to be located in accessible areas for the physically challenged. There were written day instructions for persons with hearing impairment, sign language interpreters were engaged at major INEC public functions, while Organisations of People with Disabilities (OPD) were specifically accredited by INEC for election observations. SCEEP worked with INEC staff at state level on usage of the guide at the community level to facilitate accountability.





PWD trainings were provided with opportunities to participate in a number of leadership training opportunities, including with the Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and the legislative arm across various levels of government. A few examples include platforms on Local Government Authorities (LGA) Autonomy; Youth summits on Governance, Communication and Use of Web Based Platform for Community Engagement; Election Observation trainings and amongst others. All these helped to strengthen advocacy on disability issue.

## Integrating Gender Equity

concerns into elections and accountability

Civil society groups in Nigeria have been committed to gender equality over the past decades to improve political participation of as well as their economic empowerment, amongst other issues. The number of NGOs that are committed to women's rights as human rights in urban, semi-urban and rural communities are numerous. There are coalitions and funding, programmes at state level, nationally and internationally aimed at improving women's political participation. SCEEP built on existing projects and interventions to further address issues of women in politics and empowerment in order to strengthen political accountability and greater transparency in Nigeria.

Modest success was recorded in states where SCEEP interventions took place as there was a higher level of participation of women as contestants, voters, accredited observers, security agents and accredited journalists covering the polls. After the elections, women were able to engage the governance structures in the SCEEP implementing States and Local Government Areas to demand for the fulfillment of their elected leaders campaign promises. However, the result has been inconsistent, especially as it affects the election and appointment of women into position of authority. The principal reason for this is patriarchy, laden with socio-cultural beliefs in gender roles whereby men are expected be in front where decision-making is concerned, including in elective offices. The untoward violence that has permeated local and national politics and elections over the decades equally reduced women's participation in politics and governance. Even though, the Election Management Body (EMB) at the federal and state levels have made efforts to address this through policies and guidelines, the change has not increased as expected. For instance, the number of elected women decreased from about 6 per cent in 2015 to 4.38 per cent in 2019.



Young women engage in the community mapping process

### How SCEEP mainstreamed Gender into accountable elections

To effectively mainstream gender equity and women participation into the SCEEP project, ActionAid and its implementing partners used Reflection Action and a Women's Rights Approach to specifically draw out issues that particularly impact on women and how they are specifically disadvantaged.



## Impact stories and lessons from gender integration in SCEEP project:

- Along with other vulnerable groups such as youths and PWD, women benefitted from the Community Development Charter (CDC) trainings. They played dominant roles in developing CDCs across all the states to promote inclusivity in the electoral process. Critical gender issues, including early marriage, widowhood rites, early pregnancy, etc. were integrated into CDCs, including efforts made to improve space for women in political participation.
- Women leaders from the grassroots and at national levels were provided support to meet, share knowledge and experiences as well as evolve new ways of working to address emerging threats to their effective participation in politics through the 'Women in Politics Forum' aimed at building women's solidarity towards women inclusion in governance and electoral processes.
- Affirmative action was promoted through the use of IEC materials and Public Service Announcements (PSA) targeted at women, advocacy, training, interactive sessions with decision-makers. This was coordinated through groups, including Lagos Budget Watch Group, Emergence of the Voice of Akwa Ibom Women, Kano SCEEP Community Forum and Plateau State Coalition on Electoral Reform and Good Governance (PLASCER) amongst others.

## Including and mobilising young people in electoral processes

SCEEP mobilised support at the state level for a number of national issues, including advocacy for the Not Too Young To Run (NTYTR) campaign, aimed at reducing the age of eligibility for some public offices, including president and governor, to bring about more inclusiveness in the electoral processes. Youth bodies were mobilised in town hall meetings, at institutions of higher learning, workshops and other fora. Activista, the youth movement founded by ActionAid was active in mobilising for NTYTR in the states where Activista was established and SCEEP was implemented: Lagos, Kaduna and Akwa Ibom.

Following the successful passage of the NTYTR bill into an Act, a number of young people aspired for political office, a few of them also emerged as candidates. The biggest success from this was that of the current Plateau State House of Assembly Speaker - Abok Izam who was 33 years old, when he was appointed. Additionally, the Plateau State Government also released a policy that stipulates that the selection of Management Committee members for the local government councils must reserve two slots for women, youth and PWD in each council.

## Media, communications and agenda setting in election accountability

The media has a key role to play in human rights protection, political and socioeconomic development. The media can help set the agenda to influence voting pattern, promote good political culture and discourage harmful behaviour or practices.

A key success story of the SCEEP project is the effective use of media in guiding, educating, informing about political economy in Nigeria across strata. The project contributed to voter engagement and inclusivity, thereby strengthening citizens' engagement with the electoral process and deepening democratic governance in Nigeria

## Key outcome of media involvement in elections and accountability by SCEEP project

SCEEP engagement with media promoted the emergence of a politically better informed electorate from 2014, and this further reflected in 2019 elections. This was achieved, inter alia, through media training on responsible journalism. Women, PWD, youths, persons in hard-to-reach communities were mobilised in the 180 communities where the project was implemented across 10 states. SCEEP tools used include: capacity training, media driven advocacy, the prioritisation of community demand, use of community charter, petition/letter writing and direct engagement with duty bearers.

Traditional media and new media were used to promote governance, accountability and transparency in the electoral process. The experience of the BBC Media Action, International Press Centre (IPC) and other media bodies that worked on the project, using a combination of mass media such as Radio and TV, and mobile platforms including social media contributed to its effectiveness in agenda setting. Even during violent incidents in the 2019 elections, the timely reportage by the media frequently helped in quick and real time security responses.





Rural communities, women, PWD and other hard-to-reach populations were informed about government policies via the use of media, both the traditional and new media. This was reflected in a number of elections as voters demanded for their rights, citing news reports from TV or Radio or as being shared in the community meetings ahead of the elections. Expectations from the EMB and the electorate were periodically highlighted from an informed position by the media bodies and groups supported by SCEEP, reflecting the views of citizens and CBOs.

The SCEEP project extensively organised training programmes, town hall meetings, public service announcements, etc. For instance, the project broadcast over 250 Radio and TV messages to enlighten on the electoral processes, including a special focus on women, PWD and other marginalised groups. A radio programme, 'Talk Your Own' (TYO) was run on over 150 radio stations across SCEEP states. ActionAid Nigeria and BBC Media Action strengthened coordination in this respect - over 23 million people were reached in northern Nigeria alone, through the use of various Nigerian languages in the course of implementation. Following post-implementation surveys and other assessment, it was noted that the project among others, strengthened media practitioners' capacity, strengthening their operation and level of independence

Social media was deployed extensively. The '#nosidonlook' campaign on social media, which later became a multimedia platform, was one of the key achievements of the SCEEP project. To ensure replication and synergy, SCEEP worked with related projects, including National Democratic Institute (NDI) and Justice for All (J4A), etc. SCEEP met its target on reach at least 20 media organisation and even more media practitioners surpassing its target of 220 by 124%.

### **Key impacts of the use of media and communications to promote electoral accountability include:**

- Increase in the number of women prepared to engage in the political process.
- Improvement in the level of awareness on women political participation
- Increased knowledge and skills relevant for advocacy engagement.
- Awareness on the rights of women in relation to political participation and roles and responsibility in partners in governance.

### **Multi-stakeholder platforms for accountability**

Identifying, or facilitating the establishment of, multi-stakeholder platforms at all levels from local to national has been an essential feature of SCEEP. These have ranged from townhall meetings with election managers to the Civil Society Situation Rooms that observed and supported the conduct of state level elections. Some of these platforms have become institutionalised as permanent structures for citizens' engagement with authorities, as discussed below, with the Plateau State Coalition on Electoral Reform and Good Governance (PLASCER) and the institutionalisation of the CDC charter in the Kaduna State budgetary process. Many of the achievements of SCEEP are due to the collaborative efforts of CSOs. Interactions between CSOs with an involvement in governance issues led to valuable leveraging of resources and competencies, facilitated consensus building and minimised duplication of efforts.

## **Impact of the SCEEP Project on the 2019 Elections**

Although SCEEP formally ended in 2018, the on-going influence of the project can be seen in these two examples from the 2019 elections.

### **SCEEP: Working with the people at the grassroots: Plateau Case Study**

The Plateau State Coalition on Electoral Reform and Good Governance (PLASCER) evolved from SCEEP engagement on post-2015 elections audit and was broadened into a platform for engaging policy and practice issues of elections and governance in the state. Foundational groups comprised of CSOs, Faith Based Organisations (FBOs), CBOs, women groups, youth groups and PWD platforms. PLASCER engaged effectively with state actors, including the election management body, the police and political parties towards the 2019 election and facilitate citizens especially the marginalised groups throughout the electoral process and cycle.

Prior to implementation of the SCEEP project, the electoral accountability and inclusion of marginalised groups most especially (women, youth and PWD) in Plateau State was dismal. This was visible in SCEEP's baseline study and related research. The SCEEP project however changed this narrative as it created forum and space for citizens' engagement opportunities on democratic governance.



## The experience from Plateau State

A series of trainings were conducted on governance issues, voting rights, budgeting, citizenship in participation and identification of community needs. Women, youths and persons with disabilities were involved in the planning and all aspects of these trainings and engagement with government institutions.

As a process to increase participation of marginalised groups, especially at the grassroots level, SCEEP established eighteen CDCs in the state, across six Local Government Areas (LGA). The CDCs gathered timely information geared towards their respective community development. This was not limited to political activities, but also include social and economic activities, such as budget training and health improving actions. Grassroots participatory approaches were used to ensure effective inclusion.

In preparation for the LGA elections in Plateau state, SCEEP strengthened institutional capacity for inclusive electoral and governance processes. It was a main partner for State institutions in the management of elections. It supported the National Orientation Office, Plateau State Unit, to mobilise citizens using IEC and other methods to campaign on violence free elections. Citizens were mobilised for the continuous voters' registration exercise. Overall, at least 4500 persons were reached in 18 communities via a sensitisation rally towards the Plateau State LG elections.

## Roles of citizens in credible elections: Perspective from Kogi state

Despite Kogi state not being one of the target states for the SCEEP project, the project impacted on it during its 2019 gubernatorial elections. Several national policies put in place influenced the elections positively to some extent. These included the two newly enacted laws – “Not Too Young To Run” Act and “The Disability (Prohibition) Act 2018”. Prior to Kogi's state 2019 elections, CSO in the state, including Participation Initiative for Behavioural Change in Development (PIBCID), sensitised the electorate to know their rights in relations to the elections. They engaged with decision makers, including INEC and traditional institutions to promote peaceful elections. They effectively used PSA and IECs to prepare community leaders, youth and groups who made commitments to promote credible and inclusive elections.

Trainings and sensitisation, replications of SCEEP methodology, have resulted in marginalised groups in Kogi state, including women, PWD, youth and others in the hinterland becoming more aware of their rights and making demands on Election Management Bodies (EMB) and other agencies ahead of the governorship elections, including on radio and TV. SCEEP indirectly expanded space for marginalised population to be recognised in 2019 elections in Kogi. It also contributed to MDAs committing to changing the political landscape to include marginalised groups with policies and practices as mentioned above.

## Conclusion: challenges and achievements

The results of the 2019 General Election show that voter turn out fell by nearly 9% from 2015, to 34.75%, and there was not the anticipated increase in elected candidates from marginalised groups at all levels. This is clearly disappointing given the objectives of SCEEP but understanding the challenges and context is important to learning the lessons for the future.

What these statistics do not reveal is the new organising culture in communities on accountability and inclusion and a deeper understanding of governance processes brought about by the CDC and PWD Charter processes. The collaborative work of multi-stakeholder platforms, such as the Civil Society Situation Room, INEC Parley with the Media, and the Inter-Party Council have provided a space for dialogue and consensus. Some, for example PLASCER in Plateau State have become permanent features of the political landscape.

Many of the challenges have been more clearly exposed and defined, opening the way for further analysis and action on these areas:

**Budget accountability:** While citizens have been trained and are engaging State and LGAs on budgetary issues, effective budget monitoring and accountability around government spending is still low across the board, including in SCEEP states. For instance, despite the use of CDC tool to train citizens in Lagos State on budget tracking and the establishment of the Lagos Budget Watch Groups (BWG) across six Lagos SCEEP LGAs, Lagos State is still a state where there is opacity around government spending. The community members are only able to sight the project, but unable to match project with funding or beneficial ownership. This is not peculiar to Lagos state alone, but cuts across Nigeria to various degrees.





The project was plagued by **lack of data** to strengthen decision making, including to effectively measure the implementation of policies and programmes of government to support disability mainstreaming and youth involvement in socioeconomic development and political participation. This was worsened by poor commitment by policy makers. There were verbal and written commitments, including releases of policies and guidelines that were not fully implemented. There was lack of access by CSOs to election related documentation to effectively scrutinise the electoral processes, beyond the statutory documentations, already in public spaces. For example, detailed documentation about the elections results in Kogi state were not available to the public.

**Biased media:** There are instances when some media houses tilt in support of particular political parties, making their reporting unreliable. Although, there was no known direct reportage against SCEEP's supported media organisations, the poor work by others impacted negatively on SCEEP's work and diminished its impact.

**Poor policy implementation:** Even though new regulations are in place by EMB such as regulations on PWD, gender inclusion and youth participation in form of the Disability Act, 'Not-Too-Young-To-Run' Act and mainstreaming disability regulation by INEC, these laws or regulations were not effectively put into practice in SCEEP's states during the 2019 elections. This is despite pre-election preparation between 2014-2018. PWD, youths and women aspirants' participation in the primary elections and main elections were not sufficiently strong. Although, braille ballots papers were produced, they were not available at all locations.

**Threat of violence:** According to organisations that observed the 2019 elections, including CCD, Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC), ActionAid, etc., it was stated that democratisation process, pre-, during and post-elections processes still exclude marginalised, groups, in Nigeria. In the 10 SCEEP states, despite pre-election preparatory role of the project between 2014 and 2018 in these states. PWD do not have access in some instances, elderly and women also refused to go to voting centres due to violence or threat of violence, thereby reducing the effectiveness of marginalised groups participation in post SCEEP elections in SCEEP states.

## How effective has mainstreaming of marginalised groups been?

Despite improved participation of marginalised groups it is clear that patronage, nepotism, a pervasive culture of patriarchy and lack of internal party democracy continue to present barriers to inclusion. The gaps mentioned below were noted by some of the key stakeholders:

**Disability mainstreaming not fully effective:** Notwithstanding the various trainings and capacity building, PWD generally still lack the capacity to fully hold government to account, as noted by Mr. David Anyaele of the Center for Citizens with Disabilities. Despite the passage of the Disability Act which expressly stated that the PWD shall be mainstreamed into political processes, the Act has not brought the desired change in the political space. PWD are still not duly appointed into political offices as envisaged in the Disability laws in SCEEP states, including Lagos, Kano, Anambra and Plateau states. The general public still view PWD from welfaristic angle, focusing on giving alms, food and related support to PWD, rather than understanding the human rights issue. The laws and policies are not popularised, the environment is not disability friendly, even in Lagos and Plateau that have the Act in place for a while now.

**Women's Participation:** Post SCEEP, the number of women occupying positions in SCEEP states as well as at the national level has not increased, despite the contributions and attributions of SCEEP. Communities in Nigeria, including those supported by SCEEP are still permeated with patriarchal gender discrimination and role ascription thereby excluding women from being more involved in decisions that affect them. Decision-makers at all levels and arms of government are still not involving women as expected, this is despite the policies, training and regulations which support this.

There have undoubtedly been significant achievements due to SCEEP's interventions and influence. At a national level new legislation has been enacted, including the 'Not Too Young To Run' Act and the 'Prohibition against PWD' Act, in which SCEEP's advocacy and campaigning played its part. And at state level this has been manifested in gains, including the election of a 33 year old as the Plateau State House of Assembly Speaker.

Institutions have been created that are now part of the political landscape, such as Situation Rooms which facilitate consultation and coordination between all stakeholders in a fast changing environment. In Kaduna state the CDC process has now become integrated into the annual budget process.





At a local level, communities and especially the targeted marginalised groups within them have become more aware of their rights to participate and demand accountability. Media outlets have been benefited from training and increased confidence to provide essential information in a trustworthy way, even when it means challenging the narratives of particular interest groups.

The endemic problems associated with politics and the electoral process were again evident in 2019 – violence and the threat of violence, the distorting effect of money, the overarching culture of patriarchy. However, the gains made are significant and long-term. The necessity is to find the will, both among civil society and government, to continue the process.