



**SOCIALACTION**  
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT INTEGRATED CENTRE

Annual Report

2016



## **Our Vision**

A democratic order in which communities of conscious citizens contribute to and benefit from the building of just societies and environments adequate for production and sustenance of life.

## **Our Mission**

We support and inspire community groups and other segments of civil society to participate directly in social movements demanding for change and building just societies.

We work with communities and organisations to develop collective self-analysis and alternative development models that work for people.

We work with others to identify and tackle the root causes of environmental and social problems and to build the power of people to advance solutions that will ensure democratic accountability and environmental sustainability.

## **Our Values**

We believe that grassroots democracy and popular participation are necessary for social change, and this can best be expressed with communities' ability to organise and set forth their own development agenda.

Our role is to work with social constituencies to achieve a shared understanding of the context as a basis for promoting alternatives that recognise the right of people to just livelihoods within communities adequate for the enjoyment of life.

# From the Executive Director

The Social Development Integrated Centre (Social Action) has grown to become a leading environmental and social justice advocacy organisation in Nigeria. First commencing operations from Port Harcourt in 2007, the organisation's team of inspired activists now work from six offices including in the federal capital, Abuja.

In the 2016 year under review, Social Action engaged in activities to promote human rights and awareness about the links between climate change and violent conflicts in the Lake Chad basin of North-East Nigeria. We have remained committed to delivering on our mission of education, mobilisation and solidarity for communities and activists working for environmental justice, democracy and social change in Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea.

In 2016, Social Action consolidated on the corporate organisational development process, which commenced in the preceding year following the elaboration of a Five-Year Strategic Plan for the period 2015 to 2020. It was a year full of exciting and challenging activities. Organization-wise, there was a need to increase our funding base and also look for ways to cushion the effect of inflation in Nigeria occasioned by the global fall in the price of crude oil. In the national arena, there were many disclosures of alarming scales of financial misappropriation and fraud in the management of public resources. This informed Social Action's need to re-align its transparency and accountability initiatives via reinvigorated advocacy on government budgets to better and more thoroughly intervene against corruption at the sub-national level.

Though 2016 was quite an eventful year for Social Action, we had some hurdles along the way. A major challenge for us remains the sustainability of our work especially considering political and economic changes in Nigeria and elsewhere, which introduced levels of uncertainty concerning the international development regime.

Another major challenge faced by Social Action was the difficulty of recruiting suitable staff to manage communications responsibilities. Despite the challenges, the organisation was still able to effectively harness its resources to attain its objectives for 2016.

Given the local and international scenarios and their potential impact on the pursuit of Social Action's Strategic Plan, we are repositioning the organization to diversify the funding base and plan for greater financial sustainability.

**Dr Isaac 'Asume' Osuoka**

Executive Director

# Resource Justice

## *Supporting communities impacted by petroleum exploitation through Community Advocacy Centres*

Social Action supported its Community Advocacy Centres (CACs) as locations for community and civil society engagements such as Town Hall Meetings, workshops and other fora for education, joint planning and representation to public officials, civil society and industry. In 2016, Social Action focused on the following areas:

- 1) *Umuechem (Rivers State):*
  - a) Social Action worked with the community members to document environmental and human rights abuses from 1990.
  - b) In 2016 Social Action secured the services of legal consultants in Nigeria and The Netherlands to support the Umuechem community to obtain compensation for environmental and human rights abuses through litigation.

- 2) *Monitoring and Advocacy for the Implementation of Recommendations of the UNEP Report on Ogoniland (Rivers State):* Social Action remained engaged with the Ogoni community leaders and members to monitor government plans for cleaning up polluted sites, as part of measures for the implementation of United National Environment Programme (UNEP) report on Environmental Assessment of Ogoniland. Information sharing, training, joint monitoring and other engagements with the host communities focused on the implementation of the UNEP Report, crude oil theft and artisanal refineries and issues of land rights. Positive results were achieved in increased government pronouncements and actions towards cleaning up polluted sites in Ogoniland.



- 3) *Brass (Bayelsa State):* Engagements with the communities in the Brass area focused on seeking to understand best approaches to addressing oil pollution from crude oil theft and illegal artisanal petroleum refineries.
- 4) *Warri, Ashaka, Kwale (Delta State):* Engagements with communities in Delta State focused on addressing the problem of flaring of associated gas, crude oil theft and illegal artisanal refineries.

### ***Addressing Pollution from Crude Oil Theft and Artisanal Refining Operations in the Niger Delta***

Social Action initiated cross-sectoral collaborations for dealing with the occurrence of crude oil theft and the related artisanal refining of petroleum products, which together constitute the most immediate threat to the natural environment and local livelihoods in the Niger Delta. Research Officers of Social Action collated additional video documentation and interviewed operators of artisanal refineries, community members in artisanal refining sites, law enforcement agents and other interests groups in Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers States. This resulted in a better understanding of ideas and approaches for ending crude oil theft and illegal refineries.

### ***New Vision for Resource Extraction in Nigeria***

Social Action worked closely with NEITI to advocate for government to implement recommendations made by NEITI during the period under review. Social Action engaged with NEITI about popularising the Contract Transparency Principle of the EITI as well as Beneficial Ownership principle.

### ***Petroleum Industries Bill (PIB)***

Following the failure of the National Assembly to pass the Petroleum Industries Bill (PIB) after a decade of debates, Social Action continued to advocate for improved legislation for the petroleum sector that promotes fairness, justice and equity and which upholds the rights of host communities and citizens. In 2016, the Nigerian federal government presented a new, disaggregated version of the PIB (re-named the Petroleum Industry Governance Bill, PIGB). This version comprises fiscal provisions including issues of contracts to remittances and taxes. The PIGB proposes the establishment of the Nigerian Petroleum Regulatory Commission, the Nigerian Petroleum Assets Management Company and the Nigerian Petroleum Company, among other provisions. Social Action organised different meetings in Abuja to mobilise other civil society organisations to review the PIGB. The groups produced a joint memo, which was presented by Social Action at a 3-day public hearing on the PIGB organised by the Nigerian Senate. Our position paper was prepared and submitted as Memorandum to the Committee Secretariat alongside the presentation. Social Action actively supported other CSOs in its coalition to participate in this event organised by the Senate Committee on Petroleum (Upstream).

# Popular Education

*Raising popular consciousness and participation through collaborative learning, mobilisation and solidarity for communities and activists working for environmental justice, democracy and social change in Nigeria.*

Our regular weekly popular education classes through Study Centres in Port Harcourt, Benin City, Calabar, Abuja and Owerri focusing on developing citizens' capacity to contribute to set agenda for the new federal government continued in the year.

## ***Leadership Training Camps***

We organised the annual national leadership training camp for young activists, students, civil society workers in Benin, Edo State. Social Action's camps have become Nigeria's premier forum for education and promotion of alternatives ideas on national development for youth. The camp in Benin City trained over 120 persons on skills and strategies for engaging leaders for social transformation.



*Working to encourage increased citizens demands for accountability of revenues from natural resources.*

In 2016, Social Action delivered major successes in its transparency and accountability campaigns using Community Budget Advocates associated with its Community Centres. We contributed to scaling up anti-corruption advocacy at the sub-national level by amplifying citizens voices at the grassroots level and promoting spaces for engagement and participation in local governance. This was achieved through participatory budget monitoring and public advocacy.

In 2016, Social Action expanded community budget advocacy from the Niger Delta (Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Delta, Edo and Rivers States) to northern Nigeria - with activities in Nasarawa and Kano States; and the South-East with budget monitoring activities in Abia State.

Activities achieved notable successes: through evidence generated by budget monitoring in Delta state, sustained advocacy resulted in the completion of key infrastructural projects that have long been abandoned in the state. Similarly, a practice of routinely repeating the same items in annual budgets was brought to an end. In Edo state, advocacy activities centred on the low priority of the food sufficiency sector in the state led to increased allocation to Agriculture. The 2016 budgets of Delta state and Akwa Ibom state were made available on the official websites of the states after sustained open budget campaigning led by Social Action. This is the first time the states made such fiscal information publicly available. The Bayelsa State government has also made printed copies of its 2016 budget public with a promise to upload the electronic version to the state website soon. Similarly, in the period saw the publication of budget monitoring reports, as well as the release of a report on the state of Openness and Accountability in states of the Niger Delta.

During the year we continued to train staff and volunteers of partner organisations on tools of budget advocacy. Training Workshops for Community Budget Advocates from states of the Niger Delta (Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Delta, Edo and Rivers States) and Abia, Nasarawa, Kano and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) was organised in December 2016 at Abuja, FCT in December 2016.

We made advocacy visits to relevant government officials in Delta, Rivers, Edo, Bayelsa and Akwa Ibom to discuss Open Budgets.

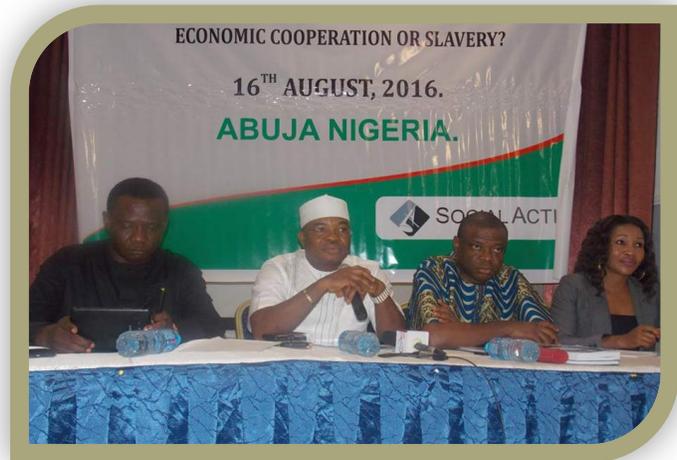
We launched an Open Budget Week which was a one week of sustained activities aimed at mobilising citizens to demand increased transparency and accountability.

Social Action re-launched our audience participatory weekly radio programme to discuss issues of budget, development and the role of citizens.

## ***Debts and Trade***

We continued our core advocacy interventions in the media on the problem of rising public debts in Nigeria. The campaigns against the spate of renewed public borrowing as a strategy to get out of Nigeria's economic recession and to fill infrastructural gaps gained momentum at the national level.

In 2016, Social Action engaged the National Assembly Committee on Loans and Foreign debts on anti-debt advocacy. This led to the National Assembly engaging in rigorous loan request scrutiny and outright rejection of some loan requests by the executive arm of federal government. The National Assembly has rejected some requests to borrow including specifically a \$30 billion loan request in October 2016.



- 1) We also contributed to building the capacity of lawmakers and legislative staff on loan issues; Collaborated with the House Committee on Aid, Debt and Foreign Loans to research on global standards, best debt management practices and application to Nigeria.
  - a) We released regular press statements on public debt and related issues on the Nigerian economy and daily social media updates on Nigeria debt situation.
- 2) Under the Trade section, the activities carried out were:
  - a) Research into the implications/consequences of the EU proposed Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with member countries of ECOWAS.
  - b) Social Action convened a conference on the E.U/ECOWAS Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA). We mobilised citizens groups that developed a joint civil society position paper on the proposed trade pact which was endorsed by organisations representing local producers, NGOs and organised labour.
  - c) Our campaigns on the EPA contributed to its eventual rejection by the Nigerian government on 30 October 2016.

This programme encourages the integration of community rights in the development and implementation of climate change mitigation and adaptation schemes in Nigeria. Social Action succeeded in generating knowledge and alternative understanding of the linkages of some of the most pressing ecological challenges with impoverishment, violence and dislocation of populations. Social Action contributed to mobilising marginalised communities to action and linked them to critical constituencies of civil society and academia as part of the process of building a movement for ecological justice in Nigeria.

## *Communities affected by drought in the Lake Chad basin*

The Lake Chad basin is part of the greater Sahel region of West Africa, which is experiencing some of the worst impacts of climate change globally. The area is also plagued by one of the most dangerous violent conflicts in the world, which has created an urgent humanitarian disaster. This project supported original research that establishes the connections between climate change, ill-conceived dam and irrigation projects and land grabbing to the ongoing violence (including the violence involving Fulani herdsman and farming communities in different parts of Nigeria). Crucially, the project succeeded in creating a new platform for concerted action among NGOs and academics from northern and southern Nigeria who hitherto had no meeting point because of the polarising nature of the conflicts and related politics.

## *Rights of Forest Dependent Communities*

Social Action contributed to building a network of communities affected by Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) project and massive land-grabbing attempt linked to a privately funded highway development in Cross River State. Impacted communities and civic organisations have acted and successfully halted planned land grabbing.

## *Grassroots community organising*

Social Action organised town hall meetings in each of Delta State and Cross River State, along with other meetings and community exchange fora. In Delta State, Town Hall Meetings brought leaders and members of Kwale, Beneku, Okpai, Obodugwa, Isoko, Irri communities together to discuss common concerns about gas flaring. Through these meetings, community members were informed about the CDM and the existence of CDM projects in their areas. Following larger meetings, other consultation meetings resulted in a petition jointly endorsed by community leaders against the UN CDM Executive Board and sponsors of CDM projects in Nigeria. A rally was also organised in Beneku to encourage communities' solidarity and joint activity in confronting the challenge of gas flaring.

In Cross River, a town hall meeting in Akpabuyo brought together leaders and members of Mbe Mountain, Ekuri Cluster and Akpabuyo to discuss new developments with the REDD+ scheme following a change of government in the state. A second meeting was organised in Calabar to bring community members and civil society groups to work together on a common platform for addressing community concerns. The coalition that was created comprises Peace Point Action

(PPA), Rainforest Resource Development Centre (RRDC) and Green Concern for Development (GRENCODE), all based in Cross River State.

Also, Social Action organised a meeting between top government officials, senior representatives of the Nigerian Ministry of Environment, UN-REDD and UNDP with representatives of communities affected by REDD+ in Cross Rivers State and Social Action. The meeting, which held in Calabar, provided the first ever opportunity for the communities concerned to meet with UN officials. It was an opportunity for learning, as community members now understand the entrenched position of UN-REDD and the need to increase advocacy on the issues of concern.

***Abuja Conference: Addressing the Crisis of the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin: Developing a Pan-Nigerian Civil Society Agenda***

In November 2016, Social Action organised the Roundtable Conference, *Addressing the Crisis in the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin: Developing a Pan-Nigerian Civil Society Agenda* in Abuja in collaboration with the Canadian Catholic Organisation for Development and Peace. The conference brought together different partners who shared their experiences and challenges working to promote sustainable food production and peacebuilding in the Sahel region of Nigeria. The conference also had in attendance other civic actors and representatives of organisations working in different ways to address the myriad ecological and socio-economic challenges confronting the populations of Sahel region in Nigeria. The meeting provided a rare space for open conversations and generated a better understanding of the immediate problems, underlying causes and ongoing initiatives by the state and non-state actors to address the challenges.

The conference agreed on the need for civil society organisations to build a working relationship that would involve forming an alliance that will include stakeholders with common interests. Following the conference, the Abuja office of Social Action has taken steps to consolidate the alliance to sustain concerted interventions in the Sahel region of Nigeria.

# Research and Publications

In 2016, Social Action continued to work in collaboration with host communities, academics and other researchers to monitor practices that could affect livelihoods, human rights and environmental sustainability. The following publications and reports were produced in the year 2016:

*Up in Smoke: Gas Flaring, Communities and Carbon Trading in Nigeria:* Through an examination of the impacts of two so-called gas flaring reduction projects by oil companies operating in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, this report shows that the global carbon trading system is flawed and subject to manipulation by the same companies that are responsible for pollution in the global south. These companies exploit the CDM mechanism to make unjustified extra profit while not accounting for real emissions reductions. The report presents findings from interactions with members of affected communities in Delta State to show that CDM projects and the carbon market discountenance the demands for environmental justice by the communities that have borne the real cost of historical pollution. The report shows that international trading of carbon credits fall short of the sustainability criteria.

*Cleaning in a Vacuum: Framework Gaps in the Implementation of the UNEP Report on Ogoniland:* On Thursday, June 2, 2016, the Nigerian federal government organised a ceremonial launching of the clean-up and restoration of polluted sites in Ogoniland. The government used the ceremony to announce its commitment to implementing the recommendations of the United Nations Environment Programme's Environmental Assessment of Ogoniland report. This briefing paper by Social Action examines developments before and following the flag-off ceremony. It analyses crucial processes and highlights institutional lapses that threaten to mar the entire clean-up process.

*EU and ECOWAS Economic Partnership Agreement: Economic Cooperation or Slavery?'* During the 49th Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS, in Dakar, Senegal in June 2016, the government of Muhammadu Buhari delayed endorsing the EU/ECOWAS Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), opting instead to continue consultations with Nigerian citizens. As a contribution to the consultation process, this briefing examines the EPA in the context of the Nigerian economy and offers alternative paths for sustainable economic development.

*States Of Decline: Citizens Report on State and Local Government Budgets in the Niger Delta, 2015:* This report presents analyses of the 2015 budget of five states of the Niger Delta (Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Delta, Edo and Rivers). The report provides details of findings of budget monitors who went to the field in late 2015 to examine the state of execution of capital projects in the sectors of education, health and food sufficiency mentioned in the budgets of the various states.

*Policy Options For Addressing Artisanal Crude Oil Refineries And Pollution In Nigeria:* This briefing paper highlighted the challenges of addressing the enormous environmental and social costs of artisanal crude oil refineries and related crude oil theft in southern Nigeria. The briefing is based on a year of monitoring of artisanal refining sites and the responses of government agencies and the state security apparatus in Rivers, Delta and Bayelsa States. It recommended that effective policing of the creeks should be accompanied with actions to ameliorate the problem of inadequate access to energy services, scarcity and the high cost of consumer fuels, weak environmental standards of oil and gas companies, impoverishment and youth unemployment in communities, and corruption in the security services.

*Cross River Super-Highway: Route to Land Grabs?*: The report examines how road construction is violating the livelihoods of several forest-dependent communities whose rights to land and access to the forests for food, medicine and energy is being threatened. The Super-Highway also calls to question the viability of the controversial United Nations-backed Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (UN-REDD<sup>+</sup>) scheme in Cross Rivers State.

*The State of Open Budgets in the Niger Delta (Citizens Budget)*: This Social Action briefing presents findings of research into the extent to which five states of the Niger Delta- Akwa Ibom, Delta, Rivers, Edo and Bayelsa- operate their fiscal processes in line with the principles of open budget. It equally examines how citizens in these states relate with and perceive government and its officials on fiscal matters. Findings from the research indicate that these states operate closed fiscal system without established structures for account giving and citizens' participation. The briefing reveals a peculiar pattern which suggests that while citizens are willing to participate in fiscal governance processes, the government has not created the conditions which make such participation possible. In fact, the reclusive manner in which fiscal processes are managed makes it impossible for the majority of citizens to have a say. It concludes with a set of recommendations for reforms.

# Partnerships

Social Action is grateful to the following organisations that supported our activities in 2016:

**Development and Peace – Caritas Canada**

**Ford Foundation**

**Rosa Luxemburg Foundation**

**The Presbyterian Hunger Program**

**Tikva Grassroots Empowerment Fund of Tides Foundation**

**FOSTER**

**USAID – SACE**

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