

STRENGTHENING CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT FOR EFFECTIVE COVID-19 RESPONSE IN NIGERIA.

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Background

In March 2020, the WHO declared COVID-19 a pandemic, emphasizing the need for resilient health systems and robust responses to diseases of public health concern. To battle the pandemic, the Nigerian Government established structures and rolled out several initiatives to control and mitigate the challenges. However, in the implementation of these response actions and initiatives, the role of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) was not fully leveraged, and this impacted the effectiveness of the government's community engagement efforts. Nigeria's response, while comprehensive, underutilized CSOs, impacting community engagement. The project sought to address this gap by improving the coordination and mobilization of a multi-sector Civil Society Response to COVID-19 to mitigate community transmission and minimize the health, social and economic impact of COVID-19 at the subnational and community level.

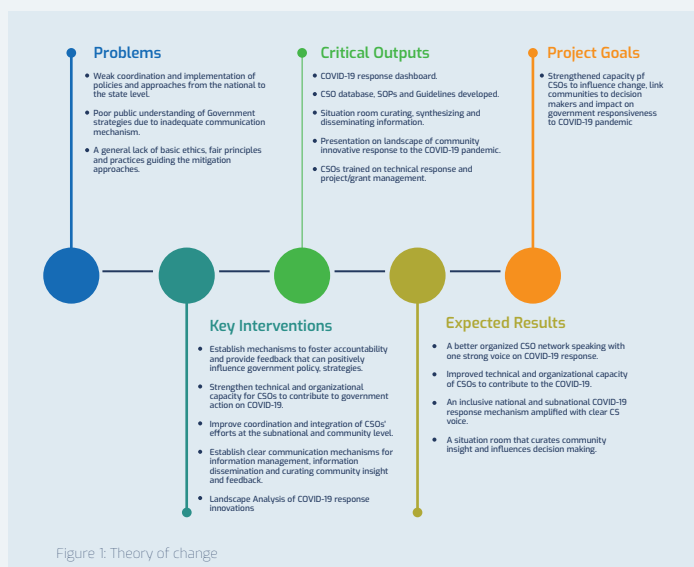


Figure 1: Theory of change

Methodology

Multi-sectoral CSOs were mapped and engaged, key indicators or information to be tracked were defined in a co-creation workshop. The project focused on four pillars: coordination, capability, communication, and accountability. Coordination improved linkages between state and federal CSOs, amplifying community voices. Communication enhanced transparency and stakeholder information sharing. Capability was strengthened through gap assessments, training and monitoring, while accountability evaluated response effectiveness and resource mobilization. Through virtual engagements, co-creation workshops were



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Precious is a health and development expert with over 5 years of experience in designing and implementing health systems strengthening initiatives at National and subnational levels.

At HSC, She played a key role in the development of technically sound and operationally feasible national

organized to map multisectoral CSOs and co-define key indicators across the four pillars.

Result

The forty-nine (49) empowered CSOs contributed to awareness creation activities, training, projects, and advocacies. These activities included conducting COVID-19 awareness activities, step-down training for colleagues, COVID-19 projects in the community, LGA, and state, and advocacy visits to the state task force. Simplified multi-sectoral guidance documents were developed, including guidelines for reopening of schools and worship centres, advisories for vulnerable groups, safe management of dead bodies, and self-isolation. Contextual information on government and community response to the pandemic that can be leveraged by the government in improving current response actions for COVID-19 as well as plan for future pandemics was generated. This resulted in seven states comprising Plateau, Anambra, Ebonyi, Niger, Ekiti, FCT and Kaduna States - achieving the milestone of having a CSO incorporated as a member of the state COVID-19 task force team following several engagements of CSOs with state actors.

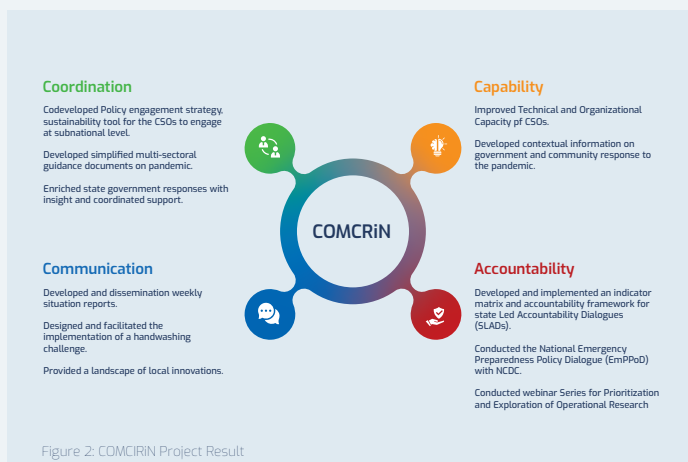


Figure 2: COMCIRIN Project Result

Conclusion

CSOs have played a vital role in improving the COVID-19 response. This was achieved through capacity building, effective risk communication, peer learning, policy dialogues, and accountability activities. CSOs were at the forefront of driving discussions with relevant stakeholders on required improvements to government's response to the pandemic. Sustainability mechanisms were developed to maintain the momentum and includes – the strengthened capacity of CSOs for such engagements and the development of a policy engagement framework articulating strategies/activities for continuous engagement.

pathogen-specific contingency plans drawing from local evidence and international best practices for the African Risk Capacity Outbreaks and Epidemics (O&E) in select countries in Africa.

She successfully led the implementation of several market research including the Enyimba Economic City- Health Segment Market research in Nigeria, African Pharmaceutical Market Research in Nigeria, Angola, Ghana and DRC and the Horizon Clinic Due Diligence in The Gambia. She co-led the Health Labour Market Assessment (HLMA) work area of the State Approach Component on the Global Fund Resilient and Sustainable Systems for Health (RS5H) Project.

Working closely with the Principal Technical Officer, she provides support for all monitoring evaluation and research activities. She was a part of the business development team that developed the successful \$21 million USAID Accelerating Control of Epidemics grant.