



Inclusion of Grassroots Leaders in Budget Advocacy Impacts Positively on the Quality of Life in Rural Communities



Grassroots Livelihood Project (GLP)



Na We Get Am!

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Introduction

The aim of this publication is to share with colleagues the very positive outcome of a pilot project on participatory budgeting carried out in Ekiti State.

It is published as part of our efforts to document the impact of our work on Civic Engagement and Governance, which was launched in 2010 as the ReclaimNaija Project.

The pilot project was conceived to promote inclusion and address inequality in the work that was being done on budget advocacy and fiscal justice in the country. Over the past 10 years, several civil society organizations have been carrying out advocacy for a more open and accountable budget culture in the country. The pressures have resulted in some openness in the Federal Budget and the Federal Revenue Allocations to the different States and Local Governments.

Nonetheless, there was still gross inequality in civic engagement on the budget in particular and fiscal governance in general. The engagement largely remained the preserve of highly educated, vocal, elite groups, organizations and individuals. Grassroots citizens and poor communities with little or no formal education were completely excluded from the process. They lacked even a basic understanding of the budget.

In 2012, therefore, CLP, with the support of the Ford Foundation, carried out a pilot project in Ekiti State to promote inclusion, voice and participation in budget advocacy, and project monitoring. The aim was to promote participatory budgeting and project monitoring towards meeting the real needs of communities and improving the quality of life in rural communities. We took advantage of the 8-point agenda of the Ekiti State Government at the time, one of which was Participatory Governance.



Community Leaders analysing the Ekiti State Budget at the training

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

We expected that a major outcome would be a change in mind set on the part of the targeted Grassroots Community Leaders who will go home with the idea that it is the duty of citizens to hold public officers and institutions accountable; that it is the duty of every citizen to fight corruption.

We expected to create a critical mass of advocates among the reached Grassroots Community Leaders who would not only engage in promoting transparency and accountability in budgeting and project implementation, but also serve as resource in subsequent interventions.

We also expected a paradigm shift by Community Development(CD) departments towards a more holistic perspective of CD which supports, not only execution of self-help projects, but also sustained community participation in transparent budgeting and project monitoring, decision making and local governance.



Community Development Officers, at the training, discussing ways of engaging with Grassroots Leaders on Budgeting

THE PILOT PROJECT

The project concept was simple – equip Grassroots Community Leaders with the knowledge and skills to analyse the budget and monitor projects, provide them with tools to engage with Government Officials on budget preparation and project implementation.

TARGET POPULATION

Grassroots Community Leaders – youth, women and men, Community Development Officers, Policy Makers, Civil Servants.

STRATEGY

Our strategy was to:

Create popular demand for public accountability through civic engagement of grassroots communities and citizens.

Build the capacity of both community leaders and relevant government officials and create synergy between the targeted State and Non-State Actors on participatory budgeting and project implementation.

WHAT WE DID

We trained 79 Grassroots Community Leaders from the 16 Local Governments on participatory governance, participatory budgeting and project monitoring.

51 Community Development Officers from the 16 Local Governments and the State level were also trained on the same issues. In addition, they received training on community needs assessment, community organising and ICT.

The budget of Ekiti State and the capital projects in the Federal Government budget to be implemented in Ekiti State were shared and analysed at the training.

We equipped Grassroots Community Leaders with knowledge and skills to engage with State and Local Governments to ensure that the real needs of communities are included in the budget.

RESULTS

The trained Grassroots Community Leaders mobilised key Stakeholders in their communities and engaged with public officers to demand for implementation of budgeted projects and completion of abandoned projects.

As a result of this budget advocacy work, several budgeted and abandoned projects were completed, and over a hundred new projects identified by the communities were approved by the Government for direct implementation by the Communities in all 16 Local Government Areas in Ekiti State.

A total of 170 communities benefited from the over 177 projects, valued at N621 million (equivalent of \$4.1 million as at 2012)



Community Leaders analysing the Ekiti State Budget at the training



IMPACT

This has resulted in improved quality of life. For example, in one community, children who used to walk 6 kilometres to school now have a school right in their community; market women have better access roads to take their wares to the market, reducing time and saving money spent on transportation; students have access to electricity and to a cybercafé for their academic work; the incidence of diarrhoea reduced in one community due to access to clean water.

Some of the projects helped to promote social cohesion and unity in the communities.

What is more, public officers were being called to account for abandoned and non-implemented projects by Grassroots Community Leaders, which resulted in greater accountability and in participatory budgeting.

Some of the results and impact of the pilot project are best presented in the words of the beneficiaries themselves:



Nelson Ayilaran:
Community Leader

"After this training, we went home and visited all the community kings - the Kabiyesis - we let them know what was going on and agreed that as community leaders, we were going to monitor all the projects in our communities. There was a borehole that was yet to be implemented. We identified the contractor, wrote a letter to him and later that same month, they started to implement the project. There was another project that was not in the budget of that year. It had been awarded several years back to a Senator. It was a 1-kilometre drainage project. We wrote and called the Senator. He did not do it until we wrote and called him. He rushed down to carry out the project and within two weeks, the project was completed."



George Ogunyasha:
Community Development Officer

"I learnt that for our country to develop meaningfully, it must start from the grassroots; if the community initiates its own project and the government respects that, it will really be the people's project and not the government's project. If it is the people's project involving every group in town, youths, women and the community leaders, the community will rally and sustain the project."



Segun Olusola:
CD Director

"Because of the capacity building by CLP, grassroots Community leaders were given an opportunity to ask public officers questions on the budget. As a result, some of the politicians who were not used to being asked to account felt aggrieved; they wanted to know how the community leaders manage to know so much about the budget and projects. Rumours began to circulate that some persons in the CD department were using the community leaders against the government then in power. But when the State Government realised that the community leaders were demanding for projects meant for them, what was legitimately meant for their communities, the governor invited the community leaders to a meeting. As a result of the meeting with the governor, several projects were initiated in all the 16 Local Government Areas in Ekiti State."



Femi Akinbolu:
Former CD Director Ekiti State

"CLP came in at the right time. They spurred the State Government into action; and we staff of the Ministry of Local Government were also energised; they put us on our toes, put the State Government on its toes, as well as the Communities. They educated us, mobilised us, asked us to mobilise the Community leaders for participatory budgeting and capital projects implementation."

COMMUNITY VOICES ON A FEW OF THE PROJECTS:

Installation of Borehole & Construction of Overhead Tank Elevation in Araromi Community, Ikere LGA



Temitope Simeon:
Community Leader

“People were fetching water from streams, wells and from far distance. We faced a lot of problems. Children were falling sick because the water was not healthy, hence we requested for the borehole.”



Mrs Adeniyi:
Community Leader

“From my estimation between 1200-1500 people have been benefiting from the borehole

Construction & Furnishing of Town Hall, Isan Community, Ekiti



Chief Bade Gboyega:
CDA Chairman

“The place is serviceable and very useful to the community. Rather than have their receptions, dance, activities and ceremonies on the open field or under the shades, they now use the townhall which is more decent, they pay token fees from time to time, so they have a ready place to use, it's not a question of rain is coming, we have to run away'. That town hall has been very useful to most people.”

**Construction of Culvert Kajola – Oke
Community, Ado Ekiti**



**Titilayo Ilesanmi (Market woman):
Resident, Kayola-Oke**

“The culvert has been very useful to us. People now have access to their destinations. Children going to school, women going to the market, people going to work now have access road to their destinations. Before, everyone had to wade across the muddy valley on foot.

For me, when coming back from the market, the *Okada* can now bring me right in front of my house and I pay less. Before, he would drop me far off and I will have to wade across the muddy valley carrying my wares on my head.”

**Computer Training School and Internet Café,
Ilawe Community**



**Ayodele Taiwo:
Beneficiary, Youth**

“This project has really helped this community; with a café, we can do a lot of things related to communication and our academic life.”

**Electricity Project – Power Transformer,
Ilokun Community**



**Joyce Awoyinka:
Student**

"The lighting situation has improved tremendously in our community. It has been a great relief. As a student, I now enjoy coming home. I can now read conveniently. It also saves me the time I spend cooking, since I can now use the electric stove. This saves me time for my studies. It saves the family money too. It has brought us some relief economically, saving the money spent on kerosene."



**J.A. Adeniyi:
Community Leader**

"The benefits cannot be quantified. The transformer services 2 communities with 202 households."

Drainage, Awedele Community, Ado-Ekiti



**Dr Paul Ajayi:
Community leader**

"Erosion has had a devastating effect on our community. So the drainage was our priority. Only one road was motorable. But the drainage and culvert have changed all that for the better".

SUCCESS FACTORS: WHY THE PILOT PROJECT WORKED

- ➔ **Effective, Action-Oriented Capacity Building:** The trained Community Leaders had a good understanding of participatory budgeting, their rights, and their responsibilities, as citizens, to hold government accountable.
- ➔ The right people (Grassroots Community Leaders) were trained.
- ➔ The Content of the training promoted confidence and personal agency.
- ➔ Integrity- the training and pilot was carried out by a credible, non-partisan organisation.
- ➔ Community Development Officers were equipped with the skills and the space to engage effectively with communities.
- ➔ High-level Synergy between Community Development Officers and Grassroots Community Leaders.
- ➔ Most of the projects were executed by the Communities themselves.
- ➔ The presence of a Governor with the political will to engage with communities on participatory budgeting.



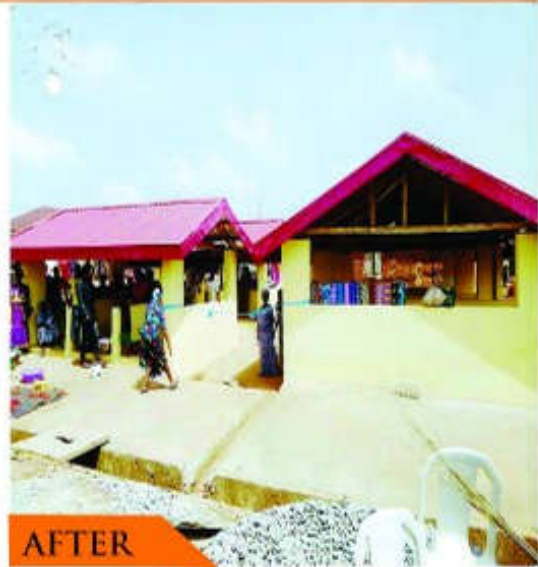
As Governor Kayode Fayemi noted, *“all that we did was to give them financial support. They chose their contractors, they bought the materials themselves for the construction and delivered the projects on time and on cost in many instances, and it gives the sense of what the people are capable of doing when you involve them in leadership. They are more transparent and accountable and their projects are cheaper than projects that government awards to contractors”*.

BEFORE AND AFTER PICTURES OF A FEW OF THE PROJECTS

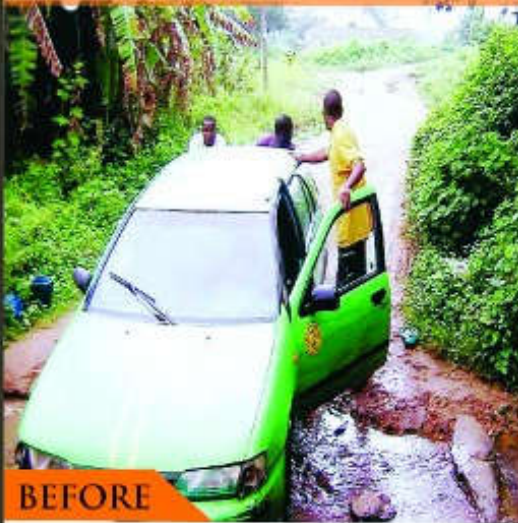
ST. MICHAEL PRIMARY SCHOOL, ITAWURE, EFON LGA



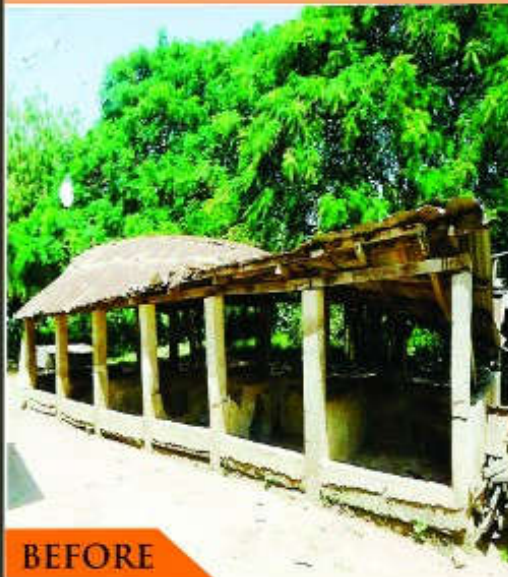
IGBOLE MARKET, IDO/OSI LGA



CONSTRUCTION OF CULVERT, KAJOLA, IKERE LGA



IPAO MARKET, IKOLE LGA



ESURE SCHOOL HALL, IREPODUN/IFELODUN LGA

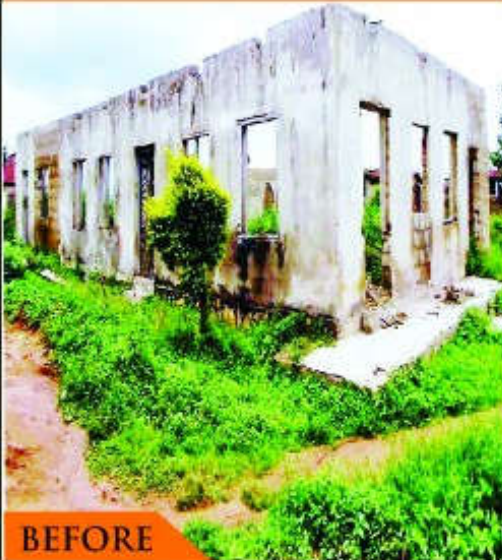


BEFORE



AFTER

IROKO CIVIC CENTRE, IJERO LGA



BEFORE



AFTER

Our Vision

A society where there is respect for human dignity, socio-political and economic justice, respect for the environment, equity and fairness for all

Our Mission

To promote Human Development and radically reduce human misery by engaging the people as agents of positive change

Our Core Values

- Integrity
- Respect for diversity, Indigenous Knowledge and Culture
- Committed to Community Ownership
- Authenticity

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Produced by
Community Life Project (CLP)
With the support of the
 Ford Foundation

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