



# Rapid Needs Assessment on Civil Society Contribution to Policy Using Digital Advocacy

Anambra, Akwa Ibom, Benue and Nasarawa State, Nigeria

## REPORT

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABBREVIATION	DEFINITION
EVA	Education as a Vaccine
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/ Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
AYP	Adolescents and Young people
FCT	Federal Capital Territory
CSO	Civil Society Organization
LGA	Local Government Area
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
COVID-19	Corona Virus Disease 2019

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

**E**ducation as a Vaccine (EVA) is a young women-led, youth focused non-profit organisation working in partnership with children, adolescents and young people to advance their rights to health and protect them from all forms of violence by strengthening capacities, providing direct services and influencing policies for improved quality of life.

EVA's work focuses on issues of sexual and reproductive health and rights, HIV/AIDS, women's rights, gender-based violence, other human rights violations and discrimination faced by children, adolescents and young people, especially the most marginalised. For 21 years, EVA has worked to advance the rights of children, adolescents and young people (AYP) particularly adolescent girls and young women, specifically their rights to health, education and freedom from violence. EVA utilizes dynamic strategies to strengthen the capacity of AYP, particularly women and girls, including those most marginalized and excluded to participate and make input in law and policy-making processes at national, state and community levels, ensuring their human rights in those processes are protected.

### 1.1 Overview of the Study Area

Nigeria is a multi-ethnic and culturally diverse federation of 36 autonomous states and the Federal Capital Territory which boils down to six geopolitical zones: South-South, South East, South West, North East, North West, North Central, and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). Nigeria is the 14th-largest country in Africa by land mass and is culturally diverse, with a population of more than 200m spanning over 250 ethnic groups<sup>1</sup>. It is rich in natural resources, with some of the largest proven oil reserves in Africa, and has a strong agriculture sector, with major exports including rubber, cocoa, peanuts and palm oil. The country gained independence in 1960 and declared itself a federal republic in 1963.

An overview of the states where each CSOs assessed is given below;

#### Anambra State

Anambra State is the eighth-most populous state in the nation and located in the south-eastern region of the country, Anambra state has a land area of 4,887sq km with an estimated population of over 4 million by the 2006 census report. It has 21 local government areas (LGAs), consisting of 177 autonomous communities. The Capital and the seat of Government is Awka. The indigenous ethnic group in Anambra state is the Igbos which is about 98% of the population and a small population of Igala about 2% of the population who live in the north-western part of the state<sup>2</sup>.

#### Akwa Ibom State

The state takes its name from the Qua Iboe River which bisects the state before flowing into the Bight of Bonny. Akwa Ibom state capital is in Uyo and the state has 31 local government areas. Of the 36 states, Akwa Ibom is the 30th largest in the area and fifteenth-most populous with an estimated population of nearly 5.5 million as of 2016 with an Area of 2,734 square miles (7,081 square km)<sup>3</sup> and the state is Nicknamed the Land of promise.

<sup>1</sup> Oxford Business School 2022. The Report: Nigeria 2022: Country Profile.

<https://oxfordbusinessgroup.com/node/961867/reader>. Accessed on 07 July 2022

<sup>2</sup> Wikipedia. Anambra State profile. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anambra\\_State](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anambra_State) Assessed on 07 July 2022

<sup>3</sup> Britannica. Akwa Ibom State. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Akwa-Ibom>. Assessed on 07 July 2022

## Benue State

Benue state derives its name from the Benue River which is the second largest river in Nigeria. The state capital is Makurdi and the state is predominantly inhabited by the Tiv, Idoma, Iggede and Etulo peoples and is rich in agriculture.

The state has a total population of 4,253,641 in 2006 census<sup>4</sup>, with an average population density of 99 persons per km<sup>2</sup><sup>5</sup>. This makes Benue the 9th most populous state in Nigeria. Benue State consists of twenty-three (23) Local Government Areas

## Nasarawa State

Located in the North Central region of Nigeria, Nasarawa State is bordered to the east by the states of Taraba and Plateau, to the north by Kaduna State, to the south by the states of Kogi and Benue, and to the west by the Federal Capital Territory. The state currently has thirteen local government areas, and its capital is Lafia, located in the east of the state. Nasarawa State is ranked the fifteenth largest in area and second least in populace out of the 36 states in Nigeria.

### 1.2 Rationale

Digital tools and spaces have been utilized by civil society organizations (CSOs) to drive different causes through information sharing, campaigns and advocacy. It has become a powerful tool in mobilizing and organizing diverse groups, challenging social issues and getting attention of decision-makers. These tools are used to monitor government policies and actions and hold government accountable. CSOs also use these tools to engage in advocacy and offer alternative perspectives for policies of government, the private sector and other institutions.

The use of digital tools became increasingly important with the onset of the Covid-19 lockdowns and subsequent limiting of in-person meetings. Digital spaces and tools became the major means of information sharing and advocacy. As of 2021, the number of Nigerians using the internet was estimated at 108.75 million, with projections of up to 143.26 million internet users by 2026<sup>6</sup>. However, grassroots youth and women organizations in Nigeria have not been able to maximize digital spaces to promote their advocacy work and even for effective implementation of their daily activities. The lack of tools, resources, and experience in using digital platforms for their work left them unprepared to deal with the impact of the lockdown and the new ways of work as they are mostly skilled in traditional ways for advocacy such as lobbying, advocacy visits, engaging national forums etc. to promote their agenda. A significant contributor to this gap is social exclusion and inequality which disproportionately affect people who are often marginalized such as people in grassroots and hard to reach communities, and even worse for persons with disability who are indicated among social groups experiencing the digital divide<sup>7</sup>. Persons with disability are often excluded in accessing digital technology, even when it is clear that digital tools can improve their participation and engagement as it breaks traditional barriers

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<sup>4</sup> Wikipedia. Benue State Profile. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benue\\_State](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benue_State). Assessed on 07 July 2022

<sup>5</sup> Razi Brown. Benue State: History, Location, People and Geography.

<sup>6</sup> Statista. Number of internet users in Nigeria from 2017 to 2026. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/183849/internet-users-nigeria/>. Assessed on 04 July 2022

<sup>7</sup> Duplaga M (2017) Digital divide among people with disabilities: Analysis of data from a nationwide study for determinants of Internet use and activities performed online. PLoS ONE 12(6): e0179825. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0179825>

to communication<sup>8</sup>. Additionally, with dwindling funds, grassroots organizations are overburdened to spend extra funds on building capacity of staff on digital technology, costs for digital services and technical support. Hence, causing an inability to access and maximize digital solutions and losing opportunities for adaptable means of work and increased productivity.

EVA intends to connect grassroots youth and young women-led organizations to advocacy platforms and discourse at the national level so that they can influence policy and law-making processes at that level, and link this to advocacy and social accountability actions at the state level. Digital advocacy capacity is critical to achieving this aim. For this to happen, EVA conducted an assessment of the capacity of grassroots youth and women organizations in utilizing digital tools and spaces for advocacy and policy influencing to understand the current gaps and how they can be strengthened, so that the capacity support will be targeted and addressing the specifically identified issues.

EVA surveyed Civil Society Organizations in Benue, Nasarawa, Anambra and Akwa Ibom states.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Assessment**

The assessment was designed to help understand and address the following objectives:

- To understand the perception of CSOs on their impact on Policies in Nigeria
- To ascertain the level at which digital advocacy is currently used by grassroot organisations
- To identify challenges faced by youth, women led and focused organisations and organisations for persons with disabilities in utilisation of digital advocacy tools and strategies
- To identify the capacity needs of these CSOs to effectively engage and influence policies at the National level leveraging on Digital Tools for Advocacy

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<sup>8</sup> Tsatsou, Panayiota. (2019). Digital inclusion of people with disabilities: a qualitative study of intra-disability diversity in the digital realm. *Behaviour & Information Technology*. 39. 1-16. 10.1080/0144929X.2019.1636136.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

To establish the need and capacity of CSOs to engage in Digital Advocacy in Policy influencing and to access the value of civil society participation in the policy process in Nigeria, this assessment employed a qualitative approach to collect data from respondents.

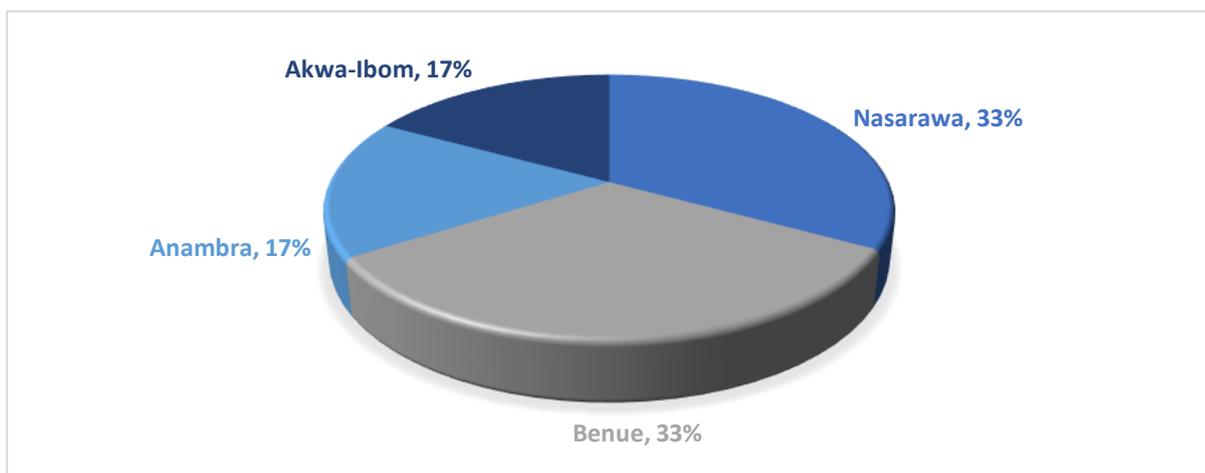
The procedures consisted of the following steps:

- collection of information to be evaluated,
- determination of the population and sampling
- preparation of the questionnaire
- implementation of the full-scale survey (KIs), and
- analysis of the study results

### 2.1 Data Collection and Sampling Technique

The sample size scope for this survey were all selected from EVAs mailing list database. A Purposive sampling technique was used to identify CSOs with the characteristics, such as Local and grassroots youth and women organisations, organisations for persons with disabilities. Using this procedure, a total of thirty (30) were selected as sample size. Primary data was collected from representatives of each CSO through questionnaires and key informant interviews via phone call. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and logit regression using statistical package, SPSS. The Statistical tests focused on the fundamental Objective of the study. All percentages are based on total number of respondents who replied to a given question, rather than on the overall number of respondents in the study.

*Figure 1: Proportion of Sample population by Location*



### 2.2 Ethical Considerations

The participation in this assessment provides information needed to ascertain the level of involvement of Grassroot youth and women organization and organization for people living with disability who have digital advocacy skills in contributing to policies in states and at the national level, all research information kept in secure computers with access to the information only by the

immediate research team, respondents have also assured confidentiality of the information shared, all respondents on this assessment gave informed consent to take part in the assessment.

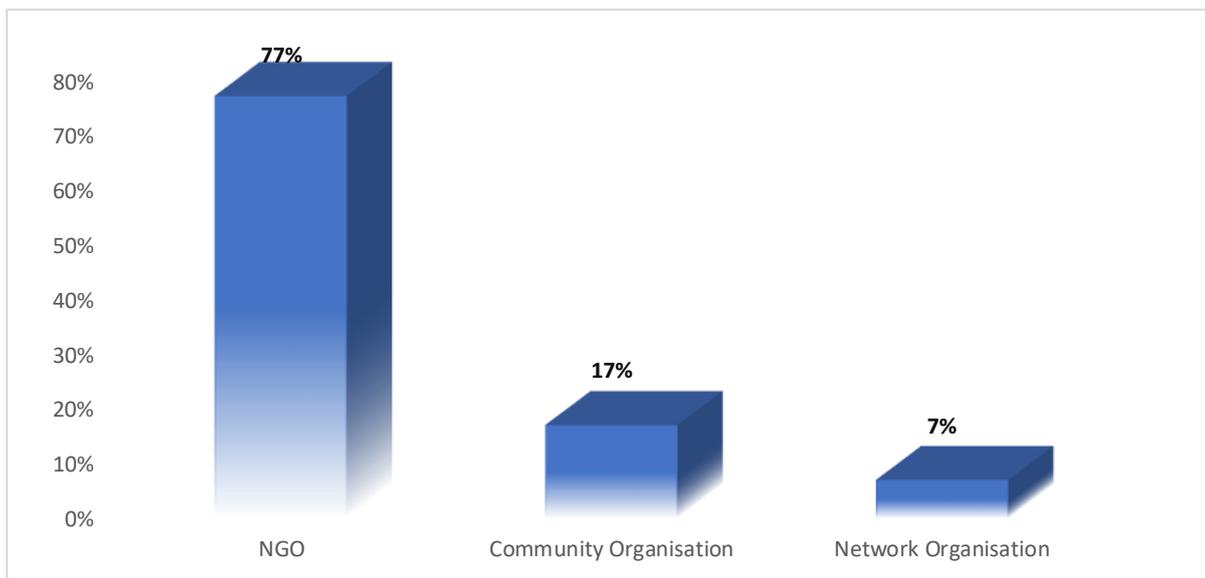
### 3. DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

#### 3.1 CSO Demographic

Quantitative data collected using the questionnaire and administered via phone calls were analysed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution tables, mean, pie-chart and bar graph were used to present the findings of this report.

Respondents in the survey were senior management staffs (Mostly the Executive Directors and Program managers) of 30 CSOs (23 non-government organisations, 5 community Based Organisations/groups, and 2 Network organisations). The respondents represented a total of 4 states in Nigeria (Nasarawa, Benue, Anambra, and Akwa-Ibom), even though their operations cut across other states in Nigeria. Of the 30 respondents, 33% were representatives from Nasarawa state, 33% from Benue state, whereas 17% of the respondents were from Akwa-Ibom and Anambra state respectively.

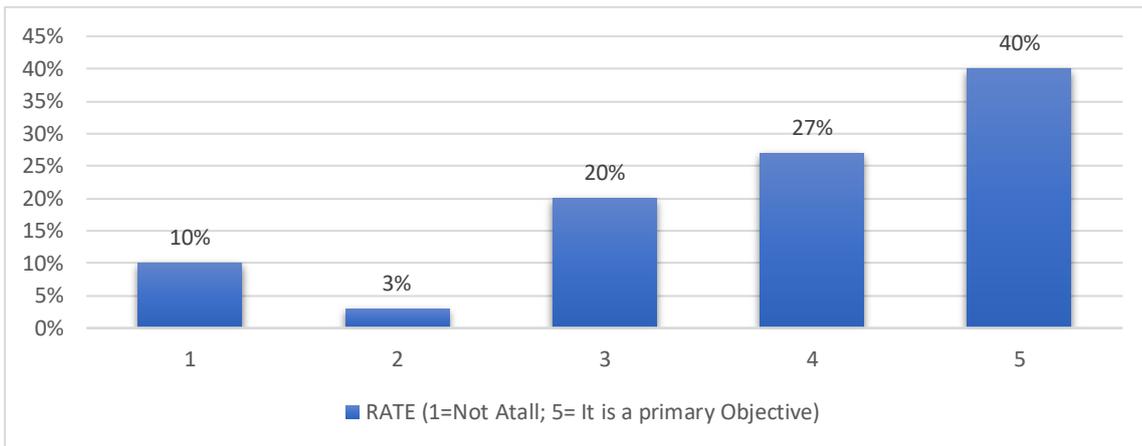
*Figure 2: Proportion of organisation by Type*



#### 3.2 CSOs Advocacy and Policy Influencing

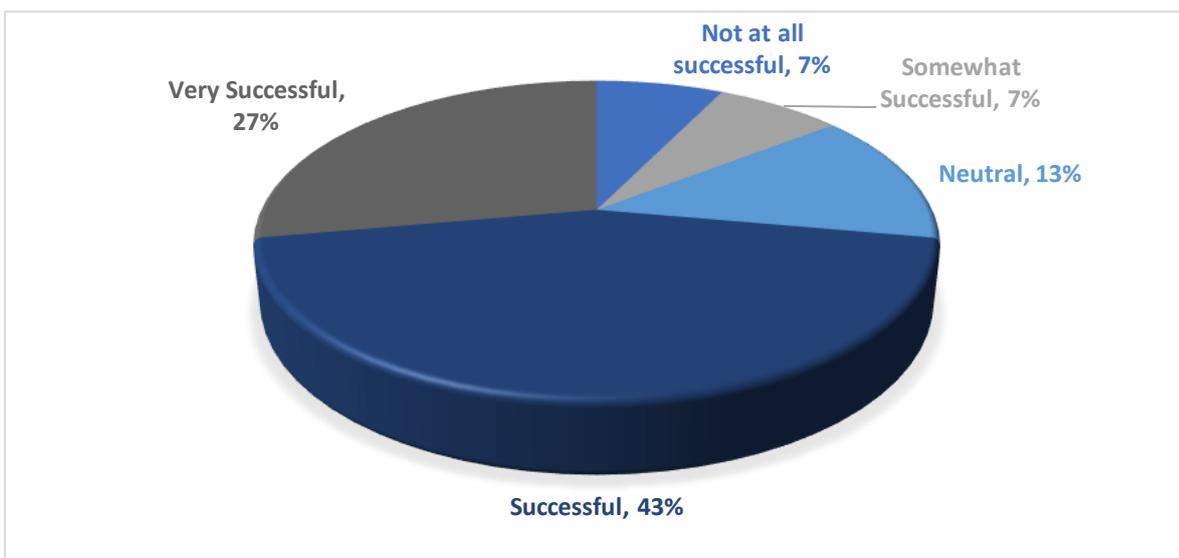
Nigeria running a democratic government has given Civil Societies a strong ground to advocate for the masses this includes the influence CSOs play on policies in the country. To ascertain the level of CSO's participation in advocacy and if it is useful to their objective, Respondents were asked if they participated in advocacy and the extent to which they participated in advocacy and how these participations have influenced policies in Nigeria. 40% of the respondent had a high rating (on a scale of 1 – 5) considered the objective of influencing government policy as highly relevant.

**Figure 3: Extent to which CSOs Try to Influence Policy**



### CSOs Success Rating on Policy Influencing

**Figure 4: % of CSOs success rate in Policy Influencing**



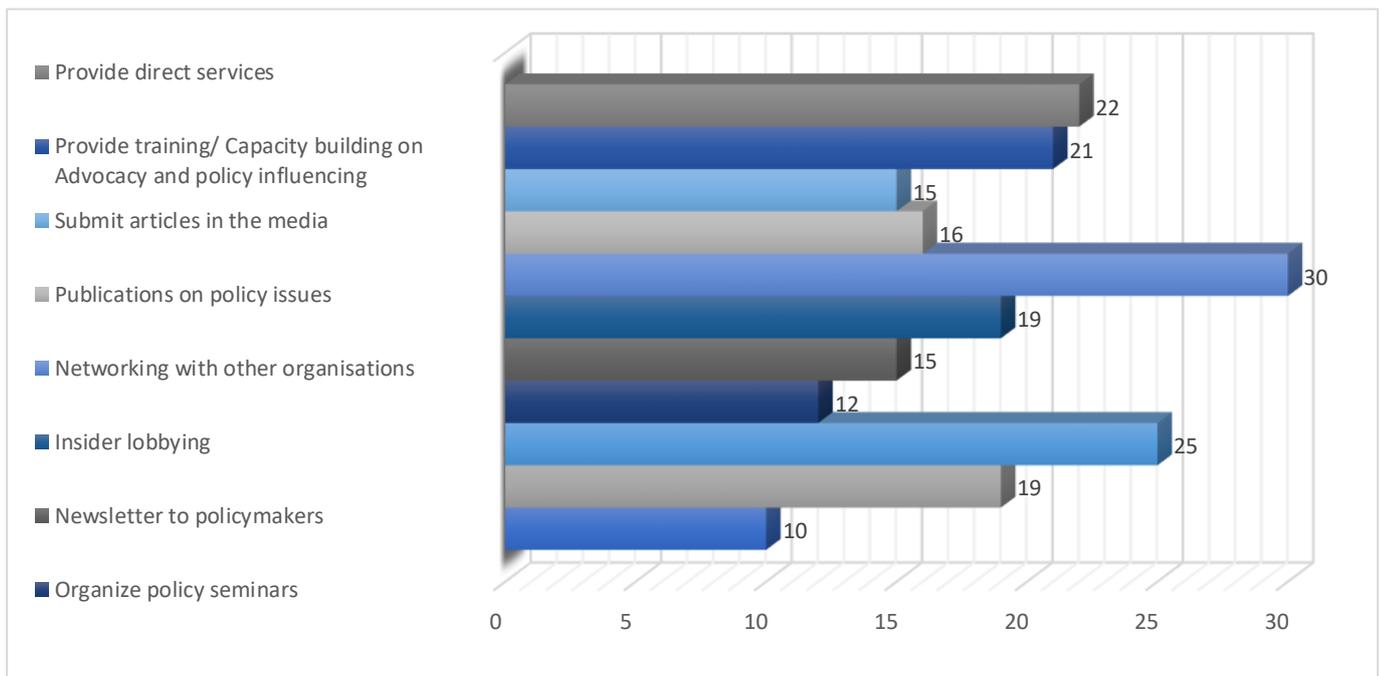
Only 43% of the respondents rated their organization successful in policy influencing in Nigeria while 7% stated that their effort to influencing policies have not been successful and 7% rated theirs a little bit successful. 13% could not ascertain whether their organisation’s effort towards influencing policy in Nigeria is successful or not as shown in fig.4. This indication is not far-fetched from the fact that CSOs interviewed did not see the relevance of policy influencing (as captured in fig 3).

Some respondents who perceived that their organization have not recorded some level of success in policy influencing stated that “their organisation only engage in advocacy and policy influencing at state level and LGA level and are not carried along at federal level; Sometimes state and federal legislation always serve as barriers to many of these policy processes”. This indicates that the skills required to have a successful advocacy campaign is needed by CSOs at state and local levels, to enable them reach their success goal of policy influencing.

## How CSOs Seek to Influence Policy

With 43% ascertaining their level of success in influencing Policy, CSOs were asked the approach they have in time past participated in advocating for Policies. 30% as depicted in fig 5 below indicated they majorly 'network with other organisations' and 25% submit articles in the media.

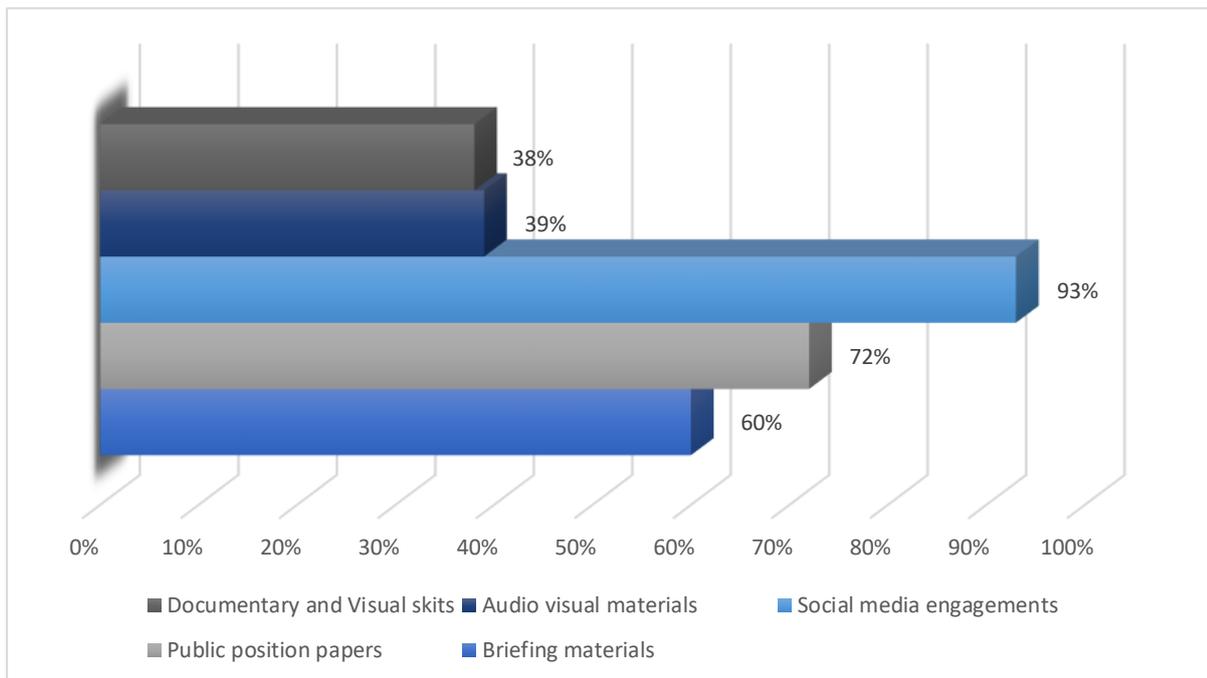
Figure 5: How CSO's Seek to Influence Policy



### 3.3 Advocacy Strategy and Success Rates

Majority of the CSOs who have utilized several advocacy strategies in influencing policies, only have done this at the local level and are not connected to the National level advocacy initiatives. Respondents were asked digital strategies that their organisation have used for advocacy. 90% of these organisations mentioned the use of social media but were unable to state categorically how these tools were used and what policies they used it to influence or the results of those activities. Audio Visuals, Documentary and use of graphics remained below average, while use of position papers and other briefing materials is frequent but not electronically distributed. This depicts the need for enhancement of digital skills and for CSOs involvement in the diverse use of digital approach in advocacy as well as capacity support to track results and measure impacts from the use of digital approaches. (See Fig 6 below)

**Figure 6: Digital Advocacy Strategies**



### 3.4 Needs of CSOs in Digital Advocacy

From Fig 6 above that showed a low rate of CSO involvement in Digital Advocacy, respondents were asked areas of needs in terms of the most necessary type of support that would help their organisation the most in influencing policy especially using digital means. Types of support mentioned were grouped as shown in Table 1 below. The majority of respondents indicated that training/capacity building on Digital Advocacy is highly needed(90%), 15 organisations mentioned that they need Networking opportunities, 67% (20) of the CSOs interviewed mentioned the need to have access to the latest thinking on how to use digital advocacy to influence policy, and other needs were; Information on policy issues (53%), Best practice Case studies (50%), and technical support on specific influencing initiatives (50%) are the types of support most needed to help their organisation to be more better positioned to influence policy.

CSO Needs in terms of Advocacy	Frequency N= 30	Percentage
Technical Support on specific influencing initiatives	15	50%
Networking opportunities	23	77%
Training/capacity building on Digital Advocacy	27	90%
Support for more research on policies	7	23%
Information on Policy Issues	16	53%
Best practice case studies	15	50%
access to latest thinking on how to use digital advocacy to influence policy	20	67%

**Figure 7: Types of Support Needed**

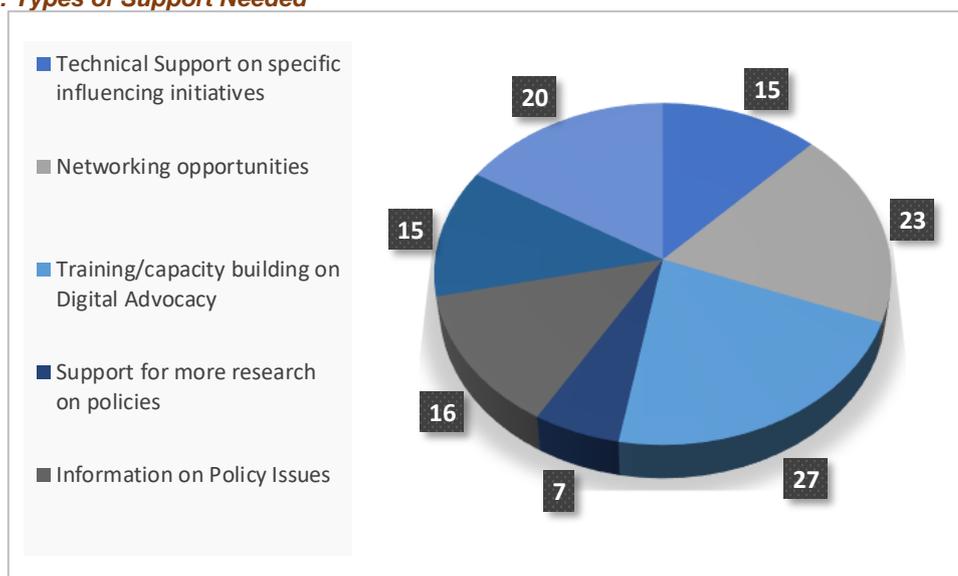


Figure 7 above shows that important actions that need to be taken to improve the policy impact of their organisation included:

- Empowerment of CSO capacities/resources for digital skills
- Build capacities/train professionals with regards to research and policy development; for staff to influence policy; for credible evidence-based policy influence; for the purpose of policy entrepreneurship; for lobbying; for the creation of a research unit within CSOs
- Networking/ information sharing

### **3.5 Success Rate of CSOs in Policy influencing at State level.**

Most CSOs that consider influencing policy as a primary objective of their organisation, indicated that their organisations have experienced only moderate levels of success with regards to influencing policy (mean rate=3.79). When asked to evaluate the overall success of civil society in the country, the sample perceived civil society to be achieving little in terms of influencing policy (mean rate=3.37), even less than compared to the success of their own organisation.

Given these low perceptions of success of CSOs generally in influencing policies in states across the country as stated by the respondents, it is necessary to determine the factors that prevent success. Respondents were further asked to specify and 100% of them indicated that 'CSOs do not have enough funds to do this'.

Respondents also made it evident that CSOs not having sufficient capacity especially on digital advocacy (90%) also contributed significantly to having limited success to policy influencing in Nigeria in the last two years as we are recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### 4. DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

This study was commissioned to primarily establish the need of youth CSOs in Nigeria in utilizing digital advocacy approaches for policy influencing at grassroots, state and national levels. It also examined what is critical to improving their capacity to engage in digital advocacy for policy influencing at different levels.

Summarily the study revealed the following;

- i. Even though majority of respondents considered the objective of influencing government policy as highly relevant to their organisation's agenda, it was observed that over 30% do not consider the objective of influencing government policy as highly considering their perceived success level.
- ii. Most CSOs have been involved in several advocacy strategies in influencing policies, most of them do this at the local level and are not carried along at the National level advocacy.
- iii. An average of 40% of CSOs use digital advocacy for policy influencing, and 40% of the CSOs have not been involved in several digital approaches in advocacy and this calls for more engagement of CSOs in the use of digital approach in advocacy.
- iv. Only 43% of the respondents rated their organization successful in policy influencing in Nigeria while 7% stated that their effort to influencing policies have not been successful and 7% rated theirs a little bit successful. 13% could not ascertain whether their organisation's effort towards influencing policy in Nigeria is successful. This indication is not far-fetched from the fact that CSOs interviewed did not see the relevance of policy influencing
- v. 30 CSOs interviewed (100%) indicated that 'CSOs do not have enough funds to advocate for policies. It is also evident that CSOs not having sufficient capacity especially on digital advocacy (90%) has also contributed significantly to having limited success to policy influencing in Nigeria.
- vi. On the demand for support the majority of respondents indicate that training/capacity building, Networking opportunities, and access to the latest thinking on how to Digital Advocacy, are the types of support most needed to help their organisation to effectively influence policy. 27 (90%) out of 30 respondents stated that digital advocacy is the most effective way to policy influencing especially with the lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic and therefore require capacity building on it.

## 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has brought to fore critical considerations in the delivery of digital advocacy skill sets in grassroots organisations. As advocacy strategies have evolved what is clear is that there is an opportunity to enhance the quality, and capacity of CSOs to engage in policy influencing and to assess the value of youth civil society organizations' participation in the policy process in Nigeria to better enable them to use evidence in connection with contributing to influencing policy processes, and the importance of digital skills for the success of the above actions.

Conclusively, the following recommendations are advanced, based on the key findings of the study;

- i. There is a need for youth CSOs in Nigeria especially grassroots CSOs to understand digital tactics for the audience, content and channels through which the right message is communicated for effective policy influencing.
- ii. Grassroot CSOs capacity need to be built to gain digital advocacy skills and engage in digital advocacy using an intersectional approach. Particular attention and support needs to be provided to the CSOs who identify with multiple marginalized groups, such as young people with disabilities, and other marginalized youth and women groups. This would enable them reach their success goal of policy influencing
- iii. To improve the policy impact of youth CSOs, there is a need to expand their network and connections to other CSOs doing similar work across other states and at national level, including utilizing digital platforms to initiate and strengthen these networks. This would allow for cross learning and information sharing, and for possible joint advocacy action, contributing to a movement of youths pushing for a change in policy spaces as well as in their communities.

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## ANNEXES

### Data collection Tools

#### CSOs and Digital Advocacy

In order for us to make effective comparisons over time and across different Civil society organisations, the assessment instrument is a pre-coded, multiple-choice questionnaire.

*Please indicate which standard answer comes closest to describing your case.*

We understand these standard questions cannot capture the full complexity of civil society and policy issues. Therefore, please provide additional comments to better explain the situation in your Organisation.

*It is important to answer all the questions. Please note that, to focus the discussion, the survey is concerned only with civil society and Advocacy/policy Influencing conversations at the country level.*

**1. Name of your organisation -----**

**2. What is your position within the organisation? -----**

**3. What type of organisation is it?**

- NGO
- Community group
- Independent research institute
- Government research institute
- University-based research department
- Freelance consultant (individual researcher)
- Consulting company
- Network
- Other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Which State do you work in?-----**

**5. Has your organisation participated in advocacy/policy influencing conversation at the national/ state level?**

- Yes
- No

**5.1 To what extent does your organisation seek to influence government policy in the country?**

- 1 Not at all
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 It is a primary objective

Comment:-----

**6. Overall, how would you rate the success of your organisation in influencing policy in the country?**

- 1 Not at all successful
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 Very successful

Comment:-----

Please explain your answer.

**7. How does your organisation seek to influence policy?**

	< Not at all			Very much >	
	1	2	3	4	5
Work on projects commissioned by policymakers					
Piloting alternative policy approaches					
Comment/ make input on draft policy documents					
Organize policy seminars					
Newsletter to policymakers					
Insider lobbying					
Networking with other organisations					
Publications on policy issues					
Submit articles in the media					
Provide training/ Capacity building on Advocacy and policy influencing					
Provide direct services					

**7.1 What advocacy Approach/Strategy/ methods have you used in advocacy in the past?**

**7.2 Have you been involved in the use of any digital approaches in advocacy?**

If yes, what type?

<b>Digital Advocacy Tool</b>	<b>Tick (if yes)</b>
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Virtual meetings and events (zoom, google meet webinars and conferences, etc)	
Direct emails	
Direct phone calls	
Briefing materials	
Public position papers	
Social media engagements (facebook, twitter, Instagram etc)	
Audio visual materials	
Documentary and Visual skits	

**8. Please say a little more about the approach you consider most successful, or list other ways in which your organisation seeks to influence policy that were not mentioned above.-**

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**9. Please tell us which policy areas your organisation has tried to influence in your state or in the country in the past 12 months.**

- Rural livelihoods / Agriculture
- Urban poverty
- Education
- Health
- Housing
- Environmental / Conservation
- Women's issues / Gender
- Child welfare
- Labour
- Budget processes
- Economic (domestic policy)
- International trade and/or finance
- Rule of law / Justice / Human rights
- Governance / Accountability
- Transport
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Comment:-----

**9.1 In your opinion, which of these policy areas you mentioned above have you had most success in influencing? And why?-----**

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**10. In your organisation’s experience, what types of evidence are most effective when seeking to influence policy?**

Types of Evidence	< Not at all effective		3	Very effective >	
	1	2		4	5
Surveys					
Statistics					
Academic research papers					
Field reports					
Case studies					
Personal testimonies from beneficiaries					
Anecdotal / success stories					
Other (please specify) _____					

**11. Please say a little more about how you choose which type of evidence to use, and mention any other types not listed above.**

**12. What type of support would most help your organisation to influence policy? Please choose the three most important and number them from 1 (most important) to 3.**

Rank 1-3	Type of support
	Access to the latest thinking on how to use evidence to influence policy
	Best practice case studies Information on policy issues

	Support for more research (on policy issues)
	Training / capacity building (If so, which training would be most useful? _____)
	Networking opportunities
	Technical support on specific influencing initiatives
	Other (please specify):

**14. In your opinion, what is the single most important action that needs to be taken to improve the policy impact of your organisation?-----**  
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*In the final section, we would like to ask you a few questions about CSOs in general, not necessarily just about your own organisation.*

**15. Overall, how successful is civil society in influencing government policy in your state?**

- 1 Not at all successful
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 Highly successful

15.1 Comment: Why or why not?

**17. In general, what are the main barriers to CSO engagement in policy processes in your state? Please choose the three most important and number them from 1 (most important) to 3.**

Rank 1-3	
	CSOs do not have sufficient knowledge about policy processes
	CSO staff do not have sufficient capacity/Skills on Advocacy/ digital advocacy
	CSO staff do not have enough time

	CSOs do not have enough funds to do this
	Policy processes are not open to CSO engagement
	Policymakers do not see CSO evidence as credible
	Policymakers tend to be corrupt
	Other (please specify)

**16. Please feel free to offer any additional comments you may have, including any topics you think we may have missed in designing this survey.**



Education as a Vaccine