



Using Participatory Grant-making to advance **Gender Equality**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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NOTICE

This document is written as an ActionAid Nigeria document and can be used as an experience-sharing publication within the Nigerian civil society. The information hereafter relating to the project was retrieved from WVL-Nigeria project implementation documents and interview sessions with ActionAid Nigeria on the grantmaking process.

Prepared by:



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ACRONYMS

WVL	Women Voice and Leadership Project
LWROs	Local Women Rights Organizations
CBOs	Community Based Organizations

1.0 BACKGROUND

The demand for accountability, transparency, and collaboration in social change programming is increasing globally. At the centre of this demand is community engagement, which requires a paradigm shift in the processes and strategies of social change programme development and funding. This shift involves rethinking the distribution of financial resources for Gender Equality programming and the inclusion of women and girls at the grassroots in grant decision-making processes. The inclusion in decision-making is embedded in the concept of Participatory Grant-Making (PGM). While there is no global definition of PGM, Grantcraft – a service for foundation centre suggests that “participatory grant-making cedes decision-making power about funding decisions including the strategy and criteria behind those decisions—to the very communities that a foundation aims to serve.”¹ Within the framework of the project in purview – Women’s Voice and Leadership Nigeria (WVL-N) – these communities include the diversity of women and adolescent girls, especially organisations that represent and work in their favour, at the grassroots.

In Nigeria, the Women’s rights movement is relatively growing despite the national framework that still marginalises women and girls in decision-making processes. Unequal representation of women in politics and businesses in the public and private sectors is a current reality in Nigeria. Also, the non-domestication of the Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and poor implementation of policies that seek to protect the interest of young women and girls, continue to erode the gains of gender equality in the country (ActionAid Nigeria, 2021).

Although the women’s rights movement in Nigeria has benefitted from different streams of funding – especially international funding, there is a funding gap in addressing issues concerning gender and sexual-based violence, women’s (land) inheritance rights, and other harmful traditional practices². Furthermore, sub-groups such as females with disabilities, internally displaced women and girls, women and girls in conflict zones, and female sexual and gender minorities³ continue to be less prioritised in grants decision-making.

To bridge this gap, ActionAid Nigeria introduced the concept of PGM in the WVL-N project implementation to allow less prioritised sub-groups and organisations to have access to funding. This publication gives an overview of the WVL-N project, how PGM was applied within the project context, lessons learned (what worked well, and challenges), and recommendations (using examples of how challenges were addressed).

This publication is a product of the Deep Dive Nigeria Case Study, of the Women’s Voice and Leadership (WVL) program evaluation. The WVL program is a multi-country initiative to support female-led women’s rights organizations (WROs). The WVL program was announced in 2017 with the adoption of the Government of Canada’s Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP), with projects having begun implementation in early 2019.



¹GrantCraft, 2018– Deciding Together: Shifting Power and Resources through Participatory Grantmaking.

²For instance Female Genital Mutilation.

³They include female sex workers and lesbian, bisexual, and queer women.

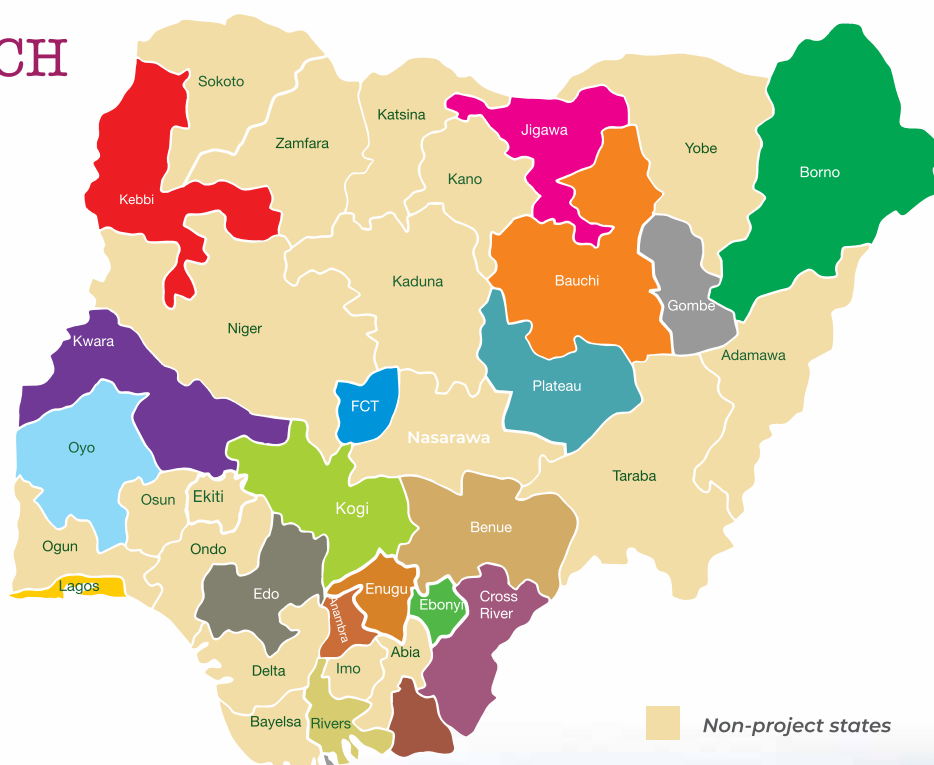
1.1 WVL - NIGERIA PROJECT

Starting in 2019, the Women's Voice and Leadership Nigeria (WVL – Nigeria) project is a five-year project funded by Global Affairs Canada as part of its Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP). The project aims to strengthen the capacities and support the activities of local and national women's rights organizations and movements that seek to empower women and girls, advance the protection of women and girls' rights, and achieve gender equality in Nigeria. Within the framework of the project, ActionAid Nigeria has applied PGM by establishing partnerships with some 118 women's rights organisations that have access to funds. This partnership allows them the flexibility of implementing priorities defined by them as women-focused organizations.

The project provides five funding streams and tailored capacity building support to partner organizations. In addition to the funds provided, partners have access to tools, resources, and mentorship opportunities, which further strengthen and sustain their financial, technical, and organizational capacity in advancing the rights of women and girls and addressing gender equality barriers more effectively. Additionally, the project supports feminist platforms at the state and federal levels for more effective networking and synergy in the advancement of women and girls' rights in Nigeria.

Since its inception in April 2019 and full commencement in July 2019, the project has funded the implementation of impactful activities around Gender-Based Violence, Women's Political Participation, and Economic Justice in the six geopolitical zones of the country. They include eighteen (18) states and the Federal Capital Territory. For more information about the project, please visit www.feministhub.org

PROJECT REACH



Akwa Ibom, Anambra, Bauchi, Benue, Borno, Cross River, Ebonyi, Edo, Enugu, Gombe, Jigawa, Kebbi, Kogi, Kwara, Lagos, Oyo, Plateau, Rivers States, and FCT.







2.0 PARTICIPATORY GRANTMAKING

Participatory grant-making is a deliberate attempt to cede power to the population or community that the grant is expected to support. It aligns with feminist principles of accountability, collaboration, transparency, and flexibility, which is at the centre of the WVNL-N project. Compared to traditional grant-making where a foundation/donor mostly decides the grant-use, the grantees, and the beneficiaries, PGM challenges the vertical (power) hierarchy in grant-making. As an organisation that works to dismantle power structures that create inequality in the society at best, and violence at worst, PGM is both a question of ethics and process in ensuring that financial assistance reaches communities and populations that have the most need.

In response to the funding gap faced by LWROs and to facilitate their effectiveness in the delivery of interventions, 64% of the total value of the WVNL Nigeria project was earmarked as Special Fund. This special fund is a financial support provided to the LWROs and their networks in the project states and those working at the national level, throughout the life of the project. These funds are designed to enhance the capability of LWROs and their networks to be more effective in delivering interventions on women and girls' rights thus contributing to the achievement of the WVNL Nigeria project outcomes.

The Special Fund is categorized into three: the multi-year granting to selected LWROs; the strategic innovation fund; and the strategic opportunity fund.



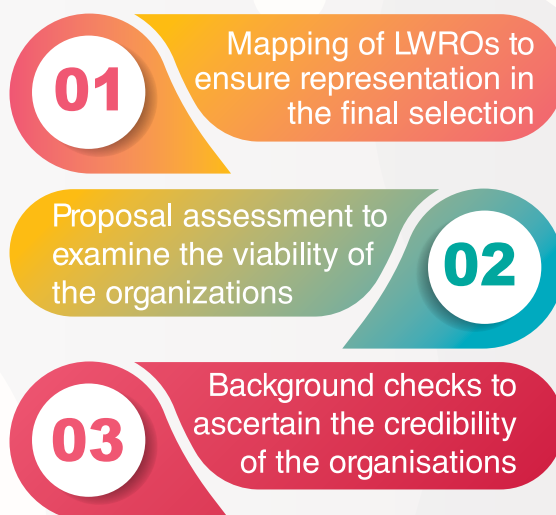
For the multi-year grant to LWROs, it was imperative to employ the PGM processes to enable financial resources to be equitably distributed and accessible to grassroots organisations that are unlikely to access financial assistance. The obstacles often faced by these grassroots organisations may include poor access to information about funding, limited capacity in programme development resulting in poor proposal development, or/and lack of legal recognition as it may be the case of most organisations serving sexual and gender minorities.

The following sessions describe how AAN employed PGM in the project implementation process. The two overarching PGM processes, included the selection of LWROs by AAN and the selection of Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) by the selected LWROs. Within the context of the WV-L-N, selected LWROs have a dual role in the WV-L-N project implementation. They are considered as representatives of the intended beneficiaries of the project i.e., women's rights organisations, and beneficiaries themselves. In their role as representatives, they are expected to identify their peers with a set of criteria detailed below, for technical and financial assistance. As implementers, they also have access to funding to implement projects that align with their priorities, however, guided by the ultimate project outcome – “increased enjoyment of human rights by women and girls and the advancement of gender equality in Nigeria”.



2.1 ActionAid Nigeria Selection of State Level Women's Rights Organizations (LWROs)

The process of selection of LWROs was in three steps, namely,



The steps are explained in details below:

01

Mapping of Women's Rights Organizations and Selection of a Pool of LWROs

The first phase of the selection process includes a national mapping of women's rights organizations and their networks. This mapping was done through a desk review as well as site visits and provides the project with a database of local women's rights organizations and their networks and movements in project states and national. This mapping supported all components of the project, including networking, but concerning the selection process, it provided a database as a starting point for engagement with LWROs and CBOs.

The selection of these LWROs was based on the following criteria>>>

01

The LWRO must have a physical presence in one of the project's targeted states. Note: for any LWRO which is present in multiple states, they will only be eligible to participate and receive funding in one project state. This is to ensure that a maximum number of women's rights organizations at multiple capacity levels can benefit from funding.

02

The LWRO must be registered with relevant government agency in their project state.

03

The LWRO must provide evidence of previous work (irrespective of scale or scope)

04

The LWRO must be known and accepted within the state/communities where they work

05

The LWRO must have a mandate/mission which aligns with the objectives of the WVL project.

02

Proposal Assessment

All organizations that met the above criteria were invited to submit a brief proposal (concept note) outlining their request for ongoing financial support. The organizations' proposals were assessed based on the following criteria>>>

01 Timeliness of submission

02 Relevance of proposal/issue to women and girls' rights

03 Proposal alignment to the WVL project goal

04 Budget alignment

05 Coherence/structure of the proposal

06 Demonstration of capacity to implement programming

07 Governance structure of the requesting organization

03

Background Check

Following the selection process outlined above, a background check was conducted on the selected organizations to ensure the accuracy of the information presented during the selection process and that the organization is credible, including a demonstrated commitment that aligns with the empowerment of women and girls. The evidence from the background check was used to reduce the number of organizations from 10 to 3 per state for AAN to proceed with the in-depth due-diligence assessment using the Partnership Assessment and Monitoring (PAM) tool.

Partnership Assessment and Monitoring: Following the selection process, and to conduct adequate due diligence in advance of selected organizations receiving funding, the project used the AAN Partnership Assessment and Monitoring (PAM) tool to assess each of the organizations. Consultants were engaged with the support of the WVL project team to conduct these assessments. The PAM approach involved a physical visit to the selected organizations in the project states.

The PAM process concluded the selection process of the LWROs that are now engaged in the project as partners in the project implementation, especially in their role as sub-grantors and grant managers throughout engagement on the project.



2.2 LWROs Selection of Community-Level Women's Rights Organizations (CBOs)

The selection process of the CBOs was led by one lead LWRO selected in each project state. The lead LWROs were selected based on demonstrable capacity to implement and manage resources allocated to the LWROs⁴. They are, however, accompanied in this process by the two other LWROs in the state and with back-end support from AAN to provide support to the CBO selection process. A total of 72 CBOs were identified and selected to receive multi-year grant using the same process as the selection of LWROs. To ensure a geopolitical balance within the states, the 72 CBOs were drawn from across the three senatorial zones of each project state⁵. The selection of CBOs started towards the end of year 1 and was completed within year 2 of the project.

The general selection criteria were:



CBOs that meet the above criteria were required to submit a short, simple concept note outlining their request for ongoing support. It was expected that these proposals will be assessed using the same criteria as above for LWROs. However, LWROs were allowed to develop additional or different criteria for proposal assessment in their state, subject to approval by the Project team at AAN – simply to ascertain compliance to the principles guiding the project.

Following the selection process, a light touch PAM/due diligence was conducted on the selected CBOs by the LWROs to assess the suitability of organizations to receive funds. The LWROs received technical assistance from AAN Project Team to undertake this due diligence process. One LWRO was given the responsibility of managing the granting process of 12 CBOs in each state. The selected LWRO, for grant management purposes, must be the one with the highest level of demonstrated capacity in grants-use and management. The Project Team provides technical support to the LWRO in each state overseeing the CBO grant management.

⁴ Ability to retire funds in timely manner, compliance to program and financial regulations

⁵ All Nigerian states are divided politically into three zones.

All grants allocated within the WVL-N project are based on priorities established through evidence to support ongoing or new programs. Examples of priorities are:

01

Addressing violence against women and girls, which include actions such as facilitating access to justice programs and services; creating awareness within communities and developing a mechanism to address these issues; advocacy for legislation/policies and their implementation; support for women and girls organizing themselves to address these issues (including safe spaces).

02

Women Economic Justice and Empowerment Programmes, which include actions such as supporting women's economic justice and empowerment, including through training, mentoring, and coaching; supporting innovative approaches to women-owned businesses; facilitating access to markets and credit, federating women businesses (cooperatives); economic/financial literacy; advocacy actions to government and institutions.

03

Women's political participation and leadership, which include actions such as efforts to increase women's political participation at all levels, capacity building for women and young female political aspirants (including pieces of training, mentorship, and coaching programs); advocacy actions targeting political parties and election management bodies for increased spaces and participation of/for women; media engagement.



The above actions were neither prescriptive nor mandatory. Other priority actions based on state context were eligible for funding.

Lessons Learned

01

Background check is an important process especially as it gives information from varied stakeholders about potential grantees' credibility, relationship, and ability to work with other actors in the state/location to a certain degree. It however does not provide complete/full-proof information about an organization. Our experience showed that despite the process of selection, a few organizations were able to slip through, but within the implementation period, these were identified and removed from the partnership.

02

PGM is an empowering process for local organizations. However, it is a slow and long process as thoroughness is required to ensure fairness is given to all applying organizations. For ActionAid, it took 9 months from mapping to the final selection to complete the selection process and sub-granting of LWROs.

03

For the initial selection of LWROs, over 400 applications were received and processed. Thus, this required a rigorous process of long and shortlisting of applicants to arrive at the final selection of LWROs that became responsible for granting CBOs

04

The responsibility of LWROs to sub-grant and manage other CBOs can be overwhelming for some that have multiple projects to manage, therefore becoming burdensome.

05

PGM allows for flexibility throughout the project implementation process. Therefore, the project management team, especially the project manager and the monitoring and evaluation team at ActionAid constantly adjusted and revised the M&E framework of each beneficiary. This was important to ensure grant compliance and adherence to the project's ultimate goal.

Recommendations

01

To ensure that vulnerable and marginalised groups have access to funding, it is important to avoid the traditional method of call for proposals. From our experience, some of the LWROs relied more on the selection process – using the criteria defined by them – and then supported the CBOs in the development of concept notes including project design, budgeting, and defining implementation strategies.

02

PGM should ensure that participating parties do not have responsibilities that surpass their capacity. For instance, within the framework of the project, there are three LWROs per state and ideally, only one LWRO is responsible for sub-granting to CBOs. Where an LWRO struggles to manage their beneficiary CBOs, the number of beneficiaries CBOs they manage is reduced and shared with other LWROs in the same state.

03

There must be consistent communication and monitoring. For example, to ensure continued transparency and accountability of LWROs to overarching feminist principles of the project, the Partnership Assessment and Monitoring (PAM) exercise must be regular and not one-off.





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