

VOICES4CHANGE

EMPOWERING ADOLESCENT GIRLS AND WOMEN IN NIGERIA

purple



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YOUNG PEOPLE AND CHANGE IN NIGERIA: Opportunities and Barriers



Executive Summary - August, 2017

ABOUT V4C

Voices for Change (V4C) is a £29 million programme funded by UK Aid, working to strengthen the enabling environment for gender equality in Nigeria. The programme targets young women and men aged 16-25 years old. It operates in four states in Nigeria: Enugu, Kaduna, Kano and Lagos and for some activities, at Federal level. V4C is a unique example of a programme applying social norms theory at scale and is addressing the structural barriers to gender equality, in particular, discriminatory and harmful attitudes, behaviours and social norms. The three normative areas that V4C seeks to change are women's voice and leadership, women's role in decision making and violence against women and girls.

V4C recognises that for young women to be better supported, change needs to happen at scale – not only at the individual level but also within wider society.

- At the individual level, V4C works with adolescent women and girls to provide them with the skills, knowledge and confidence to challenge discriminatory social norms and create change in their colleges, homes, workplaces and communities;
- At the community level, V4C works with men and boys, religious and traditional leaders, and networks of women and girls to create a critical mass of support for gender equality, accelerating change and shifting negative norms;
- At the social-structural level, V4C works to change discriminatory laws, create better policies, and direct assets towards women and girls, sending a message about changed social norms through political and legal structures.

Conceived as the pilot stage of a twenty-year vision, V4C began implementation in October 2013 and will end in September 2017.

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www.v4c-nigeria.com/resources/researchreports/
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Nigeria has a large, youthful population, with an estimated 50 million young people aged 15–35 in 2015. Nigeria's progress depends on the skills, energy and engagement of these young men and women, who display high levels of civic and political interaction with their communities.

The Voices for Change (V4C) programme in Nigeria aims to strengthen the enabling environment for gender equality, to build momentum for change, among young people, key influencers and enablers. The ambition of the programme, with young women at the centre, is to equip a wide range of young women and men to 'speak up and speak out' to challenge gender stereotypes and discriminatory social norms. Discriminatory social norms – such as those that shape views about women's roles in the family, community and wider society or the acceptability of violence against women – are major barriers to girls' and women's empowerment. V4C understands that in order to create a better enabling environment for women and girls, these social norms need to change.

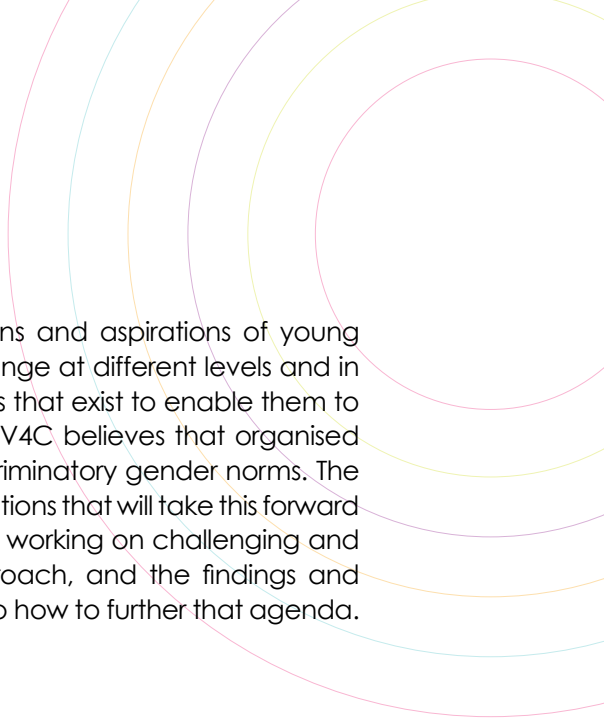
There are no quick fixes; social norms are difficult to change on an individual basis, because they are interdependent. Even if specific individuals change their attitudes, they may not change their behaviour because they feel constrained by the expectations of others. That is why V4C believes that social change can be prompted, sustained and accelerated more effectively when working on more than one level. This means taking a society-wide approach which targets those who maintain and support inequitable norms – such as men, boys, religious and traditional leaders, and older women – as well as the adolescent girls and women who are affected by them.

V4C believes that the supply and demand of research-based evidence can play a critical role in challenging these discriminatory social norms around gender – and for this evidence to have impact it must be understood and used by the people who have the power to make the change. Part of this approach is to ensure that relevant, high-quality research is available to contribute to fostering public debate, shifting attitudes, changing policy and programmatic interventions.

To this end, V4C commissioned two scoping studies on young people and leadership and their role in social movements, and two pieces of primary research: one a peer-led qualitative study and the other a quantitative survey using computer-aided telephone interviews to examine the theme of Young People and Social Change in Nigeria. In total, 1,283 Nigerian men and women participated in the studies conducted in all six geopolitical zones – 1,231 in the quantitative survey and 52 in the qualitative peer-led research. The peer-led qualitative research used innovative and rigorous methods, whereby young people identified and interviewed other young people about their perceptions and aspirations for change, and their ability to influence and create change. The young researchers also interviewed adult men or women that they considered influential in their communities. The quantitative research involved a nationally representative survey with respondents randomly selected to participate in a computer-aided telephone interview.

The findings from these pieces of research have been synthesised into an overarching research report. This report looks at young people and change in Nigeria, from both the perspective of young women and men, and from adults. V4C defines young people as aged between 16–25, and Nigeria's National Youth Policy (2009) defines youth as between 18–35 years. For the purposes of this report our research focused on young people aged between 18–25 for ethical and consent issues surrounding conducting research with minors.

This document is the executive summary of the full report, and as such offers a summary of the key findings and recommendations for future action. A digital version of the full report can be downloaded from www.v4c-nigeria.com/resources/researchreports/.



Through this research we sought to better understand the perceptions and aspirations of young women and men in relation to their ability to influence and create change at different levels and in different spaces in society; and to explore the barriers and opportunities that exist to enable them to influence, engage and participate in these social change processes. V4C believes that organised and aware young people can promote and generate change in discriminatory gender norms. The research will inform how to design programmes, campaigns and interventions that will take this forward and help build movement and momentum for change. V4C has been working on challenging and changing these social norms through a youth-led and youthful approach, and the findings and recommendations emerging from this research provide useful insight into how to further that agenda.

HEADLINE FINDINGS FROM THE RESEARCH

- Young people can, and should be, change agents in their own right, according to both adults and young people. Young women and men want to be part of changing broader societal issues, such as poor infrastructure and service provision, high rates of youth unemployment, and holding ineffective and unaccountable leaders to account.
- Young people express high levels of self-confidence in their own ability to make change happen. Eight in 10 describe themselves as a change agent – 79 per cent of young women and 82 per cent of young men. There is little difference between young women's and men's reasons for considering themselves to be a change agent.
- Young women and men in Nigeria are described as being creative, hardworking, energetic, innovative, industrious, enterprising, dynamic, visionary and resourceful, by both adults and young people.
- Young women and men have untapped potential in various spheres of influence in Nigeria, but primarily in business/entrepreneurship which 62 per cent of respondents think young people can influence and lead.
- There is a considerable gap in how young women and men perceive their contributions and barriers to influencing change, reflecting rapidly shifting gender norms. Young men are more likely to consider themselves to be civically involved, with 67 per cent of young men saying they are more active in groups than women, but only 28 per cent of young women believing young men are the most active. Young men are more likely to be leaders or organisers of groups, whereas women are more likely to be group members, treasurers or secretaries.
- Politics does not feature prominently as a change platform, but there is also large untapped potential for young people in politics, which 30 per cent think young people can influence and lead, but only 9 per cent say they currently are, and with 18 per cent believing they can be supported to do more. The research also found limited political activism among young men and women and a consensus that the political system is seen as constraining their ability to unleash the positive change they believe they can bring to the system.

Spaces where young people engage

Religious groups (typically based in young people's churches or mosques) are the most popular spaces for young people to engage. In the peer-led research, young people described how religious groups were an important tool for change at a variety of levels: (1) at the individual level in shaping personal thinking, development and mindsets about change; (2) between peers, by sharing advice and supporting each other; and (3) at a community level, by contributing to change in their local area.

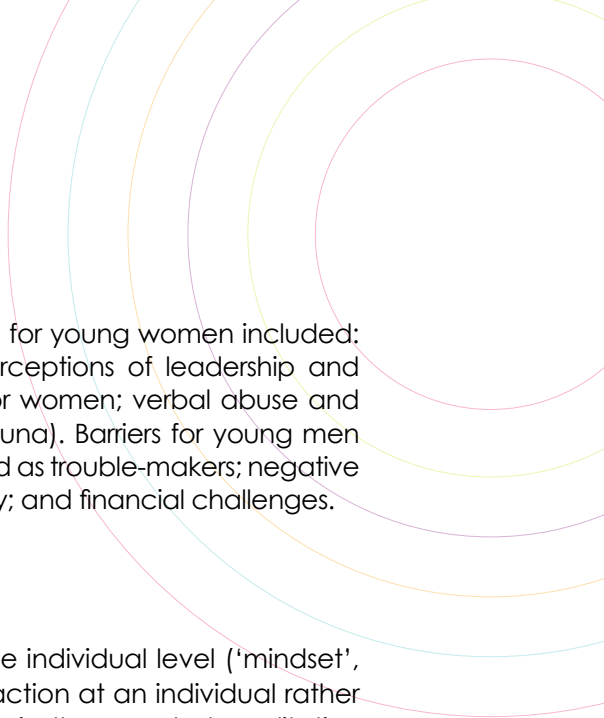
Where they exist, youth groups are another key space for young men and women to organise, although several young men, women and adults complained in the peer-led research that there were not enough youth groups. One 23-year-old female in Lagos, said, 'In Nigeria generally, there are no real youth groups, social groups, young people's group, apart from the only time I hear of groups is during the festive periods when they want to organise a party, that's all they do.'

Barriers – social and gender norms

Generational differences in perceptions about when and how young Nigerians can influence change act as a barrier to young people's ability to engage in change. This research finds that young people are in a period of transition to adulthood, where they are rapidly gaining skills, experience and knowledge. Both young people and adults believe that adults do not yet have confidence in young Nigerians' capacity to be change agents, largely due to their lack of experience. Young people fear not being accepted and adults' lack of faith in their capacity is undermining their levels of self-confidence to participate in change. A theme emerged from the research findings of some adults infantilising young people and not fully acknowledging their capacity to engage in change; for example, using the word 'children' when talking about change and young men and women. While young people may not yet have reached economic and social maturity, it is important that parents and other adults see young people as people who are growing, but with capability and agency. Adults recognised that they need to listen and support young people to influence change, including through mentorship.

Young people feel their voice is being constrained and they are excluded from spaces occupied by adults, particularly in politics, but also in spaces that should be youth-led such as student union organisations. Ninety-three per cent of survey respondents said that the older generation has made it difficult for the youth of Nigeria to aspire to leadership, and 92 per cent agreed that young people have not been given enough opportunities to hold leadership positions. Some young men and women observed that the lack of opportunities is because adults are unable to 'sacrifice' positions of power and may fear their own relevance if young people come on board. Their voices are still not heard at the community level; less than half (49 per cent) of young people believe they have a say in community decisions.

Social and gender norms also play a considerable role in holding young women (and men) back from influencing change. This research found a gap between perceptions and realities of young women's ability to participate in and influence change: many young women recognise the impact of gender stereotypes, but also question their validity. Young women's perception of whether gender is a barrier depends on their own experience and early socialisation, with some young women (and men) growing up to accept perceived value systems which prioritise 'big, strong, reliable' male leaders or role models, and 'inequitable masculinities' which emphasise the importance of male strength and energy required for activism and leadership.



Young men and women face different barriers to participation. Barriers for young women included: male perceptions of women's ability to influence change; male perceptions of leadership and certain spaces as being only suitable for men; lack of opportunities for women; verbal abuse and discrimination; fears of sexual harassment; and limited mobility (in Kaduna). Barriers for young men include: negative perceptions of young men in Nigeria; being stigmatised as trouble-makers; negative peer pressure; threats from authority figures; discouragement from family; and financial challenges.

Individual vs collective change

Young people are more likely than adults to talk about change at the individual level ('mindset', 'personal', thinking'). Young Nigerian men and women tend to take action at an individual rather than collective level by giving advice to peers – a common theme in the peer-led qualitative research, and also reflected in the findings from the quantitative research, with just under half (49 per cent) of young people who say they are a change agent giving advice to peers. Young people often advised peers or younger people on moral values or gave career or education advice, on a one-to-one basis. The responses of young men and women suggest that the focus on individual rather than collective action stems from structural barriers in the enabling environment, such as perceptions of when and how young people can engage in change, gender norms, poverty and inequality, policies and frameworks.

Social media platforms are a useful tool for influencing change at an individual level (i.e. for their practical and immediate needs), but rarely used for collective change. Just under half of all young men (44 per cent) and women (45 per cent) respondents use social media, with the most popular platforms being Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat. There is no noticeable difference between how men/women use technology to organise – a significant finding given the dominant discourse that women are disadvantaged digitally. Although relatively infrequent, a few young men and women use social media to advocate for collective change. Social media is rarely used as a tool for activism or engaging with a social movement by the young people and adults who participated in this research. Interviewees were not convinced about the long-term effectiveness of 'clicktivism' or digital activism. Adults and young people also expressed concerns, based on both experience and fears, over the risks of social media, including criminal activity, pornography and fake information.

Supporting young people

Most young people receive considerable support from parents and other adults to build their capacity to influence wider change. The most supportive adults are family members and friends, followed by pastors/imams and teachers.

The main ways that support can be given to young people are loans, provision of grants, training and mentorship, according to respondents in the quantitative survey. Twenty-three per cent of young men and 15 per cent of young women identified financial challenges to participating in change, with young people frequently saying they needed to meet basic needs before they could get involved in any kind of wider social change. Economic support through loans/grants/training would help reduce financial barriers to young people's active participation in collective action. Young people are particularly keen for adult mentors to help them acquire the necessary skills and experience to be able to engage in change processes.

Young people have a range of role models and influences, which includes people they interact with in their daily lives (family members), politicians who are perceived as bringing about change, successful public figures and celebrities (both Nigerian and foreign) who inspire them, and adult role models (teachers, college lecturers and religious leaders in their church or mosque). Young people did not mention traditional leaders as role models or influencers. Nigerian celebrities and social media personalities are highly influential in showing young men and women that change is possible.

RECOMMENDATIONS

V4C has always assumed that young people are receptive to new ideas and keen to shape the world they live in; we believe they are well placed, as the leaders, parents and teachers of the future to affect sustainable lasting change. Our research has confirmed this and given us further areas to work on.

The findings from our research have relevance for a range of different actors and we believe have the potential to stimulate wide-ranging debate around the role young people can play in supporting gender equality and social change more broadly.

Young people

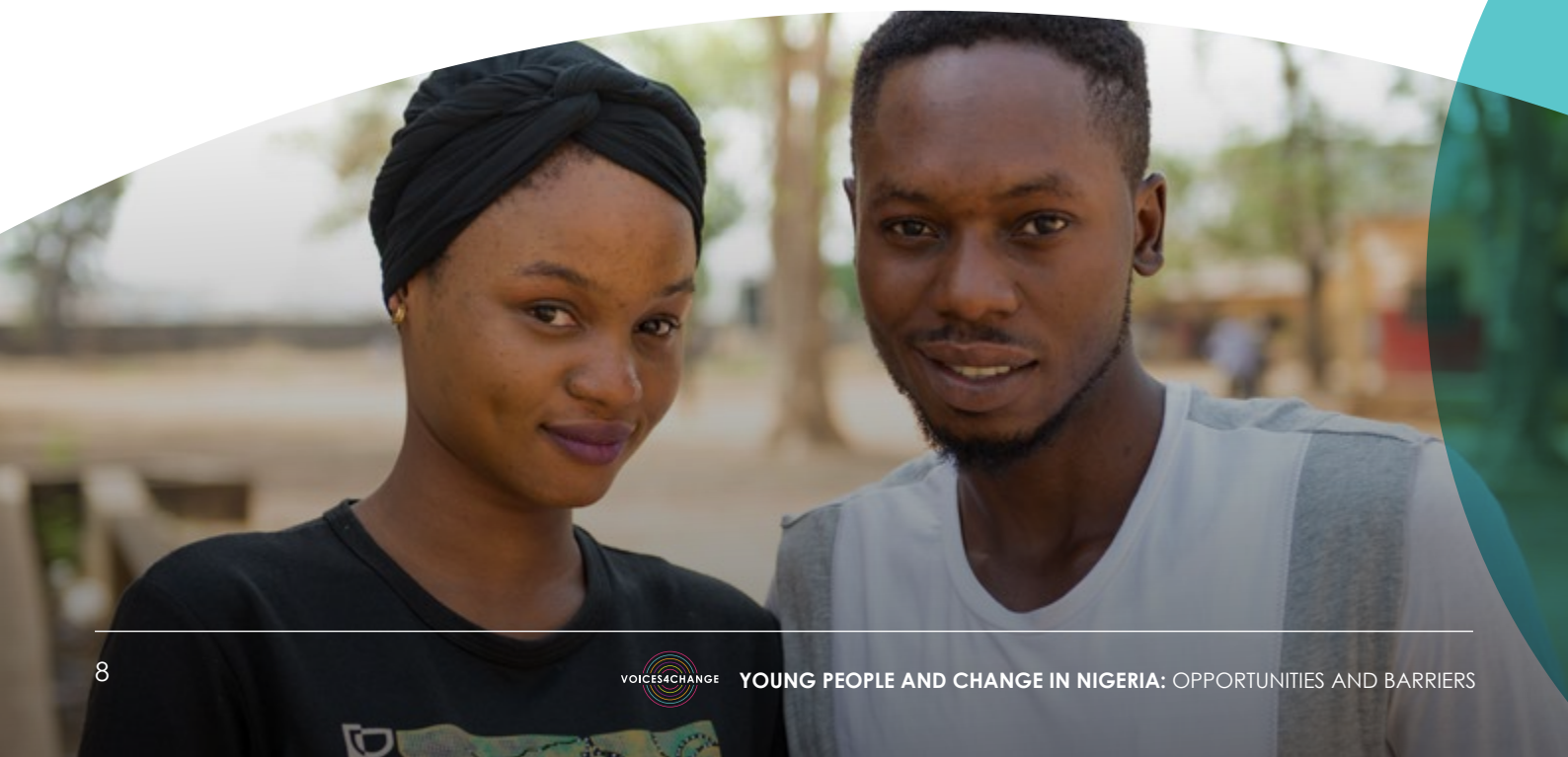
- **Build your capacity and strengthen your skills.** Explore opportunities to build your capabilities, knowledge, skills, network and agency; attend and participate in relevant programmes like the safe spaces programmes where knowledge and skills are developed, and young women are given equal opportunities for participation. Seek out relevant materials and resources that exist physically and virtually, and identify mentors and coaches to support your development.
- **Speak out, organise and participate** around issues that you are passionate about, and that concern you, either online or in person, in creative and productive ways. This might involve exploring the opportunities to join and play an active role in existing organisations in your area; negotiating for inclusion or create your own groups; seeking information, creating and joining relevant groups and political parties; discussing issues at community meetings or events; and publicising events on online forums like Facebook.



- **Young women and men should come together to promote gender equality**, equal opportunities and appropriate spaces for change to take place. V4C-supported Purple clubs are examples of groups that connect and build young women's and men's agencies and influence around gender equality. Similar groups of young women and men could be replicated in other places and institutions.

Parents and other supportive adults

- **Continue to support young people to achieve their potential.** Young people already receive considerable support from parents and other adults, and they view family members, as well as other supportive adults such as pastors/imams and teachers, as among the most influential and supportive people in their lives. Parents and other adults need to continue to support and encourage young people to be positive change agents.
- **Recognise potential.** While many parents and adults support young people, there are others who doubt their capacity and expertise. Adults need to see the potential of young men and women as people who are growing, but with capability, agency and voice. Young people's participation and influencing of change is a gradual progression as they learn through different experiences and activities, but they need these opportunities.
- **Provide mentoring and coaching.** Adult mentors are urgently needed to help young women and men acquire the necessary skills and experience to be able to engage in change processes – young people need to learn from adults about leadership and influencing skills, just like they would learn how to cook edikaikong soup. Supportive adults can provide invaluable guidance and mentoring to young people willing to increase their skills and confidence in this area. Time and empathy should be provided alongside opportunities for growth and development.
- **Create and maintain spaces for young people to participate.** Spaces need to be created for young men and women to participate, by giving them opportunities and inviting them to speak, challenging norms that require young people to be silent in the presence of elders, and stepping back from leadership positions so that young people can step in.





Programmes

Facilitate the increased participation of young people

- Civil society organisations and other youth-focused institutions should deliberately create spaces for young people to participate, and actively encourage and seek membership/involvement of young women and men, giving leadership opportunities to young people.
- Work with the spaces that young people use, particularly religious and sports institutions, to ensure they are supportive, inclusive, safe and provide opportunities for young people to influence change. Young women appear to be missing out on some of these opportunities due to constraining gender norms that do not view sports as an area for young women to engage in. This is an area that could usefully be expanded as a valuable space for young women's empowerment.
- Religious groups and leaders also play an influential role in shaping the gender norms that either encourage or hold young women back from participating in change. It is important that programmes seeking to improve gender equality work with religious leaders to reflect on how to disseminate positive messages about young women and leadership.
- Provide learning exchange opportunities for young people to interact with other young people in the global communities and with those that are leading and influencing change.
- Utilise peer-led research methodology where relevant, as an empowering methodology in and of itself and as a source of rich data about perceptions, attitudes and beliefs.
- There is a disconnect between what the government is saying and what it is doing. Young people need to participate and engage in advocacy work with the government, who has made a commitment to working with young people through the policy framework. The spaces for young women and men to engage with government on the key issues that they see as constraining their active citizenship need to be secured and facilitated.

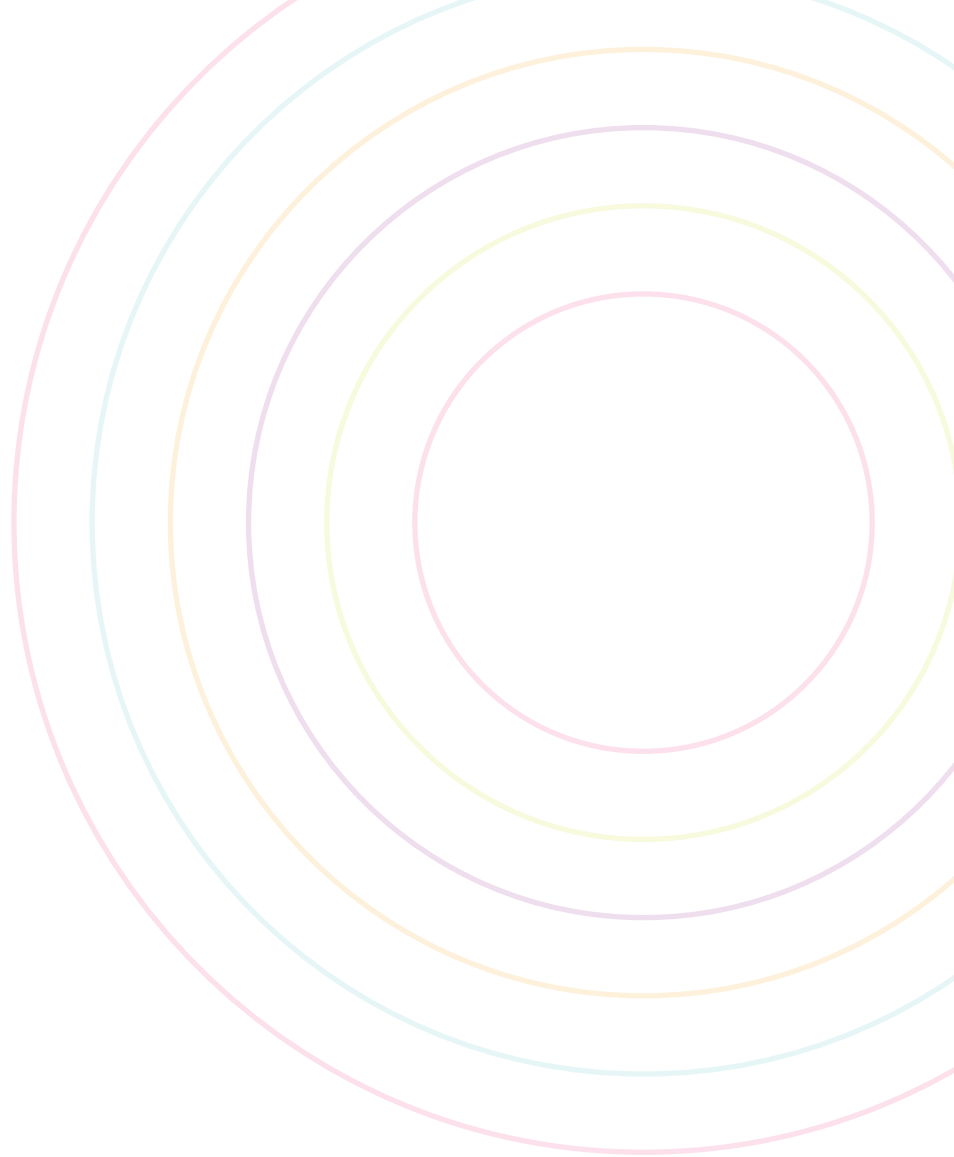
Build skills and capacity

- Organisations should offer and provide training opportunities for young women and men to build leadership skills and participate in programmes. The research identified generational tensions, with young people fearing not being accepted and adults' lack of faith in their capacity in turn undermining their levels of self-confidence to participate in change – a key issue to be debated and addressed through programmes and by influential individuals.
- Create intergenerational spaces and mentorship programmes for young people to engage and work in partnership with adults for change. This research has found that there are certain issues which both young people and adults prioritise and therefore there is greater potential for intergenerational collective action (e.g. infrastructure, employment and education), while other issues may be more suitable for youth-led action, due to young people placing greater priority on the need for change, albeit with adult support and mentoring (e.g. drug and alcohol abuse).

Support women and girls

- Showcase and highlight positive images of young women (and men) being involved in change and the differences they are making.
- Promote positive role models that young women and men respect, including using celebrities and media personalities.
- Create tailored and inclusive gender-sensitive spaces to facilitate the engagement of young women and address cultural and gender norms that act as a barrier, recognising the diversity of young women across Nigeria; for example, sports activities and institutions.
- Young men and women can work effectively together to create change – more engagement and participation between them should be encouraged and facilitated.







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A Research Report by the Voices for Change Programme (V4C) – Nigeria

August, 2017