

Promoting Gender Equality and Social Inclusion

In brief

We promote attention to gender equality and social inclusion in all of our engagement with civil society groups, the media and State Houses of Assembly, and in all of the issues and processes they work on. In all the states we work in, we also support partners to focus on some issues and form some partnerships and networks which specifically concern women, girls and excluded groups.

Respect and inclusion are among SAVI's core values. Senior management and staff are strongly committed to gender equality and social inclusion and ensure this is reflected in all aspects of the programme. Attention to gender and inclusion is explicit across all levels of the SAVI results framework, and enshrined in the programme's operations manual and all staff terms of reference.

We recognise that change towards greater social equality will be incremental and long-term, and that the challenges are immense. We value and celebrate small incremental changes in individuals and organisations when they occur – demonstrations of attitudes and behaviour that promote inclusion and greater equality. We recognise the huge significance of partners' own organisations and state governments themselves taking the initiative to promote aspects of social equality and embed this commitment within their own systems and structures.

Context

Nigerian cultures venerate age and respect – but also strongly uphold institutions which perpetuate inequalities. Exclusion and inequality are widespread – but in this highly diverse country, the nature of exclusion varies from state to state. Gender inequality is the most widespread form of exclusion. All other forms of exclusion, based for example on religion, ethnicity, indigeneity and disability, are themselves experienced differently and unequally by women and men, with women and girls frequently at the bottom of all variables.

There are many established non government organisations (NGOs), civil society organisations (CSOs) and community based organisations (CBOs) representing the interests of women and socially excluded groups across Nigeria, and a great deal of donor support for women-focused and disability-focused CSOs. Whilst many of these organisations do good work, they

often work in siloes and competition for funding breeds rivalry and distrust.

Many sector-focused, donor-funded development programmes in Nigeria engage in some form of gender mainstreaming but implementation tends to be weak unless built into the contract and incentivised by performance measures. Attention to gender and social inclusion is also often made the responsibility of one staff member or division and not effectively mainstreamed into the responsibilities of all staff. At the other extreme, some donor-funded development programmes focus exclusively on issues relating to women and girls or other socially excluded groups. Whilst most serve to highlight the problem – a positive step in the right direction – many struggle to integrate their solutions into the wider political realities of the local context.

Core principles

SAVI's promotion of gender equality and social inclusion (G&SI) is based on a number of key working principles:

- *No quick wins or one-size-fits-all solutions:* We recognise that promoting women's rights and addressing inequalities relating to ethnicity, indigeneity, religion, disability and other socio-cultural divisions is about chipping away at deep-seated attitudes, behaviours and prejudices. There are rarely low hanging fruit or quick wins – and no one-size-fits-all solution.
- *Inclusion as an entry point:* We generally use the term 'inclusion' to cover both gender equality and social inclusion. 'Gender' has negative connotations in several states where SAVI works. It is seen as a Western concept that seeks to challenge or even destroy Nigerian culture. Its use is counterproductive in the drive towards empowerment and equality for all Nigerian citizens.
- *Focus on gender and disability:* Our initial focus in discussions of inequality is nearly always on differences between women and men and disability. In the Nigerian context, these constitute accessible and acceptable entry points into far more contentious forms of exclusion relating to religion, ethnicity, indigeneity and sexuality, among others.
- *Support to local drivers of change:* Lasting change will derive from long term processes of influencing, contestation and negotiation within Nigerian society, and we see our role as supporting and strengthening these home-grown drivers of change.
- *Respect for diversity:* We give huge respect to the diverse cultures we are working with, recognise and value difference and diversity, and use language which is inclusive and sincere. We aim to recognise where people are coming from, go at their pace, and respect their position. Several, if not many, iterations of the same processes of building knowledge, understanding and relationships are often needed to build constituencies of support and move forward.
- *Practice what we preach.* As with all attitude and behaviour change, it is an area of our work where it is critically important for us to walk the talk and be the change we want to see.

Gender equality and social inclusion with SAVI staff

Leadership

The management and senior staff in SAVI are wholly committed to promoting G&SI and ensure this commitment is reflected in all aspects of SAVI's staffing and work. The National Team Leader and State Team Leaders are ultimately responsible for making sure staff attitudes and behaviour adhere to agreed values and procedures, and for taking appropriate action where this is not the case.

Inclusion at work

Respect and inclusion – 'everybody counts' – are among SAVI's agreed core values (see SAVI Approach Paper 1: Core Values) which everyone knows and takes seriously – and they are reflected in the following agreed behaviour:

- We demonstrate sensitivity and acceptance in all that we do and are particularly sensitive to gender and other factors of exclusion.
- We are tolerant and welcoming of others' opinions, views and beliefs.
- We appreciate and support each other's assigned roles and responsibilities.
- We encourage and help all to contribute ideas and suggestions.
- We believe in and demonstrate participatory decision-making and consensus building.

SAVI staff are recruited and their performance is appraised on the basis of demonstrating behaviour in accordance with agreed values.

G&SI are also taken very seriously in terms of achieving a balanced team – reflecting the ethnic and religious diversity of Nigeria, and a gender balance. The SAVI operations manual includes a number of provisions concerning gender equality and social inclusion which set out related office procedures and HR management arrangements, including provisions for paternity leave and childcare.

Staff responsibilities and technical support

Attention to gender equality and social inclusion is *part of the role and job description of all staff* and is regularly discussed, supported, reported and appraised. Leadership on gender equality and social inclusion within state programmes and our work with partners rests with the State Team Leaders.

SAVI has a *Gender and Social Inclusion Adviser* who is a member of the core Technical Advisory

Team. Her role is to provide strategic leadership, direction and support to state teams, the national team and directly to local partners where necessary. The Gender and Social Inclusion Adviser has trained all staff on gender equality and social inclusion, including gender analysis, gender mainstreaming, gender budgeting, and gender and inclusion advocacy skills. State teams have flexibility to request the Gender and Social Inclusion Adviser for specific inputs and support where needed at any time. These inputs are tailored to local needs, nurturing and following up interest and motivation.

State and national staff meet together quarterly in technical general meetings (TGMs) to review and develop aspects of the programme. To date, one TGM has focussed greater attention on gender, and another on inclusion/persons with disability – but every TGM and related quarterly reporting processes serve as opportunities for keeping G&SI issues in staff’s minds. These collective discussions bring the whole staff team to a common understanding of key terms, and provide an opportunity to discuss and reflect on strategies for engagement with partners.

Gender equality and social inclusion with SAVI partners

Partners and partnerships

In all states we support some Advocacy Partnerships (APs) working on issues focused on women and girls and/or excluded groups. Examples include maternal and child health, girls’ education and the rights of people with disabilities. In addition to this targeted work, we mainstream attention to equality and inclusion across all other APs and working processes.

Our approach to supporting and promoting gender equality and social inclusion is tailored to each state and to each set of partners. The nature and visibility of inclusion issues varies in each state, and partners’ understanding of and willingness to engage also varies greatly.

The initial ‘glass half full’ stage of the theory of change

The starting point for engagement on any issue – including those relating to gender and social inclusion – is SAVI state teams’ political economy analysis (PEA) at the macro level of the state, extending to analysis of specific sectors and actors. Staff make a conscious and deliberate effort to seek out the voices of women and other excluded groups in PEA and public dialogue processes, and to incorporate their concerns into programme thinking and design. With the support of external and local gender specialists, state teams conduct detailed situational analyses of the issues and the factors contributing to G&SI in each state, resulting in practical recommendations for SAVI and local partners. These processes of enquiry help state teams to find out about and understand existing initiatives relating

G&SI – including the sometimes powerful players and complex power relationships involved. They also help in identifying appropriate partners who have credibility with citizens in the state and commitment to collective action, and ways of building on existing momentum for change.

Support to partners

SAVI support to all partners – in civil society, the media and SHoA – starts with the process of Organisational or Partnership Capacity Assessment (OCA and PCA)¹. These self-assessments all include measures relating to gender and social inclusion, asking partners to assess their level of attention to gender and social inclusion on a descriptive scale from one to five.

In the early stages of the SAVI programme in any state, state teams themselves provide mentoring and support to advocacy partnerships, selected media houses and the SHoA on gender and social inclusion. Over time, state teams support partners to establish their own G&SI platforms, made up of a cross-section of partners and other actors who are interested and willing to engage more broadly on these issues. These G&SI platforms are usually made up of CS and government partners from SAVI-supported advocacy partnerships as well as other interested specialists and professionals from within the state. SAVI state teams gradually hand over the responsibility of mentoring and supporting other partners on gender and social inclusion to this group. Its members help each other to mainstream gender and social inclusion across all SAVI supported partnerships, partner organisations and other cross-partner platforms and networks. Additionally, some of these G&SI platforms take on their own advocacy issues drawing on baseline studies to identify key issues in the state, drivers of change and entry points to action.

G&SI capacity self-assessment tool

To support G&SI groups, we have developed a G&SI Capacity self-assessment tool². This helps G&SI partners to assess the capacity of the various groups they support, as well as their own collective capacity to provide support. As with all SAVI self-assessment tools, it serves as a basis for G&SI platforms’ own planning processes, and is designed both to build capacity and for monitoring.

G&SI group members use the tool to support partners to reflect on their attention to gender equality and social inclusion on the basis of descriptive benchmarks on a range of aspects of their work – laid out in a simple five-by-five framework. There are different frameworks for different kinds of partner – advocacy partnerships, media houses, SHoAs, as well as for the G&SI platform itself. The benchmarks progress on a simple and easy to remember qualitative scale – Aware; Permit, Facilitate; Promote and Institutionalise – roughly corresponding to the remaining five stages of SAVI’s theory of change. (see SAVI Approach Paper 3: Theory of Change.)

This exercise provides partners with a roadmap for building their own capacity. It reveals their strengths and weaknesses, opens their eyes to aspects of their functioning that could be improved through greater attention to gender equality and social inclusion, and raises their aspirations. Scores serve as markers against which partners can chart their own improvement, as well as allowing SAVI state teams to establish baselines and assess partners progress over the course of the programme.

On the basis of the gaps and priorities partners identify, SAVI state teams or G&SI platforms provide them with mentoring and capacity building support tailored to context and in response to demand.

Monitoring results

Commitment to improving gender equality and social inclusion is strongly positioned in the SAVI programme results framework across all three levels of results. Specifically:

- *Impact indicator 3*: Level of citizens satisfaction (including that of women and other socially excluded groups) with their ability to claim rights

and hold government to account through democratic channels.

- *Outcome indicator 4*: Cumulative number of demonstrable changes in policy and implementation by state governments in response to public demand where there is evidence of attribution to SAVI's approach, a portion of which reflect the voice of women and other excluded groups.
- *Output indicator 3.2*: Cumulative number of partnerships supported by SAVI (for demonstration) or by partners (for replication) under all five outputs progressively including the voice of women and other socially excluded groups i.e. permitting, facilitating, promoting and institutionalising their inclusion.

Partners use of the G&SI capacity self-assessment tool serves as the primary source of data for assessing progress against the Output indicator. Independent Citizens Perception Surveys and state team's own Results Evidence Sheets respectively provide data on the higher level indicators. (See SAVI Approach Paper 5: Defining and Measuring Results.)

Citizens, citizen groups, CSOs, the media and the State House of Assembly all play their part in shaping the first ever gender policy in Jigawa State

In July 2013, the Jigawa State Government approved a state gender policy – the first northern sharia State to do so. This effort was driven by the Jigawa State Government working alongside local civil society organizations, media, the State House of Assembly and development partners. Policy commitments are now being embedded in government sector plans, and media and citizen groups are monitoring implementation. This is a significant step change from the situation in 2009 when the SAVI programme started in Jigawa State. Whilst there were some CSOs already working on gender issues in the State, there was no gender policy and no civil society organisations lobbying for one – and the relationship between government and CSOs was characterised by mutual suspicion and mistrust. Over time, SAVI drew together a GS&I partnership. With SAVI support, G&SI partners gradually built their confidence and credibility in promoting greater inclusion in the State through a wide range of dialogue, media engagement, analytical and lobbying processes. When the Jigawa State Commissioner for Women's Affairs began to consider domesticating the national gender policy for Jigawa State, she reached out to the G&SI group to facilitate consultation processes. Building a constituency of support amongst traditional, religious and community leaders required careful, culturally sensitive, often behind the scenes negotiations and quiet, shuttle diplomacy. The gender policy was crafted well, with all goals in accordance with sharia law, which itself empowers women.

Kaduna State Government is working with the civil society Gender Working Group as a trusted partner

The SAVI-supported Kaduna State Gender Working Group (GWG), made up of strong state-based women's organisations with community level outreach, has established a very effective working relationship with the Kaduna State Government. At the invitation of the government they are now routinely participating in annual policymaking, planning and budgeting processes in four sectors – having commenced their engagement with mainstreaming gender into the Education Sector Plan in 2009. When the SAVI programme started in Kaduna State in 2008, there were a number of well established CSOs working on gender issues and women's rights, many with community level outreach. Their engagement in policy advocacy with

the state government was generally individual rather than collective, characterised by an oppositional stance, and relations between CSOs and the State Government were poor. The SAVI Kaduna State team brought together the Gender Working Group (GWG), uniting in a structured coalition, for the first time, all of the strong women and children focused organisations in Kaduna State. Over the course of time, their ability to present themselves with high capability and competence on the issues, and their non-confrontational approach, neutralised the government's prevailing negative impression of CS activists. GWG are now routinely bringing robust gender analysis into policymaking and planning processes, moving attention to gender issues from a token gesture into something actionable. This is leading to more gender sensitive government plans, and an increased focus on services for women and other excluded groups.

Disabled people successfully champion disability rights in Lagos State

In 2012, the SAVI-supported Lagos Civil Society Disability Policy Partnership (LCSDDPP) succeeded in influencing the Lagos State House of Assembly to pass the Special Peoples' Law on disability rights, as its first ever private member's bill – through robust evidence, skilful lobbying, behind the scenes informal influencing, and engagement with the media. Since then, LCSDDPP have worked as technical partners to LASODA (the Lagos State Office of Disability Affairs) which is the government office set up to implement the law, funded by the Lagos State Government. At the request of disability lobbying groups in neighbouring states, LCSDDPP is also providing mentoring and practical support to help them achieve similar objectives. This activity stems from identification by the SAVI Lagos State team of the Lagos State Governor's ambition for Lagos to recognise international standards on inclusion as an entry point for constructive citizen engagement. The SAVI team brought together LCSDDPP, made up of individuals and groups who had previously been working separately and with limited impact. SAVI assisted partners to work together effectively, strategize in a politically intelligent way, frame realistic demands, work with the media and elected representatives, and engage constructively with the Lagos State Government.

Practical tips and conclusions

- *On gender issues, let the men in!* Attitudes and perceptions begin to change in male dominated cultures when they can see examples and receive guidance from other men.

- *Be flexible, open and adaptable.* Look for windows of opportunity as they present themselves and areas where innovation can be introduced.

- *Political will and leadership:* In any organisation – whether CS or government or a donor-funded programme like SAVI – commitment from the top makes all the difference. Where possible, get the commitment of the top personnel to G&SI and ensure that they act as vanguards of inclusion throughout the programme.

- *Value and celebrate small incremental changes* in individuals and organisations whenever they occur. Moving from lack of awareness to at least some understanding of social inclusion is a major and important step for many local actors. We in donor programmes often work within high standards of inclusion. We need to recognise the long term complex nature of change, respect where people are at and not judge by external expectations.

- *Stand behind and support local movements for change.* It's important for donor funded programmes not to use their own targets to drive change on issues such as gender equality and social inclusion in ways that are neither embedded or sustainable. Stand behind and support local movements for change, brokering relationships and building skills which local actors can continue to develop after the programme has ended.

Endnotes

¹ savi-nigeria.org/resources

² *ibid*

SAVI's 'knowledge tree'

The State Accountability and Voice Initiative (SAVI) is a DFID-funded programme working in ten Nigerian states promoting a culture of constructive citizen engagement in responsive state level governance. Decision-making in SAVI is largely decentralised to state level, and state staff are supported and trained to be facilitators and mentors of locally driven change. Through providing behind the scenes support, SAVI is equipping groups of citizens, the media and state legislatures with the confidence and credibility to play their part in governance in politically smart and effective ways.

SAVI's Knowledge Tree depicts how the programme works. The roots are the core values that inform everything that SAVI does. The trunk is made up of four inter-related processes that give structure to all aspects of the programme. Left hand branches describe SAVI's working relationships with partners. Right hand branches concern internal functioning and relations with DFID.

This paper is one of a series explaining these different processes and relationships.

For more information, visit our website: www.savi-nigeria.org/approach



SAVI supports groups of citizens, their elected state-level representatives and the media to be informed, credible and effective agents of citizen voice and accountability, able to play their part in promoting responsive, accountable and inclusive governance.

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