

Supporting Social Media Debates About Nigeria's Oil Sector

THE PROBLEM

Nigeria depends heavily on oil—in 2018, crude accounted for 82 percent of the country's total value of exports, and overall revenue from the sector is the most important single source of government funds. Despite this valuable endowment, poverty persists in the populous West African country. It is therefore crucial that members of the Nigerian media, civil society organizations and the general public have access to sector data.

A few years ago these actors began to leverage transparency gains and obtain more data from authorities, but this information often came in the form of complex figures and dense language. What was missing was information presented in simple formats so that all citizens could understand it.

NRGI'S ROLE

There are nearly 100 million internet users in Nigeria. In recent years, social media has become an important means of simply and quickly conveying information about issues of public interest. NRGI set out to ensure that oil sector governance was among the topics fueling Nigerian social media.

NRGI provided support to several organizations that are pioneering ways to make resource governance issues more easily digestible and actionable. This support has taken the form of grants to organizations such as BudgetIT (which is followed by more than 165,000 people on Twitter) and capacity building training for staff of the Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI).

The Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) now regularly publishes reports detailing its finances and operations. Using NRGI funding, BudgetIT staff translate NNPC reports and other oil sector-related publications into easily understood infographics. These infographics have engaged citizens on social media (as well as through traditional outlets) while fostering transparency and accountability and informing public debate.

With NEITI, NRGI's media development team provided capacity building and curriculum development support to help create a framework for a social media influencers' capacity development strategy. NRGI supported NEITI in programming that helped 40 social media influencers to better understand the oil sector.



IMPACT

The hashtag #FixOurOil has become a digital forum in Nigeria for debates around government policy and sector governance, with much of the discussion initiated and informed by BudgIT and NEITI content. Hot topics in the last two years include the country's embattled Petroleum Industry Bill, petroleum product subsidies and controversial oil licensing deals.

Gabriel Okeowo, BudgIT's principal lead, says that "with NRGI's support, BudgIT has been able to reach over 5 million Nigerians via digital and physical channels to raise awareness of critical issues of transparency and accountability in the oil and gas sector."

Nigeria's Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) contacted BudgIT about infographics relating to audit remediation issues—the ICPC has indicated interest in prosecuting offenders, and has begun collaborating with BudgIT on other issues in the sector.

And with BudgIT's support, the NEITI trainees acquired skills for developing tools such as short videos and infographics that helped advance key messages from NEITI audit reports to their audiences. And the organization is providing its own 18,000 Twitter followers with more appealing and relatable content.

Yet challenges remain. As BudgIT and NEITI continue to leverage social media as a tool for greater accountability, they and others like them must contend with the related challenges of improving access to technology and protecting the civic freedom to use it.

"With NRGI's support, BudgIT has been able to reach over 5 million Nigerians to raise awareness of critical issues in the oil sector."

The Natural Resource Governance Institute, an independent, non-profit organization, helps people to realize the benefits of their countries' oil, gas and mineral wealth through applied research and innovative approaches to capacity development, technical advice and advocacy.
Learn more at www.resourcegovernance.org



Oil, gas and mining for development