

# **POSSIBLE WAYS TO ADVANCE SOCIAL JUSTICE IN NORTH EASTERN NIGERIA**

**A Case Study of Foundation for Societal Empowerment and Rejuvenation (FOSER)**

## **Strategies that Individuals and Groups Can Adopt for Advancing Social Justice in their Communities.**

### **1. Observance of ideal democracy that guarantees effective administration of social justice**

FOSER suggests with evidential precedents based on the study of some nations in several parts of the world, that democracy goes beyond forming political parties, contesting general elections and having a civilian government in power to profoundly embracing a system of government pre-eminently anchored on equality and social justice. Meaningful development is made when citizens' interests are equitably represented, and their needs and aspirations satisfactorily furnished. Democracy can be defined as "a deliberate and determined move towards the creation of a society bound together by shared sentiments and outlook. Beyond shared sentiments and outlook, equality and social justice are the heart of democracy. A successful democracy should be built on the foundations of social justice.

In a democratic society, the security of lives and properties are guaranteed including tolerance of the opinions and interests of others, impartial and objective service and the effective management and distribution of the country's economic and social resources. These basic attributes of a democratic society are compared with social justice which is the equitable distribution of resources, obligations and power to all persons in a society regardless of ethnicity, race, age, status,

ability, sexual orientation and religion, one would discover that one aspect is not farfetched from the other.

There are theories on different types of democracies which is often about its quality. However, in an ideal and good democracy that operates by the principles that allow for equality, greater participation, security and human development, matters of social justice will be readily resolved. Conversely, it means that democracy can be bad such as what may be obtainable in hybrid regimes with a lack of free and fair electoral competition, exclusive democracies where the autonomy of elected leaders is limited by powerful groups who dominate procedural processes or ‘illiberal’ democracies, where civil rights are partially guaranteed.

To successfully advance social justice, it is important that the individual or organization operates in a democratic society as this would promote the administration of social justice such as policy advocacy.

The Foundation of Societal Empowerment and Rejuvenation (FOSER) is currently advocating for democratic administration of social justice in the Northern part of the country, where politicians are taking advantage of the region's level of illiteracy, poverty and insecurity. It was observed and reported in the previous electioneering process how politicians are engage in vote buying, box snatching and funding youth to commit violence. In 2019 Bauchi State Senatorial by election was observed with high rate of vote buying, box snatching and political thuggery. Consequently, FOSEr endeavors to crosscut advocacy for electioneering and democratic social justice in every project they implement also enjoined the election of leaders based on credibility and competence who would in turn be responsible and accountable to the electorates. Educating the common

citizenry on the effect of election violence and selling off their voter right that can affect election of component and accountable leadership.

## 2. Examination of people's beliefs and habits

Due to religious, cultural and environmental conditioning, the reality is that individuals adhere to views they have been inculcated with and exposed to. These beliefs often have the potential to affect the way in which we work for social justice. Based on the particular social justice cause, there may be a need to change an ingrained or prevalent narrative to ensure inclusion and advocacy. The first step toward inclusion and advocacy is to take constructive action at home, at the grassroots. To develop into a reliable partner in a movement for social justice, it is a necessity for the individual or organization to engage in continuous introspection, be teachable, and be willing to expand their horizons. FOSER adopts this strategy in advancing the cause of social justice by teaching youth (educated and uneducated) to recognize social justice concerns and their repercussions, as well as encouraging diversity and inclusion both inside and outside of their own communities.

Through community stakeholders engagement with representation and priority to religious leaders and traditional leaders participation, FOSER is using the strategy to educate stakeholders on the importance to adhering to social and cultural justice within their local communities. When engaging with the traditional leaders, it is expected of you to respect their cultural heritage. For instance in the year 2021, FOSER team paid an advocacy visit to the emirs palace where We follow directives from the guards, they assess our dressing and for women to cover their hair while some were asked to stay behind due to indecent dressing from their view point, which is a sign of respect to the emirate tradition. we were instructed to remove our shoes and enter the palace by saying

“Salamaleku” meaning peace be with you. Immediately when the emir came in, we all stood up, he sat before we were asked to sit then, we sat on the floor. We were informed to avoid interjecting the emir when he is speaking.

### 3. Self-reflection and Education about social justice issues

Social justice is broad and delves into every aspect of human life and interaction. It might often be difficult to figure out how to become interested in anything. The most effective method to get started in advocating for social change is to become well-versed in social justice concerns, to be enthusiastic about the topic, and to study the implications and repercussions of permitting such issues to persist.

FOSER made great strides within a few years of its establishment because it developed its goals and mission around education concerning social justice issues such as promoting underprivileged youth and vulnerable groups of people to participate in meaningful development and impact on society through education, sports and socioeconomic empowerment. FOSER has helped, for instance, persons living with disabilities (PWD) to obtain a better grasp of the present situation of a problem, whether the problem in question is insecurity, voting rights, Gender based violence, poverty, and food insecurity.

### 4. Discover and align with local organizations

A community of practice with like-minded organizations can yield partnerships that will encourage new learnings, knowledge sharing and access to information. FOSER has aligned with many other civil society organizations (CSOs) that advocate for social justice, such as the Centre for the Advocacy of Justice and Rights (CAJR). FOSER also works together with newly formed CSOs that encourage the youth and women to be open and speak up regarding misconduct or violence in

their communities. Meet-ups are a valuable resource that community-based organizations may use to educate online communities about the social justice issue of interest.

## 5. Take positive action in communities

As an individual or a CSO, one way to advance a social justice cause is to stay informed about the community of interest. Community issues can be learned by watching the news, reading newspapers, gleaning information from social media, and even listening to podcasts. Staying active in your community of interest is very important and can be done by drawing attention to the plight of that community or the particular situation of concern. Engaging with elected officials at the local and state levels who can weigh in on the issues affecting the community and providing an avenue for redress is also necessary.

## 6. Harness the power of social media

Owing to the proliferation of functional tools offered by social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, it is now possible to share messages with large and global audiences without ever having to leave a particular location. The hashtag #EndSARS had its origins on Twitter and the protests that followed in 2020 show how social media could be harnessed to advance social change. Social media platforms provide helpful techniques to maintain a focus on vital issues while still being structured. Social media can be integral to collaboration, supporting community building, awareness, and cooperation in a variety of ways such as experience sharing and submitting articles.

For instance, followers within our platforms ask for opinions and guidance on how to approach social issues. Example, rightsholder engaged the public on twitter space sessions that was facilitated by a team of legal practitioners on the topic Conflict Resolution among the youth and

law enforcement agencies, the series of sessions was interactive with a lot of questions and seeking clarity on issues surrounding conflict resolution. Consequently, we observed a continuous increase of followers engaging on our platforms.

## 7. Attend/Organize demonstrations and protests

Demonstrations, protests, and rallies are effective ways to advance the cause of social justice. During rallies and demonstrations, however, it is important for the individual, CSO, rightsholder and general public to exercise prudence so that the wrong message is not conveyed. Even though this resource document is written in the aftermath of the waves of the Covid-19 pandemic, protests have continued across different countries, hence it is important to take precautions. FOSER has participated in demonstrations for social justice that took place in Bauchi metropolis and ensured that the voices of the rightsholders (less educated, and PWDS) voice were heard. People or organizations interested in becoming motivated social justice leaders may benefit from participating in these events because it provides an opportunity to hone activism and public speaking abilities. FOSER has exemplified this giant stride in its organized series of peaceful demonstrations in the past months. and is set to engage in more of its kinds in a continuous bid to enlighten the uninformed in the community.

Rules or guidelines for engaging in demonstrations as handed down by authorities need to be adhered to, as well as, taking the necessary health and safety precautions, including always wearing a mask and maintaining a safe distance from other persons.

## 8. Donations/Funding

Every group that works for the greater good will be grateful for financial assistance via funding and donations. These are better assessed when individuals engage in partnerships with other causes that align with their passions and thus contributing to the overall goal of alleviating the social justice issue. FOSER has supported the process of the release of prisoners and donated seed capital to them, distributed vitamin C tablets to young children around the Birshi and Bayara communities of Bauchi, and engaged in several medical outreaches. These are just a few among other ways it has donated to advancing the cause of youth empowerment.

## 9. Get involved with politics through civic engagement

Encourage members of the public to support candidates running for elected office at the local, state, and federal levels, and to sign on to political platforms and advocate for policies that will help advance the candidate's and community's cause and beliefs. A chance to work toward equality may also be found in educating the public about their perspectives on various social justice concerns. For instance, FOSER has repeatedly encouraged the public to canvass and promote awareness on empowerment and social rejuvenation, and to distribute information on internet platforms on issues of concern to society.

## 10. Make your voice heard on local radio

On several local talk radio shows, listeners are encouraged to phone in and provide their perspectives on contemporary news events, particularly matters pertaining to social justice. The participation of local influencers in radio conversations and the dissemination of their ideas to a large audience should be encouraged. FOSER made use of encouraged the use of local radio stations in the dissemination of her their ideas. Examples of publicity outreaches regarding social

justice advocacy that FOSER embarked on were via notable media channels within Bauchi metropolis, particularly, Albarka Radio Station. In addition to this, using the “live” feature of social media platforms (Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook) for audio and video-based publicity is gaining increasing popularity.

FOSER used a mix of English and Hausa language local dialects to ensure that the message is passed and well understood by all categories of people in the communities.

### **11. Investigate what’s happening at local colleges or universities**

FOSER sensitized encouraged rightsholders to match their values and focus with those of students in higher institutions and to participate in supporting their efforts. This strategy may help to set an outstanding example for students by encouraging them to begin campaigning for social justice causes both on- and off-campus.

### **12. Support artists, writers, local social media influencers, and activists who speak out against injustices**

FOSER advocates to support and align with popular musicians, authors, social media content creators, and other artists who are dedicated to social justice. By sharing their work on social platforms, they are helping them gain the recognition they deserve and promote the cause they are championing.

### **13. Be kind, understanding, and compassionate**

Encouraging tolerance and compassion for one another as individuals may be challenging and at those times it may be easy to lose focus of the team effort or social justice endeavour. FOSER encourages participants on how to cope with feeling anxious in the presence of other people and



encouraged them to empathize by thinking about one another's situations and the challenges they may be facing.

At times, an understanding of what a tolerant, peaceful approach entails is all that is required. For individuals and the community for that matter, it is important to understand the nature of peaceful approaches and behaviours in their respective settings, and learn how to develop, refine, and utilise those approaches in practice.

#### 14. Legal advocacy by pro bono (volunteer) lawyers and human activists for less privileged victims

Most instances of brutality are only perpetrated against downtrodden masses and uninformed persons. This calls for the need of voices for the voiceless such as lawyers and human rights activists to lend a helping hand in ensuring social justice is achieved for the less privileged in the society whose fundamental rights, are being trampled upon.

### **ABOUT FOSER AND VOICE PROJECT – “KNOW YOUR RIGHTS TO FIGHT POLICE BRUTALITY”**

The Foundation for Societal Empower and Rejuvenation (FOSER) was given a grant by Voice to implement the “Know Your Rights to Fight Police Brutality Project” in consortium with Kings Leodews Initiative (KLI) and Initiative for the Liberalization of Physically Challenged People in Nigeria (ILPCPN). The project aimed to reduce police brutality by at least 20% within Bauchi Metropolis through increased knowledge and proper application of civil rights by youth with a knock-on effect on the rest of society. FOSER employed different strategies to achieve the following goals:

- Conduct context analysis to identify perceptions of the general public regarding police brutality in Bauchi State.
- Organize engagement programs to sensitize uneducated youth on civil rights.
- Organize sensitization programs to train uneducated youth on how best to react to possible police brutality.
- Facilitate “Civic Education and Reaction to Police Brutality” lectures.
- Facilitate a “How to Conduct an Ethical and Peaceful Protest” training program for both educated and uneducated youth in order to avoid negative and deadly fallout associated with the #EndSARS

protests.

- Stage at least 3 peaceful demonstration rallies to press home the objective of the project.

The project targeted 550 individuals who would be the direct beneficiaries of the project while a total of about 20,000 youth were to be reached indirectly through the project.

## A FINAL WORD

Social justice advocacy provides society with equal opportunities to solve its problems. Advancing social justice connotes moving social change forward or improving development and quality of life in communities. It is important to note, that based on the political climate and social need of your selection passion, you may need to employ other strategies in advancing social justice. One thing remains important, as you decide on the approach to embark on: you have to consider the entire the community of interest (and its stakeholders) into the change process.

## Reflection Questions

1. Who is most affected by the problems (Rightsholders & Stakeholders) you have identified and are working on, and how do these Rightsholders lead strategies and decision-making in providing solutions?
2. How will you as an individual or organisation passionate about social justice evaluate your strategies in advancing social change in your community?
3. Do you think there are any policies at the local, state, and national levels affecting or inhibiting your efforts to advance a cause? How do you intend to go about it?







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