



# Training Manual

## Adaptive Leadership Training for Change Agents in Nigeria



2023

# Foreword

This training manual is designed to fit the cultural and political landscape of a high-power distance culture. A context that is hierarchical, depends on authority to get things done, supports rank and titles, and privileges bureaucracy may lean more towards technical approaches to solving challenges. The challenges of the world we live in is constantly evolving and becoming more complex. We have been experiencing how corruption is rapidly becoming an endemic condition, the rising spike of violence against all persons, community clashes, conflicts, insurgency and insecurity, economic downturn, nepotism and cronyism, and the deterioration of health systems and education.

It is time we start thinking outside the box, release ourselves of any form of restraint, be it personal or institutionally bound that stifles progress on issues we care about. It is a great realization that the challenges we face are not just any kind of challenge, but are existential in nature, and requires more voices, approaches, and insight. As a people who are committed and determined to make our communities better, we need to reconsider how we make sense of what is happening around us, beyond the usual way, demonstrate persistence in our approaches, and courageous accept what we have not tried before or what we may not be comfortable with.

The Youth Alife Foundation (YAF) appreciates the support of the Association of Leadership Educators, Anisah Ari, PhD Candidate, Leadership Communication, Kansas State University, Dr. Brandon Kliewer, Associate Professor, Civic Leadership, Kansas State University and the YAF team, Dr. Udy Okon, Kingsley Atang, Apapa Victor for the development of this manual. It is hoped that this manual will be used to support the complex work we do, as leadership is a linchpin to all the intervention targeted to make Nigeria better.

Dr. Udy Okon

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# Introduction

Adaptive Leadership is all about mobilizing for change and disrupting the status quo. The world is evolving, and so are the complexities that continues to befuddle us all. The pandemic, community crisis, political instability, financial upheavals, and social issues that borders on respect for the rights of the people are all indicators of a volatile, ambiguous, and complex situation. When we look around us, there are myriad adaptive work to be done, and this requires a new way of thinking.

Heifetz Ronald and Marty Linsky are the proponents and authors of the Adaptive Leadership Model and have been working with organizations to support the work of collaborative, iterative and provocative responses to complex challenges. They suggested two frames to look at challenges; as either technical or adaptive. When your car continuously gets broken, you seek a solution to fixing it, that is a technical solution. However, when you spend time considering all the reasons why the car continues to get broken. Probably because the driver is always late and drives the car carelessly with too much pressure, basically considering what you know and what you might not know, and seeking solutions to prevent the re-occurrence of a broken car.

Adaptive Leadership in summary is:

- Considering the root cause to challenges you experience in the work you do, your organization, in groups or even in your personal lives

- Showing up in a chaos or challenging situation, intentionally recognizing how, what and where you fit into the puzzle
- Collaborating with others across factions, ideologies, conflicts, and resistance, and still focus on the greater good.

Tell you what, Adaptive Leadership is about being intentional; intentional about working with others to solve challenges. This involves your capacity to mobilize, influence, build and manage social capital, work with what you know and what you might not know or be certain about, discard ways of working, values, beliefs that are no longer working or serving a purpose, courageous to try out the unknown and probably fail, try again and fail, until you find a solution that is sustainable. We have heard of the saying that, if it is not broken, then do not fix it. This is contrary to the practices of Adaptive Leadership Model, which is constantly seeking out ways to improve and develop an already existing system, while also interrogation who the system is benefitting and who is not. Developing a mindset that is always interrogating the status quo, curious about what is not working and why, and what is working, and how might we improve it, is the linchpin of adaptive work. Making progress on issues we care about in our communities is how we purposefully reinvent the system to work for the greater good of all.

Think about an issue in your community. Despite so many efforts, it still seems to be persistent. You are at a loss at the situation and on what to do. Adaptive Leadership provides a model that might help through a process that might be messy but provides useful tools to support this messy process to yield beautiful outcomes. The process recognizes that it takes time, but every step leads to somewhere, and most likely an aspired destination.

# Purpose of this Manual

Nigeria is facing a lot of challenges in its governance & leadership that has concomitant effects on socio-cultural, economic, and political stability of the country. Since the move to democracy in 1999, there has been stable transition of government, but poor translation of democratic practices to the wellbeing of its citizenry. There has been unprecedented levels of insecurity that is currently threatening the integrity of Nigerian's sovereignty, unemployment on all-time high, impunity to corruption, deteriorating health care, poor quality of education-with high dropout rates.

This is what the proponent of Adaptive Leadership termed as “wicked problems” which cannot be addressed by quick fixes but requires an adaptive approach. This is different from the traditional ways of engaging with challenges, where expert advice is privileged, decisions are made based on hierarchy or title, but a process that prioritizes creativity, collaboration, inclusion, courage to try the unknown, and be honest to discard what is no longer serving a purpose.

This manual is developed to support the process of understanding what it means to do this kind of tough, complex and lingering societal issues, and this is the adaptive work. It is hoped that after an engagement on the process, individuals and groups will reinvent how they tackle challenges and be equipped to make progress on issues they care about through a reflective process and self-correct.

## **Course Guide Day 1**

### **Purpose**

Participants will become oriented on course objectives, schedule and norms. This session will also provide opportunities for participants to get acquainted with each other to support active engagement, and reflect on their experiences as change agents. Participants will consider what motivates and sustains their efforts, and mentally interrogate why they do what they do, how they have accounted for success, and what they might possibly do better.

### **Activities**

This session is to set the tone for the training experience, participants will:

- Acquaint with the facilitation team and the other participants.
- Engage in “Complexity Huddle”- open conversations on what is working, what is not working, based on leadership style, organizational culture, institutional barriers, and their processual factors.
- Establish course objectives and norms for engagement & participation.

## **Objectives**

By the end of the session, participants will be able to:

- Identify and recognize who they are, what they have accomplished so far, and how.
- Learn from personal and other's experience how they might re-strategize make progress on issues they care about.

**Duration-** 30Mins

## **Reference Documents**

- Course Overview
- Session Guide
- PowerPoint Presentation
- Complexity Huddle Work sheet



## Facilitators Notes

### Day 1

Session Objectives	Activities	Materials Needed	Time Frame
Introductions	<p><b>Facilitators &amp; Participants</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome &amp; Introduction</li> <li>• Session Objectives</li> <li>• Participants prepare self-descriptions &amp; post on chat(virtual)</li> <li>-Name, what I hope to get out of this training</li> <li>• Establish training engagement norms</li> </ul>	Power point slides with instructions for activities.	<p>10mins</p> <p>5mins</p> <p>5mins</p>
Identify challenges you face in your	<b>Complexity huddle:</b>		

<p>communities e.g implementation of the National Youth Policy (<i>what, how, when, where, whom</i>)</p>	<p>Participants work in groups to talk about the challenges</p>		
<p>Adaptive Leadership Model &amp; Practices</p>	<p><b>PowerPoint presentation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distinguishing Technical problems &amp; Adaptive challenges</li> <li>• Living in disequilibrium (<i>what is essential versus expendable</i>)</li> <li>• <i>Observe, Interpret &amp; Intervene</i></li> <li>• See collaborators, don't do it alone)</li> <li>• Q &amp; A</li> </ul>	<p>Power point slides</p>	<p>30mins</p>

<p>Modelling the Practice of engaging in Adaptive Work</p>	<p><b>Exercise- Creating Your Challenge Navigator</b></p> <p>Participants work with challenges identified and start engaging with each other on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why is this challenge important to us?</li> <li>• Why is it lingering?</li> <li>• What have we been doing to address it? And how?</li> <li>• What might we do differently?</li> </ul> <p>Leadership style, Culture, Institutional factors. (Process &amp; Context)</p> <p><b>Report Back in Plenary</b></p>	<p>PowerPoint with activity instructions. Share template that can be used (Challenge Navigator Template)</p> <p>Memo how participants are engaging(<i>process</i>), listening skills, empathy, making space for others, managing divergent views, mutual respect, honest inquiry &amp; listening, critical reasoning, big picture orientation (<i>focus on the thorny issues or root of</i></p>	<p>20Mins</p> <p>20mins</p>
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		<i>the problems, problem solving skills, how progress is made).</i>	
Reflection	<b>Participants report back on:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What they have learned from the process</li> </ul>	Zoom chats, Verbal reporting, Notes	10mins
Closing			

## **Adaptive Leadership Model & Practices**

### **A) Distinguishing Technical problems & Adaptive challenges**

Technical problems are quite different from Adaptive challenges. Technical problems can be treated with technical knowledge and expertise for example, when power in your house goes off, and you look around, and your neighbor's power is on, then we may assume that your circuit is faulty. This can be fixed without many hassles because there are known solutions. When a doctor is conducting a heart surgery, there is a clear and known approach to a successful process. Technical problems may be solved by applying expertise, a defined process or way of operations or structures of an organization. However, Adaptive challenges are usually tough, thorny, persistent, complex, and multi-faceted. It requires a change in people's beliefs, values, mindset, priorities, and loyalties. Have you honestly ever asked yourself why you are not making any progress on a particular issue you really care about? What are those practices, beliefs and mindset that you hold onto, are used to, or loyal to, and probably deeply entrenched in your national or organizational culture, and institutional procedures? Thinking and acting on the possibility of seeking and mobilizing new discoveries, relinquishing certain entrenched ways of knowing and doing, and been accepting of losses may support a process of making progress on tough issues, and thriving within evolving complexities. It is interesting to know that some challenges can also present a combination of technical and adaptive element. Think about the impunity to corruption in Nigeria, the authorities continue to arrest those embezzling public funds, freezing their bank accounts, and even confiscating their properties. However, these actions did not curb the issue, which has deeply eaten into the fabric of the nation and has almost become a culture. Citizens aspiring to hold positions of authority,

so they can also have their own share of the “national cake”. This is a challenge that has been lingering for decades without any tangible nor sustainable solution. Guess what, this kind of challenge may be fixed with a combination of both a technical and adaptive solution. In addition to expert/authority intervention through arrest and repossession, this challenge would also require changes in deeply engrained practices of” chop make I chop”, people willing and committed to say no to bribes, a shift in mindset that these resources belongs to Nigerians and for the development of the country, speaking truth to power, and a culture of shaming for such acts even when the perpetrators are directly related to one, a close friend or boss. All of these speaks to loss, and are we ready to experience such loss for the greater good of the country and for future generations?

The table below provides an illustration of what Technical and Adaptive Challenge is:

Kind of Challenge	Problem Definition	Solution	Locus of Work
Technical	Clear	Clear	Authority
Technical & Adaptive	Clear	Requires Learning	Authority & Stakeholders
Adaptive	Requires Learning	Requires Learning	Stakeholders

Fig 1: *Distinguishing Technical & Adaptive Challenges- Heifetz & Linsky (2009). The practice of adaptive leadership: Tools and tactics for changing your organization and the world. Harvard business press.*

## **B) Living in Disequilibrium (what is essential versus expendable)**

Adaptive work requires helping people navigate through uncomfortable and disturbing situations, deciding what is expendable and what is essential, as progress is sought on specific issues. In such situation, one might experience conflicts, pressure, tension, anxiety, confusion, even fear of losing something dear. Lets consider efforts made to change repulsive social norms in Nigeria, and the level of resistance from the those who feel or anticipate loss. What are their fears? Why is a change disorienting for them? Why would they feel disturbance on something that would benefit 50% of the population of the country? It is not the fear of change of course, but fear of loss. What might they lose? They fear that a change in social norms that supports equality and equity for all gender in both public and private spaces might cause the men to lose certain privileges like their authority as head of household, monopoly of leadership positions, culture of tolerance for domestic violence and other forms of Gender Based Violence, and their abilities to subjugate women and girls as is common in any patriarchal society. Changing such beliefs, values and practices is adaptive work and may be the most sustainable approach to addressing this challenge. The passage of laws, like the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act(2015) is a technical fix to address and curb the prevalence of violence against women and girls, it can serve as a deterrence. However, does it really change deeply entrenched practices, beliefs and values which people may be loyal to as a culture, and might have existed for over a century.

Clearly these are tough issues that requires tough conversations, and within such environment, there is bound to be distress. The whole aim of adaptive work is not to distress people, but to draw people's sense of responsibility to dong

right, and making the right choices, beyond what their dearly held customs, norms, and job descriptions. This kind of work most times feels like you are taking one step forward and two steps backwards, and may be very daunting. You have to be open-minded to allow for new discoveries, deviation from already established plans, and be courageous to deal with losses, as new conditions emerges and the challenge gets a different kind of complex.

### **C) Observe, Interpret & Intervene**

The current cash crisis in Nigeria as a result of the introduction of the newly designed notes portends a lot of challenge for the citizens. People cannot access their funds in banks because the new notes are allegedly in short supply or diverted by the elites. The people are angry and have resorted to the street in distress, vandalizing banks and cash dispensing machines. The hardship experienced is unprecedented, as people cannot purchase gas for their vehicles, purchase groceries and other essential needs.





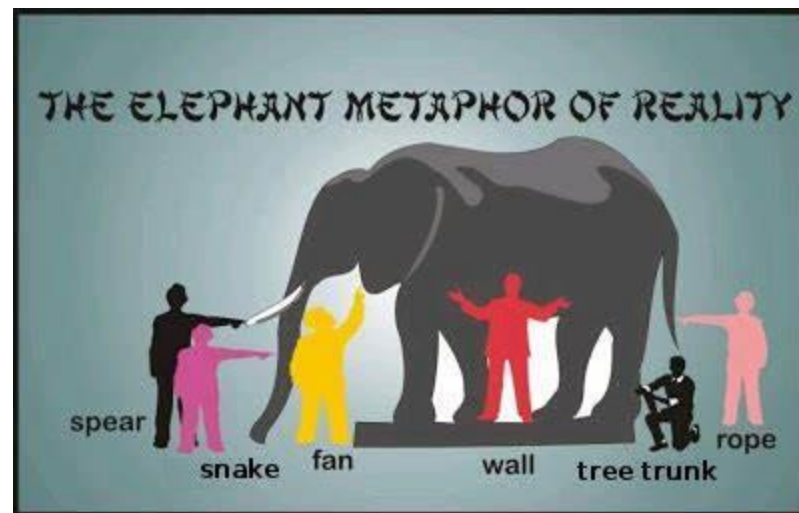
*Fig. 2: Vandalized Bank in Nigeria*



*Fig 3: Citizens queueing up for Gas*

There are lot of explanations for these challenges, as people are keenly observing and making interpretation based on the level of information they have access to, the level knowledge of the situations, and how they process these events. Some people are of the opinion that it a deliberate attempt by the current government to ensure there is scarcity of cash in the hands of individuals to avert voter buying in the 2023 election. Some other interpretation is that the government is using it as a strategy to punish those who looted the public funds to be stuck with the old series of Naira. Another line of opinion is that the government did not plan effectively and clearly was not ready for the launching and transition of the new naira notes.

This is a clear example of how people observe and interpret differently, which is often informed by their past experiences and unique perspectives. How is the lens we wear when we observe affect what we see? Is it driven by emotions, like this is how a condition is affecting me, therefore I choose to or unconsciously isolate other views and perspective and be rigid with my interpretations. It is just like the case of people who are blind folded and touching an elephant. They would give different interpretations on what they touch, depending on what they feel and sense.



*Fig 4: The Elephant Metaphor*

In doing adaptive work, one needs to really dig in for different interpretations about what they are observing. During this process, you may need to remove yourself from what is happening and observe from a distance. Imagine you are on a dance floor, where the music is playing and people are dancing, for you to be able to make sense of what the different interpretations of what is happening on the dance floor, you would need to get to higher ground to see the whole dance floor. This is what

“getting on the balcony” illustrates. You get to the balcony, observe patterns, occurrences, who is talking to whom? Who is responding? Who is not actively dancing and who is? What alliances are required to support the attainment of your organizational vision? How might you engage with the legislators to take the National Youth Policy seriously? What are the factors that should be in place for an appropriation of budgetary allocation to support the effective implementation of the policy?

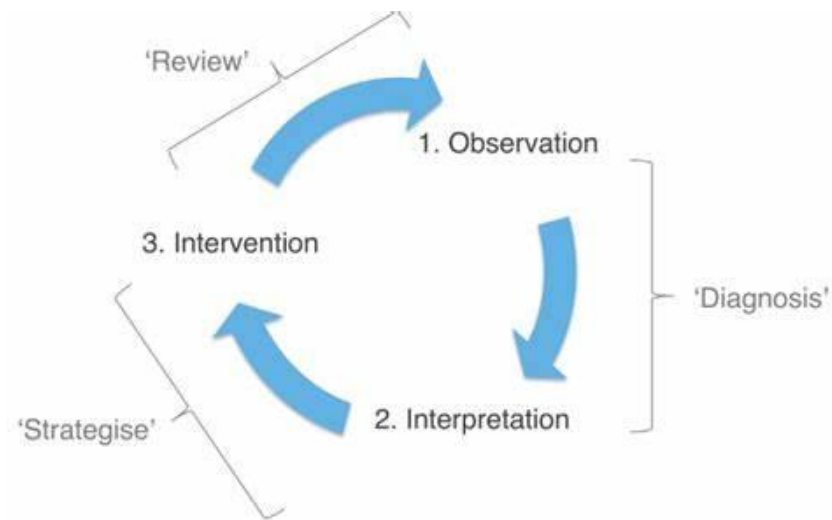


Fig 5: The adaptive work process

The whole essence of the need to observe, interpret and intervene in adaptive work is to ensure that conscious effort is made to avoid jumping into *interventions* or actions without having time to ask ourselves if our explanation of what is happening is

correct, and if there are alternative explanations to what we are observing and interpreting. When intervening, it is critical to ensure that the voices and perspectives of others are considered for contextual relevance and appropriateness. Adaptive work requires multiple interpretations and perspectives, even when it makes you feel uncomfortable. That is a prime skill for any leader that wants to thrive in complex, uncertain and unclear situations. According to F. Scott Fitzgerald, *“the test of first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposite ideas in mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function.”*



#### **D) Seek collaborators (Don't do it alone)**

Adaptive work requires efforts that contributes to systemic shift across policy and practice, in both macro and micro spaces. As described above, when people resist change, it is because they fear loss (loss of a way they are used to knowing and doing, loss of the status quo that works for them, like values, beliefs, practices and structures). There is a saying that “there is power in numbers”, and “only a stick of broom cannot sweep a floor, except a whole bunch.” Sometimes, doing this work feels lonely, and one might even get ridiculed for thinking and acting differently to enact change for the greater good. This can be dangerous too, particularly if you act alone and heroic, as you clearly become a threat to those facing disturbances, distress, discomfort, attributed to potential loss they fear, as a result of the work you do.



*Fig: 6: Walking Alone*

Please note that even people who applaud you for being courageous, encouraging you to continue to do the work you do, and even walking the walk with you, present a dangerous situation for you. They might not have the full persuasion you have, and commitment to all the way, and might just be waiting at a safe angle to see if you fail or sink. During the legislative process towards the passage of the Gender Equal Opportunities Bill in the National Assembly, a few legislators showed support for the Bill and despite contestation against the Bill, they stood their ground, considering how the passage of such law would benefit the country. After several engagement with other legislators to get a good number in the house to pass the Bill, there seemed to be encouraging support and canvass for it. However, at critical stage of the passage, only two out of over 20 of the legislators showed up, and it felt like a ruse. The lesson here is be intentional with your choice of alliances, and be smart enough to know when seek help beyond your sphere of alliances. As you see new alliances and manage existing

collaborators, you should also be able to discern when your beliefs and practices stand in the way of progress. The truth is most times, it is the source of the beliefs and practices that you might be loyal to, and not the beliefs and practices. Where did they merge from, or passed down to you from? You grandparents, parents, close friends, or even bosses.



*Fig 7: EndSARS Campaign*

In the same vein, think about those who genuinely share your passion, as well as committed to sharing the dangers and risk involved in such adaptive work. The #EndsSARs campaign demonstrates to an extent what it means to work with a collective and shared purpose. The not to young to run campaign also evidences how groups can exercise agency, despite differences



in ideology, ethnicity, perspectives and values, towards a common goal of the institution of spaces for younger Nigerians to be part of governance.



*Fig 8:Not too young to run campaign*

## **Course Guide**

### **Day 2**

#### **Purpose**

Participants move from deep reflections of technical and adaptive approaches to addressing challenges, to diagnosing an adaptive challenge. This session will provide opportunities for participants to think through a challenge they are seeking to make progress on. This would include thinking through a process of making sense of what is happening and seeking ways to address the challenge. Often, the solutions are not clear nor visible, and may require new, unfamiliar or uncharted, seemingly tough and confusing. But with determination, persistence, perseverance and commitment some of the fogginess may dissipate, and solutions become clearer.

#### **Activities**

Participants will:

- Rehash the learnings from day 1, making sense of what it means to their work.
- Go through a presentation on building adaptive culture through, “Diagnosing the Adaptive Challenge and the political landscape.
- Define a way forward on a select adaptive challenge. Working in groups to develop an action plan.



## **Objectives**

By the end of the session, participants will:

- Understand the culture and political dimensions of the adaptive challenge they are seeking to address.
- Identify and recognize who are their collaborators(allies), oppositions(resistance), their agenda, and how losses and success might be negotiated.
- Develop an action plan that defines a way forward on a select adaptive challenge.

Duration- 1.5hr

## **Reference Documents**

- Course Overview
- Session Guide
- PowerPoint Presentation
- Action Plan Work sheet

**Facilitators Note-**

**Day 2**

<b>Session Objectives</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Materials Needed</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>
Reporting on reflections	Plenary reporting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What made me uncomfortable?</li><li>• What stood out for me?</li><li>• What was the light bulb moment?</li><li>• What would I do differently?</li></ul>	Power point with prompts	30mins
Building Adaptive Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Diagnose the Adaptive Challenge</li><li>• Diagnose the political landscape.</li></ul>	PowerPoint Presentations	30mins
What if? What Now?	Design effective intervention	<b>Group Exercise:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Defining a way forward</li></ul> -Project a template and populate based on inputs from participants.	30mins

Reflections & way forward	<b>Plenary, chat reporting on:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What we can do differently and how</li> <li>• Expected results based on the above</li> </ul>	Power point with prompts	10 mins
Closing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confirm agreed actions and reporting.</li> <li>• Final statements</li> </ul>		



### **A) Diagnose the Adaptive Challenge**

A logical approach to any challenge is to seek to understand it first, considering its background/foundation, different perspectives, how was this challenge addressed before? What worked and not worked? What might be done differently? The common way we use the word “diagnosis” is in medicine, when identifying a disease from its signs and symptoms. In this instance, we are looking at an adaptive challenge, with multiple faces and layers, and with solutions that may be beyond our routine way of thinking and responding. This may be uncomfortable and disturbing, as a default way of thinking might be, *“let’s get done and over with this challenge”, “we have wasted so much time talking about/through this already, we have other things that require our attention”, “The solution is obvious here, lets close this conversation”*. Adaptive work is a process, a tough process that prioritizes the means to an end, more than the end itself, because it is in the means(process) that mindsets are changed, what is not working is

identified, recognized and discarded, what is working is taken forward or reinvented to fit the context. The relational elements involved contributes to building a community of shared values and vision as people interact, build relationships, demonstrate critical listening skills, honest inquiry, empathy, tolerance, resilience and ownership for both failure, losses and success.



*Fig: Diagnosing a challenge*

Have there been situations that seemed to persist, despite all the expert inputs, guidance and knowledge in your communities? This is an adaptive challenge, and may mean that, there is a disconnect between the solutions proffered and the values, beliefs and practices of the context where that challenge emanates from. The 14-year process that led to the passage of the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act was met with a lot of hurdles, around culture and politics. In this instance, values, beliefs and practices were tested amongst the citizens and particularly the legislators who perceived the Bill presented as threat to an already established cultural arrangement of women subjugation and high level of patriarchy. Clearly, there are some disturbances in an already existing and persisting social order, which may cause some loses if upended. If the group pushing for this Bill had depended on the authority to solve the spike in violence against women, and change repulsive social norms, then we would have been a long way from progress. Gone are the days when we did not know better, and kept complaining about those in authority to provide answers and solutions to the challenges in our communities, thus, making decisions on issues affecting us, without our voices considered. In dealing with adaptive challenges, different and infinite factors must be considered for any tangible and sustainable outcome. That is why it should be an inclusive process, with diverse voices, a good representation of the population affected, and we go into this process intentionally open minded, to gain the balcony perspective.



## **B) Diagnose the Political Landscape**

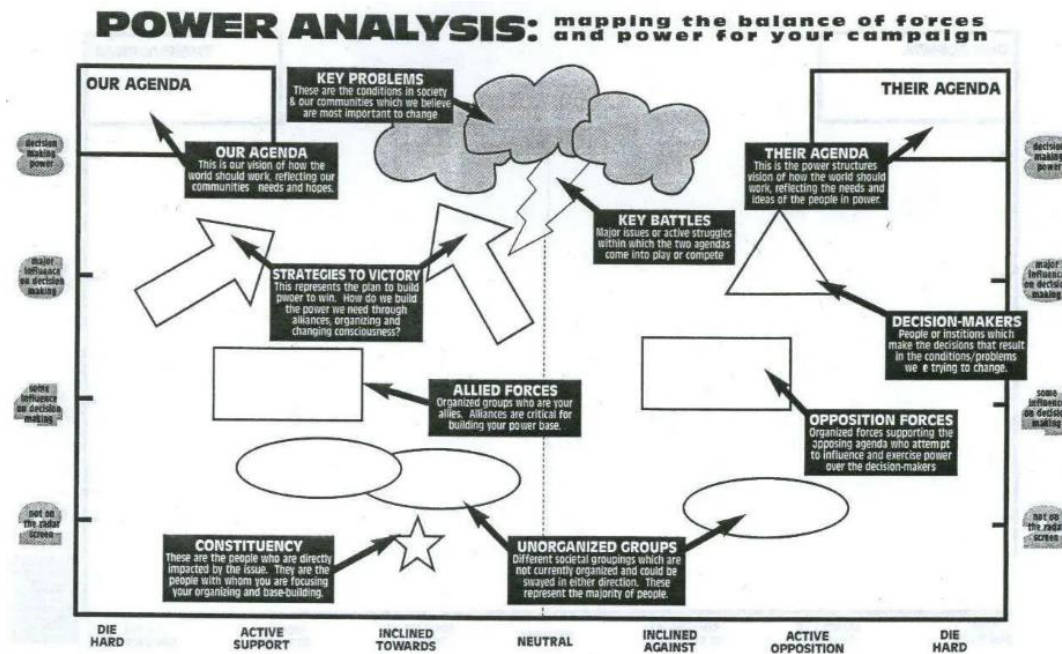
The first thought to this is knowing who your stakeholders or constituents are, and to really know what their needs and interest entails. You might have to do an analysis to understand and meet such diverse needs, which would help you take the right steps towards mobilizing effectively. It takes having a conversation or listening to someone talk on radio or TV to have a inkling about how they think or process things. They say action speaks louder than talk, but sometimes we must understand how and why people think they way they do to understand their actions. We have lived so long in conditions that justifiably, might have us doubting what politicians say and actions they take. But these groups are not from outer space, they are products of the society we live in and also share our cultural and political concerns. Having conversations with these same humans(politicians), we realize that they also have issues that they contend with, working across factions, having heated deliberations in private spaces and openly in the house of assembly(congress), acting in both overt and covert ways, and negotiating through wins and losses. It is hard to constantly be in that position, but it is also worse with the citizens bearing the brunt of the implication of decisions they take on our behalf.

So, what is your play here as concerned citizens, working to contribute to the development and progress of your communities and the society at large? You seek to understand the political landscape intentionally and strategically to make sense what is happening, why it is happening, and how you might intervene(observe, interpret, intervene). Politics is not just within and amongst those in power or authority in government, but also present within organizations, where there are people in positions who authorize how processes and structures must be operationalized, and this differs across organizations. When working with different groups to form coalitions, they come into the mix with their idea of what the challenge might be, how they are affected by it, varying level of interest and commitment, power and influence, and specific aspired outcomes. All of these might create a working climate that is complex and tough, and requires answers on:

- i) What values or beliefs drive their actions or decisions they make?
- ii) What are they loyal to, and for what? (Persons, culture, institutions)
- iii) What are their fears and what are they scared of losing as a result of the aspired change? (Position, status, resources, control, self-image)
- iv) What social capital do they have that can further the interest of the group?



In addition to knowing those working with you on an adaptive challenge, it is also critical to know those who are not(foes, resistance). This is essential to understanding how to manage such opposition, so it not a surprise at a critical time, and even been attentive to opportunities to turning such opportunities into ally. Who should you be talking and who is not? Who are both your opposition and allies talking to? What are their agenda, and how might it affect yours? How might we leverage on their actions or inactions? What opportunities for aligning for a collective agenda, that might speak to losses and success?





### **C) Designing Effective Intervention**

Interventions do not just get effective, they are deliberately designed to be effective. This may mean trying and failing, and failing, and trying again. It is all inherent in the processes, that leads to a designed intervention that works. The how, what, when, why and for whom is critical to any design process. It starts with the observation and interpretation of a situation or a challenge, and it is based on what one surfaces at this stage that informs the quality of the intervention. We often use the word “evidence based approaches and interventions” in the third sector, and this is logical for relevance, appropriateness and impact. However, how often do we make decisions that are influenced by instincts, hierarchy, ideologies (religion/culture) and status. It is critical to recognize and understand where we are making decisions from and why. In dealing with complex issues like policy formulation, approval and implementation, it takes a lot of critical thinking about what is happening around us, why it is happening, who is affected and how they are affected. The brain is processing all of these, making sense of it and calibrating in ways that proffers creative ideas that is informed by intellect (know-how). However, there is another part of us, that considers, the human relationships and values necessary to take these creative ideas forward. This is where critical empathy, inclusion, participation, compassion and motivation comes in, prioritizing human challenges with a human face and

can be described as thinking from the heart. This can be taken further by adding another to form a triad, and it is thinking from the gut. This is a part of us that instills the impetus, courage, and boldness to take the risk essential for making progress on tough, uncertain and unclear challenges. How might we work with all three parts, knowing that one may not be dissociated from another, except we intentionally isolate a part. This is where the process of adaptive work starts!

Just focusing on the use of one part may lead to problematic solutions or outcomes. Nigeria is great in putting together an incredible team of experts to develop policies that seek to address most of the existential issues. However, taking this expert developed work further to translating into meaningful endeavors in the lives of the citizens is a non-starter. The Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act, passed since 2015 has not been used to convict anyone. Nigeria is a signatory to the the UNSCR 1325, but we are yet to see women represented on the peace and security discussion table. The first attempt to introduce a youth policy was in 1981, and then finally passed in 2009. Now we are, are saddled with the struggles of transforming those beautiful statements and commitments meant to support one-third of the nation's population into meaningful outcomes for the youth. Clearly, there is a disconnect from the triad of -brain, heart and gut.

Key factors to consider in designing an effective intervention that combines creative ideas, compassion and courage are:

- Must be ripe enough to meet a critical mass of local urgency: Is the pain of the not addressing the issue palpable that if not handled would be worse conditions for all affected? Is everyone who is supposed to be on the working

team/coalition of this matter motivated and courageous to tackle the challenge? This question will help you answer timing appropriateness, and corresponding strategy that speaks to other connecting and underlying factors.

- Is the challenge framed in a way that that is clear, specific and relatable to the stakeholders needs and interest? Do they think they have stake on the issue based on how it was communicated? If people feel or are convinced that the challenge speaks to their fears and concerns, they will be committed to the cause and possible outcome. In determining how to frame a challenge strategically, the needs and interest of the stakeholders must be considered. Do they want to be affected by data first or, do would appealing to their consciousness work best? What language would ignite resistance or not? The VAPP Act was formerly, Violence Against Women Bill, but due to contestation by key stakeholders, it was revised to the VAPP Act. This new title was instrumental to the broad acceptability and passage of the Bill into an Act.
- Where do you find yourself in the puzzle?- If you are leading a group or adaptive work in the community, it is important to understand the picture the people paint of you. This is evident in the role you play, and how you embody the values and beliefs that drives the work you do. Are the groups you are working with familiar with your expertise and place in the community work? Are they so familiar with you that they can predict how you will respond to events or ideas? While it is important for the people to be able to state confidently that they know who you are and what you can do, it is also important that you get unpredictable to create space for innovative ideas and more participation. This may require you to sometimes step back and let others lead discussions, or other initiatives. Silence also is powerful and an act of

intervention too, as it creates vacuum for others to fill. But that does not mean you are entirely detached! You are purposefully listening, observing and making meaning of what is happening.

- **Manage both allies and resistance:** We all have a propensity to lean more towards those who agree with our ideas than those who do not. However, it is crucial to also seek ways to map and understand the voices of the resistance. Such information will help you build strategies, re-strategize and design interventions that is effective. It will also help you understand how the larger system of people will deal with the challenge. The Gender Equal Opportunity Bill had a lot of resistance and allies, but the group working to get the Bill passed did a mapping of the resistance, existing and potential allies, and this has supported the development of a workable and realistic strategy to advance with the work.
- **Keep the work at the center:** Adaptive work is inherently risky, fraught with uncertainty, loss and discomfort, and this may cause avoidance of a process that may be unknown to them or new. People are not afraid of change but what might be a loss to them through the process. Key questions of how might this benefit me? What might I be required to forgo for this change to happen? As someone leading adaptive work, you may need to always wear the hat of honest curiosity to decipher how and why the change may constitute some disturbances and concern for the stakeholders. For some it may mean discarding old ways of working, positions/titles, reputation, resources or even close friends or colleagues. How might you consider these are integrate how to manage such situations in your strategies and ways of engaging?. Usually, recognizing and coming to terms with these process challenges is important to support such individuals(resisters) navigate such apprehensions respectfully. Their concerns and fears are valid and should be

treated as a part of the collective work towards adaptive solutions. It is also crucial to continue to seek ways to expand your allies, so that you are not burdened with just a huge population of resisters.

## **Conclusion**

In the work we do, which is no doubt a very complex one, with multiple faces across education, health, peace and security, gender equality, water, sanitation, leadership and governance, it is critical we continually empower ourselves and others to make progress. This may require more optimism, realism and pragmatism to ensure alignment of our interpretations of what is happening around issues we care about, and the different elements that constitute those issues.

We may not be able to accomplish a particular goal we have set out, but every win is a milestone achieved towards the desired aspiration. As citizens that are interested in the greater good of Nigeria, just having a voice is not enough, but the ability to use the voice in ways that is sensitive and responsive to time and context is critical. In addition, sometimes we are fully persuaded that we have a solution to a problem and gravitate more to what we are most comfortable with. However, it is in those dark, uncharted, uncertain and unknown path that brings discomfort that delivers sustainable outcomes that creates system changes, and the necessary shift for a better Nigeria.

**Appendix**

1. Developing your Organization Change Initiative (*Adapted from Heifetz, R. A., Heifetz, R., Grashow, A., & Linsky, M. (2009). The practice of adaptive leadership: Tools and tactics for changing your organization and the world. Harvard business press.*

<b>Stakeholder (Individuals/Groups)</b>	<b>Relationship to the Issue</b>	<b>Preferred Outcomes</b>	<b>Noblest Values</b>	<b>Loyalties</b>	<b>Potential Losses</b>

2. Action Plan Worksheet

<b>S/n</b>	<b>Activity/Action</b>	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Success Indicator</b>

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