



# **NIGERIA SPEAKERS' CORNER TRUST**



**Strategy & Business  
Plan 2010-13**

**September 2010**

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Speakers' Corner Trust gratefully acknowledges the support of the UK Government's Foreign & Commonwealth Office for the preparation of this business plan which will be updated as the project develops.

# Nigeria Speakers' Corner Trust

## Strategy & Business Plan 2010-2012

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Speakers' Corner Trust is a UK registered charity which promotes free expression, public debate and active citizenship as a means of revitalising civil society in the UK and supporting its development in emerging democracies. SCT's patron is the playwright, human rights campaigner and former Czech President Václav Havel and it has a distinguished advisory council, chaired by the former Justice Secretary Rt Hon Jack Straw MP.

Following extensive consultation in Nigeria, it is now proposed to establish a Nigeria Speakers' Corner Trust (NSCT) in order to promote, coordinate and sustain a national Speakers' Corner initiative in Nigeria.

The principal aim will be to create new opportunities for public participation in governance by developing a forum for open debate through which citizens can exchange ideas and opinions, develop consensus, hold their elected representatives and others to account and influence policy-making and decision-taking.

NSCT will adapt the model successfully developed by SCT in the United Kingdom where SCT pursues its aims by forming local Speakers' Corner Committees made up of representatives of the public, private and voluntary sectors which 'own' and steer projects designed to stimulate and support public discussion and debate.

Where appropriate - as it is likely to be in Nigeria - the Committees' work may include establishing new Speakers' Corners in public spaces as symbols of citizens' rights, focuses for civic identity and platforms for public engagement.

But at the heart of each initiative lies a programme of events designed by the Speakers' Corner Committee to reach every community in its area. Some may take place at the Speakers' Corner; others will be organised in a range of venues, from Council Chambers to town halls, community centres, schools and places of work and worship. They could include debates led by interest groups, consultations mounted by public services or politicians or discussions stimulated by academics, campaigners or others on subjects from the global to the national, regional, local and cultural.

The central principle in all these events is that they should be accessible to all, strictly non-partisan and non-adversarial, welcome diversity and seek to inform opinion, identify common ground – and, as often as possible, entertain.

In Nigeria it is intended that Speakers' Corner events will lead to greater public participation in and influence on decision-making and service delivery and an enhanced level of accountability and legitimacy in the democratic process; some will inspire practical community action at a local level; others will lead to improved understanding between or within communities. Still others may be simply educative, enriching and empowering on a personal level.

The project has won the backing of a wide range of civil society organisations and international agencies in Nigeria, several of which have offered partnership and/or practical in-kind support. They include the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) and ActionAid. Coalitions for Change (C4C) is providing seed corn funding for the short-term employment of a project coordinator in Abuja. Ojobo Atuluku, the former deputy director of ActionAid in Nigeria, was appointed in August 2010.



"Freedom of expression is the cornerstone of democratic life. It is by the free exchange of ideas among citizens about how they should live together and how they should be governed that we create and sustain the democratic society. So the rights to free association and expression are scarcely less important than the right to live in peace and free from want."

**Václav Havel,**  
playwright, former  
President of the Czech  
Republic & Patron of  
Speakers' Corner Trust

C4C is one of a number of civil society organisations which serve on a Working Group which advises SCT on the project's development. Membership also includes Integrity, the Paradigm Initiative, the Policy & Legal Advocacy Centre and the National Democratic Institute as well as representatives of the NBA, NLC and ActionAid.

The NBA, which is providing pro bono legal advice, is currently preparing an application to the Corporate Affairs Commission in Abuja for the registration of NSCT as a Trust. NSCT will have its own constitution, Advisory Council, Board of Trustees and, subject to funding, staff. Whilst remaining affiliated to Speakers' Corner Trust, it will be independent of it.

Once constituted, NSCT's first task will be the development and launch of a national Speakers' Corner project in Abuja. It will then seek to roll out the project to other parts of Nigeria, drawing on the support of the extensive regional networks of the NBA, NLC and ActionAid.

## 2. NIGERIA SPEAKERS' CORNER PROJECT – THE BACKGROUND

In September 2008, SCT undertook a scoping exercise designed to test the viability of a Speakers' Corner project in Nigeria by addressing four key questions:

- is there support for it?
- can active stakeholders be identified?
- can it be sustained?
- can it be funded?

Consultees in both Nigeria and the UK broadly agreed that a Speakers' Corner project would be particularly timely not least because Nigeria has reached an important stage in the development of its democratic and economic process: there are grounds for optimism that it can fulfil its very significant potential but also a danger that, if it does not now do so, recent progress could falter or even be reversed.

A significant number of consultees, including politicians of different parties, regarded the lack of public participation in Nigeria's political and democratic systems as the principal obstacle to progress. They referred in particular to

- the lack of opportunity among citizens to participate in their own political processes
- the lack of influence of the majority of Nigerians on policy-making and service delivery
- the lack of accountability in Nigerian politics and public administration
- the lack of national consensus and the potential for conflict.

Several acknowledged at that time that the President, the courts and a growing body of politicians had been showing a renewed commitment to the democratic process. But they also recognised that, in seeking a new legitimacy, the same politicians and public servants are finding it difficult to create vehicles for the engagement they wish to promote between themselves and the public.

They regarded the creation of a genuinely 'public space' in which citizens can meet and debate on equal terms with each other and the decision-takers among them as vital both to the building of a more stable and sustainable democratic process and to the fostering of more cohesive communities.

Moreover, they saw in the Speakers' Corner model the prospects for a credible, independent vehicle for public engagement capable of serving the needs of both the public and those in positions of power who are serious about developing a more open and participative democracy.

The consultation concluded that conditions in Nigeria, the level of support for the project and the prospect of collaborative working with a wide range of credible and well-resourced national and international organisations would justify the promotion of a Speakers' Corner initiative.



“SCT’s approach is based on the belief that association between citizens and the free, face-to-face exchange of ideas, information and opinions - with each other as well as with the decision-takers among them - is a key to rebuilding trust and participation in Britain’s civil society and developing vibrant civil institutions and robust rights in emerging democracies.”

**Peter Bradley, Director of Speakers' Corner Trust**

On that basis, in 2009 the UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office awarded SCT a grant to enable it to lay the project's foundations. As outlined above, over the last year, SCT has established an extensive series of partnerships, created a Working Group to guide the project's development, recruited the first distinguished members of an Advisory Council, secured a small grant with which to recruit a temporary project coordinator and is now in the process of establishing the Nigeria Speakers' Corner Trust and preparing for the launch of the national initiative.

Funding is now sought to support Nigeria Speakers' Corner Trust over the longer term and to develop the project further by creating and sustaining a network of regional and local projects throughout Nigeria.

### 3. PRIORITIES & PROGRAMME

The Nigeria Speakers' Corner project is intended to contribute to the development of a culture in which

- increasing numbers of Nigerians are able to debate issues of importance to them, engage with their political process, influence decision-making and participate in their own governance
- political transparency and accountability is increased and corruption reduced
- an enhanced capacity for consensus building contributes to community and national cohesion and a reduction in civil conflict

and, as a result,

- civil society is strengthened and citizens' rights further embedded
- Nigeria's democratic stability and positive regional influence is strengthened.



A Zambian speaker uses the temporary Speakers' Corner created by SCT for the *Global Forum on Freedom of Expression* in Oslo in 2009.

#### 3.1 Developing the Trust and Launching the Project

As outlined above, NSCT has already established a small Working Group which has identified a number of key objectives for 2010/11 (some of which are already in hand), namely to

- establish an effective and sustainable Nigeria-based vehicle for the long-term development and delivery of the Speakers' Corner project
- create a credible and independent national Nigeria Speakers' Advisory Council, made up of respected representatives of the public, private and voluntary sectors, to 'own', manage and promote the initiative
- raise sufficient funding to enable NSCT to establish a permanent office and small staff
- seek support for the initiative from Government, prominent individuals, the political parties, civil society bodies, including those representing women and young people, the media and business
- raise public awareness of and participation in the initiative
- identify a suitable site for the national Speakers' Corner project in Abuja
- develop proposals for and launch a national Speakers' Corner in Abuja
- prepare proposals for training programmes, to be trialled in Abuja, to support the development and management of local projects and to prepare the public for their use
- arrange an initial, high-profile programme of debates and discussions in Abuja
- develop the framework for a network of Speakers' Corner projects and activities in other parts of the country so that the roll-out process can begin in 2011/12.

Progress on some of these priorities have been described above. Other tasks are outlined in more detail below.

### 3.2 National Speakers' Corner Sites

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A number of potential sites for a Speakers' Corner in Abuja have been identified including:

- Millennium Park
- Unity Fountain
- Eagle Square
- Old Parade Ground.

Further consideration will be given to these and other options and the authorities, including the Federal Capital Territories Administration, will be consulted before a decision can be taken.

### 3.3 National Launch

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The launch is likely to include a high profile opening ceremony and a series of events in Abuja which demonstrate the scope of the project through the topics and formats chosen for debate, the venues in which they take place and the cross section of the communities they are intended to engage.

### 3.4 The Roll-Out

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The Working Group is also considering priorities for the roll-out of the project. As suggested above, the Nigerian Bar Association, the Nigerian Labour Congress and ActionAid all have extensive networks which they can seek to activate in supporting local projects.

The Working Group has given preliminary consideration to the priority locations for early projects to which further, more detailed thought will be given shortly.

SCT has also agreed to develop a partnership with the BBC World Service Trust through which to promote and report Speakers' Corner initiatives and activities in remoter parts of Nigeria.

### 3.5 Training Programmes

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While many people in Nigeria have good ideas and strong opinions, few have had the opportunity to express them and most lack the confidence and skills which will enable them both to speak confidently and effectively in public and to listen to the contributions of others.

The English Speaking Union, one of the world's foremost providers of support for speech and debate activities, has offered to provide training for Nigerians who can then in turn conduct programmes of their own which might include

- workshops in public speaking or debating for secondary school, university students and others
- training other teachers and coaches
- demonstration events and lectures on public speaking to raise the profile of the Nigerian Speakers' Corner Trust.

## 4. GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

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### 4.1 Advisory Council and Board of Trustees

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With the advice of the Working Group, SCT is currently recruiting the founding members of the NSCT's Advisory Council from which will be drawn the membership of the Trust's Board of Trustees. The membership of the Council will initially be limited to some 6-10 but will be expected to increase gradually and organically, reflecting (for example) the areas in which local projects are promoted. In addition, Speakers' Corner Committees will be established in due course for each local project.



“In the UK we sometimes forget how lucky we are to have free speech and what an important part it plays in our modern day life. The Speakers' Corner project is a celebration of that freedom and a vital tool in the drive to combat political disengagement at home and abroad.”

**Rt Hon Jack Straw MP,  
Chair, SCT Advisory  
Council**



A speaker from the African Voices Forum sets out her priorities for the next Government at the *People's Hustings* held in Bristol in the run-up to the UK general election in May 2010.

At this event and similar initiatives in other cities, the public rather than the politicians took centre stage with the party candidates asked to respond to the agenda set for them by voluntary organisations and voters.

The Advisory Council will broadly reflect Nigeria's federal character by representing

- the geo-political zones
- the faiths
- the genders
- older and younger people
- the professions (including the media, law, universities, arts etc)
- the public / private sectors
- civil society.

Members will be men and women of high standing whose reputations and influence will help to establish and further develop the project and its purposes. A number of distinguished Nigerians have already accepted invitations to join the Council. They include:

- Chris Kolade - lecturer in Corporate Governance, Lagos Business School; former Nigerian UK High Commissioner; former Director General of the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation; former Chief Executive and Chairman of Cadbury Nigeria Plc
- Dr Timiebi Koripamo-Agary - Media Coordinator and Liaison Niger Delta Amnesty Programme; Federal Permanent Secretary (Rtd); Member Board of ActionAid Nigeria; Labour Adviser to the Presidential Taskforce on Power; Executive Director, Gender Rights Advancement and Development
- Matthew Hassan Kukah – Catholic priest; author; human rights campaigner
- A.B. Mahmoud – lawyer; Senior Advocate of Nigeria and former Solicitor General, Attorney General and Commissioner of Justice in Kano State
- Clement Nwankwo - Director, Policy & Legal Advocacy Centre; former executive director, Constitutional Rights Project
- Sandra Obiabo – Executive Director, Communicating for Change (tbc)
- Dr Kole Shettima – Director, MacArthur Foundation Africa office; Co-Chair, Higher Education Initiative in Africa; Chair, Centre for Democracy & Development; Member of the Board of Actionaid Nigeria
- Pat Utomi - Professor of Political Economy, Lagos Business School; broadcaster; former Presidential candidate
- Maryam Uwais - lawyer; member of the African Union Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child; member of the Nigerian Presidential Advisory Council.

In addition Wole Soyinka, poet, playwright, Nobel Laureate, human rights and democracy campaigner, has expressed interest in participating in the project's launch.

#### 4.2 Staffing

The Working Group has attached considerable importance to the recruitment of an administrator who will be able to drive progress on the project's development, launch and roll-out.

Coalitions for Change has agreed to fund

- a technical advisor to establish and develop the project in Abuja for a period of three months
- support for one or more pre-launch demonstration events as a means of testing the model.

In addition, ActionAid has offered to provide office accommodation and IT access for the administrator for a further period.

#### 5. PROMOTION

In the run-up to the launch of the national project and thereafter as NSCT develops its proposed network of Speakers' Corners and extends the scope of its activities, strategic and targeted promotion will become increasingly important in stimulating interest in and support for the project among a range of key audiences.

These will include, for example, potential contributors to or partners in SCT's work including both central and local government, voluntary and community organisations and potential funders from the corporate, public and charitable sectors.

SCT proposes to develop a media programme as soon as plans for the national launch are adopted. It is also proposed to enlist the support of the networks of civil society organisations and, in due course, to develop a dedicated website.

## 6. BUDGET & FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

### 6.1 Budget

A detailed financial forecast has been prepared. We estimate that NSCT's running costs will be around N19m (£85,000) per year, though existing commitments of support reduce the funding requirement for the first year to about £70,000.

As noted above, NSCT has secured agreement from Coalitions for Change to cover the cost of technical assistance for three months to undertake the preliminary work. Part of the role of the consultant will be to finalise the budget and to seek cash sponsorship and in-kind support.

A copy of the financial forecast is available on request.

### 6.2 Financial Requirement

NSCT will be a lean organisation which will initially take the lead in initiating local projects but will aim increasingly to facilitate local groups in developing and sustaining their own projects while providing resources and coordination to support them.

It is intended that, as has been SCT's experience in the UK, much of NSCT's future growth will be secured through partnership with existing organisations.

NSCT therefore has three key financial objectives, namely to

- fund its development and launch
- fund its central administration and develop new programmes over the longer term
- work with local groups to fund local activities.

NSCT is now seeking sponsors willing to make a significant contribution to launch and sustain this initiative. Ideally it will have five sponsors, each contributing N5m per annum for a period of three years. Sponsors will be recognised publicly in all of NSCT's work.

### 6.3 Donors & Foundations

NSCT is seeking funding from donors and foundations. SCT has secured support from the Foreign & Commonwealth Office to fund its own contribution to the project in 2010/11 but this is not sufficient to enable it to make any significant disbursements.

SCT has secured significant in-kind support from a number of organisations including the NBA, NLC and ActionAid and expressions of interest which might lead to collaboration with or funding from others in due course.

### 6.4 Corporate Support and Sponsorship

SCT has been successful in the UK in attracting support, often in kind, from the private sector. It is proposed that NSCT will seek a limited number of relationships with companies and organisations which can

- provide financial or in kind support for aspects of its work
- introduce access to skills or networks which will add value to its work
- provide support and leadership in promoting projects at a local level.



A Sudanese journalist speaks at SCT's temporary Speakers' Corner in Oslo.

## Appendix 1: Terms of Reference for NSCT Director

The proposed Nigeria Speakers' Corner Trust (NSCT), for which Trust status is being sought, seeks an experienced individual with strong personal qualities as well as the appropriate skills.

This is an exciting but demanding role at the heart of a new initiative designed to promote the principle of free expression in Nigerian civil life and provide new opportunities for Nigerians both to play a greater part in the shaping of their democracy and the development of public policy and to hold their politicians and public servants to account.

He/she should be committed to the aims of the initiative and be capable of playing a key leadership role in both implementing and developing them. He/she should have organisational and administrative skills which include patience and an eye for detail, resourcefulness in overcoming obstacles and the confidence and discretion required to negotiate with decision-takers and opinion-formers. He/she should also be a good communicator and an effective motivator of others.

He/she should form a close working relationship with the Chair(s) of the Nigeria Speakers' Corner Advisory Council and Board of Trustees and, though personally motivated and self-confident, understand the importance of accountability to both the Trustees and the Council.

He/ she will be expected to:

- work closely with Speakers' Corner Trust, the Nigeria Speakers' Corner Trust Working Group (which currently comprises representatives of ActionAid, Coalitions for Change, Integrity, the Nigerian Bar Association, the Nigerian Labour Congress, the Paradigm Initiative, the Policy & Legal Advocacy Centre) and other organisations supporting the initiative
- coordinate the contributions of a range of partners/supporters
- develop the systems required for the efficient running of a small organisation
- communicate with members and/or potential members of the Nigeria Speakers' Corner Advisory Council and Board of Trustees
- negotiate with public authorities
- identify and negotiate with potential funders and collaborators
- promote the initiative to key sectors including politicians and the media
- work with third party organisations and individuals in preparing for and organising the launch of the national project.

He/she must be IT literate and experienced in basic accounting and possess the following:

- a minimum of ten years experience with at least five in a similar position.
- a background in Social Sciences or humanities
- communication, negotiation, listening and facilitation skills
- ability to organise events and manage expectations of different stakeholders
- an in-depth knowledge of Nigeria's political terrain.



The Nigeria Speakers' Corner Working Group meets in Abuja