FTVII
PROJECT

AKELEKU SIDI COMMUNITY IN NASARAWA STATE REJECTS VOTE BUYING AND EMPTY PROMISES
ABOUT THE COMMUNITY

AKELEKU SIDI VILLAGE

Akeleku Sidi is a community located in the interior part of the Jenkwe development area of Nasarawa State. The community is known for its bad road network, which is a dilapidated bridge making it difficult for the villagers to travel to the city for business. The community has no access to clean water and only has two classroom buildings.

On the 23rd of January 2023, the Step Up Nigeria team visited the community to sensitise first-time voters on the negative impact of vote selling, the need to act with integrity during an election, and hold their elected representatives accountable for delivering critical services to their community. Step Up Nigeria used a storytelling approach by showing the community the story Halima’s vote, a short play about a woman who chose to stand up against vote selling in her community by speaking up for a better life, and gave power to the voices of others who were silent which led to her community having better services. The First-Time voters were motivated by Halima's action and were willing to act with integrity during the election. Beyond the first-time voters, leaders in the community also participated in the session.

Ironically, on that same day, as the Step Up team were wrapping up the session by supporting participants in completing the evaluation forms, we heard noises and noticed a commotion outside the hall. The commotion happened outside the venue and resulted from the arrival of the incumbent State House of Assembly member from the People Democratic party representing the community. He came into the community to campaign for votes in the upcoming election. Upon his arrival, the youths who had completed their post-evaluation, along with some of the elders in the community, marched towards the representative and asked why they had not seen him in the past four years after winning the election to fulfil the promises he made during his campaign in the last election to fix the road leading to their community and provide them with clean water.
The community members realising that the House of Assembly members had no answers to their questions, started singing the song Step Up Nigeria team had taught them a few minutes ago, replacing the services in the original song with what the community needed the most. The song goes thus;
"We no wan ya rice
We no wan ya money
Wetin' we wan?
Na water wey clean
Wetin' we wan?
Na clinic and road."

On hearing the song, one politician's entourage slapped a community member, which intensified the community's resolve to demand better services. They started to chant the slogan "No service, No Vote" and chased the politician away from the district.

It was encouraging to see that the sensitisation session with community members on the importance of using their votes to demand better services led to community members taking real action when the time came. According to the women leader of the community, Mrs Joy Ishaya, 'the sensitisation session has been the most beneficial knowledge they have ever received.'