

**Project Title: Know Dem Well (KDM)—Know Them Well**

**Motto:** *Using information for transformative action*

**Project Summary:**

This project is primarily concerned with the collection of comprehensive, accurate and relevant information on political candidates to improve voters' knowledge and decision-making capability during elections, and in turn ensure transformative and resilient democracy in Nigeria.

**Project Objective:**

To build a comprehensive, non-partisan and accurate information hub that will serve as a go-to resource for informed assessment of political candidates for all elective positions across all tiers of government, and consequently facilitate voter-efficiency and equal opportunities during elections, and transformative governance after elections.

**Problem Statement:**

One of the major problems that voters encounter before elections in Nigeria is the dearth of critical data on political candidates vying for public offices. Often, the general public have to rely on scattered and mostly skewed or unreliable information directly or indirectly provided by these political candidates.

Due to this information gap, voters find themselves in a situation where they either have to elect candidates that may not be qualified for public offices, or are compelled to abstain totally from elections due to what they perceive as a pool of the same candidates, whose main difference is the name of their respective political parties. This voter apathy is backed by available statistics on the dwindling number of actual voters during elections, despite the [consistent increase](#) in the number of Nigerians acquiring Permanent Voter's Card (PVC) or registered to vote.

The approach of Civil Society Organizations in the past, including our organization, has been to develop a voting criteria for voters to use in assessing party candidates during elections. However, this approach focuses less on who the candidates really are—their track record and ideological and policy inclinations—and therefore pales into comparison with comprehensive, accurate and critical data on the track record, ideological and policy worldviews of each political candidate, which should be available for public consumption and action.

The availability of critical data on political candidates during elections can be linked to the quality of voter decision, election outcomes and the quality of governance after elections.

Through this initiative, we intend to close this critical information gap and ensure the availability of comprehensive information on political candidates—women and men, boost voter confidence in the electoral process, enhance inclusive and participatory democracy, strengthen democracy and contribute to the fight against corruption in public offices.

## Proposed Solution

A research-intensive ‘candidate-profiling’, to be called ‘Know Dem Well’ in local pidgin (translated in English as *Know Them Well*), for easy communication and nationwide reach, to provide essential data on political candidates, and improve voters’ quality of electoral options and electoral decisions during elections.

Our proposed solution will also focus on providing information relating to the number of female candidates that each of the eighteen political parties present for election in general—including female candidates presented by these political parties during previous elections (if any), and the ‘candidate profile’ of each of the female candidates presented now, in particular. Through this initiative, we intend to facilitate the upscaling of female candidates’ participation, their visibility and a more equitable chance for their policies and ideology to be known during elections in Nigeria.

We intend to make the Internet, Newspapers and Historical Archives, our primary source of information, by leveraging on the abundance of open-ended information on those platforms, whilst on-the-ground investigation, the candidates themselves and other available sources will contribute to curating more relevant information.

Having played a frontline coordination role in the brutally suppressed #EndSARS protests that engulfed Nigeria in 2020, one way we are now committed to making Nigerian democracy work for Nigerian youths and women is to ensure that the chances of electing the right people into office is significantly improved.

## Methodology

Our approach is to place emphasis on critical indices that will establish a connection between the candidates’ past (whether they have been in public office or not), and their likely approach to governance if elected into office—zooming in on candidates’ ideology and reform policies, vocalized and implemented in the past and now. We intend to focus on: **Candidates’ Commitment to Democracy, Human Rights and Gender Equality; Commitment to Poverty Eradication; Commitment to Ending Corruption in Public Offices and Society; Commitment to Socio-economic Development and Environmental Protection; Commitment to Education and Social Change; Commitment and Approach to Internal Security and Public Safety; Commitment and Approach to Peace and Conflict Resolution.**

Across the areas mentioned above, we intend to consider candidates’ historical commitment to each of these areas; whether or not they have been in public offices and their performance if they have been in public offices, or their commitment—in real and measurable terms—to each criterion if they have not.

This is a research-intensive project, hence our implementation will reflect this. For a start, we intend to focus on Presidential Candidates and the 469

members of Nigeria's Federal bi-cameral National Assembly. Our experiences from this 'pilot phase' will serve to guide our eventual coverage of other levels of elective positions. Our approach to developing each candidate's 'candidate profiling' will be driven by a group of experienced and dedicated project staff, strategic members, strategic partners and volunteers. Our approach to popularizing each candidate's profile will consist of a project-exclusive website, partnerships with two key online media organizations, partnerships with two radio stations and engagement with Social Media Influencers.

A fair, neutral and non-partisan conclusion will be done on each candidate's 'Know Dem Well' profile, to articulate the agreement or otherwise of each candidate's ideology and policy slant, in relation to each of the criterion highlighted above, and the overall implications of their ideology and track-record for democracy and governance in Nigeria. At no point shall we tell voters who to or not to vote during elections; our role is to put out the relevant information on each candidate to help voters make the right decision.

We, however, intend to do a bi-annual survey to understand citizens' overall assessment of the project, and their suggestions on how to make it better. Also, at the end of each candidate's 'Know Dem Well' profile, there will be a short poll to website visitors to know whether the provided information is considered helpful or not—this will help our assessment of the project in relation to our expected outcomes.

### **Expected Outcomes**

- Improved understanding of each political candidate's ideology and policy worldview;
- Substantially increased information bank for voters' assessment of political candidates;
- Improved visibility of Female Candidates during election campaigns
- Improved policy suggestions and implementation by elected public officials;
- Improved qualitative value of implemented policy vis-à-vis economic, social and environmental impact by elected officials;
- Reduced impunity for corruption in public offices;
- Improved Public Security and Safety;
- Improved citizens' confidence in the electoral process.

### **Theory of Change:**

The idea of 'strong man' in African politics is a peculiar yet pernicious phenomenon. Rather than focusing on radically dismantling the structure that upholds that idea—a onerous, costly and somewhat elusive task, we can seek to incrementally inject the right individuals into that structure, who would upend and positively change the meaning and impact of what it means for a political leader, woman or man, to be strong. For there to be such leaders, we should begin by showing a necessary link between a political party and political candidate's past and present—by establishing a link between the candidate's ideological and policy worldviews—and their capability for delivering good governance in a democratic society.

By providing a well-researched profile to demystify political candidates before elections, we will improve voters' knowledge of the candidates, improve voters' confidence in themselves to make the right decisions during elections; and in the electoral process to uphold such decisions.

By implementing 'Know Dem Well,' we would increasingly be able to improve voter-efficiency in electing the right leaders during elections, and in turn be able to have leaders with the right ideological and policy worldviews to deliver transformative governance, and ultimately ensure a genuine and resilient democracy.