

# NEW RESPONSES TO COVID-19 IN LAGOS

## WOMEN OF CHANGE SERIES



January 2020 in Lagos started out like every other year. Big businesses lined up annual calendars and individuals shared goals for the next 12 months. However, a few weeks into the year, everything changed, and Lagos, along with the rest of the world was thrust into confusion and panic. By April, businesses had shut down, oil prices plummeted, and most importantly, people were facing uncertainty and fear. Amidst the global tension, at the heart of Nigeria's economic capital, initiatives like Telemed and Citizensgate were introduced and managed to benefit citizens of Lagos State. The Citizensgate portal is managed by the Office of Transformation, Creativity and Innovation (OTCI), under the stewardship of reform-minded Director, Branding, One Stop Enquiry Services and Service Charter, Princess Adenike Adedoyin-Ajayi. Princess Adedoyin-Ajayi started her engagement with OTCI when she joined the Lagos State Civil Service in 2008. Her mandate was to support Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and strengthen their ability to adopt and implement Service Charters, and to establish in each MDA, a One-Stop Shop to improve service delivery. With support from the State Partnership for Accountability, Responsiveness and Capability (SPARC) in 2009, the Service Charters were initiated, One-Stop Shops and the Citizensgate portal established, which has become one of the new ways Lagos State has adopted to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Director has also been empowered to carry out her professional duties, through the Women in Governance intervention of the Partnership to Engage, Reform and Learn (PERL), a programme of the UK Foreign Commonwealth Development Office (FCDO).



Started her engagement in the Lagos State Government with Office of Transformation, Creativity and Innovation (OTCI) in 2008.

Joined the PERL WinG Initiative in February 2018, which further empowered her to carry out her professional duties.

With support from PERL and one of PERL's predecessor programmes, she:

- Supervised the development and implementation of service charters in Lagos State ministries, departments and agencies.
- Oversaw the establishment of, One-Stop shops to improve service delivery.
- Coordinated management of the Citizensgate portal set up by Lagos State Government for service delivery, and trained staff who manage the back end of the portal on soft skills, customer service and service delivery management.

## Citizens' Gate

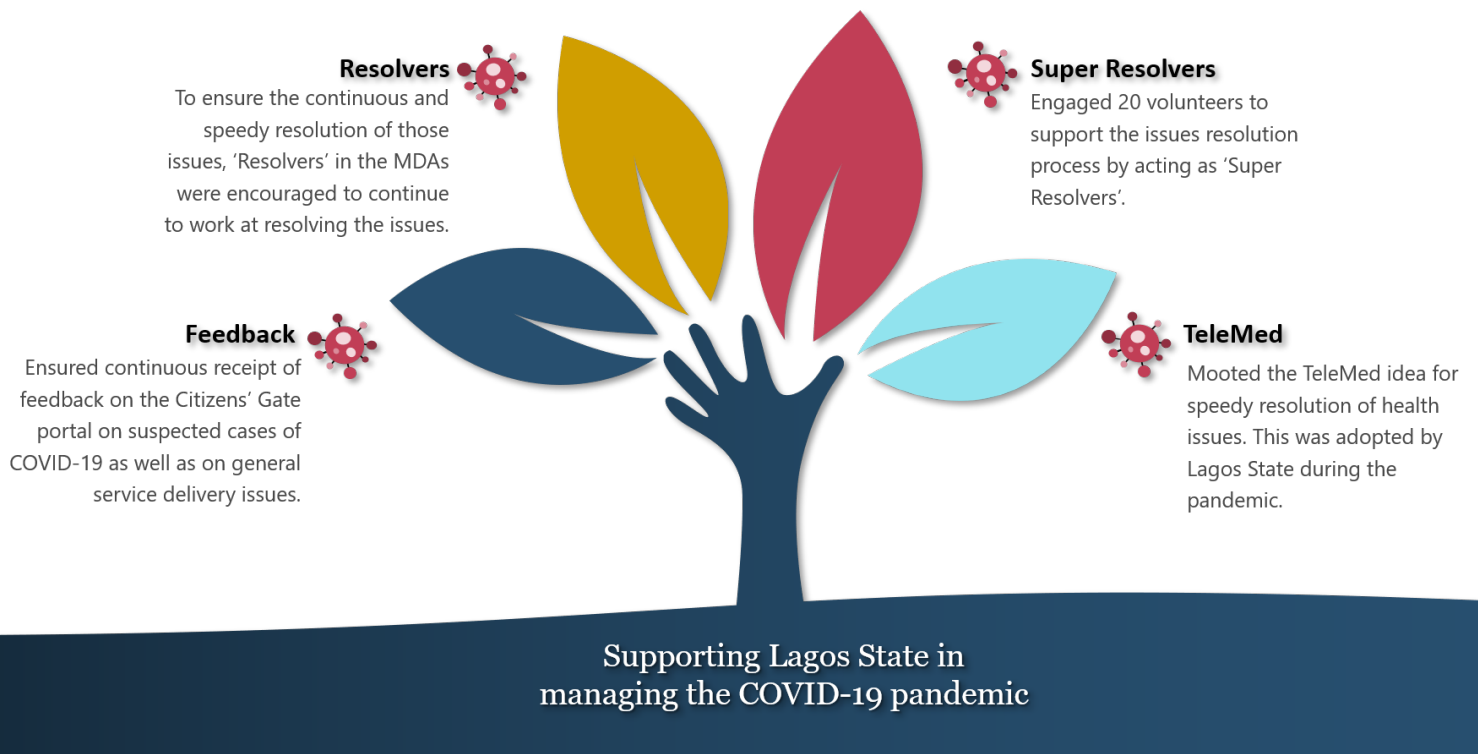
This is an e-governance portal developed by the Lagos State Government in 2017 to collect Citizens' feedback on all service delivery issues. It is housed at the Office of Transformation, Creativity and Innovation (OTCI), which works with relevant ministries to resolve service delivery issues. With the advent of COVID-19, all attention was moved to the Ministry of Health, even as the lockdown commenced. One of the effects of this was that service delivery slowed down as MDAs were not fully operational. Feedback was still being received through the Citizensgate portal, but there was almost no one to attend to the requests/ feedback as public officers were mostly at home. Issues remaining unresolved meant that people were left unattended to while a lot of things were going wrong.

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*We got 30 Super Resolvers as volunteers. We met with them remotely and gave them the terms of the assignment including confidentiality (which had a high risk of being compromised due to working from home). The Super Resolvers helped to ensure that most of the pending requests started getting resolved, while the lockdown lasted, thereby significantly reducing the number of unresolved requests.*

Princess Adenike Adedoyin-Ajayi





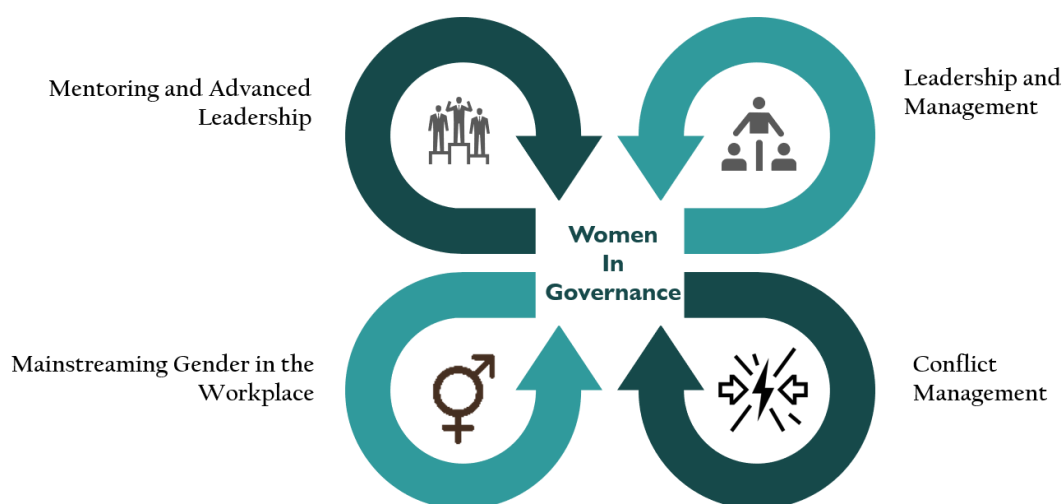
Cases of domestic violence while at home for the lockdown were being reported, suspected cases of COVID-19 were also being reported through the portal, in addition to many other issues including whistleblowing. As requests were piling up, Princess Adenike Adedoyin-Ajayi, who is in charge of Service Delivery and Service Charters at OTCI coordinated an idea to resolve this challenge.

Princess Adedoyin-Ajayi coordinated management of Citizensgate, working with resolvers (officers in the MDAs who had access to the portal and were ordinarily responsible for resolving issues coming in through it), to ensure issues and feedback were attended to without delay, and escalated where necessary. She then asked for 20 volunteers who would act as 'Super Resolvers' during the lockdown period. As they were all working from home, they had to make the sacrifice of using their own personal devices and data to do the work, without any promise of reward, except that their efforts would be recognised. The response to this call was positive.

## TeleMed

In addition, Lagos State Government adopted the TeleMed Initiative, which entails telephone consultations with medical doctors, to reduce the number of patients going into the hospitals and reduce the risk of further spread of communicable diseases, including COVID-19. The idea of scheduled-time-appointments as opposed to staggered appointments to hospitals, and home visits to the vulnerable, the elderly and those with suspected or confirmed contagious ailments were also mooted. As an Office, OTCI is putting together a position paper to review the relevant working policies including part-time work and flexible hours, in line with the new working norm that has emerged due to COVID-19.

## The Women In Governance Initiative



The Women in Governance Community of Practice (CoP) was officially launched on the 28th of February 2018, just ahead of International Women's Day with 15 members and the theme: "Stronger Together." By March 2020, its membership had grown to 52. Since the launch of the Community of Practice, there have been three training programmes to improve the overall performance of these change agents to deliver better services. A training on Gender Mainstreaming in the Workplace was conducted for women in leadership positions in the Southwest in September 2019. The training focused on a broader understanding and implementation of equity and inclusion in the workplace, emphasising gender-based budgeting as a learning from Osun state, following implementation of the State Gender Equity and Social Inclusion Policy, which PERL helped to develop. The first training, held in February 2018, provided AWARD certified leadership and management skills building through well-defined modules and team building activities. In September 2018, there was a second Community of Practice gathering for a one-day conflict management training. In January 2019, the expanded Community of Practice met again for an AWARD certified four-day advanced leadership and mentoring training, following the identification of the women to understand and deploy mentoring skills within their organisations to optimise performance.

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