

COMMUNIQUE ADOPTED AT THE END OF A ONE DAY TOWN HALL MEETING ORGANIZED BY NDEBUMOG IN CONJUNCTION WITH OXFAM IN NIGERIA AS PART OF OXFAM'S SPP II ACTIVITIES AT BRIDGE WATERS HOTEL, ENUGU ON THURSDAY, FEB. 8, 2018.

INTRODUCTION:

A Town Hall meeting on shadow budget and community needs assessment was organized by NDEBUMOG in conjunction with Oxfam in Nigeria on Thursday, Feb 8, 2018 at Bridge Waters Hotel, GRA, Enugu State. The meeting was aimed at creating awareness about issues of participatory budget and the use of factsheets as a tool for fiscal lobbying, influencing and development of community action plans. It was part of the activities of Oxfam's Financing for Development Strategic Partnership Program (SPP-II), being implemented by NDEBUMOG and other partners across Nigeria.

Participants were drawn from several sectors, such as, the Local Government Representatives, legal practitioners, traditional rulers, Civil Society Organizations', students, National Council for Women Societies and other professionals. The meeting was declared open by the Traditional Ruler of Uruku Kingdom, HRM, Igwe (Dr) Cornelius Nomeh, JP, the Eze Udo 1 of Uruku Kingdom.

OBSERVATIONS:

It was observed that citizens at the community level, do not have interest in budget work and do not ask questions aimed at holding the government accountable. Such citizens treat budget and governance as exclusively a matter for those in power. Therefore, the need to hold government accountable on what happens in the budget circle is a collective responsibility and not the business of government alone.

It was also observed that government, do not carry out community needs assessments before deciding on projects to be allocated in the budget on behalf of communities nor bother to find out, what the people truly needs, when and how they need it.

The general lack of interest in the budget by communities and the failure to hold government accountable have created the opportunity for those in power to mismanage Nigeria's commonwealth.

From the fact sheets presented to stakeholders during the meeting, it was observed that up to 80% of line items allocated in the capital budget for Enugu State in the 2016 FGN's Budget were never carried out. Such, for instance, are; Construction of block 3 classrooms with VIP office, toilets and furniture at Community High School Obioma, Udi LGA, allotted N15,000,000 was not constructed. Construction of Road Network in FGC Enugu allotted N34, 264,125 was not constructed, Construction of Perimeter Fence worth N15, 002,484 was not constructed as the school already has a fence. A sum of N293, 145,984 that was allocated to improve the standard of education at FGC in Enugu was never utilized etc.

RESOLUTIONS:

The participants resolved and agreed as follows:

1. Monitoring the budget processes and implementation is a collective responsibility, as the governors or presidents may have the time to monitor budget.
2. It is citizens responsibility to monitor budget through man power development on budget processes and analysis, reporting to community leaders or civil society groups and through press conferences and walking up to relevant government agencies.
3. We will hold companies in our localities accountable for corporate social responsibility (CSR), ensuring that they carry out NEEDS ASSESSMENT in the communities before implementing community development programmes. Citizens also need to engage these entities to ensure that they pay their actual tax regularly.
4. Women should be sensitized on the need and importance of their involvement in shadow budgeting, as women and children are the most marginalized in Africa.
5. Participants demanded that the 2016 Federal Government's Budget as it affects Enugu State, should be revisited with a view to implementing the projects contained therein.

CONCLUSION:

Participants commended NDEBUMOG and OXFAM for the meeting, which they said was an eye-opener for bringing a meeting as important as this to Enugu stakeholders.

Prepared by (pro bono) Communique Drafting Committee:

1. Dr. Godstime Okafor (Global Law Firm)
2. Mrs. Nneka Ikeh (Legal Practitioner)
3. Chioma Madukwe (Socio-economic Researcher)
4. Barr. Ebere Chikezie (Legal Practitioner)
5. Dr. Joycelin Okubuiro (Lecturer, Faculty of Law, University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus)

Barr. Chinasa Agu Ndubisi moved the motion for adoption of the communique and was seconded by Engr Alloysius Iloka.