

COMMUNIQUÉ ISSUED 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, WHICH HELD AT JERRY MARRIOT HOTEL, NSUKKA ON SATURDAY, FEB. 10, 2018.

INTRODUCTION:

A Town Hall meeting on shadow budget and community needs assessment was organized by NDEBUMOG in conjunction with Oxfam in Nigeria on Saturday, Feb 10, 2018 at Jerry Marriot Hotel, Nsukka, 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 Local Government Areas around Nsukka, legal practitioners, traditional rulers, Civil Society Organizations, youths, women groups, academia in Enugu North Senatorial District, among others. The meeting was declared open by the Traditional Ruler of Nkpunano, Nsukka Ancient Kingdom, His Royal Majesty, Igwe (Dr) Amb Patrick Okolo, Chukwu Nwe Eze 1 of Nkpunano Kingdom.

There were presentations on community needs assessments and shadow budget that were made by a team of facilitators, which further elucidate discussions during the gathering.

OBSERVATIONS:

Participants observed the following;

- That majority of community stakeholders, do not participate in government budget process, due to lack of interest and opportunity to participate;
- Community needs are hardly captured in the government budgets as a result of failure to incorporate and carry out community needs assessments in the budgeting process;
- That budgeting processes are not transparent and budget documents are hardly accessible to the public, especially, Local Government Budgets;
- That rather than tackling the needs of communities, government budgets have become avenues for corruption;

- The participants also observed that many of the projects allocated to the Enugu North in the Federal Government's 2016 Appropriation Act, were either; not executed, abandoned or not completed. Most of the projects seems to be highly inflated and some duplicated. It was further observed that some projects executed by an International Development Agency, (World Bank) were also contained in the 2016 Federal Government Budget.
- It was also observed that health workers charge money for maternal and child services, whereas; such services have been declared as free by government.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

From the foregoing, participants recommended and resolved as follows:

- That community needs assessments should be made an integral part of the government budgetary and fiscal processes at all levels to ensure that community needs are appropriately captured in the budget;
- That government should not only make budget participatory, but should encourage citizens, including community stakeholders to participate actively in the process;
- That the 2016 Federal Government's Budget should be revisited, so that the projects earmarked for Enugu State, which were either, not carried out or abandoned should be carried out to conclusion;
- That the government of Enugu State should embark on the probe of its free medical scheme to fish out, for sanctions, those who collects money from patients, even when the treatments are supposed to be free;
- Government at all levels should make budget documents accessible to the public, since budget is a public document. Hoarding of budget documents does not augur well for accountability, openness, and access to information;

RESOLUTIONS:

- The participants resolved to embark on budget advocacies, using the shadow budget techniques in order to attract development to their areas.
- They further resolved to embark on awareness campaigns in their localities to arouse t interest of community members for participation in budget and governance process.

CONCLUSION;

The participants thanked NDEBUMOG and OXFAM for the Town Hall meeting, which they said was an eye-opener to them.

Signed:

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