

# **A COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE END OF ONE DAY TOWN HALL MEETING ON CITIZEN'S BUDGET PARTICIPATION HELD ON THE 2<sup>ND</sup> JUNE, 2020 AT THE CONFERENCE HALL OF MINISTRY FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND CHIEFTAINCY AFFAIRS, LAFIA, NASARAWA STATE**

## **BACKGROUND**

The Nasarawa State Ministry of Finance, Budget and Planning, organised a Town Hall Meeting on Citizen's Budget Participation, in preparation towards the 2021 State Budget Processes. This was the second edition of its kind since the inception of the administration of **Engr. Abdullahi A. Sule**, the Executive Governor of Nasarawa State.

The Participatory Budgeting otherwise known as Citizens Budgeting which is the process of deciding how public money is generated and spent. The meeting brought the representatives of the state citizens and people from both formal and informal sectors such as Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), Community Based Organisations (CBOs), Faith-Based Organisation (FBOs), Media, Religious groups, Youth Associations, People with Disability (PWD) and farmers.

The 2019 preparations against 2020 budget theme was "Towards Ensuring Citizens' Participation in the Budget Process" while the theme for 2020 against 2021 budget is tagged "Participatory Budgeting: Towards Accessible and Transparent Governance" is an improvement in terms of participation and organization over the 2019 town hall meeting.

The Overall goal of the Town Hall meeting for 2020 against 2021 budget process is to instill transparency in budgeting and budget process by focusing on key indicators of public availability of budget information, public participation in the budget process, Framework on Access to Budget Information.

## **COMMENDATIONS:**

The Participants during the one-day Town Hall Meeting on Citizens' Budget Participation commended:

The Ministry of Finance Budget and Planning Nasarawa State for a well-articulated objective and for organising this crucial meeting in preparation towards 2021 budget, as a way forward towards promoting participation and inclusive planning process

The steps taken in uploading the 2020 budget online, making it simple and accessible for the public via [www.nasarawastate.gov.org](http://www.nasarawastate.gov.org) thus promoting openness in governance

The administration of **Engr. Abdullahi A. Sule**, for the establishment of Nasarawa State Bureau for Public Procurement Agency headed by a Director General, which is the right thing in the right direction as this would ensure value for money.

## **OBSERVATIONS:**

The participants who were in attendance in the town hall meeting on Citizens' Budget Participation makes the following observations:

1. That the 2020 budget presentation made by the director of Budget from Ministry of Finance, has provided key background information on 2020 budget as a baseline for 2021 budget preparation. However, copies were not made available on or before the meeting for the participants to get familiar with.
2. The Global CONVID-19 Pandemic has negatively affected the implementation of 2020 Budget, therefore need to be reviewed or reversed to reflect the realities on ground.
3. Over-dependence on National allocation from the Federal Allocation Account (FAAC) is not sustainable source of income for a young state like Nasarawa state that needs a lots of infrastructural development.
4. The Budget is not realistic because the sources of income does not balance with the expenditure, hence this could lead to budget deficit, meaning that government will borrow to implement capital expenditure project, which may not be good for the coming generation.

5. Cash payment taxes creates a lot of leakages and double taxation which subject most tax payers to injustice.
6. The releases and payments to Contractors by the government is not open and transparent enough because there is no publications of such payments thereby hindering access to critical information by NGOs/CSOs in the state that are willing to partner with government in monitoring and tracking projects.
7. The various MDAs and Agencies in the state are not engaging NGOs/CSOs well in their planning processes, thereby limiting citizens' participation, ownership for good governance
8. The State House of Assembly have not been conducting Public Hearing session where NGOs/CSOs and other stakeholders could participate enough, this negates the true practice of democracy in the state.
9. The concept of Citizen's Budget participation is relatively new, therefore awareness of this concept is not comprehensive enough in the state yet. Open Government Partnership (OGP) has not been domesticated in the state, where stakeholders participate in annual planning for the various MDAs in an inclusive manner
10. That there is no standardised implementation plan and a participatory monitoring and evaluation framework for effective monitoring and tracking of government spending in transparent and accountable manner
11. That the state government have not fully automate her payment systems to cover all government tax payments and other government remittance, this create rooms for cash transactions which has high risk for leakages
12. That the 2020 budget allocation to agriculture and health sectors were below the 10% and 15% standard.
13. That there is relatively peace in the state among farmers and herdsmen now
14. There is no quarterly/annual review of the performances of budget to provide feedback.
15. That Environmental Impact Assessment of some construction projects by some contractors in the state and the mitigating strategies is weak, hence farming land and lands for citizens' property development have been affected negatively.

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

In view of the aforementioned observations made during the meeting, the following recommendations were made:

1. Capacity building on Citizens Budget Participation and Inclusion for selected stakeholders in partnership with NGOs/CSOs that have the capacity to deliver should be one of the key focus in the 2021 budget.
2. There should be monthly/quarterly public publications of all government releases and payments to Contractors by the office of the Accountant General (AG), this would promote openness, transparency and accountability and making information accessible by NGOs/CSOs partnering with government to simply contributes their quotas in monitoring and tracking projects and expenditures
3. There is great need for participatory development of Monitoring and Evaluation tools and Implementations plan with clear indicators of measuring success against 2021 budget as this would simplify quarterly reviews and feedback on budget performances timely
4. Agriculture and Health sectors should be prioritise in 2021 budget to mitigate the impact of CONVID-19 pandemic, since the state is experiencing relatively peace for farming activities to strives, this two ministries if well taken care of, would be able to provide the required man power with high IQ because nutritional food is key to healthy people.
5. The state government should ensure automation system of all payments of government for both the federal, state and local government areas, while remitting to each tier what is due for them, as this would block all possible leakages, double taxations and injustice in internally generated revenues for sustainable development.
6. The Bureau for Public Procurement Agency should participatory develop a robust template with NGOs/CBOs, Media and Contractors to ensure inclusiveness, value for money, transparency and accountability for good governance
7. Appropriation of budget should not always be in increasing figure yearly, but focus should be on realistic. The 2021 budget should be based on reality, more so that the 2020 budget implementation suffers setback due to CONVID-19, this may mean that most of the capital projects should be carried over to 2021, while the budget remain same

or less to that of 2020 to avoid budget deficits leading to borrowing to finance such deficits

8. A deliberate strategic effective partnership and collaboration plan should be encouraged and as well reached between the MDAs, Agencies and NGOs/CSOs during the 2021 budget for quality improvement efficient and effective budget development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation for sustainability
9. The state House of Assembly should organise public hearing on budget processes and strategically engage various NGOs/CSOs at their various committee levels for inclusive and high level participatory decision making processes in our modern democracy in 2021 budget process
10. There should be empowerment of CSOs/NGOs to increase awareness and sensitisation of the public on the concept of citizens' budget participation and inclusion
11. That a bottom up approaches to budgetary processes should be promoted and if possible community shadow budget should be encouraged against subsequent year through community needs identifications, prioritisations, action plans and budgeting in partnership/collaboration with CSOs/NGOs in the state
12. A comprehensive environmental impact assessment exercise is necessary and should be conducted by professionals by the government prior implementation of especially construction projects, monitor to ensure strict adherence to recommendations to respect human rights and maintain environmental friendliness in project execution in the state
13. The state should domesticate Open Government Partnership in 2021 budget and ensure that such system functions well.

In conclusion, participants at the meeting believe that if the state government adopt the recommendations for 2021 budget and beyond, we would be able to achieve the following objectives:

- ❖ Understand citizens' budget participation
- ❖ Promote accessibility and transparency in government
- ❖ Improve share, learning and experiences among citizens
- ❖ Promote inclusive people decision about citizens' budget processes and projects

- ❖ Encourage and empower individuals and communities to participate in governance
- ❖ Promote direct involvement of communities particularly in budget decisions
- ❖ Recognize and remove barriers to full and effective participation in governance in Nasarawa State
- ❖ Have a sustainable, transparent, accountable and good governance that is people centeredness

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Signed on behalf of CDC, by:



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