

March 6 2013

COMMUNIQUE OF THE FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY SESSION FOR THE SOUTH WEST ZONE

[I] INTRODUCTION

The Fiscal Responsibility Session for the South West Zone was convened by Centre for Social Justice with the support of the Open Society Initiative for West Africa at the K&S Motel Ibadan on Wednesday March 6 2013. Over 187 participants were drawn from non- governmental organisations, faith based and community based organisations, the media and professional associations.

The Session was convened with the objective of building capacity and a popular mass movement - the Citizens Wealth Platform for fiscal governance interventions especially as it relates to the budget. The expected outputs include increased demand and effective engagement for good fiscal governance by diverse stakeholders under the umbrella of CWP and enlisting members into the CWP as active participants in the fiscal governance process.

Presentations focused on understanding the ambit of possible interventions under the Fiscal Responsibility Act and review of budget tracking strategies with a view to learning from best practices and surmounting challenges.

[II] PARTICIPANTS NOTED THE FOLLOWING

(A). The publication of the capital budget pull out on a geopolitical zone basis for the year 2012 federal budget by Citizens Wealth Platform (CWP) and its importance in providing information for citizens to hold government accountable: The establishment of a functional state level CWP in Ogun State to take fiscal governance activities to the grassroots.

(B). The fact that chapter 2 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 is not justiciable as a basis for the claim of rights, especially economic and social rights.

(C). The constitutional doctrine and practice of checks and balances is lacking at the state level as the executive virtually controls the legislature and the judiciary.

(D). The contradictions, weakness and undemocratic nature of the political system reflects as corruption and impunity in the expenditure and management of public finances.

(E). Corruption has become a way of life and is now perpetrated in hundreds of billions and trillions and this has led to impunity and under-development of the country.

(F). State and local government level budget documents are still unavailable to the public and the opportunities for participation are limited compared to the federal budgeting process.

(G). Statutory provisions under the Fiscal Responsibility Act, Public Procurement Act and the Freedom of Information Act provide opportunities for enhanced civil society work.

(H). CSOs have not utilized their capacities to test and ensure that the fiscal system works and is made more responsive and accountable to the needs of the people, extant laws and policies.

[III] THE PARTICIPANTS THEREAFTER RESOLVED AS FOLLOWS

(A). To fully monitor and report on the implementation and achievements of the 2012 federal capital budget using the capital budget pull out published by Citizens Wealth Platform.

(B). The ongoing constitutional amendment process provides an opportunity for CSOs to make demands to ensure that certain components of chapter 2 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 on economic and social rights are made justiciable including the protection of the rights of people living with disabilities.

(C). Beyond the executive, CSOs should target the legislature and judiciary in their advocacy activities pointing out to them the need to check the fiscal excesses of the executive and to ensure that all state level fiscal actions are in accordance with the Constitution and relevant laws.

(D). Elections provide the opportunity for citizens to vote out any party that fails to reflect the will of the people in governance and nomination of candidates. Any party that lacks internal democracy and imposes candidates without giving the people a choice to vote lays a solid foundation for the executive to subvert the other arms of government. Such a party does not deserve the peoples vote.

(E). FGN should prosecute all persons indicted in various categories of corruption from the oil subsidy scandal and police pension funds, etc.

(F). CSOs should increase the demand for more openness in the budget process at the state and local government levels.

(G). CSOs should devise advocacy to ensure the enactment of state level Fiscal Responsibility and Public Procurement laws and the enforcement of certain provisions of the federal level Fiscal Responsibility Act which applies to states.

(H). CSOs should utilize all legal and legitimate means to fight corruption and impunity including exercising the right to wage a protracted struggle against fiscal tyranny.

(I). CSOs in other South West states should emulate the example of Ogun State and establish a functional state level CWP for engagement of the fiscal governance process.

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