

COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AFTER A ONE-DAY OPEN GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIP SUB-NATIONAL STEPPING DOWN MEETING ORGANISED BY THE AFRICA NETWORK FOR ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMIC JUSTICE, ANEEJ, IN COLLABORATION WITH THE BAYELSA NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS FORUM, BANGOF, HELD AT THE TOP RANK HOTELS GALAXY YENOGA ON MONDAY 16TH JULY, 2018.

Introduction

The meeting was convened for the purpose of stepping down Open Government Partnership, OGP, for Bayelsa state in accordance with the mandate of the Africa Network for Environment & Economic Justice, as co-chair of the National Action Working Group on Anti-Corruption, in collaboration with the Bayelsa Non-Governmental Organisations Forum, BANGOF.

It had in attendance stakeholders from the public and private sectors, community leaders/chiefs, lawmakers and representatives of the attorney General and Commissioner for Justice, Commissioner for Budget and Economic planning.

After presentations and syndicate sessions on the Open Government Partnership with the following sub themes; independent dialogue mechanism for Bayelsa state, the role of CSOs in the drafting of the Bayelsa State Action Plan, SAP, and lapses in the budgetary processes in Bayelsa, the following observations were made:

- (i) Low level awareness of the concept of Open Government Partnership in the state
- (ii) Fiscal Transparency briefings in Bayelsa state are not detailed enough
- (iii) CSOs are excluded from the Transparency briefings
- (iv) Inadequate participation of stakeholders in the budgetary processes.
- (v) There is a huge gap between formulators of the budget and the people
- (vi) NEEDS assessment is not carried out before budgets are prepared.

Consequently participants recommended the following:

- (i) Bayelsa state government and CSOs should ensure proper sensitization on the OGP concept.
- (ii) Bayelsa state government should involve CSOs in the drafting and creation of a timeline for the State Action Plan.
- (iii) Monthly transparency briefing should be more detailed and interactive
- (iv) There should be active CSO participation in the transparency briefing
- (v) Government must ensure proper sensitization of Bayelsans on the budget processes.

- (vi) Government involvement of all stakeholder in the budget process through town hall meeting and public hearing on the budget before the passage
- (vii) The Bayelsa state government must ensure community ownership of projects in Bayelsa, and transparency in the bidding process.
- (viii) Budgetary provisions should be based on community needs assessment
- (ix) The government should have a functional portal where budget document, transparency briefing, procurement processes, auditor general report etc, can easily be accessed by the public

In conclusion, government is encouraged to sign on to the Open Government Partnership (OGP) because it will enhance the government transparency policies, attract foreign direct investments, donor grants and funding.

SIGNED

1. Dr. Oyibo Charles, Habi-Care Foundation
2. Benita Opia, Benny's Development Initiative
3. Mr. Fyne E. A. Otokito, Prissy Foundation
4. Chioma Olele, Care For the Needy Development and Resource Centre
5. Powedei Debekeme, Bayelsa State Facebook Community
6. Torki Dauseye, Family Welfare Foundation
7. Comrd Pricness Egba, Global Care Rescue Mission aka Operation Rescue
8. Philip Godfrey, Person Living Disability (PWD)
9. Inatimi Peter Odio, FACE Initiative