

COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE ONE-DAY MEDIA SENSITIZATION ON FINANCING OF EDUCATION IN RIVERS STATE, 2008.

PREAMBLE:

Civil Society/Media Sensitization Forum on the Financing of Education in Rivers State took place on the 25th April 2008, at Nana's Place, D-Line, Port Harcourt, Rivers State. The forum was organized by CIRDDOC Nigeria in collaboration with PACT Nigeria, and with the support of USAID, under the ADVANCE Project, which ActionAid provided the technical support. Participants for the forum were drawn from Media Houses and Civil Society organization. The objectives of the forum include: -

- (a) To review the state of the media in reporting on the entire budget process, especially as it concerns education budget in Rivers State.
- (b) To review strategies for media advocacies on budget as timely and accurate reporting of the implementation of education budget in Rivers State.
- (c) To assist in budget tracking and monitoring including sectoral allocation to education
- (d) To facilitate and promote an interactive partnership between and civil society organizations.
- (e) To increase the knowledge of participants on the entire budget cycle.
- (f) To encourage the media to write feature article on the issues of budget, with particular reference to education budget in Rivers State.

Papers presented by the Resources persons during the Technical sessions were:

- (a) "The Role of the Media in Monitoring the budget process" by Augusta Akparanta-Emenogu , Acting Coordinator, Advocacy, Awareness and Civic Empowerment Porject, ActionAid Nigeria.
- (b) "Making 2008 Budget Work for Education in Rivers State" by Mr. Obiora Okoli (who stood in for Dr. Chukwuma Agu) of African Institute of Applied Economics, Enugu.

Challenges:

The Media sensitization forum identified several obstacles that militate against the Media participation in the entire budget process as follows:

- (1) Unavailability of budgetary information to the media houses
- (2) Low capacity of the media houses to report effectively on public finance analysis and budget issues
- (3) Low monitoring/follow-up to the budgetary processes on the part of the media houses.
- (4) No adequate feedback mechanism
- (5) Difficulty in getting the government to pay attention on education.
- (6) Non inclusion of media houses on budgetary processes such as public hearing, etc.
- (7) Government owned media houses write to favour the government irrespective of public interest.

- (8) Lack of due process in formulating, passage and implementation of the budget.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Sequel to the challenges identified in the budgetary process in Rivers State, the participants propose the following recommendations, as panacea for ameliorate the above aching conditions in the state:

- 1) The Media houses should train and build capacity of reporters on Public Finance Analysis
- 2) Government should increase education funding of the educational sector in the state to match the UNESCO benchmark of 26% for the sector.
- 3) Government should adopt palliative budget to improve educational disadvantaged local government areas of the state.
- 4) There should increased partnership between CSOs and the Media houses to improve on the issues around budget implementation and evaluation.
- 5) Increase infrastructural allocation to education sector to make the schools conducive for learning, while providing adequate remuneration for the teachers as motivation.
- 6) Budget document should be made available to the media houses to promote accountability and good governance.
- 7) There should be in-depth and investigative reporting on budget issues.
- 8) The State house of Assembly should be alive to its oversight functions especially in the area of monitoring and d implementation of the budget.

Members of the Communique

- | | | | | | |
|-----|---------------------|---|--------|---|-------------------------|
| (1) | David Ahura | - | Chair | - | Independent Monitor |
| (2) | Okoroji Kelechi | - | Member | - | Youth Awareness Project |
| (3) | Vivian-Peace Gboelo | - | Member | - | The Tide |
| (4) | Ekemini Ubong | - | Member | - | Treasure FM Radio |