

**COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE ONE-DAY CIVIL SOCIETY –  
GOVERNMENT FORUM ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EDUCATION  
BUDGET IN RIVERS STATE  
AT NANA’S PLACE, PORT HARCOURT ON 24<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2008**

**PREAMBLE**

Civil Society/Government Forum on the implementation of Education Budget in Rivers State, took place on the 24<sup>th</sup> April, 2008, at **Nana’s Place, D/Line**, Port Harcourt, Rivers State. The forum was organized by **CIRDDOC Nigeria and PACT Nigeria**, with the active support of **USAID**, while **ActionAid** Nigeria provided the technical support. Participants at the forum were drawn from Government Ministries, Civil Society Organizations, Trade Unions and the Media. The objectives of the Forum include:

1. Simplifying budgets and deepening the debate around education budget policies and decisions in Rivers State.
2. Collating and disseminating budget information in the education sector in user-friendly formats.
3. Providing independent critical analysis and advocacy on how the education budget was implemented.
4. Helping to build a culture of accountability in governance
5. Advocating for more access to budget decision-making
6. Mobilizing stakeholders, interest groups and citizens to participate in the budget process so as to enhance education in Rivers State.
7. Providing input into education budget of Rivers State, through existing channels, for instance, submissions to parliamentary committee on education.

Papers presented by the Resource Persons during the Technical Session were:

- (a) **“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* and
- (b) **“Government: Using the budget as a tool for improving the Peoples lives”** by Mrs. Augusta Akparanta-Emenogu, Acting Coordinator, Advocacy, Awareness and Civic Empowerment Project, ActionAid Nigeria.

These recommendations provided the background for very participatory deliberations. In course of the deliberations, the forum re-emphasized the importance of education in the lives of the individuals and the society in general. It agreed that education can be used as a visa to move out of poverty. It also agreed that a good budget that is well implemented and monitored could lead to the provision of quantitative and qualitative education.

**CHALLENGES**

The forum identified several obstacles and challenges hindering the entire budget process, among these were:

- (a) Secrecy in the formulation and implementation of the budget
- (b) Lack of popular participation of the citizens in the budget process
- (c) Lack of transparency and accountability in the entire budget cycle
- (d) Resistance to change by those on the driving seats
- (e) Inability to adopt new strategies
- (f) Lack of due process in formulation and implementation of budgets
- (g) Several inherent problems in the budget process
- (h) Lack of consensus to improve budget process

## **RECOMMENDATION/SOLUTIONS**

For the purposes of ensuring the realization of budget objectives on education in Rivers State, the forum issued and adopted the following recommendations:

- (a) That there should be increased budgetary allocations to all key sector of our national development in line with MDGs objectives
- (b) There should be culture of transparency, accountability and probity in our budgetary process as a way of enhancing good governance and democracy.
- (c) Mobilizing and encouraging stakeholders, interest groups, citizens to participate in the budget process, so as to enhance education in Rivers State is crucial.
- (d) Establishing consistency among strategies and policies being presented in different documentation, including the budget at various levels is vital.
- (e) Efforts should be made for inputs and for the strengthening the consultative process of preparing National Poverty Reduction Strategies.
- (f) Facilitating inter-ministerial co-operation among key agencies for establishing clear and strong linkages between planning, programming and budgeting.
- (g) Fostering partnership with government, civil society organizations, the media and the beneficiaries in the formulation and implementation of poverty reduction policies is imperative.
- (h) Budget document should be made available to the general public, as this will promote transparency and accountability in governance.
- (i) Formation of Budget Monitoring Committee made up of civil society, traditional rulers, town Union Executives and government officials.
- (j) Strict adherence to budgetary allocations by ensuring that funds are spent as allocated on projects.
- (k) Budgetary allocations to Ministry of education should be implemented by education officials to ensure proper monitoring and accountability.
- (l) Budgets should be comprehensive, encompassing of all fiscal operations of government as well as being flexible to suit the dynamics of changing situations.

The Members of the Communiqué Committee were:

- (1) Hon. Emeka Chibuke CJC- Chair – CIRDDOC Nigeria
- (2) Mrs. Theresa Onuoha (Member) - Ministry of Women Affairs Rivers state
- (3) Tamunoala Bright (Member) - Youth Awareness Project
- (4) Stephen Obodoekwe (Member) – National Point