

**MINUTES OF CONSULTATIVE MEETING WITH CIVIL SOCIETY
ORGANIZATIONS (CSOs) ON YEAR 2020 REVISED BUDGET, HELD ON
5TH MAY, 2020, AT GOSHEN HOTEL, LOKOJA, KOGI STATE.**

1.0.0 PREAMBLE

1.0.1 The meeting with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), was organized as part of the ongoing consultations with stakeholders on the review of 2020 Approved Budget, necessitated by the effects of COVID-19 pandemic, which caused significant shortfalls in revenues (statutory transfer and IGR) and altered the State development priorities. Basically, therefore, the meeting was to obtain the inputs of the CSOs in the revised Budget. In the last few years, the CSOs have made very useful contributions to the budgeting process, particularly in the areas of drawing attention to areas that needed greater attention and what we needed to get right, to improve the budgeting processes.

2.0.0 MINUTES OF THE MEETING

2.0.1 The meeting commenced at 1:31PM with a prayer by Mr. Mathias A. Okpanachi-the Executive Director, Youth and Women's Health Employment Initiative (YAWHEI).

3.0.0 OPENING REMARKS

3.0.1 The Hon. Commissioner of Finance, Budget and Economic Planning, Mukadam Asiwaju Ashiru Idris welcomed participants to the meeting. He said CSOs were partners in progress, because we shared the common goals of improving the quality of life of the people through the application of best practices. He said further that, over the years, Government had improved its processes of Service delivery to the people based on comments and contributions of the CSOs, saying Government shall continue to listen to them, in the belief that, by so doing, it would always add value to the quality of life of our people.

3.0.2 Speaking on the ongoing COVID-19 induced revenue losses and changes in priorities, the Commissioner said the assumptions that informed the preparation

of year 2020 approved Budget were no longer feasible. For instance, he said, the Budget was prepared on crude oil benchmark of \$57 Dollars per barrel but the price had now fallen to less than \$20 Dollars. In the same vein, the exchange rate was projected at N305/\$ but had now risen to N360/\$, saying these were not good signs to sustain the implementation of approved Budget. According to the Commissioner, the projected statutory transfer and IGR were no longer realizable due to several factors such as lockdown, which had restricted movements such as air travel, road travels, inter state movements, opening of businesses, closure of schools, markets etc.

3.0.3 The Commissioner stressed that Government was compelled to commence discussions to adjust the 2020 approved Budget due to the reduced revenue and the challenges emerging from the effects of COVID-19 pandemic. He continued that the overwhelming challenges experienced in the Health sector and the informal sector required enormous resources. Accordingly, he said, Government was planning to earmark funds towards upgrading the State Specialist Hospital, completion of the Diagnostic Center while plans were at advanced stage to build a new Hospital in the Central part of the State. To this effect, Government was proposing a Draft Revised 2020 Budget of Prosperity of N102,123,091,931 from the earlier approved Budget of N176,123,091,931, representing 42.02% reduction. He further emphasized that, the Federal Government had revised its Budget assumptions which led to the downward review of the National Budget with the consequential effects on the State Budget, as the States depended largely on the Federal Transfer, to fund its budget. He, however, stated that expenditure leg of the revised budget needed to be widely discussed with the relevant stakeholders including the CSOs, to ensure that government priorities truly reflected the priorities of the people at this time of serious health and economic crisis.

3.0.4 In his remarks, the Commissioner of Information and Communication, Evangelist Kingsley Fanwo, commended the initiative to engage CSOs, saying it would improve participatory governance and best practices. He expressed appreciation to the Commissioner of Finance, Budget and Economic Planning and his team, for the initiative to review the 2020 Approved Budget since it had become practically impossible to finance a Budget of over N176 Billion due to COVID triggered revenue losses. He informed the meeting that, Government focus was to address the most important issues of sustaining Kogites by providing palliatives in

form empowerments to ensure Food security, and improvement in Health care services. He concluded by stressing the need to have a robust and efficient health care delivery system and a properly developed Agricultural system in order to attain food sufficiency.

3.0.5 The Commissioner of Rural Development, Hon. Daniel O'Neal Ejigbo, on his part, agreed with the comments of his colleagues. He, however, informed the meeting that, the Ministry of Rural Development, through RAMP, a World Bank supported project, would be reaching out to people via welfare, rural roads and agriculture programmes. He said his Ministry had also taken the steps to encourage people to triumph over the pandemic by being innovative and resourceful.

3.0.6 In his own comments, the State SFTAS Coordinator (World Bank Assisted), Mr. E.O Bayode, said Government was not resting on its oars, as it would continue to implement measures that would shift attention to seeking alternative sources of revenue in the face of dwindling revenues from the traditional sources. He said the State was able to attract a grant of \$8.8 Million US Dollars through the SFTAS programme performance based grant for 2018, which was conducted in 2019 and released in 2020. He said SFTAS was a performance based grant with the overall envelope of \$750 million US Dollars, available to all eligible states of the Federation over a period of 4 years, with a maximum yearly grants of \$18.5 million per state, if all the Disbursement Linked Indicators were met. He said, the State was doing its best to ensure it maximize this opportunity to support activities in the key sectors of the state economy. He advised CSOs to make meaningful contributions that would help address COVID-19 induced issues.

3.0.7 The Project Coordinator, Search for Common Ground (SFCG), Mrs. Gift Omoniwa appreciated the State Government for improving its processes of service delivery to the people based on comments, inputs and criticism by the CSOs. She expressed delight that, the process was getting better, even though we were not where we want to be yet. She recalled the demand by CSOs for Town Hall meetings on budget, preparation of the Citizens Budget and the need to expand the scope of the Town Hall meetings to the senatorial districts during the 2019 Stakeholders meeting on Budget, which were heeded and implemented by Government. She said these actions were affirmation of the fact that, Government was listening to the people. Finally, she advised Government to sustain cordial relationship with

CSOs because they were very closed to the grassroots and could provide pool of opinion that would help Government to improve its Budget processes.

3.0.8 The Executive Director, Initiative for Grassroot Advancement (INGRA), Hamza Aliyu, commended the willingness of the Government to engage CSOs in the Budget process and that no matter the outcome, the engagement was important. He also advised that a constitutional framework be put in place to ensure the continuity of this process. On accessibility of Budget documents, he commended Government for making the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF), Multi-Year Budget Framework (MYBF) etc publicly available on the State official website and Ministry's website. He, however, advised Government to re-strategize on the 2020 revised Budget in order to deal effectively with the effects of COVID-19 Pandemic.

4.0.0 COMMENTS, SUGGESTIONS AND RESPONSES.

4.0.1 In his contribution, Amabi O. John, Executive Director- (FEPFL), advised Government to balance its response on COVID-19 pandemic, saying provisions should be made to strengthen the Agricultural sector. He said critical farm inputs such as seeds, pesticides, fertilizer etc. should be made available to farmers at the right time. He advised that, CSOs should be involved in the drive to generate revenue. He said Kogi State was losing close to Fifty Million Naira (N50 m) annually despite the fact that, the program was developed in Kogi State. He concluded that, meeting with CSOs should not only be about how to allocate resources to the different sectors but also about how to generate revenues.

4.0.2 Abaniwo C. Nathaniel, Executive Director-Rehoboth Community Advancement Initiative (RECAN) expressed concern on the allocation made in the 2020 budget for children activities. He called on Government to do more to increase budgetary allocation for the development of children including ensuring that such allocations were released for the purposes meant. He called for the funding of children day celebrations, address the problem of street begging, and issues of orphans. He said the budget revision exercise should be used to improve children related issues.

4.0.3 Comrade Rajan Suleiman, Executive Director-Development and Female Gender Initiative (DEGENDER) said that, since the Budget review mostly affects the expenditure leg of the Budget, attention should be focused on the Health sector

which bears the bulk of the expenses. He said, the Primary Health Care Centers in the rural areas should be equipped and funded through the Drug revolving fund in order to reduce pressure on state Hospitals and reduce cost of providing health services.

4.0.4 Steve O. Salawu, Executive Director-CEPAT, observed that, though Kogi State was yet to record any index case of COVID-19, its effects, had reduced the standard of living of the people. He called on Government to provide Palliatives to alleviate the hardship resulting from this global pandemic. He also observed that Kogi State had no Government funded school for the Deaf and Blind and advised that it should be established to cater for the Vulnerable in the society. Furthermore, he advised that, the standard at the State Specialist Hospital be upgraded to meet up with the current reality. On Conditional Cash Transfer, he advised Government to key into program in order to serve as a take-off grants especially for the over one thousand trainees sponsored by the State Government in the Nigeria-Korea Friendship Institute. He expressed concern on the absence of members of the House Committee on Finance and Appropriation from this meeting and advised they should be invited in the subsequent meetings.

4.0.5 Halima. O. Sadiq, Executive Director-PIBCID, commended the State Government for organizing this meeting. She said the effects of COVID-19 which had reduced the expected revenues, should be used to channel more resources to agriculture, especially women in Agriculture and Youth Farmers since they cut across the 21 Local Government Areas of the State in order to tackle post-COVID-19 challenges. On Health, she advised that Government should focus on reviving Health Centers in the Local Government Areas by properly funding and equipping them to tackle the imminent challenges.

4.0.6 Umar Danasabe Muhammed, Executive Director-HAADI, expressed concern on the State inability to meet the Maputo Declaration of 10% allocation to the Agriculture sector. He called on Government to prioritize Agriculture by meeting the 10% Allocation to the sector. He said the challenge in the Agriculture sector also included lack of releases of the allocated funds, requesting Government to ensure prompt releases of budgetary allocations to Agric. He called for Agric. to be prioritized post COVID-19 in order to guarantee food security in the State.

4.0.7 Reuben Joshua, Chief of Party-African Youth Growth Foundation (AYGF) observed that post-COVID-19, there would be increase in social vices like cultism, kidnapping, ritual killings, armed robbery etc. He advised Government to effectively engage the Youths by developing Youth Development Programmes such as skill acquisition to counter these negative tendencies.

4.0.8 Odok Katherine Banku, Project Officer-Socio-Economic Research and Development Centre, informed the meeting that, there was no awareness creation on children living with Autism in Kogi State. She emphasized that, such children would do well if given the right Health care and development support. She called on Government to establish a Centre for Information on Autistic Disorder in the State. She stressed the need to train and re-train special care givers as well as customize their educational system to accommodate Autistic Children and the provision of learning Aids to support their Education. She also observed that the Rehabilitation Centers were inactive, as there was the need to train and re-train the staffers and also equip the centers. She concluded her contribution by advising Government to convert the prevalence of floods in the state into dams to support all-year farming as a way of generating revenue.

4.0.9 Idris Ozovehe Muraina, Executive Director-(RECEF), expressed appreciation to Government for its openness to discuss the Budget. He observed that the COVID-19 Pandemic had opened up a wide space for Government to perform. He called for economic diversification and improve the Agricultural sector. He said the issues with the health sector should be tackled from the grassroots by funding and equipping Primary Health Centers at the rural areas to tackle any health related issue.

4.0.10 Mathias A. Okpanachi, Executive Director-(YAWHEI) advised Government to properly equip and fund Hospitals and primary Health care at the rural areas as part of the preparedness to check the effects of COVID-19 pandemic.

5.0.0 Responding, the Commissioner of Finance, Budget and Economic Planning, Mukadam Asiwaju Ashiru Idris emphasized the importance of the meeting with CSOs, which he said was to ensure the inclusive review of the Budget.

He told the meeting that, all information relating to the progress already made with regards to revision exercise were publicly available on the State websites. He called on the CSOs to be more active on the state website, saying such would help

improve participation while also cutting cost, particularly now that, the revenues were on the downward trend.

5.0.1 On the issue of Capital Projects, he stated that Government was interested in prioritizing activities that would support the poor and vulnerable, especially in Health, Agriculture and Education while other non-too essential ones would be rolled over to the next Budget cycle. He explained that Government had already made some progress in addressing issues raised on Children, Health and Education. He called on the meeting to follow the progress online, to enable them contribute maximally, particularly the recently uploaded Innovative First Quarter Budget Performance Reports.

5.0.2 On Agriculture, he affirmed the Maputo Declaration, saying the issue was not just budgetary provision and release of funds but the overall performance of the sector. He explained that as at the First Quarter, 2% of the Budget size had been spent on Agriculture, saying if the trend was maintained, at the end of the year, 6% or 7 % of the budget size would have been spent on the sector, which would be encouraging.

5.0.3 He stated further that, 90% of the revenue for the state went into the payment of salaries, wages and pensions. He said, out of the sum of 3.4 Billion Naira received as state allocation for the month of April, 2020, 3.2 Billion Naira was spent on Salaries, Wages and Pension. However, he said, this situation could be exploited for the benefit of the people, saying the State had abundant cultivable land and Civil Servants were permitted by law to farm. He said Government would partner with CBN to provide farm inputs like Fertilizer, Hoes, Cutlasses, Pesticides, Herbicides etc. He said this process had already begun, as the staff had been profiled.

5.0.4 He said, in order to save for the future, the State had opened a Stabilization Fund Account where 5 to 7% of the IGR would be remitted.

5.0.5 On the State Specialist Hospital, he stated that the sum of N800 Million Naira would be committed to the rehabilitation of the Hospital while 50% of the money would also be made available to support Medical Doctors, Consultants and other health workers on the frontline of this pandemic, as Hazard allowance. He said the State Diagnostic Centre was also receiving attention while the sum of 2.5 Billion had been earmarked for the upgrade of the General Hospital in the Central into

Specialist Hospital as well as the sum of 1 Billion for the three zonal Hospitals in the East, West and Central.

5.0.6 On the COVID-19 Action Recovery and Economic Stimulus, he explained that the sum of 1.5 Billion Dollars would be made available by the World Bank for Agriculture, Rural Roads, Health etc. He, therefore, called on the CSOs to come up with plans and ideas on how to access the fund.

5.0.7 On Youth Engagement, he said the Government had trained 1050 youths but there was the need for counterpart funding to continue. He said, another proposal had been sent to the Federal Government on the engagement of 21 thousand youths in Agriculture and the target was to cultivate 21 thousand hectares of land, 1 hectare per Local Government Area, saying a budget line had already been created for it. He said the documentations had been forwarded to the Presidency and guarantee had been obtained while estimate of inputs concluded.

5.0.8 In conclusion, he said it was important for the Budget to be as realistic as possible, calling on CSOs to partner with Government for the development of the state. He promised Government would continue to adjust its priorities in line with changes in the needs of the people.

5.0.9 Also responding, the Commissioner for Information and Communication, Hon. Kingsley Fanwo challenged CSOs to push Government to stop giving out lazy Palliatives. He explained that the best palliative would be to empower Households and Farmers to produce more. He also stated that the state would do everything possible to conserve the energy of the Youth and to unleash it positively for the benefit of the State. In conclusion, he said that, a platform would be opened to generate ideas that would address the issue of Autism in the State.

6.0.0 CLOSING REMARKS

6.0.1 The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Finance, Budget and Economic Planning, Jimoh A. Mohammed thanked all the participants. In particular, he expressed appreciation to Government for ensuring participatory development. He commended the CSOs for their contributions and objective criticism. He promised that all contributions and observations would be acted on. He said the draft Revised Budget would most likely be presented to the State House of Assembly on 19th of

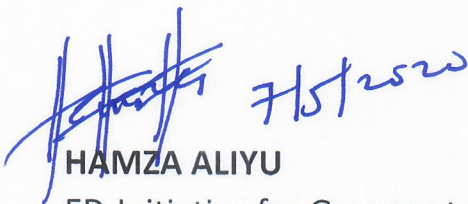
May, 2020 for its consideration and approval. He closed the meeting with a prayer at 4.11 PM.



MUKADAM ASIWAJU ASIRU IDRIS
Hon. Commissioner of Finance, Budget
and Economic Planning
(CHAIRMAN)



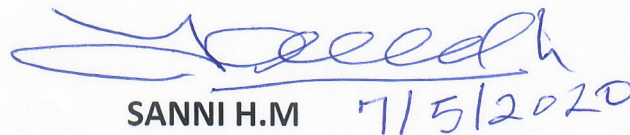
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