

ROUNDTABLE ON MAINSTREAMING REVENUE TRANSPARENCY IN ELECTION 2007: PROMOTING REVENUE TRANSPARENCY IN ELECTION 2007: ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR PWYP NIGERIA

Introductions: Eve Thompson of Pact and David Ugolor of ANEEJ are introduced

Goodwill Message from Eve Thompson:

Pact is a grant-making partner of USAID. Ms. Thompson applauds the diversity of organizations represented. She is learning about the challenges in Nigeria as Pact supports advocacy around extractive industries. Ms. Thompson applauds PWYP's intervention in the electoral process and encourages the concern in the electoral process of voter education. Pact seeks to support the process of discourse on issues. The focus, Ms. Thompson observed, seems to be on the origin of the candidate, rather than the issues that must be addressed like poverty and the utilization of resource revenues to address this. Ms. Thompson encourages holding elected officials accountable. Ms. Thompson concluded by thanking David and ANEEJ for organizing the event.

Presentation by David Ugolor:

David Ugolor extends his thanks to Pact. The impetus for the meeting came from a meeting with Pact on the elections and the notion that Pact's emphasis on elections should be reflected throughout civil society. Ms. Thompson approved the budget and ANEEJ is grateful for Pact's efforts to realize the meeting. The key points in a strategy forward to the elections and beyond will be fleshed out as a result of this meeting. One key point is NEITI. The Hart Group Audit report is also significant. The results of the audit raised questions about transparency in the oil industry and government. PWYP seeks to get politicians to respond to the Hart Group report's issues, also as aspirants to contest the election. Publish what you *spend* is the key strand of PWYP: budget tracking. Oil revenues must benefit people. Opening public finances to scrutiny is key. The use of disclosures of federal transfers is not resulting in development. The PEMFAR exercise revealed that the recovered loot was only marginally used for development. As a world first, the National Network on Stolen Assets lobbied the Swiss Government to return the loot and then monitored its use. It was found that even a Local Government Area cited as recipient of development funding sourced from the recovered loot, did not exist. The framework for accountability à la OSOPADEC is another issue. NEEDS is a strategy framework for reform and transparency, but the issue is its implementation by politicians. How can PWYP insure that the institutions fighting for transparency survive the transition post-elections, insuring that the coming elected officials buy into the ideas of reform? What are the challenges to anti-corruption? Voter cards have been held up. It seems that enlightened people are effectively excluded from voter registration by the time

involved. Cynicism is another resistance to change. Elections that are fair and free begin with fair and free promotion of candidates. Here David Ugolor mentions his role in putting Pastor Innocent Adjenughure into contact with influential people. He cites that we can thus initiate our own agenda; PWYP can create high-profile candidates.

What are the candidates' positions on reforms? Can PWYP influence the political parties? How can PWYP and civil society continue to influence reforms? Can PWYP initiate a policy dialogue with politicians to ensure their understanding of the issues surrounding NEITI? And, regarding similar transparency reforms, can the aspirants/coming administrations appreciate the groundwork that led to reforms?

Comments:

- 1) The speaker comments that access to voter registration is hampered by lack of (voter) machinery. Also, education of voters and monitoring of votes. Godfatherism: the appointment of candidates is another problem.
- 2) Political culture in Nigeria: participation is declining. The quality of participants is likewise declining due to apathy and cynicism. Suggestion: not just political education for common people but also targeting the political elite who have become dispirited.
- 3) Comments by the Edo State Chairman of the National Conscience Party covered the strategies to hold candidates accountable: issues are not discussed, politicians shy away from the facts. The speaker enumerated his party's platform and suggests that candidates should attest to an oath. What can PWYP do? The NCP has the answers in their platform. The Chairman enumerated his party's platform on health, education, and employment.
- 4) Ogazi Emeke spoke about the designing of a framework for sustainable development in Ebonyi State and thus giving impetus for partnering with PWYP. Mr. Emeke lists the chain of events his organisation experienced in confronting government to employ revenues towards development.
- 5) The speaker encourages decentralisation of PWYP according to regional issues. He mentions the disillusionment among politicians and suggests meeting with them, getting them to sign a non-violence pact. What is lacking is popular participation. This hinders political momentum to effect change. Lack of civil society participation in the NEITI process was also mentioned. The speaker advocates a human rights based approach written into the NEITI Bill. The EFCC has not been independent: civil society must address the EFCC Bill.
- 6) Voter registration has been racked with fraud. The speaker advocates "transparency education" so any aspirant can engage in discourse on the issues. The speaker proposes that this education be followed up with a debate to prove that the aspirant is conversant on transparency issues.
- 7) The speaker calls on politicians to address poverty in the coming election.

- 8) The speaker made the following suggestions: 1) PWYP should have consultation with INEC; 2) a body examining political and electoral fraud should be established; 3) in engaging INEC, inform them that civil society WILL be monitoring elections and inform the international community of findings, because the Federal Government responds to this pressure; 4) states' use of the 13% derivation fund should be published monthly; 5) PWYP should consult with political parties.
- 9) PWYP should meet with aspirants at all levels to enlighten them and secure their commitment to hold them accountable.
- 10) PWYP should remember its main objectives of revenue transparency by mapping out members' capacities and secure the involvement of professional bodies to make inputs. Rather than just initial emotional responses, we need expertise in oil industry accounting. PWYP should create a common template for engaging the masses, politicians, etc.
- 11) There should be advocacy concerning the security at the state and local levels during the election. There must be instituted a scoring process to evaluate politicians' performance. PWYP should build capacity among NGOs in other regions to engage them in budget monitoring. The speaker calls upon Pact to decentralise funding.
- 12) Rigging: NGOs must examine INEC officials neutrality: are they independent? The speaker also suggests the creation of an intelligence unit to investigate politicians.
- 13) The speaker advocates including political campaign finance monitoring into PWYP activities: the development of a mechanism to track what is spent by aspirants.
- 14) PWYP and civil society must acknowledge time and resource constraints, prioritising, for example, voter registration: the process of rigging is already on! Start with itemising priorities now!
- 15) PWYP should focus on monitoring oil revenue financing of political campaigns.

Panel Discussion:

The panel discussion began with the introduction of its participants Mrs. Abiola Akiyode, Mr. John Ikubaje and Dr. Sylvester Odion-Akhaine.

Mrs Akiyode stated that the issues are 1) transparency of the political process, 2) the Constitution and the rule of law, 3) impunity, 4) corruption and poverty, 5) stakeholder and community participation. The political process is quite fraudulent, according to Mrs. Akiyode. Is the aspirant accountable? Most are not, was her assessment. The politicians of Delta State are in the pocket of the oil companies. Corrupt practices exacerbate poverty. Revenues are going to certain portions of the country but not to the poor. Lacking awareness, the relevant stakeholders don't properly challenge corrupt leadership. Women are not in a position to influence the process of decision-making with regard to revenue transparency. Mrs. Akiyode relates the story of a rural woman who asked who

she should vote for and she didn't know how to answer. Is there a viable alternative among political candidates? She suggests a checklist be developed so Nigerians can assess the integrity and qualifications of the candidate.

John Ikubaje asked what the role of PWYP is in the electoral process and suggested a possible point of entry: both the monies of the INEC and those of political parties come from extractive revenues. These are the entry points for PWYP to examine the political parties' process. Rigging is one issue. The effect of poverty results in voters voting against their conscience. Here is the issue of protection the electoral mandate. We must exploit the power relationship in the pre-electoral period: here it is the electorate that is the powerful party. This is a situation that can be exploited by civil society. The pre-electoral period can open an opportunity for PWYP to challenge aspirant's knowledge of the issues. Civil society can also exploit the influence of IFIs to install conditionalities on monies. Civil society can engage the media. It can create a contract with politicians prior to elections that can be used to hold them accountable post-election. Mr. Ikubaje proposes creating a social contract between civil society and politicians that could result in impeachment if breached.

Dr. Odion refers to the linkage between elections and revenue transparency. He asks whether the Nigerian system is open to scrutiny. The state and the major economic players are all rent-seeking. Top officials are involved in bunkering. Are officials accountable for these illegal rents? Privatisation is a means of legalising corruption. Dr. Odion advocates auditing of political parties and the INEC. There should be horizontal accountability among political parties. Politicians know how to exploit the poverty of voters. But meeting the basic needs of citizens reduces their vulnerability to political manipulation. Dr. Odion suggests that party members themselves should hold their party's candidates accountable.

Comments to panel discussions:

- 1) Primitive accumulation is the motive for seeking political office, not serving the public good.
- 2) A possible instrument for promoting accountability among elected officials is to enforce a one-month education to learn basic responsibilities. Audit the accounts of parties and the publication of their accounts. Transparency of party funds, subject to peer review, is another option. There is the need to empower indigenous institutions to monitor electoral transparency.
- 3) PWYP must adopt the role of educating the masses on the issue of political "imposition." To penetrate the political class, masses must counter imposed leaders.
- 4) The Chairman of NCP suggests taking this conference to other regions to broaden awareness.