



**CHANGE BEGINS WITH ME**

# THE IMPERATIVE OF DEVELOPING A SUSTAINABLE FRAMEWORK FOR CITIZENS ENGAGEMENT WITH GOVERNMENT TOWARDS NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

**Presented by**

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# Introduction

- The world over, constitutional democracies derive their essence from the sovereign status conferred on citizens in the political and governance process.
- This sovereignty finds expression in the preferences that citizens make in the choices of those they desire should represent them in the management of human, material and financial resources.
- On this score, elected representatives and by extension, government, merely hold in trust the reins of power for the citizens; and are therefore obligated to be responsive to their frustrations, fears, hopes and aspirations.

# Intro...

- Additionally, this imposes on government the responsibility to render stewardship to citizens on the mandate freely given government to superintend over our commonwealth for our common good.
- In other words, citizens, by virtue of their sovereignty, are the subjects and not the objects of the governance process.
- Regrettably, quite a number of governments, the world over, struggle to win the confidence and enlist the good will of their citizens largely owing to the ominous chasm created between citizens and government as a result of insufficient information flow.

# Intro...

- If it is true that citizens participation in governance is the defining feature in every democracy, alienating them from the governance process is inevitably perilous to good governance in several ways.
- Besides providing fertile ground for rumor to thrive, it erodes citizens confidence in government and the governance process and compromises transparency and accountability standards in governance, thus, stultifying prospects for national development.

# Intro...

- I believe that it is in order to forestall such tendency and also to deepen robust citizen engagement with government that the Bureau for Public Service Reforms has thoughtfully provided this platform, so we can converse around **The Imperative of Developing A Sustainable Framework For Citizens Engagement With Government Towards National Development .**
- Let me therefore commend the Bureau for the germaneness of the topic and the aptness of the discourse.

# Intro...

- It is my hope therefore, that at the end of my presentation, I would not only have added value to what you already understand citizen engagement entails, but would also have stimulated us to take practical steps as citizens at ensuring that we catalyze and also drive the engagement process in order that our democracy is further deepened and citizens are better served.

# Conceptualising Citizen Engagement

- Citizen engagement is a process by which the government and civil society open dialogue, establish partnerships, share information and otherwise interact to design, implement and evaluate development policies, projects and programs that require the involvement and commitment of all interested parties, including, among others, the poor and traditionally marginalized groups.



# Conceptualising Citizen Engagement...

- Citizens' engagement is as old as humanity
- It is a basic principle of democracy because governments derive their authority and power from the people
- Citizens have the right and responsibility to demand accountability and ensure that government acts in the best interest of the people
- Government is therefore under obligation to respond to the needs of citizens in fulfillment of the social contract that exists between the two entities.

# Conceptualising Citizen Engagement...

- To this extent, citizens play a critical role in advocating and helping to make public institutions more transparent and accountable.
- They also contribute innovative solutions to complex development challenges.
- This is precisely what Open Government Partnership (OGP) seeks to achieve.

# The OGP and its Principles

- The Open Government Partnership (OGP) was launched on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2011 to provide an international platform for domestic reformers to make their governments more open, accountable and responsive to citizens. The partnership is governed by four key principles:
- **Transparency:** Information on government activities and decisions is open, comprehensive, timely and freely available to the public, and meets basic open data standards.

# The OGP and its Principles...

- **Accountability:** Rules, regulations, and mechanisms are in place that call upon government actors to justify their actions, act upon criticisms or requirements made of them and accept responsibility for failure to perform.
- **Citizen Participation:** Governments seek to mobilize citizens to engage in public debate, provide input, and make contributions that lead to more responsive and effective governance.

# The OGP and its Principles...

- **Technology and Innovation:** Governments embrace the importance of new technologies in driving innovation, providing citizens with open access to technology, and increasing their capacity to use technology.

# Founding Governments

- Brazil
- Indonesia
- Philippines
- Mexico
- Norway
- South Africa
- United Kingdom
- United States
- Since its launching, number of countries has risen to 75

# Eligibility Criteria

- Country must
  - Embrace open government declaration
  - Develop a National Action Plan with concrete open government reform commitments developed with public consultation
  - Be committed to independent reporting on progress.
  - Exhibit a demonstrated commitment to open government in four key areas namely:

# Eligibility Criteria...

- ❑ **Fiscal transparency**- There should be timely publication of essential budget documents.
- ❑ **Access to information** - There should be an access to information law that guarantees the public's right to information.
- ❑ **Income and asset disclosure** - There should be rules that require public disclosure of income and assets for elected and senior public officials.
- ❑ **Citizen engagement** - There should be basic protections for civil liberties and an openness to citizen engagement and participation in policymaking and governance.



# OGP In Nigeria

- On 11<sup>th</sup> May 2016, President Muhammadu Buhari had announced at the Conference on tackling corruption organised at the Marlborough house in the UK that Nigeria will join the OGP
- On 27<sup>th</sup> July 2016, Nigeria joined the OGP as its 70<sup>th</sup> member and submitted its two-year National Action Plan (NAP) to the OGP international Secretariat in December 2016 at the fourth OGP Summit held in Paris, France.
- Central to the implementation of the OGP, is the principle of co-creation

# OGP In Nigeria...

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- Consequently, Nigeria established a 42-member National Steering Committee made up of 21 members from Government and 21 from Civil Society and the Private Sector.

# OGP and Citizen Engagement

- Requires Civil Society and Government working together to:
  - Disseminate information
  - Create spaces and platforms for dialogue
  - Co-ownership and joint decision-making

# NOA and Citizen Engagement

- The National Orientation Agency is the Lead Agency for **Commitment 12** which is to: “Develop a permanent dialogue mechanism on transparency, accountability and good governance between citizens and government to facilitate a culture of openness.”
- It is also one of the supporting MDAs for **Commitment 11**, which is to: “Improve compliance of public institutions with Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) with respect to proactive disclosure provisions and stipulating mandatory publication requirements.”

# NOA and Citizen Engagement...

## □ Purpose – To address

- Non-inclusiveness of citizens in the governance process.
- Paucity of knowledge about governance activities by citizens
- Apathy of citizens with respect to governance issue
- Poor knowledge of existing citizens' rights
- Lack of access to government data.

# NOA and Citizen Engagement...

## □ Objectives:

- To give citizens a voice in governance and make government more responsive to their priorities.
- To build mutual trust and confidence between government and citizens.
- To promote improved service delivery.

# NOA and Citizen Engagement...

## □ **Expected Outcomes:**

- Increased participation of citizens in governance
- Increased responsiveness by government to the people's needs
- Improved service delivery to citizens

# NOA and Citizen Engagement...

## □ **Performance Indicators:**

- Proportion of MDA's policies and plan that reflect citizens voices
- Proportion of MDA budgets that reflect citizens views
- Number of citizens fora held in key service MDAs like transport, power, BOF, FIRS, CAC, BPP, NEITI et c
- Number of public hearing conducted in parliament leading to possible amendment of laws
- Number of Town Hall Meetings held leading to greater community participation.



# Sustainable Framework For Citizen Engagement

- **Local Government Assembly:** This is a community dialogue session between government and citizens to discuss issues that affect them. This is held at least once every year in each of the 774 LGAs in Nigeria



# Sustainable Framework For Citizen Engagement...

- **Peace and Security Platform:** The engagement with citizens on this platform is aimed at purging Nigerians of hate speeches, ethnicity and religious bigotry which tend to divide the nation and also slow down overall progress on policy and programmes implementation across the country. It is held at least once in each of the six geo-political zones of the country every year.

# Sustainable Framework For Citizen Engagement...

- DG, NOA and WAI Brigade Volunteers at Peace and Security Platform



# Sustainable Framework For Citizen Engagement...

- **Town Hall Meetings:** This is a platform for interaction between the electorate and their representatives at the state level. The interaction affords citizens the opportunity to engage representatives on a wide range of policy issues and particularly, budget related issues. It is held at least once in each of the six geo-political zones yearly.

# Sustainable Framework For Citizen Engagement...

- **NOA-Civil Society Roundtable:** This Roundtable session offers a platform to discuss government policies and activities around;
  - Corruption
  - Good Governance
  - Security
- It holds at least once in a quarter so as to cross-fertilise ideas on topical governance issues. This also opens a window for citizens' input into the governance process.

# Some Citizen Engagement Tools

## □ **The Freedom of Information Act**

- A potent tool for citizen engagement and the promotion of transparency, accountability and citizen voices in the governance process
- NOA has
  - ✓ Translated the Act into 21 indigenous languages
  - ✓ Trained 2,462 people (NOA staff and other citizens) to drive the grassroots sensitization in 159 Local Government Areas in 9 pilot States and the FCT.
  - ✓ Held 915 grassroots public sensitization activities using Theatre for Development and Community Dialogue Sessions in 876 communities across the 9 Pilot States and the FCT.

# FoIA Sensitisation at Bokkos LGA of Plateau State



# FoIA Sensitisation at Akuku-Toru LGA of Rivers State





# FoIA Sensitisation at Makarfi LGA of Kaduna State



# Some Citizen Engagement Tools...

## □ **Budget Tracking Template**

- An effective budget monitoring and tracking instrument produced by civil society in collaboration with the National Assembly to:
  - ✓ Enhance citizen participation in governance
  - ✓ Promote accountability and transparency
  - ✓ Ensure prudent and judicious use of funds
  - ✓ Ensure value for money
  - ✓ Strengthen citizens to complement NASS oversight functions

# Some Citizen Engagement Tools...



- NOA uses this instrument to track budget implementation in 774 LGA and provides feedback to NASS, and State Assemblies to complement its oversight functions.

# Critical Posers

- How many MDAs in the auditorium have established Fol committees as required under Act?
- How many MDAs have done proactive disclosure as required under the Act?
- How many of us have read provisions of the FOLA?
- How many of us have invoke provisions of the FOLA in exercise of their right to know and to advance the frontiers of citizen engagement?
- How many of us have bothered to ask questions about their constituency projects?

# Critical Posers...

- How many of us are aware of how to access our National or State Budgets online?
- How many of us try to interrogate our National, State and Local Government budgets?
- How many of us take advantage of the public hearings sessions organised by State and National legislators on budgets.
- How many of us engage our Councilors, State and National legislators to ensure that our priorities are captured at the budget formulation stage?

# Conclusion

- Citizen Engagement is about citizen action.
- Any Framework for Citizen Engagement remains impotent until citizens resolve to give it force by acting appropriately
- The surest recipe for the birth, nurturing and blossoming of an irresponsive, unaccountable corrupt and despotic government is the growth of a docile citizenry.
- Citizens must engage to forestall such tendencies
- Government has provided the relevant legislation for robust citizen engagement. It is for citizens groups to act.



Thank you for listening