

The Civility

“We cannot Imagine democracies
without a vibrant civil society”

-Rohini Nilekani



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From the Publisher's Desk

The CIVILITY is a quarterly newsletter publication of the Organization for Community Civic Engagement (OCCEN), aimed at showcasing OCCEN's work of empowering citizens and communities across Nigeria to reach their full potential through promoting good governance, human rights and inclusive democracy that works for all.

Like the first edition, this second edition of the newsletter is dedicated to OCCEN's partnership with the European Union Agents for Citizens-driven Transformation (ACT) Project which empowers CSOs to be credible and effective drivers of change for sustainable development in Nigeria.

It therefore focuses on the various activities of OCCEN in the second quarter of its implementation of the EU ACT Project titled: *“Strengthening Civil Society Participation in Public Policy Decisions in Kano State.* The project strengthens Kano Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) capacity to demand for accountability and tackle social exclusion through participation in public policy discussions.

Accordingly, the newsletter captures stories of key recent activities of OCCEN including a one-day policy dialogue between civic organizations and Kano government representatives on the domestication of National Gender Policy in Kano state; a sensitization training for members of the Alheri Women's Group of Naibawa Area of Kano metropolis on the ongoing Continuous Voter Registration (CVR) exercise; as well as a bilateral dialogue between public institutions and Kano CSOs.

You will also find in this edition of CIVILITY a review of two handbooks produced by OCCEN with the support of the EU ACT project, namely *Handbook on Civil Society Legal Framework in Nigeria* and *Handbook on Promoting Civil*

Society's Participation in Public Policy. Also included in this edition is an opinion article on President Muhammadu Buhari's recent signing into law of the long-awaited Electoral Act Amendment Bill, written by OCCEN's Executive Director titled: *Mr President, History Will be Kind to You for Signing the Electoral Bill!*

Signed

Abdulrazaq Alkali

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OCCEN EU-ACT Strengthens Kano CSO's Engagement with Public Institutions

In a bid to strengthen CSOs-Government relations in Kano state, the European Union Agents for Citizens-driven Transformation (ACT) Project and the Organization for Community Civic Engagement (OCCEN), recently hosted a bilateral

members of the Kano Civil Society Forum (KCSF).

Mukhtar Yakasai, the director of planning at the Ministry of Budget and Planning testified that the EU ACT CSOs-Government dialogue would help strengthen his ministry's

engagement with civic organizations in the state and acknowledged the fact that CSOs were already making an immeasurable contribution to the implementation of the Kano State Development Plan (KSDP II), particularly in the areas of health and education.

Mr Ibrahim Waiya, the President of KCSF agreed that the EU ACT policy dialogue would strengthen relations between government and CSOs in Kano state and urged the CSOs to shun confrontation and instead be constructive in their engagement with government in the state. He commended the recent improvement in access to information from the state government which he said would improve the government's working relationship with CSOs in Kano.

Participants at the EU ACT CSOs-Government policy dialogue resolved to implement a step-down capacity building for other Kano public institutions so as to also enhance their capacity for engagement with CSOs.



dialogue between public institutions and Kano CSOs, aimed at strengthening the existing mechanism of civic participation in public policymaking in the state.

The policy dialogue brought together leading Kano CSOs and government officials responsible for planning and research from key Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) who deliberated on the best strategies for strengthening consultation and cooperation between CSOs and public institutions on public policy issues in Kano State. Among others, participants at the dialogue session were representatives of the state ministries of budget and planning, health and agriculture as well as



OCCEN EU-ACT engages Kano CSOs on domestication of National Gender Policy

The European Union Agents for Citizens-driven Transformation (EU-ACT) Project and the Organization for Community Civic Engagement (OCCEN) recently hosted a select group of Kano civic organizations as well as representatives from the Kano state government to a one-day policy dialogue on the domestication of National Gender Policy in Kano state. The EU-ACT/OCCEN dialogue session between civil society organizations (CSOs) and representatives of the Kano state government sought to stimulate and consolidate the ongoing effort of the state government to domesticate the National Gender Policy in the state. One of the CSO participants, Ms Maryam Usman, Executive Director of the Center for Advocacy in Gender and Social Inclusion (CAGSI), said the EU ACT policy dialogue helped the Kano CSOs learn how to better harmonize and consolidate their engagement in relation to

gender policy in Kano which will subsequently fast-track the successful realization of their ultimate objective of the complete domestication of the gender policy in the state.

“Being a member of Kano State Gender Committee, I will discuss the resolutions of this meeting at the committee level and also see how I can support the opening of doors for more CSOs to participate in the domestication effort so as to fast-track the implementation of the policy,” pledged MsUsman.

Through this policy dialogue between government and CSOs on the domestication of the National Gender Policy in Kano, EU-ACT is making a significant move towards ensuring no one is left behind in the public policymaking process in Kano state which will contribute to the attainment of Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



OCCEN EU-ACT Sensitizes Kano Women Group on Voter's Registration

The European Union Agents for Citizens-driven Transformation (EU-ACT) Project and the Organization for Community Civic Engagement (OCCEN) recently hosted a sensitization training for members of the Alheri Women's Group of Naibawa Area of Kano metropolis on the ongoing Continuous Voter Registration (CVR) exercise, in an effort to strengthen the participation of women in electoral processes.

The 43 women participants were sensitized on the process of acquiring the Permanent Voter's Cards (PVC) so as to be able to carry out their civic duty of electing leaders of their choice thereby entrenching women's participation in political processes, policymaking, and promoting good governance.

The trainees said prior to the EU ACT sensitization training they were oblivious of where and how to obtain their PVCs due to lack of awareness on the CVR process which hindered them from participating in the political process. Having participated in the training, the women said they had now become aware of not only the CVR process but also voting process, election campaigns and

would no longer be disenfranchised during electoral processes.

Thanks to the OCCEN/EU-ACT training, many members of the group had gone ahead to acquire their Permanent Voter's Cards (PVC) in Kumbotso Local Government Area (LGA) of Kano State. EU ACT believes enhancing women's civic education would significantly raise political knowledge among women who will subsequently play a more active role in political and decision-making processes.



REVIEW:

Handbook on Promoting Civil Society's Participation in Public Policy

As part of its project on strengthening civil society participation in public policy decisions in Kano state, supported by the EU-ACT Project, OCCEN has produced a *Handbook on Promoting Civil Society's Participation in Public Policy* which comprises Eight (8) chapters.

Accordingly, Chapter One(1): The Concept of Public Policy and its Importance, maintains that public policy encompasses government statements, rules and regulations with direct bearing on the life of citizens while Chapter Two (2): Institutions and Public Policy, contends institutions – Executive; Legislature; Judiciary; Technocrats; Political Parties; Interest Groups; Individual Citizens; and Media – lend legitimacy to public policies.

Moreover, Chapter Three (3): Public



P o l i c y Analysis, explains these several approaches to public policy analysis, namely, prescriptive, descriptive, micro and macro – all of which could be carried out using either quantitative or qualitative methodologies of policy analysis while Chapter Four (4): Public

P o l i c y Evaluation, explains policy evaluation as a means to determining the effectiveness and efficiency of an implemented policy hence is carried out based on feedback from stakeholders.

Chapter Five (5): Public Policy Communication, delves into the importance of communication as a means of informing, enlightening and educating citizens about specific public policies hence the necessity of establishing communication channels through the media (electronic, print and social) for sensitization campaigns while Chapter Six (6): Public Policy Processes, explores the step by step approach to public policy or policy cycle namely: agenda setting; policy formulation; policy adoption; implementation; as well as evaluation and feedback.

Chapter Seven (7): Citizens Representativeness and Accountability in Public Policy, focuses on the crucial role of citizens' representation in public policy processes, through interest groups (CSO, and NGOs) which ensures policy acceptance by the people as well as giving the citizens the opportunity to hold policymakers accountable. Finally, Chapter Eight (8): Challenges of Public Policies, focuses on challenges to implementing public policies – inadequate information; policy inconsistency; executive incapacity; lack of legislative interest; and corruption.

REVIEW:

Handbook on Civil Society Legal Framework in Nigeria

In recognition of the pivotal role of creating an enabling environment for CSOs to operate in harmony with the rules and regulations of the Federal Government of Nigeria. And as part of its project on strengthening civil society participation in public policy decisions in Kano state, which is supported by the EU-ACT Project, OCCEN has produced a *Handbook on Civil Society Legal Framework in Nigeria*.

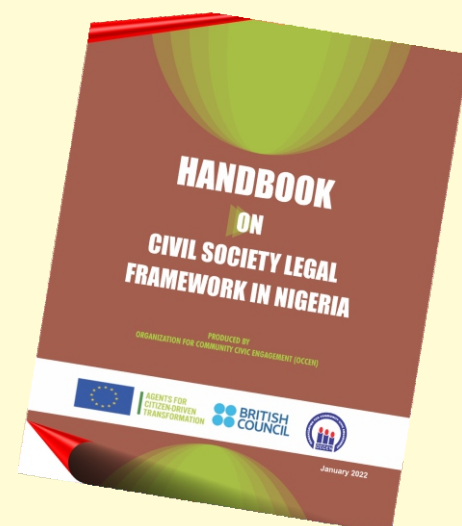
For CSOs to legally function in Nigeria they must be acquainted with the legal framework guiding their operation in the country hence this handbook which explains the legal framework for the operation of CSOs in Nigeria as it relates to incorporation, mode of operation, taxation, as well as day to day operations.

The handbook comprises six chapters with Chapter One (1): Civil Society Organisation, explaining definitions, conceptual clarifications and functions of Not-for-profit Organisations (NPOs) i.e NGOs and CSOs. Chapter Two (2): Legal Framework for CSOs, looks at the legal framework of NPOs from a global perspective, linking it with the statutory laws governing the operations of CSOs at the national, state and local government level in Nigeria, such as the Company and Allied Matters Act (CAMA) 2020 and Capital Gain Tax Act 2004.

Chapter Three (3): Registration, explains the two major classifications of CSOs registration in Nigeria i.e Incorporated Trustees (IT) and Company Limited by Guarantee (CLG) clarifying the meanings, scopes, procedures, differences and similarities between the two categories while Chapter Four (4): CSOs and Tax, discusses tax exemption, taxable, non-taxable income and property of the CSOs and the process of registering with the Federal Inland Revenue Services (FIRS) and filing of the annual tax return.

Chapter five (5): SCUML Registration, delves into money laundering and the statutory acts enacted to control it in Nigeria i.e the Money Laundering (Prohibition) Act, and Terrorism (Prevention) Act 2004

as well as how to register with the Special Control Unit Against Money Laundering (SCUML) while Chapter Six (6): Internal Policies and Procedures, focuses on internal policies, rules and procedures necessary for the effective management and day to day operation of CSOs such as human resource policy, communication policy and finance policy.



Mr President, History Will be Kind to You for Signing the Electoral Bill!

By Abdulrazaq Alkali

On Friday, President Muhammadu Buhari finally signed into law the long-awaited Electoral Act Amendment Bill. The President's assent to the bill came about a week before the expiration of its deadline, as provided in the Nigerian Constitution. The National Assembly had since January 31 transmitted the reworked Electoral Bill to Buhari, the President having earlier in December 2021 withheld his assent to the bill for reasons many Nigerians were not satisfied with.

Earlier on, the move by the National Assembly to bring sanity and transparency into our nation's electoral system by passing the Electoral Reform Bill 2021 had gladdened the hearts of many Nigerians. The passage of the bill, which among others makes direct primary by political parties mandatory as well as legalizing the electronic transmission of election results, was one of such rare moments when the National Assembly, Civil Society Organisations and Nigerian citizens in general were all on the same page. Unfortunately, the President kept foot-dragging and unjustifiably delaying his assent to this all-important bill to make it a law. This became a source of worry to all right-thinking Nigerians because the President appeared to be prioritizing the selfish interest of some powerful politicians who felt

threatened by the return of the power to select candidates of political parties to all party members which will end their firm grip over the political parties.

The indirect method of nominating candidates for election through delegates had been hijacked by political Godfathers and vested interests who continued to manipulate the delegates in favour of their cronies. Because of this unjust system, quality leadership and representation have been lacking in all levels of our political leadership. Thus, the newly signed Electoral Act will promote and entrench the rights of members of political parties to actively participate in the selection of their candidates.

It is obvious to all rational Nigerian citizens that the conduct of primary elections via direct primaries remains the most transparent mode of nominating candidates for secondary elections. By signing the bill into law, the President is not only returning the power of electing the candidates of political parties to the people but also allowing for more citizens participation in political processes as well as advancing an equitable level-playing ground for all aspirants which will allow for the emergence of popular candidates.

No doubt, the now expired system of indirect primaries had handicapped women and youth from attaining political leadership to bring about any positive change. To this end, the



direct primary approach will significantly reduce the marginalisation of women and youth in our political process. It will also significantly limit the menace of God-fatherism and promote intraparty democracy.

For sure, the President has demonstrated courage and leadership by upholding and protecting our democracy. Ultimately, the diligence and collective efforts of Nigerians to see the highly deficient Electoral Act 2010 amended has paid off. This credit goes to all Nigerians and particularly members of the National Assembly, trade unions, and Civil Society Organizations who worked tirelessly and despite numerous setbacks to ensure the bill saw the light of the day.

However, the war is still not over. As we approach the 2023 elections, the challenge before us is ensuring that all the crucial provisions of the new Electoral Law have been implemented to the letter.

Congratulations Nigeria!

Abdulrazaq Alkali is the Executive Director Organization for Community Civic Engagement (OCCEN).



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