

The Civility



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Editorial

From the Publisher's Desk



Dear Readers,

Welcome to the second edition of 'The Civility' by the Organization for Community Civic Engagement (OCCEN). In this second volume, generously funded by the National Endowment for Democracy, we showcase impactful initiatives from OCCEN's "Strengthening Youth Civic Activism in Northern Nigeria."

Dive into pages highlighting diverse projects led by six interns across Kano, Kaduna, Zamfara, Katsina, and Borno states. These individuals dedicated a month to serving in State Departments, contributing skills and passion to uplift their communities.

Explore pivotal moments, from the one-month internship program in February and policy dialogues in Kaduna on the 'Strengthening Youth Engagement in Open Government' Partnership and Kano on Engaging Political Parties for Inclusive Practices. The impact resonates in articles shedding light on civic activism challenges in Northern Nigeria.

The airwaves played a crucial role, with dedicated radio programs amplifying youth voices and spreading awareness about civic engagement and Democracy. Thought-provoking articles, such as "Unchecked Economic Hardship A Threat to Nigerian Democracy," offer insights into pressing societal issues.

Our deepest gratitude to the National Endowment for Democracy for enabling OCCEN to empower youth and promote civic engagement. Explore with an open mind, understanding the power of civic engagement in shaping the future. Happy Reading!

Josephine Eche Omajari

ENGAGING POLITICAL PARTIES FOR INCLUSIVE PRACTICE IN KANO STATE

Date: 17th February 2024

Venue: Aminu Kano Center for Democratic Studies

Time: 10 am prompt

The policy dialogue brought together relevant stakeholders from political parties, civil society, INEC, media and former young contestants from different political parties with aimed of creating more enabling environment for inclusive structure within political parties and governance in Kano.

Party and Election Challenges Addressed by Mal Abdulrazaq Alkali the Executive Director OCCEN. Alkali outlined challenges in the electoral process, including issues with delegate and primary elections,

parties have well-articulated and crafted provisions for these underrepresented groups in their constitutions and manifestos, but there is very limited evidence to suggest that they are consciously implemented. It is claimed that equal opportunities exist for all party members, including freedom to aspire to any leadership position in the parties, seeking nomination for elective positions, and accessing political appointment on the strength of membership of a political party.

However, the reality is that members who enjoy such opportunities are relatively few, especially when compared to the number of positions competed for and taken by the three aforementioned groupings.

OCCEN also observed that, although party membership may be a prerequisite to aspire and access leadership in political parties, nomination tickets and political appointments, other factors such as the right connections and informal networks of influence often skew the process. Rather than actively supporting these three unrepresented groups, parties often find it difficult to change the status quo, and as a result risk losing out on powerful voices from within these groups. Only a few women have climbed the ladder of political influence in political parties, with limited impact in turn on the further promotion of women participation in politics.

To mirrored it down to the case of young people, with factors of affluence and personal ambition often leading to identification with party elders to the neglect of their peers. . The prominence of persons with disabilities is usually lower, given the small percentage of representation in the overall party membership, hardly being recognized beyond the face of the Persons with Disabilities Leader. Overall, the skewed practices within political parties has had a negative impact on

how individuals and groups can mobilize, influence and achieve representation, as well as

Josephine Omajari, the Program Officer with OCCEN, provided a discussion on "Youth Political Engagement: Challenges and Solutions." Josephine emphasized that involving young individuals in politics is not merely an option but a critical necessity for the progress and vitality of Kano State. Recognizing the richness of Kano's history and the diversity of its population, Josephine underscored that youth participation holds the key to addressing specific challenges, driving local innovation, and establishing a more inclusive and representative political system tailored to the unique needs of the state.

Women's Role in Decision Making Discussed by Mufida Kabir. Mufida is the, OCCEN's Gender Officer, delved into the obstacles hindering women's participation in decision-making processes. Challenges highlighted encompassed discouragement from political parties, funding issues, community resistance, violence, and harassment. Kabir proposed solutions, including legal reforms, networking, and mentorship programs for women and youth.

Madam Fadwa Umar, INEC Gender officer gave goodwill message on INEC's Inclusive Voting Initiatives: providing an insight into INEC's efforts to facilitate inclusive voting. This included the introduction of assistive materials like braille votes. Practical measures, such as separate lines for women during elections and posters catering to the hearing impaired, were implemented to enhance the overall inclusivity of the electoral process.



pick pointing, and pin appointing. Money politics was identified as a significant concern, along with internal democracy challenges. Alkali scrutinized the introduction of an oligarchy system into Nigerian politics, emphasizing the importance of adhering to rules and policies when involving family members in politics.

Mr. Alkali emphasizes that political parties are the building blocks of any elective democracy in that they define the pathways for mobilizing and canvassing for votes as well as serve as focal points for engaging on governance. As pivotal as the place of political parties in a democracy are, Nigeria's experience with party organising has been one of mixed results, with particular concerns about the exclusion of women, young people, and persons with disabilities.

Alkali also narrated that the main objective of this policy dialogue is to promote inclusivity of political parties in Kano against the backdrop of perceived unfulfilled potential that responds to women, young people, and persons with disabilities who want to engage in politics. Its significance rests in the understanding that political parties are about the only institution of democracy in Nigeria that have not witnessed significant development since the return to democracy in 1999. Indeed, the near stalled state of their development has become a source of concern in the face of the urgency for democratic dividends.

OCCEN observation reveal that while all the political parties may seem highly inclusive on paper, notably in terms of processes, provisions and opportunities for women, young people, and persons with disabilities, the reality is to the contrary. There is a lack of evidence that many of the parties have comprehensive membership registers, nor one with disaggregated social characteristics, such as women, young people, and persons with disabilities. Some of the

POLICY DIALOGUE ON STRENGTHENING YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN OGP IN KADUNA STATE

Kaduna, Nigeria – In a groundbreaking event, the city of Kaduna played host to the 'Policy Dialogue on Strengthening Youth Engagement in Open Government Partnership (OGP)', drawing together a diverse assembly of key stakeholders, government officials, and emerging young leaders. The primary objective of the gathering was to facilitate a robust dialogue, share valuable insights, and bolster youth involvement in the governance framework.

I'm a welcome Remarks, Yusha'u M. Abubakar, the Kaduna State Coordinator for Community Civic Engagement, inaugurated the event on behalf of the Executive Director, Malam Abdul Razaq Alkali. Abubakar extended a warm welcome to all attendees, expressing optimism for fruitful deliberations.



Kaduna OGP Journey So Far:

Tara Jeremia, the State OGP Point of Contact, delivered a compelling presentation on Kaduna's OGP expedition. He underscored the pivotal role of citizen engagement in the state's notable achievements. Jeremia detailed innovative tools, including the Citizens Feedback App, Toll-Free Line Call Center, WhatsApp Line, and Facebook Page, empowering youths and citizens to act as the government's "Eyes and Ears" across 255 wards in Kaduna State.

Milestones in Citizens Engagement:

Musa Sulaiman, the Citizens Co-Chair of OGP Kaduna, showcased the tangible achievements of OGP in citizen participation. The discourse spanned open governance, focusing on critical areas such as security, access to justice, gender equality, and climate action.

Launch of OGP Youth Engagement Forum (OYEF):

A landmark moment unfolded with the official launch of the OGP Youth Engagement Forum (OYEF), seamlessly integrated into the existing OGP Youth Hub. This forum establishes a dedicated space for young leaders to actively contribute to policy discussions, empowering them to shape the future of Kaduna.

Panel Discussion – Youth Perspectives on Governance:

A dynamic panel discussion featured youth representatives sharing their unique perspectives on governance. Topics ranged from inclusivity in decision-making to leveraging technology for transparent governance, emphasizing the necessity of avenues for youth participation in policy formulation.

Closing Remarks:

Mr. Abdulrazaq Alkali, the Executive Director of Community Civic Engagement, delivered poignant closing remarks, expressing gratitude for the active participation and highlighting the importance of sustained collaboration in implementing youth-centric policies.

Alkali reiterated Kaduna State's commitment to open governance and youth empowerment principles.

At the end, the Policy Dialogue on Strengthening Youth Engagement in OGP marked a pivotal moment for Kaduna, demonstrating the joint commitment of the government and citizens to promote inclusive governance.

The launch of the OGP Youth Engagement Forum signals a significant stride toward ensuring active youth involvement in shaping the city's future. As the dialogue concludes, Kaduna anticipates positive strides toward a more transparent and participatory governance model.



Unchecked

Economic Hardship an Imminent Threat to Nigerian Democracy

Nigeria's existing economic challenges coupled with some of Federal Government economic policies have created situations that have caused significant erosion to the purchasing power of Nigerians. The significant loss in value of the national currency and high inflation rate has created unbearable hardship to the common man, to the extent that a large majority of Nigerians are struggling to feed themselves and their dependants. Public service workers are some of the most affected because the salaries of most workers have been reduced to a value that will in no way cater their basic needs.

The impoverishment of majority of Nigerians will in no way provide the security, economic and political stability we all yearn for. Poverty has direct correlation to insecurity and political stability in most developing countries. One doesn't need to look far to establish this fact, but just take a glance at some of our African countries. We can profoundly agree that uncontained poverty is the greatest threat democracies in the developing countries like Nigeria, it worsens illiteracy, healthcare provision, insecurity and corruption. Unchecked poverty is also the major ingredient for most civil unrest and to a large extent civil wars across Africa, to the extent citizens in some African countries are losing hope about democracy and are opting to support military regimes. While some will argue that Nigeria is not headed in the that direction exactly, but majority would not and the indices shows significant deterioration in every key aspects of our living standards which is suppose ensure citizens support and longevity to our democracy.

It is crucially important that our political leaders wake up from their slumber and device and implement effective measures to tackle the current economic downturn faced by Nigerians. Some of these measures need to be put in place in the short term as soon as possible to arrest the deteriorating livelihood of Nigerians. Others can be set for medium and long terms benefits due to the time and resources needed for implementation.

It is unfortunate that a lot of Nigerians have lost confidence in political office holders evident by the unacceptable level of

embezzlement and waste of resources from our leaders, with no regards to the suffering the common man. For Nigeria to be able to sail through these difficult times, there is need to have the confidence of the citizenry and carry them along decision making. Reducing cost of governance by cutting down unscrupulous spending from government personals and elected officials, and channeling more resources into areas that will translate real economic value can help regain the confidence of Nigerians. Some of these savings can be really beneficial in establishing social safety programs to provide a basic income or assistance to households in extreme poverty.

It is very clear that presently Nigerians are in dire need for immediate welfare intervention that will cushion down rising cost of food items. These can be achieved by increasing the supply of food items in the country through short term importation of the critical food staples (until our next major harvest), which can be sold at subsidized rate to citizens. And significantly increasing and simplifying financial accessibility as well availability of fertilizers/chemicals and training to our local farmers especially now to make significant increase agricultural output in the coming raining season. However, nothing can be achieved in this regard if the current insecurity issue is not dealt with. With bandits and kidnappers roaming and invading our rural areas, damaging and burning farms as well as restricting farmers from accessing their farmlands, no real agriculture progress can be achieved. It is equally critical that the federal and state government to immediately take actions to mitigate the effect of flooding in most of our agricultural areas, in order to reduce loss of crops to flood recorded in previous years. Similarly, with increasing unemployment especially among youth governments should provide incentives and support to encourage people to go into agriculture. It will be a game changer when our educated youth go into agriculture, which is when we can see significant technological development and efficiency in our agricultural sector, just like we can see in our IT, film and music industry and the rest of the creative industry.



By Abdulrazaq Alkali
Executive Director
OCCEN Nigeria

Moreover, small and medium scale enterprises (SME) which make the backbone of Nigeria's economy are sinking and struggling to survive. The federal and state governments need to increase intervention and support to our struggling SME's and manufacturers. These can be made through providing access to short term interest free loans, reduced tax or granting tax breaks and relaxing some costly bureaucratic regulations. More importantly, improving electricity supply is very important to easing the operational cost of SMEs and manufacturers. As one element that worsen the inflation in Nigeria is the lack of stable electricity supply to SMEs and manufacturers, which means majority have to rely on using the expensive alternative i.e., power generators that rely on diesel. And this makes the finished products and services very expensive to the common man.

However, implementing these measures will not be enough, unless our leaders commit to implementing measures to reduce corruption which can compromise policies and divert resources away from those who needs it the most. It is necessary that anti-graft agencies be strengthened to ensure adequate enforcement and prosecution needed to deter others and restore public confidence.

FACES OF OCCEN SUPPORTED INTERNS



Aminatu Muhammad hails from Benue State is interning at the Kano State Public Complaints and Anti-Corruption Commission (PCACC). Kano State, Nigeria, is renowned for its cultural heritage. Presently, its Department of Public Complaint and Anti-Corruption Commission is active in addressing grievances and combating corruption. In politics, the state recently witnessed electoral contests marked by tensions and controversies, reflecting the dynamics of power struggle and governance in the region. Aminatu's internship involves practical training in record-keeping and correspondence management, crucial in maintaining transparency and accountability within the commission.

Aminatu Muhammad

Ibrahim Sabiu hails from Katsina State, located in northern Nigeria, known for its rich cultural heritage and agricultural activities. Presently, the state faces security challenges, including banditry and kidnapping, leading to displacement of communities and disruption of socio-economic activities. Under the guidance of OCCEN, Ibrahim is gaining insights into political processes, elections, and legislative affairs, with a keen focus on addressing these security challenges.



Ibrahim Sabiu



Rahila Umar hails from Zamfara State, situated in northwestern Nigeria, recognized for its rich mineral resources, particularly gold. Presently, the state grapples with insecurity, notably banditry and cattle rustling, resulting in widespread violence and displacement of residents. Government interventions focus on security operations, peace dialogue, and economic empowerment to address the crisis. Through her internship at the Open Government Partnership Secretariat (OGP) in Abuja, Rahila is contributing to promoting transparency and trust between the government and citizens, amidst these challenges. And also learning how OGP can be more inclusive at subnational level.

Rahila Umar



Baba Bolori Mustapha, a vibrant humanitarian from Borno State, located in northeastern Nigeria, is known for its cultural heritage and historical significance, including the city of Maiduguri. Over the years, the state has faced significant security challenges due to the activities of the Boko Haram insurgency, leading to the displacement of populations and humanitarian crises. Baba's internship with the Nigeria Red Cross Hygiene Promotion aims to improve hygiene standards and foster civic education within the community, amidst ongoing efforts to restore peace

Baba Bolori Mustapha

Irene Dogo, serving at the Kaduna State Planning and Budget Commission, is based in Kaduna State, located in north-central Nigeria, known for its economic significance, cultural diversity, and historical landmarks. Currently, the state is facing security challenges, including ethno-religious conflicts and banditry, leading to loss of lives and displacement of communities. Government efforts aim to restore peace through dialogue, security operations, and community engagement initiatives. Irene's internship focuses on the Eyes and Ears project under the Open Government Partnership, contributing to transparency and accountability efforts within the state.



Irene Dogo



Samin Yahaya Saidu represents Kano State, situated in northern Nigeria, renowned for its historical significance, vibrant markets, and diverse culture. Presently, the state grapples with security concerns, including insurgency and communal clashes. Efforts are ongoing to restore peace and stability through government interventions and community engagement initiatives. Through his internship with the Aminu Kano Center for Democratic Studies, Samin is actively promoting good governance principles, particularly through social media, to foster inclusive democracy amidst these challenges.

Samin Yahaya Saidu



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