

## **1. ABIA STATE: Findings**

### **Public Access to budget documents**

Abia state scores 16 out of 100 on the State Budget Transparency Index. While most documents are produced in the state, only the Accountant General's Report and Auditor General's Report are publicly available on request.

### **Public participation in the budget**

Citizens and CSOs in Abia state have limited spaces for the public to be involved in the budget process with a score of 14 out of 100. During the **budget formulation** stage, the Ministry of Youth Development and Ministry of Women & Social Development invite some constituencies with disabilities to provide inputs on the State Draft Estimates. While these ministries invite some disabled groups, however, the government doesn't clearly articulate how these inputs will be used. The **budget approval** process is closed to the public. Both the **budget execution** and **auditing** process have no open spaces for public scrutiny.

### **Public access to procurement information**

With a score of 30 out of 100, citizens have minimal access to procurement information in Abia state. Tenders in Abia state are publicly opened after the bidding process is closed. The procurement decisions with justification of each award are published in the official gazette.

## **Recommendations**

CIRDDOC recommends the following to improve budget transparency, public participation in the budget process, and transparency in the procurement process:

### **Budget Transparency**

The government can easily improve budget transparency in Abia state by timely publishing online the following documents that it already produces:

- Request for submission of Budget Circulars from Ministries, Departments, Agencies and Parastatals
- Abia State Budget along with Abia State Medium Term Expenditure Framework and the Abia State Draft Budget votes
- Abia state Budget Appropriation Law
- Abia State Quarterly Reports
- Abia State Mid Year Review

In addition to publishing these documents, the Budget Office in the Abia State Planning Commission should partner with CSOs in the state to develop a Citizen's Budget.

### **Public Participation**

To effectively take advantage of knowledge of CSOs and citizens, the government in Abia state should do the following:

- open the budget formulation process to all constituencies; establish effective mechanisms to solicit the public's inputs on what should be included in the State Draft Estimates; and clearly articulate what the government expects to do with these inputs.
- publish a list of beneficiaries of projects, subsidies, social plans and other targeted spending from MDAs.
- establish practical mechanisms for the public to provide inputs on how the budget is being implemented and publish reports on how these inputs are used.

Similarly, the Abia State House of Assembly should do the following:

- open committee hearings on the budget to public where citizens and CSOs can testify.
- open the hearings on the Auditor-General's Report to the public.

Lastly, the Auditor-General should do the following:

- establish practical mechanisms for the public to submit inputs on what should be audited.

### **Procurement Process**

To improve the entire procurement process, the following should be done:

- the government should introduce a law in the SHoA establishing a Tenders Board that would oversee the whole procurement process along with a procurement complaint board that manages an alternative dispute resolution mechanism.
- the official gazette including procurement awards, justification of awards for all community projects should be publicly available at no charge.
- Enact State Fiscal Responsibility Law.
- Establish state procurement body.

### **Access to Information**

To improve access to information in the state, the government should do the following:

1. Domesticate the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act, 2011.
2. Establish Freedom of Information (FOI) Agency in the state