REPORT OF THE ONE-DAY CITIZENS' ENGAGEMENT ON THE 2024 BUDGET HELD AT NIKE LAKE RESORT HOTEL, ENUGU ON THE 2ND OF DECEMBER, 2023.

In tune with the processes that accentuates transparency and inclusiveness in the budgetary process, the Enugu state government led by His Excellency, Rt. Hon. Barr. Peter Ndubuisi Mbah has on Saturday, the 2nd of December, 2023 through the Ministry of Budget and Planning held Citizens' Engagement on the 2024 Budget at Nike Lake Resort, Enugu.

The event started with the arrival and registration of participants at about 10.00am.

Opening Remarks:

(a). The Governor of Enugu State

Governor Mbah ably represented by the Hon. Commissioner for Budget and Planning, Barr. Chris-Roberts Ozongwu in an opening remark reiterated that his administration is open to transparent budget processes. In his words; "citizens' engagement as an important part of budget process is integral to better decision making, better planning, better budgeting and better accountability". He further stressed that the essence of the event is to get the voices of the citizens involved in governance.

(b). Honourable Commissioner, Ministry of Budget and Planning:

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Also, in a welcome address, the Hon. Commissioner for Budget and Planning, Barr. Chris-Roberts Ozongwu commended Governor Peter Ndubuisi Mbah for his unswerving efforts towards transparent leadership, fiscal transparency and improved public services delivery in the State. Hon. Ozongwu re-emphasized, that the meeting is to encourage participatory budget process in which a recognizable percentage of the inputs made by citizens during the event will be reflected in the 2024 budget in reality of the Governor's mantra, "business unusual".

He further noted that the height of the event would be the presentation of Citizens' Accountability Report (CAR) on the implementation of the 2022 Budget of Consolidation and Transition prepared from the 2022 Audited Financial Statements in collaboration with the Civil Society Organisations, and the moment the citizens come up with their inputs for the 2024 budget.

(c). Citizens' Accountability Report:

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At the course of presenting the 2022 Citizens' Accountability Report (CAR) by the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Budget and Planning, Mrs. Clara Nwakaego Ezeh and the Co-Chairman, Open Government Partnership representing Civil Society Organisation, Barr. Cromwell Chibuzor; it was pointed out that the Audited Financial Statement of the State which was produced by the Accountant General of the State is summarized in the 2022 CAR in a format that every Citizen of Enugu can easily comprehend.

Mrs Ezeh noted that the State within the fiscal year had an aggregate expenditure of N130.4Billion equivalent of 69.9% performance rate while the revenue aggregate performance stood at 76.7%. In the sectoral recurrent expenditure, Education had 23.7% of the total allocation and a performance rate of 97.8%. However, they reiterated amongst others, the State government's decision to increase the total allocation of Education in the 2024 Budget to 30% and a huge sum to accommodate the completion of major State abandoned projects.

Participants:

Participants at the event were delegates from the following:

Youth/ Women Groups

- National Youth Council of Enugu State Students
- Nigerian Youth Parliament
- National Association of Nigerian Students
- National Youth Council of Nigeria
- Enugu State Female Comrades
- National Youth Assembly of Nigeria

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- Nkanu Youth Assembly
- Agbaja Youth Assembly
- Nsukka Youth Assembly
- United Youth Forum
- Women Group

Civil Society Organisations

Heroine Foundation

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- · Lead Network Africa
- Connected Development
- Divine Era Development and Social Rights Initiatives
- Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities, Enugu Chapter

Community Leaders

- · Members of Enugu State Traditional Rulers
- Members of Christian Association of Nigeria, Enugu Chapter
- · Members of Association of President Generals

Other Stakeholders

- Members of National Union of Journalists, Enugu Chapter
- · Members of Enugu State Executive Council
- · Permanent Secretaries
- · Head of Agencies and Parastatals
- · Other Government functionaries

Citizens' Engagement:

At the course of the event, the participants were given opportunity to make inputs that will reflect in the 2024 Budget. Some of these inputs are:

- 1. May I commend the Governor, His Excellency Rt. Hon. Barr. Peter Mbah for keeping his promise of providing portable water for Ndi Enugu. However we ask that our rural areas should also be made to benefit from this water project. Also, the Oji-River-Amansea road should be decongested by the State Government reconstructing Umuabi-EhuheAchi-Court-Isikwe-Isuochi or Ufuma road. In addition to this, there should be a permanent Military checkpoint and provision of CCTV Cameras in that area to curtail kidnapping and other criminal activities around that area (Ejike Ilo-Tasie, President General Oji-River, 08065996920).
- The State government should equip our health institutions like Parklane with modern
 equipment like CT Scans, MRI machines etc. Secondly, Enugu-Ugwogo-Opi roads
 should be expanded to aid development in those communities. The State government

- should ensure **easy access to loans** especially for the youths to venture into agriculture and production businesses. (HRM Igwe Tony Ezemma, Traditional Ruler of Eziani, Nsukka LGA).
- I commend His Excellency for keeping to his campaign promise to Ndi Enugu. However,
 I pray that the State government sees a way to revive some of the moribund companies
 and abandoned projects like Anamco, International Conference Center, Presidential
 Hotel etc. (HRH Igwe Amb. Lawrence Agubuzu CFR, OON, 08033829556)
- 4. We appeal to the State government to help youths have access to loan solely for agriculture. Also, we plead with the state government to at least give free education from Primary1-Jss1 so that a lot of indigent ones can go to school. Schools in the rural areas like Nmgbagbu-Owa, Olo and Imezi-owa should also be made conducive for the students (Ejiofor Chidiebere, Coordinator Enugu State Female Comrades, Ezeagu LGA).
- 5. I plead with the State government to ensure that modern technology is integrated in the agricultural sector in the state. An App should be developed to help know the actual data of farmers/farmland and monitor the food chain from farm to fork. The SAP2 should have an area mapped out for young farmers and people living with disabilities. While youth bodies in agriculture such as the Enugu state Young Farmers, the Agricultural Directorate should be properly carried along; Agricultural Taskforce should be created to help drive the agricultural plans of His Excellency's administration. (Kenneth Eze, Board of Director, LEAD NETWORK, President Enugu State Young Farmers Association, 08034961809).
- 6. I commend the new administration of his Excellency, Barr. Peter Mbah for the effort put so far in the New Enugu. I suggest that a capable body should be established to see to the betterment of children, youths and women living with disabilities; and the fund allocated for their special needs should be thoroughly investigated to ensure that it's used judiciously. I also suggest that the large expanse of lands in the state that are yet to be developed should be leased for agricultural activities, recreational activities.
 (Odumkwe Chinyere National Youth Assembly of Nigeria, Enugu Chapter).
- 7. The State government should put in more effort in empowering the youths in all ramification so as to reduce the "JAPA" syndrome that is on the increase in the society now. (Ogbuefi Esther, Nigerian Youth Parliament 07065406260).

- 8. The State government should develop the communities so as to decongest the capital. The President Generals should be carried along whenever projects are to be carried out in the communities. They should also be made to confirm if such projects are actually executed too. Also, I suggest an ICT Centers should be built in every autonomous community. (Barr. Sam O. Chukwu President General, Enyimba Amoli Community, Awgu LGA).
- 9. I propose that the Youths should be separated from the Ministry of Youths and Sports; and made to be under a Youth Development Agency so that can be well reached and evenly empowered. In addition, I suggest that a Youth Farm should be established in the State to incorporate Young farmers who will have easy access to grants and loans to boost the agricultural sector (Adaeze Anita Isamade, National Youth Council of Nigeria, 08039540598).
- 10. I commend His Excellency, Governor Peter Mbah for keeping to his promise of providing portable water in Enugu state. However, I plead that access to this water should be extended to the communities. Secondly, unemployment seem to be the bane of our youth's problems. I therefore solicit the help of our action Governor to help in solving this problem. (Obinna Onu, President General Amankpaka Nike Community, 08035494112).
- 11. We pray that the State government establishes Enugu State Disability Commission as provided in section 33 (1) of Enugu state discrimination against persons with disability (Prohibition Law, 2023). Smart schools agenda should include Disability accessible facilities and assistive technology including trained Special education teachers. Also, existing Special Schools in Enugu like School of the Deaf Ogbete, School of the Blind Oji-River etc. should be prioritized in the 30% allocation to education in the State. The 5% provision for Persons with Disability in compliance to Section 31(1) of Enugu State Disability Law in employment, agriculture, humanitarian interventions, ICT, SME in all MDAs should be implemented. Additionally, provision of sign language interpreters at health centres, hospitals, health insurance and disability friendly walkways in public facilities for persons living with disability should be implemented. Social Intervention programmes targeted towards persons living with disabilities should be encouraged. (Onyebuchi Mba, Chairman Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities Enugu State)

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- 12. On behalf of the good people of Ugwueme Community, Awgu LGA, I appeal to His Excellency to look into the deteriorated state of roads in Ugwueme community and the lack of electricity therein. The community is currently without a dependable source of clean/portable water. (Okafor, Joseph Okechukwu, PA to the Hon. Member representing Awgu South State Constituency; National Youth Assembly of Nigeria 08139551389).
- 13. I appeal to the State Government to kindly pay our retired Primary school Teachers their pensions and gratuities. Also, I suggest that the State government do some consultations before siting the Smart Schools and do it without fear or favour. (Igwe Justice Ezeike, 08033406035).
- 14. I plead with the State government to help facilitate proper staffing of Secondary and Primary schools in Ezebunagu community in Ehalumona as there are no single teacher in the aforementioned schools. Also, the health centre in this community is not functional, it should be made to start working. (Hon. I.K Ukwuwa, PG Ezebunagu Community, Ehalumona Nsukka).
- 15. The State government through the Ministry of Budget and Planning at the EXCO Meeting should plan on counterpart funding system with the Local Government for rural youth empowerment and sustainable development. This is the Local Government Council System has little or rather no plans for youth empowerment/ development. (President Agbaja Youth General Assembly, 08035696810).
- 16. I suggest that the State Government should focus more on capital expenditures rather than the recurrent expenditures. This is because the State can only develop through capital expenditure hence the capital expenditure should be increased from 39.1% as achieved in 2022 to at least 70%, (Izuchukwu Epueke, Solid FM, 08061164538).
- 17. I pray the State government to look into the **abandoned water project** attracted by Senator Ken Nnamani over 18 years ago in Idodo zone comprising nine communities including Owo. Secondly, **moribund industries** like Niger Steel, Niger Gas, Nachi Vegetable Oil Refinery, Flower Mill Emene, Nkalagu Cement Industry etc should be reactivated. (*HRH Igwe H.A Edeani*).
- 18. The State government should construct a road connecting Abakpa to Thinkers-Corner and Emene. Also, the bridge between Abakpa and the new road leading to Adoration-

- Umuchigbo-Iji-Nike is about collapsing because of the erosion. (Representative of Christian Association of Nigeria, Enugu Chapter).
- Budgetary allocation focusing on youth and their access to opportunities should be improved (Ikenna Ugwu, Connected Development, 08065353686).
- 20. We plead with the new Administration to look into Ozi-Edem road that has been in a deplorable state for years now. Fixing thus road will help provide abundant food for the people of Enugu. (Ogbuike, Joseph Ekemezie PG Ozi Edem Town Union 08036062676).
- 21. I pray the State government to declare free education from Primary 1 to JSS 3 because so many cannot afford the cost of education. It is also important to factor support for critical health challenges like kidney failures, cancer and other illnesses that remedies but the poor finds very difficult to manage in the health care sectors. (Amb. Amaka Nweke, Country Director Global Society for Anti-Corruption, 07083577282).
- Management Committee to help government manage schools and bring in more of private partnership. Also, budget for the implementation of inclusive education which provides for inclusive infrastructures in the schools, Oji-River Special School rehabilitation should be implemented. (Enwelum Ogechukwu (Esq.) State Steering Committee Member, OGP and Executive Director, Divine Era Development and Social Rights Initiative, 08038726200).

Wrapping up the event, the Hon. Commissioner, Barr. Ozongwu and the Executive Secretary of Economic Planning Commission responded to some of the issues raise as it concerns recurrent and capital expenditures respectively. Barr. Ozongwu added that the citizens should expect the reality of his Excellency's mantra "Business unusual" as he has vowed to ensure that 40% of the citizens' nominated projects raised in the citizens' engagement will be reflected in the 2024 Budget.

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Compiled by:

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Information Officer/PRO

Ministry of Budget and Planning.

Signed: <

Hon Barr. Chris-Roberts Ozongwu

Hon. Commissioner

Ministry of Budget and Planning.

Signed:

HRH Igwe Amb. Lawrence Agubuzu, OON, CFR

Acting Chairman, Enugu State Council of Traditional Rulers.

Signed:

Barr. Chibuzor Cromwell

Co-Chairman OGP, CSO.

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