

NIGER STATE



Geopolitical Profile: Niger State was carved out of the former North-Western State by the late Head of State, General Murtala Ramat Mohammed in February 1976. The state capital is Minna, and other major cities are Bida, Kontagora and Suleja. The Nupe, Gbagyi, Kamuku, Kambari, Dukawa and Koro form the majority of numerous indigenous tribes within the state.

This State lies between the latitude of 3.20' east and longitude 8 and 11.3' north with a population of 4,082,558 (2005 est.) within 25 administrative local government areas. It is bordered to the North by Sokoto State, West by Kebbi State, South by Kogi and South-West by Kwara State. Kaduna and Federal Capital Territory border the State to both North-East and South-East respectively.

Niger State covers a total land area of 83,266,779 square kilometers or about 8.3 million hectares which represents 8% of the total land area of Nigeria. About 85% of the land is arable. The state is named after the River Niger; Nigeria's two major hydroelectric power stations (Kainji and Shiroro dam) are located within the state.

The state is currently been governed by the All Progressive Congress Party Governor after beating the 16 years ruling party (PDP) in the Last 2015 Election; Abubakar Sani Bello (APC) is the current governor. The state has three Senators and 10 House of Representatives of the APC and all members of the state house of assembly are from the APC.

Economy Climate and Potentials: The State is very richly and abundantly endowed with fertile land, even climate characterized by very rich annual rainfall with a wide variety of mineral and material

resources such as gold, clay, silica and sand, granites, marble, copper, iron, s feldspar, lead, kaoline, cassiterite, columbite, tanta " lite and limestone.

Agriculture is the back bone of the economy of Niger State as nearly 90 per cent of the population depends either directly or indirectly on it for their livelihoods. The state is one of the largest and most fertile agricultural lands in the country. With only about 10 per cent of the state's arable land being cultivated. Niger State is the acclaimed "Power House" of the nation because it houses three hydro-electric power stations in the State. Also situated there is Kainji National Park, the largest National Park of Nigeria, which contains Kainji Lake, the Borgu Games Reserve and the Zugurma Game Reserve

Investment Policies and Climate/Institutions: Niger state government economic policy direction is found in its vision 20:20:20 which reflects a long term full potential for sustainable growth and development. This strategy is drawn from the State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy and the MDGs. Although the promotion of the private sector is still hindered by significant constraints, the government has taken steps to speed up the implementation of its medium-term development plan, things looked brighter for the state economy which is largely driven by agriculture, fair IGR system and reliance on the federal allocation coming to states.

The last government of Dr Aliyu Babangida of the PDP tried to consolidate its gains and speed up economic and social progress, the government and its technical and financial partners developed programmes to improve performance in the implementation of the Economic and Social Development Plan which aimed at tackling the constraints hampering achievement of the 2012-15 Economic and Social Development Plan. The Current government of Abubakar Sani Bello (APC) which came into power on May 29, 2015 is working toward reviving the economy and placing the state on the path of sustainable growth and development.

FINDINGS

Public Access to budget documents

Niger state scores 25 out of 100 on the State Budget Transparency Index. The State Budget Appropriation Law and Accountant General's and Auditor General's Reports are available on request. The majorities of the remaining documents is produced, but are not publicly available. The Citizen's Budget and Quarterly Reports are not produced.

Public participation in the budget

Citizens and CSOs in Niger state have limited spaces to be involved in the budget process with a score of 39 out of 100. Citizens and CSOs are essentially shut out from the **budget formulation** process. The Niger State House of Assembly opens public committee hearings during the **budget approval** process. The government publishes a very limited list of beneficiaries of projects, subsidies, social plans and targeted spending from MDAs during the **budget execution** process. Meanwhile, the **auditing** process is closed off to the public.

Public access to procurement information

With a score of 23 out of 100, citizens have limited access to procurement information in Niger. While there is no formal law regulating the procurement process, the Niger State Guideline for Economic and Due Process Document of 2007 established the Niger State Budget Implementation, Monitoring and Price Intelligence Unit to oversee the process. This Unit publishes guidance documents for potential bidders.

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 increase budget transparency in Niger state by timely publishing online the following documents that are already produced:

- Niger State Call Circular for Budget Estimates

- ❑ Niger State Draft Budget Estimates along with Niger State Draft Budget Votes and State Vision: 2020
- ❑ Niger State Quarterly Performance Report
- ❑ Niger State Mid-Year Budget Performance Review
- ❑ Niger State Accountant-General's Report
- ❑ Niger State Annual Report of the State Auditor-General

The Niger State Ministry of Finance & Economic Development 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 Niger 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.
- ❑ improve the comprehensiveness of the 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 along with reports on how these inputs are used.

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

- ❑ open all committee hearings on the budget to the public where citizens and CSOs can testify and publish reports on these hearings.

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 processes, the following should be done:

- the government should introduce a bill regulating the procurement process; give the Niger State Budget Implementation, Monitoring and Price Intelligence Unit the authority to regulate the procurement process in the state and the necessary resources to fulfill its duty and establish a procurement complaint board that manages an alternative dispute resolution mechanism.
- the Niger State Budget Implementation, Monitoring and Price Intelligence Unit should open bidding documents in public immediately after the bidding process is closed.
- the Niger State Budget Implementation, Monitoring and Price Intelligence Unit should publish all procurement decisions along with their justifications and for all community projects.

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