

ABIA STATE



Geopolitical Profile: Abia State is a state in south-eastern Nigeria. The capital is Umuahia, although the major commercial city is Aba; it was formerly a British colonial government outpost. The state was created in 1991 from part of Imo State and its citizens are predominantly Igbo people (95% of population). It is one of the nine constituent states of the Niger Delta region. Abia” is an acronym formed from the initial letters of four groups of people, namely: Aba, Bende, Isuikwuato and Afikpo. These constituted the major groups in the state at its creation.

Located in the southeastern region of Nigeria, Abia State lies within approximately latitudes 4° 40' and 6° 14' north, and longitudes 7° 10' and 8° east. The state shares common boundaries to the north with Ebonyi State; to the south and southwest with Rivers State; and to the east and southeast with Cross River and Akwa Ibom States respectively. To the west is Imo State, and to the northwest is Anambra State. The state covers an area of about 5,243.7 sq. km which is approximately 5.8 per cent of the total land area of Nigeria. With its capital at Umuahia, it has seventeen LGAs, namely: Aba North, Aba South, Isiala Ngwa North, Isiala Ngwa South, Ukwu West, Ukwu East, Obingwa, Ikwuano, Bende, Arochuku, Ohafia, Isuikwuato, Umuahia North, Umuahia South, Ugwunagbo, Osisioma and Nnochi.

The People of Abia are mainly of the Igbo stock. English is widely spoken and serves as the official language in governance and business while the Igbo language serves as a native tongue. Globally, the Igbo is well-travelled. They are known to be tolerant, ultra-democratic and reputed to be industrious, highly market-oriented, very hospitable and accommodating.

probably due to their migratory nature. About 2.4million Abia people are very entrepreneurial in nature.

The people of Abia State are pre-dominantly Christians of different denominations. There are also a good number of Muslims, with adherents of the two religions living together peacefully. Some people in the state are animists, who believe in a Being called “Chukwu”. The traditional worshippers believe in the ability of deities to exercise strong influence on the destiny of man.

By the projection of the National Bureau of Statistics, based on the 1991 census figure of 1.19 million, Abia State was expected to have a population of 3.51 million. In 2006 the National Population Commission allocated 2,833,999 as the population of Abia State. This figure is being contested at the population tribunal. The basis being that the survey carried out in Aba showed that Aba alone has more than 1.5 million houses. Taking each building to house 4 persons, (a conservative figure), it means that Aba alone has the population of at least 6.0 million. When the other towns and communities are put into consideration, then Abia is well over 10 million.

National Census of Nigeria carried out in 1991 puts the provisional population of Abia State at 1,976,805. Out of this figure, 920,268 are males and 956,434 are females. In almost all local government areas of Abia State, the population of females is more than that of males except in Aba area (Aba North and Aba South LGAs) where the population of males is more than that of females. Settlement Pattern: Abia State has two main urban centres, namely: Umuahia and Aba. Umuahia, the state capital, has become the administrative, educational and cultural centre of the state. In addition, the city is located at the centre of an extensive agricultural region, which covers most of the central part of Abia State. It is also strategically located along a well-established north south trading and transportation route.

Infrastructure & Economy: Crude oil and gas production is a prominent activity, as it contributes to 39% of the GDP. The manufacturing sector only accounts for 2% of the GDP. The industrial centre of the state is in Aba, with textile manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, soap, plastics, cement, footwear, and cosmetics. Representing 27% of the GDP, agriculture, which employs 70% of the state workforce, is the second economic sector of Abia. With its

adequate seasonal rainfall, Abia has much arable land that produces yams, maize, potatoes, rice, cashews, plantains, taro, and cassava. Oil palm is the most important cash crop.

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