

BAYELSA STATE



Geopolitical Profile: Bayelsa State was carved out from the old Rivers state on 1st October 1996 created by the military regime of late Gen. Sani Abacha. It has a land area of 21,110 square kilometers with an estimated population of over 2 million in 2014. It has 8 local government areas (LGAs), consisting of 323 Communities. The Capital and the seat of Government is Yenagoa. The indigenous ethnic group in Bayelsa State is the Ijaws about 100% of the population with sub tribes which include Ogbia, Epie Atissa and Nembe.

The current ruling political party in Bayelsa State is the People Democratic Party (PDP); the present government came into power on February 15, 2012 after a successful handover by PDP-led Government. The state House of Assembly (SHoA) comprised 24 members representing the 8 Local Government Areas of the state. As at 2014, the SHoA is made up of 24 PDP members.

Economic Climate and Potentials: The major occupations in the state are fishing, subsistence farming, palm oil milling, lumbering, palm wine tapping and local gin making, trading, carving and weaving. The state is blessed with an abundant supply of crude oil and she has other mineral resources such as Natural Gas, fine sand and clay (used in pottery and porcelain production).

Investment Policies And Climate/Institution: Due to its abundance of natural resources, Bayelsa state offers variety of investment opportunities in 9 economic sectors namely: agriculture, energy, fisheries, infrastructure, solid minerals etc. However, the present state government has undertaken series of reforms by creating the Bayelsa State

Investment Promotion Agency (BIPA) with the aim of quick incorporation of companies, easy registration with tax authorities, less costly rate for building permits, simplified procedure for registering properly and reduction in time to register land which has created friendly and enabling climate for investors in the state.

FINDINGS

Public Access to budget documents

Bayelsa state scores 45 out of 100 on the State Budget Transparency Index. The State Budget Call Circular, State Draft Budget Estimates, and State Budget Appropriation Law are publicly available on request. Citizens have access to all documents in both the budget formulation and approval stage that can serve as a basis to monitor how the government is executing the budget; however, none of the budget execution documents (Citizens budget, Quarterly budget implementation reports, Mid-Year Reviews, accountant-general's report and Auditor-General's report) are publicly available to the public. The Accountant-General's and Auditor-General's Report are only produced for internal use while the Citizen's Budget, Quarterly Reports, and a Mid-Year Review are not produced at all.

Public participation in the budget

Citizens and CSOs in Bayelsa state have absolutely no spaces to be involved in the budget process with a score of 0 out of 100.

Public access to procurement information

With a score of 23 out of 100, citizens have limited access to procurement information in Bayelsa. The Bayelsa State Procurement Law 2009 regulates the entire procurement process and established the Bayelsa State Due Process Bureau. The Bayelsa State Due Process Bureau publishes all awarded contracts online.

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 increase budget transparency in Bayelsa state by publishing the following documents that are already produced:

- Accountant-General's Report

- Auditor-General's Report

The Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning of Bayelsa state should do the following:

- partner with CSOs in the state, to develop a Citizen's Budget.
- produce and publish the Quarterly Reports and a Mid-Year Review on time.

Public Participation

To effectively take advantage of knowledge of CSOs and citizens, the government of Bayelsa 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 Bayelsa State House of Assembly should do the following:

- open all committee hearings on the budget to public where citizens and CSOs can testify and publish reports on these hearings.
- 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 processes, the following should be done:

- the Bayelsa State Due Process Bureau should establish a procurement complaint board that manages an alternative dispute resolution mechanism.
- the Bayelsa State Due Process Bureau should publish award justifications when awards are published online as well as 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