Africa Country Partnerships on Fiscal Transparency Portals: Nigeria and South Africa

Report of activities (preliminary version)

1. Background

The Nigerian Ministry of Budget and National Planning is establishing a Fiscal Transparency Portal with the aim to facilitate public consultation on the use of public resource by ensuring access in one central portal for timely proactive disclosure of fiscal information and data. The Nigeria Fiscal Transparency Portal is intended to be the Portal that enables a one stop access to most relevant Fiscal information and data platform for Nigeria.

On the other hand, the National Treasury of South Africa, in collaboration with civil society, has developed the Vulekamali budget transparency portal (link) to ensure that useful, timely, and relevant information is published in an accessible way while addressing users’ needs. Coordinated by the GIFT network, Nigeria and South Africa dialogue on Fiscal Transparency Portals brought together the National Treasury of South Africa and the Government of Nigeria to allow each country to present on what they expect to gain from fiscal transparency portals, progress made so far, and challenges they face in developing such portals. Civil society and private sector were also participate of the dialogue.

As part of the terms of the Nigerian Ministry of the Budget engagements as a steward before the GIFT network, and based in the SA National Treasury collaboration within GIFT, the network organized a peer-learning exchange in South Africa, including a workshop in Pretoria. Counting with the generous and strategic support of CABRI, a GIFT steward, the workshop was aimed at facilitating a discussion on the benefits, challenges, and ways to improve fiscal transparency in Nigeria.

1. Date and place

Date: 5-6 December 2018

Venue: National Treasury of South Africa in Pretoria

1. Participants

Nigerian delegation

*Government*

* Anne Nzegwu- Director of Budget Reform, Federal Ministry of Budget and National Planning, Planning Office.
* Chidinma Ilechukwu. Team Lead, Ministry of Justice, Open Government Partnership Coordinating Ministry and Co-Chair.
* Boniface Abali, Assistant Chief Executive, Federal Ministry of Budget and National Planning, Budget Office.
* Aliyu Edogi Aliyu- Head of Regulations / Deputy Director, Bureau of Public Procurement.
* Immaculate Ntui- Assistant Manager. Federal Inland Revenue Service.
* Martha Keleke Ukponu, Deputy Director, Federal Ministry of Budget and National Planning, Planning Office.

*Private sector*

* Nnanna Ude- Representative of The Private Sector. Nigerian Economic Summit Group.

*Civil society*

* Peter Egbule- Respresentative Of Civil Society. Publish What You Pay & EITI.

South Africa Participants

*Government*

* Raquel Ferreira, Chief Director Expenditure Planning, National Treasury.
* Andisile Best, Director of Expenditure Planning, National Treasury

Civil Society

* Imali Yethu Representatives
* OpenUp Representatives: Adrian Kearns and JD Bothma
1. Results
* The main points of interest for the participants were the budgeting process of South Africa, as well as the public contracting reforms and systems behind the procurement process in both countries. The discussions brought to light many public financial management gaps in the budget process of Nigeria, which benefited from the learning processes in South Africa.
* There seems to be a consensus among the Nigerian delegation on the need to progress in their transparency efforts, giving to coordination among the different agencies and departments a key role in the process.
	+ The need for coordination and for linking the systems and data systems, were particularly acknowledged by the representative of the Bureau of Public Procurement.
* After the presentation of other international initiatives for fiscal transparency (Brazil, Mexico and El Salvador), the adoption of a single-entry portal consolidating different initiatives seemed like a feasible and sensible option for Nigeria. However, the issues to solve are:
	+ Objective of the portal. While the publication is an important milestone, the group still needs to decide what public problem they would like to help solving through the Portal. The prioritization of the subsequent initial steps will depend on that.
		- The representatives of the Budget Office and the Bureau of Public Procurement acknowledge the benefits of linking budget-procurement-infrastructure to help solve the lack of infrastructure problem.
		- It is important to continue emphasizing the importance of publishing with a clear purpose, define in dialogue with users, and to consider an iterative approach to include various initiatives.
	+ The question of governance of the site was a difficult issue to tackle for the visiting group, and it was decided that when the various issues, objectives and stakeholders were identified and defined, ways to address such a question would be clearer to the higher management.
	+ The goal of publishing a site that unites five initiatives (ease of doing business, i-tax, i-monitor, NEITI and open contracting) before May 2019, did not seemed achievable at the moment.
* It is worth noting that the CABRI representative emphasized the need to progress in public financial reforms in Nigeria firstly and more urgently than transparency initiatives, considering that the gaps on data availability (i.e. the 2018 budget just recently passed) could derive in lack of inputs to populate the portal.

Next steps

* It is important to consider that each of the initiatives are part of the proposed one-stop shop is still running in parallel processes, so it is important to engage coordinated and synchronized efforts as soon as possible.
	+ There is a monthly fiscal transparency working group meeting for the completion of the Open Government Partnership commitments. In these meetings presided by the OGP Secretariat, fiscal transparency working group co-chair (Dr. Anne Nzegwu) and civil society representatives, it seems already possible to find progress in specific objectives related to GIFT work and the portal planned:
		- “Provide technical support for MDAs to publish budgets quarterly and annual budget implementation reports on their websites in both human and machine-readable”
		- “Ministry of Budget and National Planning to publish an annual comprehensive citizen’s guide to budget.”
		- “Development and management of publicly available database on public sector procurement in both human and machine-readable.”
* Focus on the budget office related commitments by looking at the progress in the aforementioned activities of the Budget Office commitment: “[To Ensure More Effective Citizens’ Participation Across The Entire Budget Cycle](http://nap.openalliance.ng/_comm/26)”.