



ADP-PEOPLES DIALOGUE CONVENES CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS TO PUBLIC FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT (PFM) CONFERENCE

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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- “Citizens in the remaining 170 districts must be engaged to help them hold their assemblies accountable” **Charles Othniel Abbey**
- **African Development Programme and Peoples’ Dialogue Host National CSO Conference on PFM**
- **Revise budget to reflect education, health development and youth unemployment issues.**



Participants with Representatives of the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD)

Movements towards meaningful engagement with citizens in the development process is gradually seeing the light of day. Civic participation and awareness raising on local governance issues is also gaining a strong foothold throughout the country. Since 2013, the spotlight has been placed on citizens’ involvement in public financial management processes of development planning, budgeting and revenue management, procurement and asset management, financial reporting and auditing and monitoring and evaluation.

The lead role played by state actors including the Ministry of Finance (Fiscal Decentralization Unit-FDU), Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (Social Accountability Unit-SAU), Local Government Service Secretariat

(LGSS), Internal Audit Agency, Audit Service, Controller and Accountant General’s Department, and National Development Planning Commission in developing Public Financial Management (PFM) templates to deepen fiscal decentralization and strengthen citizens’ demand for effective local governance and accountability is commendable.

This lead role ought to be complemented by citizen/non-state actor led processes in strengthening demand- side capacity that will enhance citizens understanding of PFM issues and increase citizens’ support for effective management of public resources as well as them fulfilling their civic duties of paying necessary financial commitments for

improved service delivery.

Against this background, **African Development Programme (ADP)** co-led by Peoples Dialogues held a national conference with the aim to consolidate ideas at establishing a civil society platform throughout Ghana that seeks to promote popular participation in local governance.

The meeting took place on 7th-8th November, 2016 at the Forest Hotel in Dodowa.

Charles Othniel Abbey (Ag National Convenor), in a remark noted that the Social Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability (SPEFA) project and its consortium which is being led by the Netherlands Development Organizations (SNV) focuses only on the Metropolitan and Municipal Assemblies. “It was for this identified gap that the citizens in the remaining about 170 district needed to be engaged in a manner that they will also be informed with the necessary information to participate in, negotiate with and hold their district assemblies accountable for their actions” he said.

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The Head of SAU, Madam Fati Soale lauded the idea saying it is a good thing to do. She said "as the SPEFA process ends next year, the interest of the citizens to hold district assemblies accountable need- ed to be sustained since they have not reached the level where they can mobilize themselves and engage their Metropolitan and Municipal Assemblies (MMAs)" .

She noted that even though Ghana has practiced decentralization for some

time now popular participation was weak and that the coming of the network can serve the purpose to address the weakness.

She advised that the success of the meeting and network depends on the quality of documents develop and that beginning stages are always crucial so network member should put in their best in developing a good strategy document.

Elvis Otto, a technical adviser of the SAU supervised discussions on the key focus areas that should constitute the Network' s strategic document.

The African development Programme (ADP) was represented by **Ag. Executive Director, Charles Othniel Abbey** and **Programs Assistant Solomon Okai**, both led discussions and did presentations on the Environmental and Stakeholder Analysis respectively. The

discussions contributes to effort to feed the overall Strategic Plan of the Network.

Partner CSOs representing eight regions participated in the conference and was supported by the Social Accountability Unit (SAU) of the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development.

The public financial management issues of district assemblies and social accountability is the focus of the Network.

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The African Development Programme (ADP) in collaboration with the Ga East Municipal Assembly has organized a second Town Hall Meeting to present to the residents its budget estimates for the 2017 period.

The meeting which is also known as engagement platforms affords citizens the opportunity to contribute to, and advocate for some interventions in their communities whiles bringing duty bearers face-to-face to interact with right holders on the issues affecting development.

In order to make the meeting a success, the Ga East Municipal Assembly resorted to the use of the **Public**



Financial Management Template 1 i.e **Things The Assembly Plans To Do This Year** (2017) to make the discussions, identified projects and programs more transparent and easy to account for.

Participants from the length and breadth of the district came. Representative from the

Ghana Federation of Disable (GFD), Residents Associations, Transport Union, Market groups just to mention a few were there to interact with the duty bearers. In all 159 people participated, out of this 87 were men and 69 were women.

The Assistant Planning Officer took participants through the projects and programs the

Assembly has outline to execute. Notable among them were under Education, Health, Water, Sanitation, Agriculture, Markets, Social Programs, Office and Residential Facilities among others with associated financial commitments were highlighted.

However, during the plenary majority of the participants protested the budget estimates for the Office and Residential Facility maintenance of the Municipal Chief Executive (External painting works on the MCE' s residence at Abokobi) which stood at gh¢ 35,000.00. The source of the resource was identified as Internal Generated Fund (IGF)

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While several attempts were made by the Planning officer, Budget Officer and Head of Social Accountability of the Ministry of Local Government to restore calm at the meeting, some participants charged the assembly to redirect the resources into youth related programs as it is a missing component in the Budget to help address the youth unemployment in the District. Other participants wanted the resource to be invested into education and health sectors.

Madam Fat Soale Head of SAU also suggested that the assembly increase their budget for citizen engagement in order to bridge the information gap between duty bearers and right holders.

As a result of this, Remy Edmundson, a regular Social Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability (SPEFA) forum member has convened some residents associations in the district with the sole aim of serving as a pressure group on participatory planning and budgeting processes, scrutinize future budgets thoroughly and make necessary recommendations in the best interest of the residents.

Some participants who spoke after the meeting congratulated ADP and SAU for bringing such a program to the district. A resident from Sesemi said "we certainly want to thank ADP and the government for this program, it is one of the best things to happen as citizens participation in this issues are concerned. Our hope is that they (assembly) continue with it. Some also said it has been an eye-opener to the things the assembly does in planning development.

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[HTTP://WWW.MOFEP.GOV.GH/SITES/DEFAULT/FILES/DIVISIONS/BUDGET/FDU/PMFI-TEMPLATES-GUIDELINES-2013.PDF](http://www.mofep.gov.gh/sites/default/files/divisions/budget/fdu/pmfi-templates-guidelines-2013.pdf)

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