

IMO STATE



Imo State came into existence in 1976 along with other new states created under the leadership of the late military ruler of Nigeria, Murtala Muhammad, having been previously part of East-Central State. The state is named after the Imo River. Part of it was split off in 1991 as Abia State, and another part became Ebonyi State. The main cities in Imo State are Owerri (the state capital), Orlu and Okigwe. The local language is Igbo and Christianity is the predominant religion.

Imo State lies within latitudes $4^{\circ}45'N$ and $7^{\circ}15'N$, and longitude $6^{\circ}50'E$ and $7^{\circ}25'E$ with an area of around 5,100 sq km. It is bordered by Abia State on the East, by the River Niger and Delta State on the west, by Anambra State to the north and Rivers State to the south. Besides Owerri, Imo State's major towns are Isu, Okigwe, Oguta, Orlu, Mbaise, Mbano, Mbieri, Orodo and Orsu.

Imo State has a population of over 4.8 million with population density that varies from 230 persons per sq. km. in Oguta/Egbema area to about 1,400 persons per sq. km. in Mbaise, Orlu, Mbano and Mbaitoli areas. This high population density has led to intensified pressure on land, forests and other natural resources, leading to increasing rural poverty which is characteristic of densely-populated rural areas. Fallow period rarely exceeds one year and in some areas continuous cropping is the rule. Low crop yield and loss of land to erosion have combined to induce people to migrate in search of jobs and even farmland in other parts of the country.

Economic Climate: The state is rich in natural resources including crude oil, natural gas, lead and zinc. Economically exploitable flora like the iroko, mahogany, obeche, bamboo, rubber tree

and oil palm predominate. However with a high population density and over farming, the soil has been degraded and much of the native vegetation has disappeared.

This deforestation has triggered soil erosion which is compounded by heavy seasonal rainfall that has led to the destruction of houses and roads. The population of Imo State is predominantly rural. Some of the most densely settled areas of Nigeria are found in Imo State, where a direct relationship exists between population density and the degree of dispersal of rural settlement.

FINDINGS

Public Access to budget documents

Imo state scores 13 out of 100 on the State Budget Transparency Index. While most key budget documents are produced in the state, not a single one is published. The State Budget Call Circular, State Draft Budget Estimates, State Budget Appropriation Law, Accountant-General's Report and Auditor-General's Report are produced for internal use while the Citizen's Budget and Mid-Year Review are not produced.

Public participation in the budget

Citizens and CSOs in Imo state have limited space to be involved in the budget process with a score of 19 out of 100. During the **budget formulation** stage, the public is essentially shot out from providing inputs. The Imo House of Assembly holds committee hearings on **budget approval** process. In conjunction with LGAs, town hall meetings are held during the **budget execution** to assess how public works projects are implemented. The **auditing** process has no open space for public scrutiny.

Public access to procurement information

With a score of 17 out of 100, citizens have limited access to procurement information in Imo. The Imo State Public Procurement Law of 2010 created the Bureau of Public Procurement, which regulates the procurement process in the state.

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 Imo state by timely publishing online the following documents that are already produced:

- ☐ Call Circular for Submission of Proposals
- ☐ State Draft Budget Estimates along with 4-year Rescue Development Plan
- ☐ Imo State Enacted Budget
- ☐ Imo State Budget Performance Reports
- ☐ Imo State Financial Statements
- ☐ Annual Report of the Auditor-General on the Accounts of the Govt. of Imo State of Nigeria

The Budget Directorate of Imo state should do the following:

- ☐ partner with CSOs in the state to develop a Citizen's Budget.
- ☐ produce and publish the Mid-Year Review.

Public Participation

To effectively take advantage of the experience of CSOs and citizens, the government of Imo 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 Imo 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.
- ☐ 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 government should give the Bureau of Public Procurement the authority to regulate all the procurement process in the state and provide the resources necessary to fulfill its duty.

- ☐ establish a procurement complaint board that manages an alternative dispute resolution mechanism.
- ☐ the Bureau of Public Procurement should publish all procurement decisions along with their justifications for all community projects.

Access to Information

To improve access to information in the state, the government should do the following:

1. Domesticated the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act, 2011.
2. Establish Freedom of Information (FOI) Agency in the state