PUBLIC AND PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT CENTRE (PPDC) REPORT ON THE
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TOUR “BUDESHI WAKA” ANAMBRA STATE
ON THE 7TH JUNE 2017.

The town hall meeting saw in attendance representatives from the 5 schools visited by a procurement monitor in February 2017. Communities represented were Nanka, Ajali, Umuem-anam, Azia, and Ubahuekwem in Ihiala. Amongst stakeholders present were the Principals of the visited schools, community leaders and PTA chairman of the schools. The event which was held at Community high school Nanka in Orumba north Anambra State kicked off at about 11:30 am with registration of attendance and introduction of stakeholders' present.

To ensure full participation, the attendees were enlightened on the role of PPDC in promoting citizens participation in governance through procurement monitoring. Iteoma a staff of PPDC was the first speaker, she went ahead to identify the importance of citizens engagement in curbing corruption and ensuring better service delivery. During her opening remark which was done in the local dialect, she brought to limelight the Budeshi platform where details of public contracts are published and urged participants to engage with the information provided to monitor projects within their locality.

Gift Omoideia who facilitated the interactive session went into details to discuss the report published by PPDC based on findings reported by procurement monitors. She went further to elaborate on the role of PPDC in ensuring that best practices are attained in the public sector as well as the challenges faced by rural communities in monitoring the implementation of projects.

One of the highpoints of the session was the feedback given by heads of the schools regarding the projects, challenges encountered and the way forward.

Renovation/Rehabilitation Of Community Secondary School Nanka Orumba South LGA for ₦20,040,900.00

The Principal of the school who commended PPDC for organizing the meeting spoke on the current state of the school. He stated that the renovation was for the school fence, which has not been completed till date, this means the pupils are constantly exposed to attack from hoodlums due to lack of a perimeter fence. The issue of security was portrayed as the biggest challenge the school has. While speaking on how he got the information concerning the project, he mentioned that the contractor called to inform him he was directed to carry out the project in the school and commenced work shortly. However, since he had
no prior information on details of project he never knew what the school was entitled to. He went further to narrate his experience trying to get the contractor to finish the fence. While expressing his dismay on the amount the contract was awarded as contained in the report PPDC published, he said prior information on projects would have helped in avoiding use of substandard materials and ensuring the contractor completes the work prior to signing off of project. He also said he had put a lot of efforts to ensure the contractor completed the construction the school fence, however the contractor promised to return if he receives the funds to complete the project. He also condemned the way some contractors execute public project, especially portraying the project as a favour to the community.

In response to needs assessment done prior to the project, the principal said that each school sends annual returns to SUBEB which comprises of what the school needs, he opined that the information provided in the document serves that purpose. He also stated that he has written to SUBEB on the fence issue and is yet to receive any positive feedback.

St. Anthony School Azia, Ihiala for N35,000,000.00

The community was represented by the school principal, community members and PTA members. The Principal who spoke on behalf of team expressed his shock over the amount the project was awarded for. According to him, he had no prior information on project amount, which according to him would have aided his liaising with the contractor in ensuring the project met the required standard. He spoke on the state of the school as at the time the procurement monitor visited in February, which he said was deplorable. While emphasising on the need for prior information from UBEC and ANSUBEB regarding projects, he said lack of information continues to be a huge challenge in effective implementation of projects within their community.

He went further to narrate how he received a call on a Saturday morning from the contractor who did the project. Though the contractor showed him the letter authorizing him to execute the project, the letter according to the principal did not disclose the amount or the standard of the intended project. He further disclosed how difficult it was to get the contractor to return. Speaking on project monitoring by the board, he said a team of M&E staff once came to the school during which they saw the dilapidated structure left by the contractor and promised that actions will be taken to ensure the completes the work. According to him work on the project recommenced the week before we held the town hall meeting, and they are looking forward to seeing the school
renovated and conducive for learning.

**Nkworji Fishermen School, Anam for **₦10,000,150.00

The assistant headmaster of the school who spoke on behalf of the principal confirmed the findings from the procurement monitor. He said neither the contractor nor SUBEB gave prior information on the project. On why the students commenced lessons in the new structures despite uncompleted, he narrated the dilapidated (infested by bats etc) state of the old structure which made the school authorities use the new project. He then appealed to PPDC to take the discussion further to ensure relevant authorities consider the matter.

**Government Technical College, Ubahuekwem Ihiala for **₦25,000,000.00

The Headmaster of the school who was present at the meeting spoke on the present state of the school. Though he has been in the school for only 7 months, he said no letter was received from ANSUBEB about the project except the letter received by his predecessor. While speaking on the importance of the school to the community, he complained that the school lacks basic science and technical equipment.

He explained that the existing structures in the school made it impossible for the contractor to install the technical equipment meant for the school with the notion that “the school is not safe”. He complained bitterly on the inability of the school to function as a technical school because there are no equipment available for practical learning.

Speaking on how they learnt about the project, the principal confirmed that his predecessor informed him of the letter authorizing the contractor to execute the project, however the letter did not specify the amount and other relevant information needed to ensure full implementation of the project.

Other challenges facing the school were electrification and equipping of the laboratory.

**Ajali Primary School, Orumba North LGA for **₦19,894,980.00

The project which was renovation/rehabilitation of the school was reported to be completed but locked up as a result of lack of teachers. The headmistress of the school who was present at the meeting disclosed how the contractor notified her of the project and his intention to complete the project within a space of 3 months precisely on 29th January 2016. According to her, she informed the contractor the school needed water but was informed that was not part of the project.
During her speech, the principal delved on the issue of security, lack of teachers and school as basic needs of the school. Speaking on the project, she said some of the classrooms were locked because of lack of teachers. She also pointed out that the school has 6 teachers to teach over 500 pupils, this according to her was impossible thus, the structures were locked up.

On further steps taken to ensure teachers were sent to the school, she said all this information were listed on the monthly returns sent to SUBEB.

In addition to issues raised, other stakeholders present emphasised on the issue of vandalization of school properties because the premises are not secured. Amongst the stakeholders who spoke were- Chairman PTA St. Anthony Azia who commended PPDC and spoke on the need for security posts in public schools, PTA chairman of government technical school Ubahuekwem-Ihiala spoke on issues of access road, access to clean water and dilapidated structures seen in public schools despite the huge amount used in renovating them.

**Core issues and recommendations**

- Deployment of teachers to public schools
- No Prior information on all projects entitled to public schools
- Access to clean water to be included in projects
- Request for where feedback on MDG projects should be channeled to
- Access roads to schools to be included in projects

**Recommendations**

- SUBEB to give prior information on projects to school heads, detailing amount, type of projects and name of contractor.
- Effective monitoring of projects by the government to ensure contractors implement the projects effectively.
- Adequate security and labourers in public schools.
- Needs assessment prior to projects being awarded to reduce resource wastage and to aid in tackling major challenges.

In conclusion, PPDC mentioned that budget information is available on the Budeshi platform, however, in recognition of limited access to the internet in some of the local communities, Seember inquired from the communities which channel PPDC can use in passing across the information. In response to that, it was agreed that: Outlook newspaper, Fides newspaper, The Sun and Asatu can serve that purpose. Also, it was agreed that the information can be sent to the Town unions who can help disseminate the information.
Seember also inquired if the communities will be willing to attend a broader stakeholder engagement with the State government if organized, in response the people agreed they will be present and will be ready to present their cases if such opportunity can be provided by PPDC.

The meeting ended at about 2:15 pm with taking of group photograph and refreshments.

**Cross-cutting issues raised at every state visited:**

- There exists a huge gap of communication between Federal, State and local communities regarding projects at the local level.
- Lack of prior information or sensitization on intended projects to the host communities
- Lack of security in public schools
- Most projects done haphazardly by contractors
- The absence of a central platform where local communities can access budget and procurement information
- Substandard materials used in constructing public projects
- Staffing
- Access roads
- Inaccessibility of the house of reps. Members