

## WELCOME ADDRESS

### PROMOTING QUALITY CIVIC EDUCATION IN THE COUNTRY

Distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure to extend to you all a very warm welcome on behalf of Riplington & Associates and to say how grateful we are that you have accepted our invitation to attend the National Stakeholders' Consultative Meeting on 'Promoting Quality Civic Education in the Country'.

We are all aware of the fact that such meetings would never be possible without the help and support of funders, therefore, I would like to express my sincere thanks to Open Society Initiative for West Africa. The project is implemented by OSIWA under DFID funded-programme 'Deepening Democracy in Nigeria 2'. DDIN 2 aims to strengthen democratic governance in Nigeria.

I wish to take this opportunity to welcome the representative of the Honorable Minister of Education, Chairperson Dr Fatima Akilu, Prof Chidi Odinkalu (giving the keynote speech, Prof Jibrin Ibrahim (moderator), Alhaji Musa Inuwa Kubo (Commissioner for Education, Borno State), students from Kado LEA primary school and Chidera Ozochi (student representative from Enugu).

It should be pointed out that we recently concluded a series of state consultative meetings in the 3 pilot states (Borno, Enugu & Kano) to sensitize and raise awareness of stakeholders about the project on promoting quality of civic education. This also included school visits that afforded us the opportunity to interact with students and staff. In addition, we have had advocacy meetings with NERDC and NCCE to sensitise them about the upcoming project.

It is also gratifying to note that the agenda of the meeting covers a wide range of interesting items relating to civic education from the policymakers down to the student perspectives. I am especially excited to hear from Chidera who is in SS3 and has been studying civic education for 6 years. My colleague Chijioke will give an overview of the project, Prof Odinkalu will give an in-depth speech highlighting the linkages between civics, national identity/nation building, and quality education. Then we have the panel discussion moderated by Dr Jibrin Ibrahim which aims to discuss the role of schools (educational systems) in building democratic citizens through the formal civic education curriculum.

It is an opportune time to discuss an issue of mutual interest with participants from the 3 pilot states and the FCT – civic engagement, national development, values, the role of young people under 18 and the education system.

It would seem that many people think they can explain the world and feel free to complain about the world; the point must be to change it. If the current social order does not seek to

address and resolve problems, whether through deliberate endeavor or casual oversight, allows them to continue and to multiply, then that order must be scrutinized and exposed; to do anything else is at best hypocritical and at worse it is damning our children and their futures. Civic education provides that opportunity through its teaching of civic, democratic and moral values for young people to identify moral bankruptcy and ethical vacuums, and to be equipped to do something about them.

There is no more important task than the development of an informed, effective, and responsible citizenry. Society can produce technically competent people in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. However, the kind of society we want to live in and the kind of government we want to have requires effort and commitment on the part of its citizens. Civic education aims to develop the skills and dispositions to function effectively as citizens - all of which are required regardless of your technical background or specialism.

In democratic settings, the concept of 'sharing' is in terms of power, of resources, and of responsibilities. In a democratic society, the possibility of effecting social change is ever present, if citizens have the knowledge, the skills and the will to bring it about. That knowledge, those skills and the will or necessary traits of private and public character are the products of a quality civic education. The project 'Promoting Quality Civic Education in the Country' is focused on schools and for the reasons highlighted above. However, it also provides an opportunity to widen the democratic space for those under 18 and their participation in decision-making on issues that affect them now and in the future. Through the educational system, civic education curriculum aims to develop active citizens who can impact society in a positive way. The question is having being made a compulsory and examinable subject at basic and senior education levels – how effective is the policy, curriculum and implementation strategy?

The main purpose of the meeting is to have stimulating exchange of ideas from various stakeholders on 'quality civic education'. And participating in this exchange, will be, on the one hand, senior Government officials from the FCT and the 3 pilot states and, on the other, high level experts of international repute, civil society, practitioners from the educator stakeholders and committed citizens. The result, it is hoped, will be to the benefit of the nation and those represented here.

Thank you for your attention. I trust that the exchanges will be interesting and worthwhile.

I warmly welcome you again.

Abiola Sanusi (Director, Riplington & Associates)

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