

MINUTES OF THE MEETING WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF DEPARTMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (DFID) HELD AT THE NIGERIA GOVERNORS' FORUM SECRETARIAT ON WEDNESDAY, 24 JUNE, 2009

S/N	NOTES/RESOLUTIONS	ACTION
	<p>ATTENDANCE</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A.B Okauru – Director General, NGF 2. M.A Jibia – Executive Director, (Finance & Admin), NGF 3. L.T Shittu – Executive Director, (Strategy & Research), NGF 4. C.C. Chuku – Head of Legal, NGF 5. F.U Katsina – Technical Assistant to the DG, NGF 6. Joe Abbah – SPARC, DFID 7. Nancy Onoh – SPARC, DFID <p>COMMENCEMENT/DG'S OPENING REMARKS</p> <p>The meeting was presided by the Director General (DG), who welcomed the DFID team to the NGF Secretariat. He informed the meeting that the Secretariat had previously held a fruitful preliminary meeting with Nancy Onoh. He gave a brief exposé on the NGF and its Secretariat, prospects and challenges.</p> <p>Mr. Joe Abbah, Deputy National Programme Manager, SPARC, in his response informed the meeting that DFID is a ministry in the UK responsible for overseas development and it is present in 60 countries. It has been in Nigeria for over 30 years under different guises. During the military era, it worked through the civil societies.</p> <p>DFID attitude to its core mandate is that the best way to eliminate poverty is to improve governance at the local level. It achieves its deliverables by engaging civil servants (who make up its core staff), programme managers, external consultants and development partners to act on its behalf. Its areas of interest include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Health ▪ Education ▪ Voice & Accountability ▪ Security ▪ Justice ▪ Growth ▪ Malaria ▪ HIV/AIDS ▪ Girl child education in the North ▪ Water <p>Generally, DFID is interested in working with those who are serious at growing development in identified areas. Their style in Nigeria is slightly different from that of other countries-the focus</p>	

is improving the capacity of Nigerians to use its resources to develop its people. It cannot depend on donor support as this may never be enough.

Prior to 1999, the DFID had laboured under an assumption, (which by benefit of hindsight) has proved inaccurate that things would progress properly on transition into democracy. It waited for the Nigerian government to initiate its own programmes but after about three years down the line, there was nothing to hold onto.

DFID is present in about 6 States in Nigeria, the sense being that knowledge gained here will be shared through out the nation. In 2005, owing to noticeable lack of commitment, it pulled out of Benue and Ekiti States. They have remained in Jigawa and Enugu States. To make greater impact in the country, DFID has chosen to work in large cities, eg Kano, Lagos and FCT Abuja. The situation in Delta State creates a situation that inhibits DFID presence even though there is a feeling that Delta has enough fiscal capacity to improve the lives of its people. All that is needed is better governance.

In 2005 also, DFID worked with the National Planning Commission to focus in key areas of:

- Communication and Transparency
- Budget and Financial Management
- Policy and Transparency

It marked the first time that the performance of different States had been measured in any way. This was repeated in 2006 and the outcome was a little better.

Mr. Abbah further informed the meeting that his division within DFID is called **State Partnership for Accountability, Responsiveness and Capability [SPARC]**. SPARC is the governance programme that would coordinate the Sector angles, Education, Health etc He identified 6 core areas of focus for SPARC:

- ❖ Policy Strategy & Research
- ❖ Public Sector Management-Civil Service Reform, ability to deliver government's agenda, human resources management, recruitment of new staff, retirement and pension packages etc)
- ❖ Monitoring and Evaluation
- ❖ Knowledge Management
- ❖ Improvement in Local Government administration
- ❖ Public Financial Management-ability to manage affairs of State (budget, accounting, debt management, etc)

He expressed confidence in the readiness of DFID to support the States in the areas of Fiscal Responsibility and Public Procurement.

Concerning the Peer Review Mechanism being contemplated, he expressed the belief that the current composition of the NGF Secretariat was equal to the task of meeting the challenges ahead. He further assured the Secretariat that now that the NGF has been given the responsibility of anchoring the process, SPARC would work with them. This would give NGF a sense of ownership of the process. There was funding available for the project and there was a need for the Secretariat and SPARC to develop a Strategic Plan together.

The DFID representative was of the view that even though the Forum was central to the things being put together and was of very strategic importance, there was an attendant risk of being drawn thin because of being pulled in different directions.

An outline for developing a strategic plan for the Secretariat would take the following into consideration:

- What is the NGF?
- What does it do?
- What is its general direction, including Long and middle term focus areas
- Issues of funding
- Issues of staffing
- Relationship between staff resources and organisational needs
- Need to sequence and prioritise the objectives
- Capacity building for the governors and Secretariat staff
- Peer Review Mechanism

He stated that DFID would be happy to fund any State's programme that was found to be useful and was ready anytime the Forum wished. In response to a question on the criteria for choosing States to assist, Mr. Abbah noted that it used to be on individual preference basis. There was a tendency to follow Points people who had cordial relationships with the Donors. This has changed since 2005 because of the application of benchmarks. It is believed that the Peer Review System would further strengthen the mode of selection.

The need for cooperation between DFID and NGF was reiterated and this would start immediately. In relation to the calibre of staff to be recruited, it was agreed that the process of development of strategy would throw up requisite areas of expertise. Mr. Abbah also advised on the possibility of certain offices being funded by Donor Agencies. He revealed that the former minister of the FCT, Mallam Nasir El-Rufai had 80% of his staff funded by donors. He suggested that a meeting be held at some point in the future between the chairman of the Forum, Head of DFID and the DG of the Forum's Secretariat to discuss

areas of mutual collaboration.

He warned that even though there was a possibility of meeting with all the donors, there was also a risk of getting a mere agreement in principle at this preliminary stage. But once there was a clear plan of action, a concrete plan of assistance could be secured.

On the way forward, it was agreed that:

- i. DFID would work with the Secretariat to work out a clear plan for the mid and long term strategy of the Secretariat;
- ii. Identify a clear path to follow to achieve the stated objectives;
- iii. Identify consultants and make attendant arrangements
- iv. The process could be developed starting in August.
- v. There was a need to have a forum in the near future between the NGF, National Planning Commission (NPC) and the MDG office.
- vi. The ED (Strategy & Research), Fatimah Katsina and Nancy Onoh (SPARC) would work out a broad strategy plan.

The DG once again thanked the visiting team for making out time to attend the meeting and the meeting was brought to a close.

Chuku, C.C Esq.