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Tackling social exclusion through major infrastructure: NIAF's partnership with the FGN

Executive Summary

- NIAF is supporting the integration of gender and social inclusion (G & SI) considerations in the prioritization of capital projects within key infrastructure Ministries.
- The Nigerian national policy context recognises that **government spending can improve social cohesion and productivity, if capital projects are pro - poor and gender sensitive**. This recognition is highlighted in the National Gender Policy, which requires Ministries to improve the outcomes from government spending across sectors through more socially responsive planning and design processes.
- This policy requirement has received broad acceptance within Government and has formed the basis of donor support at different levels. Donors have traditionally focused on the demand side, providing support to civil society in engaging with the budgetary process. However, **on the supply side there has been a skills deficit in terms of translating policy rhetoric into practical planning and tangible social impact**. This means that commitments at the policy level have not translated into results at the project level.
- As part of its capital project prioritisation support, NIAF **integrated a practical, user-friendly framework to enable effective social impact targeting in the design and implementation of capital budgets within the infrastructure sector**.
- Furthermore, NIAF **provided 66 senior ranking civil servants with training on a practical user-friendly tool for mainstreaming gender and social inclusion** considerations in infrastructure capital project budgeting. 22 of these trainees were from the senior management cadre in the Budget Office of the Federation of Nigeria (BOF).



Senior management civil servants at the NIAF economic appraisal and costing training

The Challenges¹

The critical challenge for Nigeria is that the link between infrastructure design and social impact targeting is not clearly articulated in policy documents and during project delivery. At best, policy makers espouse generic references of improved infrastructure provisions ‘automatically’ resulting in improved living standards for poor and excluded demographic groups. However, the approach for ensuring that this actually happens is often not clear.

Other challenges include:

- Significant misconceptions across different MDAs, on how gender and social inclusion is relevant within the context of non-social sector programming.
- Donor support has traditionally focused on improving the ability of civil society to engage in government budget and planning processes from a social inclusion perspective. This has not been complimented with the support required, to ensure that the demand for socially responsive budgets translates into practice changes, especially for the Ministries responsible for infrastructure provision.
- A lack of clarity on how to action the aspirations of the National Gender Policy within the context of budget and planning, especially with respect to infrastructure provision.

‘...One of the biggest challenges is that civil servants often regard gender (and social inclusion) issues as the remit of social sector ministries...they also find it difficult to make the link between gender, (social inclusion) and economic policy issues...’

Commonwealth secretariat issues paper FMM (02) 11

The NIAF Approach

NIAF’s approach in dealing with the challenges above is unique because of the flexible nature of the facility model and also because of its diverse technical expertise in dealing with the non-social (or ‘hard’) sectors.

Earlier in the year, NIAF had finalized and also begun implementation of its G & SI strategy. This is part of very deliberate attempt to promote inclusive growth through infrastructure delivery.

Leveraging on its relationship with the budget office and with the infrastructure MDAs at Federal level, **NIAF integrated a gender and social inclusion strand as a part of its work on capital budgeting reform**, which provided an opportunity to sensitise different MDAs within the context of their everyday work.

Furthermore, NIAF worked to:

- **Identify policy commitments** on gender and social inclusion that are relevant to infrastructure provision.
- **Facilitate policy dialogues** on gender and social inclusion within the context of capital projects prioritization.

‘What I found most useful about this training was how to integrate gender and social inclusion as a key factor in capital project appraisals...’

Participant at NIAFs training for MDAs on ‘Economic appraisal and costing of capital priority projects’

¹ Commonwealth secretariat issues paper FMM (02) 11 available at http://www.gender-budgets.org/index.php?option=com_joomdoc&view=documents&path=resources/by-type/general-resources/gender-responsive-budgets-a-review-of-commonwealth-experiences&Itemid=563

- **Structure the capital projects prioritisation template** around current and emerging social cohesion realities.

The Outcomes

As a result of NIAFs intervention in this area

- Gender and social inclusion considerations have **been integrated as part of the budget prioritization template** approved by the Budget Office of the Federation.
- **22 budget officers and 44 senior civil servants** from other MDAs have been equipped with the skills and information required for improved social targeting through capital projects.
- There has been a gradual **acceptance of social impact targeting** as part of capital project prioritization in non-social sector Ministries.
- There is an **increasing demand for the NIAF approach within the infrastructure MDAs not just at federal level but also at the state level from states like Kaduna and Kano.**