CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN NIGERIA
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT MANUAL
About BudgIT

BudgIT is a civic organisation driven to make the Nigerian budget and public data more understandable and accessible across every literacy span.

BudgIT’s innovation within the public circle comes with a creative use of government data by either presenting these in simple tweets, interactive formats or infographic displays.

Our primary goal is to use creative technology to intersect civic engagement and institutional reform.

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WHO IS A CITIZEN?

A CITIZEN IS A PERSON WHO IS A MEMBER OF A PARTICULAR COUNTRY AND WHO HAS RIGHTS BECAUSE THEY WERE BORN THERE, OR BECAUSE THEY ARE GIVEN RIGHTS. ‘CITIZEN’ COULD ALSO MEAN A PERSON WHO LIVES IN A SPECIFIC ENVIRONMENT.

There are different ways one can become a citizen of a country; either by birth, naturalisation or marriage, as these indicators vary between nations. According to the Oxford dictionary, “a citizen is a legally recognised subject or national of a state or commonwealth, either native or naturalised.”

CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY

The state is comprised of both leaders and followers, and it is the responsibility of all citizens to keep it running. We all have a moral obligation to act in line with the set rules and regulations that govern a place - be it the community, council, or state.

Citizens need to be enablers who are ready to make things happen for the good of the society because without them taking action, corruption would thrive continuously.

This could eventually lead to a sustained lack of delivery of the essential services which all citizens are entitled to, such as healthcare, education, jobs, roads and schools.
WHAT ARE THE DUTIES OF A CITIZEN?

According to the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, here are some of your duties, as a Nigerian:

a. Abide by this Constitution, respect its ideals and its institutions, the National Flag, the National Anthem, the National Pledge, and legitimate authorities;

b. Help to enhance the power, prestige and good name of Nigeria, defend Nigeria and render such national services as may be required;

c. Respect the dignity of other citizens and the rights and legitimate interests of others and live in unity and harmony and in the spirit of common brotherhood;

d. Make positive and useful contribution to the advancement, progress and well-being of the community where she/he resides;

e. Render assistance to appropriate and lawful agencies in the maintenance of law and order; and

f. Declare his/her income honestly to appropriate and lawful agencies and pay his/her tax promptly.
# What are the Rights of a Citizen?

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Civic Engagement Manual
WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE GOVERNMENT?

The Government must ensure that her citizens’ physiological and safety needs are met. One of the roles of Government is to provide essential amenities such as primary education for every Nigerian child, water, roads, electricity, as well as a peaceful and safe environment.

This means the government must protect her citizens from internal and external enemies, and preserve order, whilst being accountable and transparent to her citizens.

WHY DO WE HAVE A GOVERNMENT?

A Government is the tangible authority that carries the responsibility of keeping an organised environment in a local council, state and the country. The government must firstly, uphold the constitution of the land, as this is the document that directs the nation’s affairs. Second; uphold the peculiar tenets and values on which the society/country is established.

Finally, the government is the most significant deciding factor when it comes to making policies; this is necessary to ensure there are free and fair opportunities for all citizens.

WHY SHOULD CITIZENS ENGAGE WITH THE GOVERNMENT?

Citizens’ engagement has an important, and direct impact on the economic and social development of the country. During elections, citizens determine who comes into power, and if a wrong leader is elected, it destroys the nation. After choosing leaders, the next obligation is that citizens need to hold their government accountable for open and transparent governance.
When the right questions are asked, citizens indirectly provide checks and balances for the government to succeed. Citizens who engage will make sure their needs are captured in the budget, and followed through to the implementation, and audit stages.

**ENGAGING WITH ALL TIERS OF GOVERNMENT**

This process is where every Nigerian should explore ways to regularly communicate with the government after the election period, based on agreed timelines. To grow our democracy in Nigeria, it is our responsibility as citizens to ensure our elected officials speak with, and listen to us, regularly. This can be done through letter writing, participating in town-hall meetings and tracking public projects in your community.
10 ACTIONS TO MAKE YOU AN ACTIVE CITIZEN
1. **Payment of tax**: Paying your taxes is one of the most important civic duties of a citizen. The money paid to the government is used to provide essential amenities for your benefit, such as good roads, free education and many other needs in your community. Every employed citizen must pay tax, and it is also the right of every citizen to ask how the tax is being spent by the government.

2. **Ask Questions**: “Ignorance is no excuse” this saying means we must all be like students, when it comes to what happens in our country. Learning is our responsibility and if we as citizens take every opportunity to contribute to civic activities within our communities, the country will be the better for it. To avoid being ignorant citizens, we must ask questions, and share the answers, as this will inform us of the necessary actions we need to take individually and collectively.

3. **Register to Vote**: Every citizen in a country becomes a legal adult at a particular age. In Nigeria, at age 18, every citizen has the right to vote. This is a civic responsibility that must be carried out, to ensure you have representation in government; this is always for the common good of the society.

4. **Allegiance**: Every country expects total loyalty from her citizens. As a citizen, there should be no room for questioning your devotion. Therefore, citizens should always collaborate with the law enforcement agencies to fight crime in the society.

5. **Uphold the Constitution**: The Constitution is the most important document of a country and citizens should be willing to obey the laws
of the nation without questions or hesitations.

6. Know your rights: A Constitution is an legal document which must be adhered to. Every citizen must know their rights and be ready to #AskQuestions, especially if these rights are infringed upon.

7. Know and Engage with your Representatives: Citizens should show interest in whoever represents their constituency (or area) in the National Assembly. Citizens should engage with the lawmakers: these could be the Representatives in the Lower House, or the Senators in the Upper House. Ask for quarterly town hall meeting with your Representatives, to discuss how to make Bills or suggest projects that are relevant to your community. There are 109 Senators representing the Senatorial Districts, and 360 Honourables who are also called Representatives - they cover the 360 Federal Constituencies. Know which ones are your own, and begin to communicate regularly with them.

8. Respect the rights and the freedom of others: As Citizens, we must learn to acknowledge and defend one another, especially our rights and freedoms. This shows our stance as united, when we treat fellow citizens with dignity. This helps to maintain law and order, and it is only when we work together as citizens, that we can all demand for the gains of democracy from our government.

9. Participate in your local community: As citizens, we must understand that the way a family makes up a community, also makes a society, and the society is what we call our country as a whole. We must understand that it is our enthusiasm in getting involved in our own communities that affects our participation levels as active citizens. Whether it is through street cleaning, recreational activities, awareness drives
or volunteering, we all must participate in what happens in our neighbourhoods, if we want to see the changes we are asking for, as citizens.

10. Obey federal, state and local laws: A popular saying says: “there is no sin where there is no law.” It means for a state not to remain in constant disorder, there must be laws guiding the citizens and the government. As citizens, we need to obey these laws, otherwise we would have committed an act of civil disobedience, or a crime. While a crime can often be violent in the way it is committed and the means through which it is committed, civil disobedience is always non-violent. Civil disobedience is the active, professed refusal of a citizen to obey specific laws of the state, and the orders as prescribed by the government, or of occupying international powers.
WHAT IS THE BUDGET?
A Budget is a plan that shows what the government is expecting as income (popularly called revenue), and what the government plans to spend the money on, which is called expenditure. A budget is a document which also has details about how the government plans to spend your money. This money may be your share of Nigeria’s wealth which the government has collected on your behalf; e.g. revenue, or your contribution, which you pay as a tax to the government. The budget also contains other details; for instance, it will show whether the government intends to save or borrow money within the specified year. Local governments, State governments and the Federal government all have budgets. The Budget document is called an Appropriation Act.

Appropriation is the legal authority given to the Government to spend your money, on your behalf. This is done by the Legislature - the National Assembly or State Houses of Assembly. When you vote for anyone in an election, you are simply giving the person the legal authority to approve and spend money on your behalf.
HOW IS THE BUDGET PREPARED?

A lot of work goes into making the Budget. Everything has to start early, so that the Budget can be finished and approved by the Legislature, before the beginning of the new year.

The first stage of the process is that a Budget is written, or drafted. It is then sent to the Legislature (lawmakers) for approval, often spent by the Executive (government) and finally gets audited. This audit is to check that all the money was shared or spent just as written in the Budget plan at the beginning. A proper Budget audit is expected to be verified by an independent professional, and the results are usually made public.

In Nigeria, there is a document that is prepared before the annual Budget. This is called the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF). Having the MTEF means for the 2018 budget, there are already plans for 2019 and 2020; it helps in planning government resources.
WHAT MAKES A BUDGET?

Revenue is the amount of money the government believes it will make during the year; this is money collected on your behalf.

Expenditure is how the government plans to spend the money it will make. Again, this money is being spent for your needs and rights as a citizen. Expenditure has two parts: Recurrent and Capital Expenditure.

Capital Expenditure is money spent by government to get fixed capital assets, land or intangible assets. This means Capital Expenditure is how much is used for projects, including the building of schools, hospitals, roads, or buying security equipment. Capital Expenditure is sometimes called “Capex.”

Recurrent Expenditure is all payments made, apart from capital assets. It includes payments for goods and services (wages and salaries for workers, electricity bills and purchase of diesel); fuel subsidies; interest payments on debts, and transfers. Recurrent Expenditure can be seen as the cost of running the government or the cost of items that can be used immediately. It is divided into; personnel costs, overheads and debt service.

Personnel Costs: These are the total sums of money including salaries, allowance and other benefits, that Government pays to its workers (civil servants). These are the people the Government employs to work for you and provide what you need, as a citizen.

Overheads: These are any regular expenses not paid directly to a civil servant or other government workers, and it includes money billed directly to customers. Overheads must be paid for regularly.

Examples are: electricity bills, water bills, the buying of diesel for generators, or the money spent by civil servants on travelling during work.
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION
In 2011, then President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, signed the Freedom of Information (FOI) Bill into law, after intense advocacy and awareness campaigns by civil society organisations.

The Freedom of Information Act (FOI Act) was established to grant citizens access to public information. This covers information in government agencies, departments and ministries. Ordinarily, the Act enables citizens by granting them the power to scrutinise the affairs of any government agency on its activities, financial accounts and other information that should be made public.

Over the years, the Ministry of Justice has continued to lead the implementation of the Freedom of Information Act in public agencies by ensuring their compliance to the stated guidelines.

**PURPOSE**

The Freedom of Information Act has the sole purpose of connecting government to its citizens. It provides access to data, information and public materials through requests and processes. However, exceptions are in cases of national security and private information. To use the Act, citizens need to send in a letter requesting for the information they are interested in. Public authorities are then obliged to comply with the content of the request, and provide the information within a specified time.
HOW TO WRITE A FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST

The Freedom of Information request can be written and submitted in the following simple steps:

1. Know the exact information you wish to obtain

2. Identify the appropriate ministry/department/agency in charge

3. Put the recipient’s address, and a reference number to track the letter and the date.

4. Address the letter to the relevant officer in charge or the FOI Officer.

5. Use ‘Freedom of Information Request for details of -----’ as the subject of the request. This is to differentiate it from a regular letter.

6. Request for the information you want, in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

7. Sign the letter and deliver to the recipient address.

8. Ensure the FOI request is accompanied with a photocopy for recipients’ acknowledgement i.e for their signature.
The FOI Act gives seven days (7 days) for public agencies to respond to Freedom of Information requests made by the public. Should the agency refuse to respond after the stipulated seven days, the enquirer can decide to send a reminder to the agency citing the initial letter (using a reference number). If this reminder letter is unanswered, the enquirer is powered by the FOI Act to sue the public agency to court.

It is advisable that the enquirer notifies the FOI Desk at the Ministry of Justice, because this ministry coordinates, supervises and enforces compliance by public agencies, to the Freedom of Information Act.
USING THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT TO COMBAT CORRUPTION
DYNAMICS OF CORRUPTION

Over the years, societies, individuals, organisations and studies have defined corruption as having various forms. Some types of corruption that occurs within societies include human, financial, economic, social, religious, petty and grand corruption. The best approach to understanding the ramifications of corruption could be by extending the scope to accommodate the HUMAN COST of corruption.

Relatability is a key ingredient in helping citizens better comprehend and project the consequences of corruption.

COMMUNAL RESOURCES MUST WORK FOR ALL

The human cost perspective offers a wider understanding into the imprints corruption makes on the lives of every individual.

The misappropriation of funds, wrong use of power and socioeconomic status, contract inflation and other related acts of corruption in the public sphere perpetuates inequality in the society, thereby affecting everyone. It is important for citizens to understand that, for example, N50bn taken from public purse is not best understood as ‘N50bn has been stolen’ but as:

10,000 units of 2-bedroom flats stolen from citizens
10 km worth of roads taken away from the people

The theft of internally-generated revenue for one state in an entire year
This approach sends a signal to citizens that they must ensure public resources work for them by holding their elected officials accountable.

This act of citizen vigilance will discourage the misappropriation of funds, and bring about overall development in all Nigerian States.

The objective is to examine the pattern of corruption in Nigeria’s key sectors: Education, Health, Finance, Security, Works, humanise the long-term effect and encourage citizens to take ownership of public projects in their communities, to avoid recurring acts of corruption.

**ELECTIONS**

As a very critical part of any democracy, elections have to be free and fair. The best outcome is to get new sets of leaders, according to the wishes of the people, and in keeping with law. Nigeria has been operating under the democratic system of governance since 1999, after a series of military regimes. A vibrant democracy gives room for wider political representation, and citizens must play their role to ensure inclusion never reduces.
THE VALUE OF VOTES

Each citizen needs to know that their vote is not a gift item to be given out, neither is it a commodity to be purchased, nor a complimentary item used sparingly.

Your vote is your fundamental human right, and you are at liberty to decide without coercion who to give your vote to.

A vote is your approval being given to an electoral candidate you believe will represent your interest.

It is important for every adult that goes into a voting process to understand that the vote they cast today is a seed they are planting for their future, and that of their children.

Your vote is as important as your life, because if you cast your vote for a wrong candidate, the decision that candidate makes when elected into office can either affect your life positively or negatively.

Your vote is also a tool of judgment; you can decide not to give it to a public officer who has performed poorly, but is still seeking re-election into office. In the event that the majority of votes re-elect such a candidate into office, your conscience will be justified that you did not contribute to continuous injustice or corruption being perpetuated by the candidate.

Your vote has nothing to do with you tribe, religion, colour and language. When casting your vote, it is important to consider none of these features. Only think of the leadership qualities and personality of every candidate seeking your votes.
VALUES TO VOTE FOR

Every four years, Nigerians go to the polling booth to cast their votes and elect public officers into various political positions. As Nigeria grows in her democratic journey, citizens must upgrade their knowledge on what values to vote for during elections.

1. The values to vote for begin with you. How much value you place on your vote, will determine how/who you will give your vote to.

2. The values to vote for have nothing to do with religion, tribe, economic status, language or ethnicity. It is fully dependent on your personal convictions that the candidate you want to vote for will represent your interests, and the future of your children.

3. Values of accountability are necessary; you need to look out for candidates that show a sense of responsibility to their family, societal moral standards, as well as their career or business pedigree. A man or woman that is not accountable to family virtues would most likely not value the responsibilities that come with a public office. It is also important to check for, and know about the precedents of the candidate you give your vote to - what has he/she has done well or otherwise, before.

4. Look out for the characters and qualifications of those seeking election into public office. It is not likely that your interests will be safe in the hands of the weak and ignorant; or faithfully managed by immoral, corrupt and unsympathetic individuals.
Often, you will be able to discern the values to vote for, from the manifestos of the candidates. Candidates that are prone to offering quick-fix support, or ad-hoc bribes (locally called stomach infrastructure) as elections approach, will not have lasting benefit for your future. This is because their focus is on what they can give you now, just to secure those votes. Look out for candidates that have realistic, long-term plans and show these clearly, during campaigns. For those candidates seeking re-election, the best measurement of their capabilities is their past record. Ask yourself: “would my life be better if this person did exactly what they have done in the past four years?”
THE “NOT TOO YOUNG TO RUN” ACT

If you are old enough to vote, then you are old enough to run for office. The Act To Reduce Age Qualification For The Office Of The President And Membership For The House of Representatives And The State Houses of Assembly now covers this. Popularly called the “Not Too Young to Run Act”, it has replaced previous provisions in the 1999 Constitution that put age limitations on public office aspirants.

Starting from 31 March 2018, the age qualification for those wishing to run for President has now been reduced from 40 to 30 years; Governors from 35 to 30 years; Senators from 35 to 30 years; House of Representatives membership from 30 to 25 years, and State House of Assembly membership from 30 to 25 years. This means you can now be part of the solution, and part of the government. It gives the younger generation a greater chance at taking part in nation building, and bringing forward innovative and creative ideas.
15 TOOLS FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

Information is power, and an informed citizen is one able to articulate their demands as they hold their elected officials accountable. Following are a few tools and means to be used, for effective engagement.

Project Tracking: Tracka ([www.tracka.ng](http://www.tracka.ng))
Tracka is a community of active citizens tracking the implementation of government projects in their community to ensure service delivery.

Government Budgets: ([www.yourbudgit.com](http://www.yourbudgit.com))
BudgIT is a civic organization that applies technology to intersect citizen engagement with institutional improvement, to facilitate societal change.

Shine Your Eye is an SMS and web platform that facilitates engagement with National Assembly members and other elected officials.

Community Project Tracking: ([www.ifollowthemoney.org/](http://www.ifollowthemoney.org/))
A Network of Grassroots Citizen Who are Dedicated to Track Government and International Aid Spending

Tracking Public Bills: ([www.placbillstrack.org/](http://www.placbillstrack.org/))
PLAC’s bill tracking system is an online platform for tracking the status and progression of bills through the legislative process in the National Assembly.

Access to Justice: ([www.gavel.ng](http://www.gavel.ng))
Gavel is a civic tech organization aimed at improving the pace of justice delivery through tech.

Oil Revenue: ([www.fixouroil.com](http://www.fixouroil.com))
The Nigerian oil & gas industry has historically been used to pander to the
needs of very few highly placed in the society, however this is not how an ideal oil & gas industry should be run.

**Election/PVC Issues:** (https://govote.ng/)
A nigeria website with focus on prospective voters enlightenment and preparing them for elections.

**Open Government Partnership:** (www.openalliance.ng)
A websited developed to see that Nigeria derives maximum benefit from openness and transparency needed for inclusive development and efficient service delivery.

**Open Contracting:** (www.procurementmonitor.org)
The Public and Private Development Centre (PPDC) is a non-governmental organization created to increase citizens’ participation in governance processes in a way that improves the integrity of public and private sector processes.

**Tax Issues:** (http://followtaxes.com/)
FollowTaxes is a platform that educates taxpayers on their rights and obligations around budget and how taxes are administered, in Sub-Saharan Africa.

**National Budget Info:** (http://www.budgetoffice.gov.ng/nbi/app/)
National budget info is a platform that educate citizens on the Nigerian Budget, showing Citizens Guide to the budget, Budget Timelines, Policy Documents and Keyfacts.

**FG Complaints Desk:** (http://www.pebec.report/)
The PEBEC App is Nigeria’s Official Public Service Complaint website for complaints and feedback for the service of any Ministry, Department and Agency of the government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

**Election Chatbot:** (www.electionpadi.com)
Election padi is an Artificial Intelligence also known as Agent E, it was created to provide relevant information about Nigeria's electoral process.

**Civic Innovation:** (www.civichive.org)
Civic Hive is a Social Incubation Hub in Lagos, with the sole aim to accelerate anyone who has a passion and a plan to create a solution to social problem
FIVE QUICK THINGS YOU MUST DO

1. Participate; get your voters’ card and vote!

2. Start holding Government accountable; take advantage of the FOI Act.

3. Be an active citizen - monitor public projects around you!

4. Create awareness; spread civic education to everyone you know.

5. Pay your taxes!