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For Immediate Release

#OpenNASS: Over 7,000 Nigerians Demand that the Breakdown of the National Assembly Budget be made Public

‘There is not a crime, there is not a dodge, there is not a trick, there is not a swindle, and there is not a vice which does not live by secrecy.’ - Joseph Pulitzer

You will recall that our #OpenNASS advocacy and demands over the past 4 years for an open and transparent National Assembly has remained in the mainstream of discussions. This is particularly important because the legislative arm of government has oversight function over the executive. How can legislators hold the executive accountable when they are opaque in their internal operations?

There have been several articles written and infographs published on the issue. The allegations of ‘budget padding’ also started conversations in the National Assembly about the breakdown of the budget because only the principal officers seem to know the details. The National Assembly has also refused to respond to Freedom of Information (FOI) requests and a court order to provide its detailed budget.

Between June 29 and July 4, 2016, we conducted a scoping survey randomly selecting telephone numbers and collecting 1,200 responses to 39 questions. On Tuesday, December 20, 2016 EIE, Budgit and other partners addressed a press conference about how **76% of Nigerians Actively Support Open Government Policies and #OpenNASS is a Panacea for Transparency and Accountability**. Toll-free lines 08139861001 and 08139861002 were also commissioned for citizens to join the advocacy by signing a petition on the National Assembly budget.

Furthermore, as at March 2nd, 2017, 7,181 have signed the Petition demanding that a breakdown of the National Assembly’s budget be made public with immediate effect. Attached with this press release is an infograph capturing the figures. These petitions have been gathered and they powered a letter sent and addressed to the Chairman of the National Assembly dated March 9th, 2017 which was received. Details and information from the signatures gathered are as follows:

Location of Signatories

- 7% of Nigerians who signed the Petition are from the South Eastern part of Nigeria.
- 9% are from the South West.
- 14% from the North East.
- 15% from the North Central or Middle Belt.
- 6% from the South South.
- 19% are from the North West (including Kaduna) of Nigeria.
- 30% did not give a response.



Language of Signatories

- 45% signed using Hausa.
- 29% signed using English.
- 11% signed using Yoruba.
- 10% signed using Igbo.
- 5% signed using Pidgin.

Gender of Signatories

- 20% of signatories were Female.
- 53% were Male.
- 27% did not respond

What Next?

It is clear that despite several failed promises and assurances by the Senate President and the Speaker of the House of Representatives to make the breakdown of the 2016 and by extension the 2017 National Assembly budget public, Nigerians remain committed to ensuring that their demands of an accountable National Assembly is met speedily. An infographic also highlighting several promises made by the Senate President and his office is also attached with this press release.

Lack of accountability in the National Assembly is very dangerous for our democracy because those who are elected to provide oversight over the executive arm's implementation of our budget cannot be expected to provide leadership and ensure accountability when they have refused to be accountable with resources allocated to them.

It is disheartening that a breakdown of the huge financial expenses incurred by the National Assembly cannot be made available to the demanding public, and even more mortifying that some members of the National Assembly do not know how the money made available to the Houses are eventually spent.

Our attention is also drawn to the recent happenings between the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the Governor of Kaduna State. We would like to clarify that publishing of 6 months' payslip of the Speaker doesn't not in any way address the issue around the budget of the National Assembly or makes the entire legislature transparent or accountable. The leadership of the National Assembly which the Honourable Speaker is a part of is responsible for opening up of their budget.

#OpenNASS has been a very active conversation on social media and we've expanded the conversation through newspaper infographs and radio programs.

We will continue our engagement using mobile technology and additional media platforms to enable Nigerians to get engaged, informed and most importantly, take action. The toll-free lines: **08139861001 and 08139861002** are still available for citizens to sign the petition on the National Assembly budget breakdown and get other information on governance issues. Also in the coming days, the 2nd petition to replace voice voting with electronic voting and making voting records public will be available for citizens to sign.

The toll-free line is a 'flash' service. 'Flash' service meaning upon dialing, the call drops up and calls you back immediately. The hotline is in English, Igbo, Pidgin, Hausa and Yoruba.

Again, we reiterate that through the hotline and our engagements on social and traditional media, we will promote three advocacy goals of the #OpenNASS campaign:

1. The National Assembly should publish the breakdown of its 2016 and 2017 budgets;



2. Maintain a functional website, provide contact information of its members, activate the switchboard in the National Assembly complex so citizens can engage their representatives and make attendance records public;
3. Replace voice voting with electronic voting and making voting records public.

The National Assembly is a critical institution in our democracy and we will ensure that it is repurposed to serve all Nigerians, not just a few. They are currently on recess until April 25th, 2017 and we encourage citizens to engage them at home and demand for accountability so they can resume plenary to deliver on their promise.

God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

- End -

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The OpenNASS project is collaboration between Enough is Enough Nigeria and VOTO Mobile supported by the Omidyar Network. The project builds on the work and networks of partners across Nigeria – Budgit, CITAD, CONGOs (Edo), CSNAC, Dawn in the Creeks, Development Dynamics, Reclaim Naija (CLP), SERAP, Premium Times, Sahara Reporters & YNaija.

Enough is Enough Nigeria (www.eie.ng) is a coalition of individuals and organizations committed to instituting a culture of good governance and public accountability in Nigeria through active citizenship. EIE Nigeria was an integral part of the #OccupyNigeria movement in 2012 and it's currently very active in the #OpenNASS campaign. The coalition includes The Future Project; Paradigm Initiative Nigeria (PIN); Education as a Vaccine (EVA); Kudirat Initiative for Democracy (KIND); and LYNX Nigeria. Partners include Budgit & ReclaimNaija.

Voto Mobile (www.votomobile.org) is a Ghana-based tech startup and social enterprise that makes it easy for businesses, governments, and NGOs to share information and gather feedback through interactive SMS or voice calls in local languages – using mobile to instantly reach across distance, language, and literacy barriers. Voto's mission is to increase participation and accountability in the services delivered to citizens, and to empower communities to collect and share information to drive positive social change.