PREAMBLE:

Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC) organized a one day Town Hall Meeting on Strengthening Existing MDGs committee in the Katsina State House of Assembly with support from Mac Arthur Foundation. The roundtable drew about 20 participants from Katsina State House of Assembly, civil society and the media. The roundtable featured Chioma Blessing Kanu as the lead presenter and other discussants. After exhaustive deliberations on various thematic issues, the following observations and recommendations were made:

OBSERVATIONS:

1. Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) presents Nigeria with opportunity for greater equity, prosperity and fulfillment in maternal and child health (i.e. Goal 4 and 5 of the MDGs); and Nigeria ranked among the countries facing a setback in the attainment of MDGs.

2. While the responsibility to implementing and achieving MDGs lie not only with the executives, Katsina State legislature holds essential position through effective oversight towards successful implementation and achievement of MDGs.

3. Lack of focus and holistic approach toward the implementation of MDGs has threatened the achievement of MDGs in the States; Katsina State House of Assembly is currently working towards legislation to increase manpower on health and education in the State; and MDGs has put in place 80 healthcare facilities, except manpower and drugs to provide for maternal and child health services.

4. Delayed implementation and inadequate political will towards implementation of MDGs; unchecked illegal immigrants from neighbouring African countries and unfavourable foreign policies have overstretched and sabotaged our medical and education facilities.

5. Lack of reliable and consistent baseline data; huge funding gaps; poor coordination; inadequate parliamentary oversight; lack of transparency and accountability in governance at national level have backpedalled the achievements of MDGs.

6. Lack of women representatives in the Katsina State House Assembly; inadequate medical personnel on maternal health, especially at the grassroots.

7. Existing socio-cultural factors, male dominance, financial incapacitation, inadequate support has challenged the election of women to the Katsina State House of Assembly and other strategic positions.
8. As against some schools of thought, religion widely practiced in the State demands full-fledged involvement of women in seeking knowledge and does not restrict participation in politics.

9. The current Katsina State House of Assembly is highly progressive and has pioneered several key legislations that have positively impacted on the lives of the citizens.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Enhanced legislative oversight to ensure judicious utilization of the existing resources for the maximum provision of maternal and child health.

2. Increased focus and holistic approach towards the implementation of MDGs.

3. Reliable and consistent baseline data; proper funding; effective synergy and coordination among the tiers of government; effective legislative oversight; good governance.

4. Enabling environment and full-fledged socio-political support to promote and encourage women participation and representation in the National and State Assemblies.

5. Well-informed citizens about socio-cultural and religious teachings to avert biased opinion against women involvement and participation in political activities in the State.

6. Well formulated action plan across House Committees and effective constituency outreach to fast-track the achievement of MDGs.

7. Concerted efforts to safeguard the nation’s borders to address corrupt practices in the border management.

8. Strengthened coordination among MDAs, CSOs and active involvement of the media in the implementation of MDGs.

9. Other State Assemblies are encouraged to emulate Katsina State legislature in proactive engagement on developmental issues.

CONCLUSION

The participants expressed their appreciation to CISLAC for embarking on the town hall meeting and to Mac Arthur Foundation for providing the support to this all important program channeled towards strengthening the capacity of MDGs committee with special focus on maternal and child health as well as increased knowledge amongst stakeholders. The State Government strongly supports the initiative of promoting MDGs. Participants expressed gratitude to the organizers noting that the engagement was revealing and indeed an opportunity to begin to create bigger conversation amongst players on MDGs in the Katsina State. Participants further called for enlightenment of rural populace and more sensitization
workshops on maternal health. It was also unanimously agreed that the engagement should set an agenda for effective.

Signed:

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