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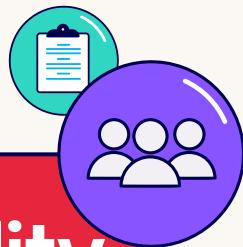
Citizen Accountability Demand Toolkit

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Citizen Accountability Demand Toolkit

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Introduction

Sequel to the recent national elections in Nigeria, which took place on February 25, 2023, and March 18 2023, the President-elect, Vice-President-elect, and other elected officials have now assumed office. The President and Vice President were sworn in on May 29, 2023, while the members of the National Assembly will be sworn in on June 13, 2023.

The elected President, Vice President, Governors, and Deputy Governors are expected to serve for four years, starting from the date they were sworn into office. However, they may be replaced if they are impeached, resigned, or pass away. The Vice President or Deputy Governor would assume the role in such cases.

As for the elected legislators, they are also expected to serve a four-year term if they are sworn in at the beginning of the legislative session. If a legislator is elected through a special election (known as bye-elections), their term would end with the current legislative session. There are circumstances where a legislator might be unable to complete their term, such as if they pass away, are recalled by the majority of voters in their constituency, or are convicted in a criminal court.

In the event of a vacancy, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is responsible for conducting a bye-election within 90 days to fill the vacant position.



Elections play a crucial role in a democratic society, although they are not the sole guarantee of citizen influence over policy-making or responsible governance. However, they allow citizens to choose their leaders and actively participate in decision-making. It is essential to view elections as opportunities to empower citizens, promote informed participation, and foster a sense of responsibility among elected officials.

Moving forward, it is essential to ensure that citizens remain engaged and hold their elected representatives accountable. By actively participating in the political process, citizens can help shape government policies and ensure the responsible use of state resources.



Understanding Our Rights and Responsibilities as Citizens

- ❖ **Citizens have rights and responsibilities, including the right to participate in decisions affecting their communities. Participation is not only valuable for democracy but also drives positive changes in society and empowers citizens. Active citizen engagement is crucial during and between elections, and it can be done through various channels such as national institutions, alternative movements, and online platforms.**

To ensure accountability, citizens must actively engage with the political process. They can demand responsible leadership and hold elected representatives accountable for their promises. For a democracy to function effectively, politically engaged citizens should be involved in all aspects of political decision-making, including electoral processes, peace-building, and constitution-building.

Today, citizens are taking the lead in driving change by using innovative methods of participation and representation. They seek greater control over representative bodies, increased government accountability, and more meaningful involvement beyond just voting in elections. With the help of technology, more citizens can now express their opinions in public conversations that have the potential to shape policies and political outcomes. This growing citizen participation and the desire for closer connections between citizens and politicians create opportunities for systemic changes, particularly at the local level.

Citizens need to recognise the power they possess and actively participate in shaping their communities and the policies that affect their lives. Citizens can bring about meaningful change and ensure their voices are heard by engaging in the political process.





Tools for Citizen Participation, Government Engagement and Accountability Demand



**Freedom of
Information Act**



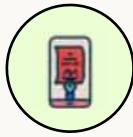
**Citizen
Charters**



**Public
Hearings**



**The
Judiciary**



**Online
Petitions**



**Community Town
Hall Meetings**



research

request

Using The Freedom of Information (FOI) Act to Hold the Government Accountable

Information Act was signed into law on May 28, 2011, by Former President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan as a legislation that guarantees public access to records and information held in the public domain. The 32-section document also seeks to protect public records and information for the public interest and protect public officers from being punished or prosecuted for disclosing certain kinds of official information without authorisation. In its preamble, the Act states succinctly — An Act to make public records and information more freely available, provide for public access to public records and information, protect public records and information to the extent consistent with the public interest and the protection of personal privacy, protect serving public officers from adverse consequences of disclosing certain kinds of official information without authorisation and establish procedures for the achievement of those purposes and; for related matters. From the above statement, it is evident that the FOI Act nullifies the provision of laws like the Official Secrets Act and the Criminal Code that legislate against unauthorised disclosure of public information. In fact, as a Law of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act supersede that of any existing law regarding the concealment and disclosure of public information in Nigeria.

Tips on How to Use the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act¹

Do your research

Firstly, the most successful Freedom of Information Act requests are focused, well-researched, and straightforward. It should be used only to request documents that are not otherwise publicly available. Before filing a FOIA request, you should research to determine what type of document you are looking for, which agencies are likely to have the documents, and what government records on your interests are already in the public domain. Once you have determined that the information you seek is not publicly available, you should identify the specific documents, types of documents, or subjects of records you wish to seek. All executive branch departments and agencies are subject to the FOIA. The National Assembly and the courts are not covered by the FOIA, meaning you cannot send an FOI request to a court or The National Assembly. Address your letter to the head of the departmental agency you are writing to.

Write your FOI Request Letter

The FOIA request assumes its artful form at this stage. Having researched what information to request from the agencies, you are ready to draft an FOIA request. Send your letter, choose the correct agency by finding out which government agencies are subject to the FOIA, and craft a specific & targeted request. All agencies accept requests by postal mail. Many agencies also accept requests sent by fax or email. Some agencies have online submission forms.

Submit your FOI Request Letter

Submit your request to government agencies that are subject to the FOIA (the FOI applies to both state & federal institutions), and craft a specific & targeted request. All agencies accept requests by postal mail. Many agencies also accept requests sent by fax or email. Some agencies have online submission forms.

¹ <https://ymonitor.org/request-guide/>

Track your FOI Request Letter

Once you have filled your request(s), it is crucial to keep track of relevant information such as the date sent, agency or components, subject(s), agency tracking numbers, date and nature of any subsequent agency correspondence, including phone and email correspondence. This information may be necessary for follow-up inquiries, appeals, and litigation and help to avoid sending duplicate requests.

After you submit your FOI request, the waiting game begins. Under the law, agencies are to issue a final determination within seven (7) business days, but many agency FOIA offices have significant backlogs of pending requests.

Responses to your FOI Request Letter

You will receive a response - a letter of acknowledgement or cite a backlog of requests as to what could delay processing your requests, or the documents can be released in full or in parts (redacted). They can also refuse to confirm or deny the existence of the records, or reject the request for a procedural reason - If rejected, you can decide to appeal by crafting an appeal letter and sending it to the agency. If unsatisfied by the determination of your appeal, you have the right to sue for the release of the documents in a Federal court.

Use the FOI Act Responsibly

To use this information you've been sent, please do so responsibly. Ask for permission if you're going to reproduce a document that's been sent to you (or at the very least acknowledging the source). Even though you've been sent the information, the copyright will normally still belong to the authority concerned or whoever gave it to them.

Sample Freedom of Information Request Letter²

Your Name

Your Address

Your Telephone Number

Your Email Address

Date

The Freedom of Information Officer

(You may also choose to address the letter to the head of the institution, namely: the Permanent Secretary, in the case of a Ministry; the Director-General, in the case of an Agency; or the Managing Director, in the case of a public corporation)

Name of Public Institution

Address of Public Institution

Dear Freedom of Information Officer,

Application for Information/Records/Documents Under the Freedom of Information Act

In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act, 2011, I hereby apply for copies of the following documents

1. A copy of the minutes of the meetings of the Procurement Planning Committee of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, held on May 28, 2011, at which a decision was taken to purchase 250 laptop computers for senior officers of the Ministry.
2. Copies of all correspondence, including emails, between officials of the Ministry of Information and the company known as Blue Skies International, from January 1, 2011 and June 30, 2011, leading to the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding dated July 1, 2011.
3. A list of all the applications for building plan approvals and permits granted by the Ministry of Urban Planning between May 29, 2007 and May 28, 2011. The list should indicate the name of the applicant, the date of the application, the date the application was granted, the type of building approved and the amount paid in fees and charges by each applicant

I would be grateful if you could supply me with photocopies of these documents.

Should you require any clarification regarding this application, please do not hesitate to contact me either by phone (your phone number) or by email (your email address).

I look forward to receiving these documents promptly and, in any event, within 7 days of the receipt of this application, as required by the Freedom of Information Act, 2011.

Yours sincerely,

Signature

Your Name

² <https://mediarightsagenda.org/sample-freedom-of-information-request-letter/>

Making Democracy Work for All: How to Hold Government Accountable through Public Hearings



❖ A public hearing is an open gathering of lawmakers, citizens, respective stakeholders, and government officials to discuss, debate and make proposals for a proposed law in the Legislature. It provides an opportunity to obtain public input on crucial legislative policy or proposed legislation that affects a wide range of citizens, such as a constitution review or the annual budget. It allows a group of citizens to communicate their interests to Legislators. A public hearing requires an open and mutually respectful dialogue between legislators, government officials, stakeholders and the citizens.

Citizens can participate and make a tremendous difference during and after the public hearing. First, during the public hearing, a memorandum can be submitted highlighting the issues that need urgent attention and sections to be deleted. The Committee will allow oral presentation for those who indicate interest. Interested individuals, groups and organisations can send their Memorandum electronically.

What are the Ways Citizens Can Participate in a Public Hearing?

01 Look for information in newspapers, television advert, radio adverts, or social media platforms to know when and where the public hearing is scheduled.

02 Be informed of the Bill to be discussed and get a copy of the Bill (At the National Assembly or State Houses of Assembly)

03 Identify the priority issues and draft your recommendations in line with the issues. You can also include an issue you believe should be addressed which has not been included.

04 Prepare a memorandum detailing your view(s) and recommendations. Submit copies before the public hearing.

05 Attend the public hearing and present your view.

Can Public Hearing Outcomes Change Anything?

Yes, relentless advocacy, lobbying, petitions, peaceful protest and other means of engagement are proven ways of getting government and politicians to work better.

Memorandum Template

This Memorandum Template is a guide to help you/your organisation in drafting a memorandum.³

Name/Name of Organization

Address

Mobile Number/Email Address

Introduction

This should cover information about you/your group/your organisation, why you/your group/your organisation is interested in the bill, highlight the key issues and recommendations. You should also state why the proposed amendment is important. If you think the amendment is not important, you can also state it and explain why you believe it is not important.

Tip: Keep it simple and straight to the point.

Argument and Recommendation

This section will contain you/your group/your organisation's proposed amendments/arguments for/against a Bill or an issue. It should provide recommendations for consideration to amend or dismiss a clause or section or make a new introduction of a new clause or section in the Constitution or proposed bill.

Tip: Be sure to quote/mention the relevant sections to strengthen your argument.

Conclusion

This section summarises you/your group/your organisation's position and why the relevant Committee should take your recommendations.

³ Source: Yiaga Africa. (May 2021). How Citizens Can Make a Difference Through Public Hearing. Toolkit.

Tips on How to Make Your Presentation at Public Hearings

Greetings



Begin with acknowledging the legislators and other stakeholders (this can include government institutions represented, stakeholders, media and other citizens) present at the public hearing. However, if you cannot properly acknowledge the protocol, it is safe to just offer a general greeting and say: “allow me to stand on the already established protocol” or “allow me to stand on the existing protocol.”

Introduce yourself and the organisation/group



State your name, your organisation, and your designation. If you are speaking for yourself, your name will suffice.

Identify the issue briefly

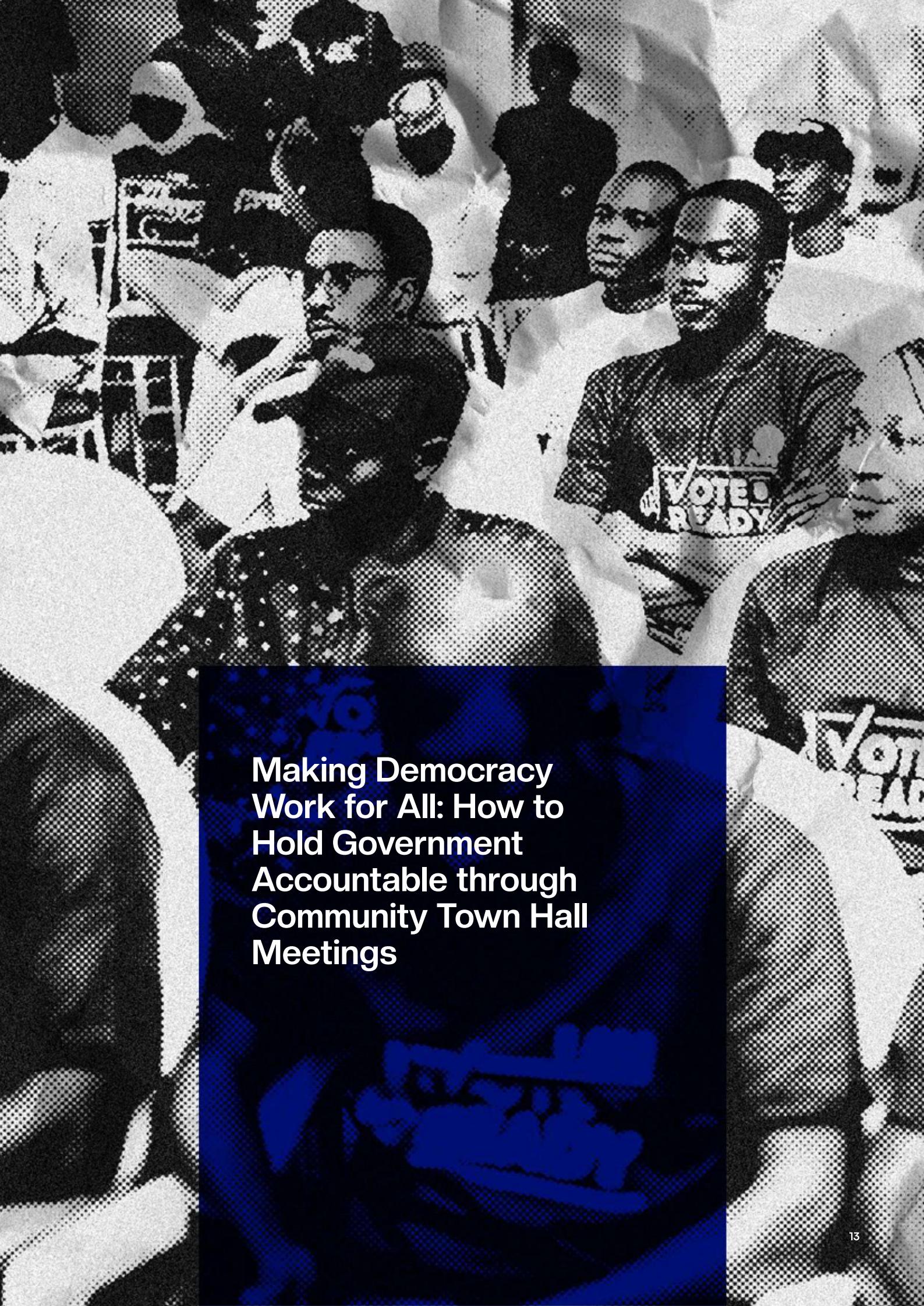


Referencing the clauses, sections, or areas in your Memo. List your proposed recommendation(s). Hearings usually have a long list of organisations scheduled to speak. Keep your presentation short and simple. Sometimes, to ensure more participation, between 3-5mins may be allotted to each person speaking. **KEEP IT SHORT. FOCUS ON YOUR MAJOR ARGUMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.**

Closing



Thank the legislators and the audience for listening. End with a call to action; an example is: “I hope this Committee will consider all the submissions contained in our memo and give Nigerians a bill that we can all be proud of.”



Making Democracy Work for All: How to Hold Government Accountable through Community Town Hall Meetings

❖ A town hall meeting is an informal public meeting around shared subjects of interest. For many years, town hall meetings have been an important tool for informing citizens about emerging issues, gauge where a community stands on certain subjects and serve as a place to identify and implement solutions to a problem. These meetings also serve as a great way to get messages out to the public, generate news media coverage, jump start local advocacy efforts by mobilising and organising community support and identifying individuals and organisations for future partnerships and collaborations.

Planning a Town Hall Meeting



Form A Planning Committee

A good way to make your event as successful as possible is to form partnerships with a variety of organisations and partners in the community, and work with them to plan and hold your event. These relationships will raise the profile of your town hall meeting and increase public awareness and attention.



Research the Unique Characteristics of Your Community

Before organising your town hall meeting, it is important to understand your community's unique issues, challenges and opportunities for change. Review local data from a variety of sources and develop a community profile based on solid research. This information will help you know how to focus the discussion and give your program and presentations credibility.



Identify Your Objectives

No two town hall meetings are alike. Your meeting's content, format and objectives will depend on the particular concerns and needs that you and your partners have identified. For example, your objective could be simply to inform community members about a problem in the community. Other communities may want their town hall meeting to be a forum for a call to action, such as increased health care services, education or social amenities.

Holding Your Town Hall Meeting

STEP
01

Setting-Up Your Meeting

To ensure a successful event, assign community members and volunteers to different tasks.

Set up: Some people should arrive early to make sure the venue (such a community square, hall or even under the tree) is set up properly and to make any last-minute adjustments. For large meetings, you may need to

have a sound system, including table microphones for the panelists. Small meetings, with 25 or fewer attendees, work well with a roundtable setup

Sign-in/registration table: You will need to set up a sign-in table, where you can collect names and contact information for everybody who comes and hand out materials. Remember to have separate sign-in sheets, one for the general audience and one for members of the media. This information will be invaluable as you conduct your follow-up activities and plan future meetings.

Handouts: At the sign-in table, you may want to have agendas and other information, as well as press kits for reporters. If you plan on discussing specific documents, have copies available.

STEP
02

Conducting Your Meeting

The meeting should begin with a welcome and introduction by the organisers of the Town Hall Meeting or planning committee. The welcome and introduction should last no more than five minutes and should explain the purpose of the meeting, welcome guests and introduce the moderator. The moderator should then begin the Town Hall Meeting with a brief introduction of the issues that will be discussed, a review of the format and introductions of each Speaker. It usually works best to have all of the panelists speak and then each should have three minutes to answer a question from the moderator. The entire panel discussion shouldn't last longer than 50 minutes. After the panel discussion, the moderator should begin the question and answer period. After the Q&A, either the moderator or host organisation should wrap up the meeting by thanking everyone for coming. Encourage attendees to take the first step — just one action, no matter how small. Encourage those who like to lead, mentor and organise to assemble a small group to take more concerted actions. Provide contact information for those who want to follow up after the meeting.

STEP
03

Coordinate Media Interviews

Leave enough time after your briefing for media interviews. Generally, you should set aside 30 minutes after the question and answer period ends to coordinate the interviews between members of the media and your spokespeople. In many cases, the media will request an advance interview, so make sure someone is always available to handle requests for media interviews.

After the Meeting What Next?

Your efforts do not end with the town hall meeting. In most cases the meeting serves as a catalyst for future strategies and initiatives. To truly achieve your goal, you will need to conduct a number of follow-up steps in the few weeks after the event.



Conduct a Debrief

No more than two weeks after your town hall meeting, reconvene the key individuals who were involved in planning the event to discuss how it went. Discuss whether you achieved your objectives and how you want to put the information and ideas that emerged into practice in the community.



Develop an Action Plan

After the debrief, write up the comments from the Town Hall Meeting, giving an overview of the briefing and summarising the problems and solutions offered by the community and panelists. Think about what the next steps could be and develop an action plan. Some possible ideas are policy recommendations, information dissemination or media outreach.



Using Town Hall Meetings to Build Your Advocacy Work

One of the most useful resources that you can develop from your meeting is a list of the names and contact information of everyone who attended. This database can become your mailing list for future events and a source of potential supporters and volunteers. The database can also serve as a resource to identify people who might be interested in signing petitions for attending public hearings.



Making Democracy Work for All: How to Hold Government Accountable through Petitions

Petitions are an excellent way to create meaningful change in the world. Whether it's a complex global issue or simple local election, a petition can get your point across and produce real results. While creating a petition can often look like a daunting and overwhelming task, it's actually quite easy to start. All you have to do is choose the proper platform, write your petition, and get your audience to sign it.

Identify your goal and desired audience. Every petition has a different goal, audience, and scope of change you'd like to see. Knowing what you want to change and who you need to reach will help tremendously as you develop your petition.

- ❖ A platform is the method you use to create and distribute your petition. To choose a platform, you should think about who you need to reach and what you want to change.

Some government agencies and institutions require a certain number of signatures before they consider a petition. Make sure that you check to see what kind of platforms they allow and how many signatures you'll actually need before starting.

Choose between online and print petitions based on your specific needs

Selecting the proper platform will ensure that the right audience is seeing and signing your petition. Use a digital platform if you need to reach people from different parts of the globe. Use a template to print out physical copies if you're trying to appeal to your local community.

- ❖ It's a lot easier to get people to sign your petition if you can present it in person and explain your cause to them. Consider printing your petition and presenting it to the public yourself.

Use an online platform to create a digital petition

There are several popular websites that you can use to create a petition. Change.org, GoPetition.com, and iPetitions are simple online platforms that allow you to create and share petitions digitally. They are free to use, but tend to have limited options when it comes to designing a petition.

According to change.org⁴, ‘A petition is a written document requesting some type of change or request made to an authority figure. Getting multiple signatures from different individuals shows the degree of support for your cause’.

The basic process of creating a petition includes:



⁴ <https://guide.change.org/create-a-petition>

Choose your topic

The first step in creating a petition is to choose a topic that is meaningful to you. If you don't already have a specific action in mind, get started by thinking about your broad interests, such as animal welfare. Then, think about how to narrow down your issue into a specific action item. Craft a plan for not only what you'd like to see happen, but also how to achieve that goal and how to measure its success. The more detail the better — you want to grab the reader's attention and convince them to sign your petition. By choosing a compelling topic with clear steps, you'll set yourself up for a successful petition campaign that earns plenty of signatures.

Write your headline

Your headline is your first opportunity to engage readers with your petition and make it clear what change you want.

Name specific places, organisations, or people

Potential supporters want to know if this petition is relevant to them or their community. Naming the community or groups impacted will capture attention. Be thoughtful about using CAPS or extra punctuation (!!!) which can be interpreted as a sensationalised headline, and may be unappealing to potential supporters.

Start with an action verb

Readers want to know specifically what change you want to make so they can decide whether to sign your petition. Your headline is the place to focus on the solution. Common action words for petitions are “stop, save, ban, grant, oppose, add, start.”

Use a hook

Get people's attention by making your headline emotional and urgent. Make it clear who is affected and why you care. If there are key dates or time pressure on your petition, include that information too.

Choose your Decision Maker

A decision maker is a person in an authority position who has the ability to help implement the change you seek. This could include a politician, an influencer, or a business person. Once you have a specific goal for your petition, you can figure out who this person (or persons) should be. For instance, elected officials can help with legal issues, while a business leader could help make changes in the private sector.

Gather information about your selected decision maker to include in the petition

By including an email address for the right decision makers, you can let them know about your petition and give readers confidence that your petition can win.

Pick people, not a group or organisation

Unlike an organisation, you can hold people directly accountable. Make your decision maker the person or people within an organisation who are responsible for your solution or who you need to convince. For example “Honorable John Brown” rather than “Federal Government of Nigeria.”

Choose someone directly responsible

It's better to target the people who can give you what you want rather than more senior, public figures. Someone directly responsible can make a decision and implement your solution faster. They are also more sensitive to public pressure because they aren't used to it.

Tell your story

Storytelling is at the center of a successful petition. Facts, statistics, and citations are helpful to include, but also consider sharing an individual's experience that helps people emotionally connect to your cause. Consider your word choice and tone in reference to your target audience. For instance, you may target parents if your petition centers on a cause like maternal health or early childhood education. Think about their values and priorities and how those relate to the problem you hope to solve. You can also include a video to grab your audience's attention. And you don't need to spend a ton of resources to tell a good story. With a phone camera and some free video editing software, you can relay your own passion and inspire others to feel the same way as you.





Making Democracy Work for All: How to Hold Government Accountable through the Judiciary

Nigeria, as a member of the United Nations and African Union has ratified major international human rights instruments which seek to protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms. Undoubtedly, the effectiveness of rights guaranteed in these instruments and the national constitution of Nigeria depends to a considerable degree on the existence of adequate machinery and remedies for their enforcement.

The courts play an important role in safeguarding human rights in Nigeria. The court is the most important constitutional structure designed to ensure the observance of, and compliance with the human rights norms codified in the various international human rights instruments and the constitution.

The relationship between access to justice for community members and human rights protection stems from the fact that it is only when individuals have access to the courts that they can seek for the protection of their basic rights. In other words, the legal and institutional structures existing in a system may be such as to preclude the citizens from having access to the courts, who are therefore unable to seek for the enforcement or protection of their basic rights.

Opportunities For Government Engagement through Judicial Processes

The Legal Aid Council of Nigeria

The Legal Aid Council of Nigeria works nationwide to provide free quality legal service to indigent suspects and giving voice to the voiceless. The vision of the Legal Aid Council is To build a Nigerian nation where there is equal access to justice for all irrespective of means and where all rights are respected, protected and defended.

Nigerian Bar Association Human Rights Institute (NBA—HRI)

The Nigerian Bar Association has always been at the forefront in the promotion and protection of Human Rights, the Rule of Law and good governance in Nigeria. The Nigerian Bar Association Human Rights Institute (NBA—HRI) was established to effectively and efficiently promote and protect the rule of law, the independence of the legal profession, and to advance human rights enforcement in Nigeria. It will promote respect for human dignity, and translate human rights into specific guidelines for putting those principles into practice. The Institute provides technical development programmes and is also a resource development framework for advocacy in the Nigerian Bar Association. The Institute has a human rights desk in all the 120 branches of the Nigerian Bar Association across the country. The Human Rights Institute at the branch level is chaired by the Vice-chairman of the NBA of each branch.

The vision of the Nigerian Bar Association Human Rights Institute (NBA—HRI)A society where human rights are promoted and protected and the independence of the legal profession is guaranteed. A society with unhindered access to justice and the human rights and dignity of vulnerable people are protected.



Making Democracy Work for All: How to Hold Government Accountable through Citizen Charters

The Citizen Charter is a binding written agreement between the stakeholders (i.e. those who govern and the governed) aimed at fostering transparent and accountable governance. They are tools for social accountability initiated by citizen groups to hold public officials, politicians and service providers to account for their conduct and performance in terms of service delivery, mandated responsibilities and public obligations. Citizen Charters are aimed at ensuring regular interactive dialogue between citizen-voters and the specific government/political actor concerned, to fulfill their commitments to the development agenda defined in public platforms. The Citizen Charter is also intended to encourage active citizenship, leading to a more balanced relationship between politicians and citizens/civil society actors, and allowing the voice of the disadvantaged to be heard in the policy and planning process. The Citizens Charter promotes performance-oriented leadership as citizens-voters begin to choose leaders not for “good speeches”, but for their “performance” and capacities to lead and govern. The Citizen Charter provides a framework whereby participation can happen at different levels and citizens can participate for best results.

The Citizen Charter process involves five stages of activities spread over the pre-election and post election phase.

Pre-election phase

Stage1- Formulation of a Citizens Charter

The formulation involves a series of sectoral consultations at the community/constituency level, at least a month prior to the commencement of electioneering campaigns. The Citizens Charter is prepared as a manifesto of the collective, unified, priority concerns of the various socio-economic groups like farmers, laborers, women, youth, artisans, etc. and are addressed to political candidates.

Stage 2 - Candidates' Forum

The Forum brings together all electoral candidates for a face-to-face exchange with local citizens. At the Forum, the Citizens Charter is presented and responses from candidates are sought. The presence of media representatives at the Candidates' Forum is very vital to promote the cause, widen the dissemination of information to the larger public and to document the proceedings, agreements signed and the commitments made.

Stage 3 - Signing of the Citizens Charter

This stage involves the signing of a contract between citizen-voters and the candidates. The Citizens Charter stipulates a contract between the candidates and the voters, by which the candidates, if elected, agree to be held accountable through ongoing public evaluation of their performance.

Post-election phase

The activities in this phase begin after the elected officials assume their offices and mainly involve lobbying for legislative resolutions to institutionalise the provisions of the Citizens Charter with budgetary allocations.

Stage 4- Performance monitoring and evaluation

The purpose of the public platform is to evaluate the actual performance of the elected officials, vis-à-vis their pre-election commitment to the people's agenda and the terms of the Citizen Charter.

Stage 5 - Institutionalising the Citizens Charter

This is a rigorous process where CSOs deliberately and proactively launch advocacy campaigns to bring pressure on community representatives to pass legislation for institutionalising the Citizen Charter with budgetary allocations.

Post-election phase

Citizen Charters help to reduce corruption and enhance transparency, accessibility, responsiveness and accountability of political candidates and public officials. Citizen Charters have also prevented a wide range of malpractices such as abuse of public funds, tardiness/absenteeism, poor planning/budgeting and project implementation and unethical conduct of public officials. Even in challenging contexts, creative and persistent approaches have succeeded in improving systems of public disclosure and feedback. Citizen Charters are potent instruments to build political will for pro-poor ad peoplefriendly policies and plans while also acting as a catalyst to infuse transparency in the electoral process and resisting money and muscle power in politics.

Conclusion

True Democracy happens at the interface of citizens and institutions. As new trends in technology, representative institutions, and participatory processes transform politics at all levels, so too will they redefine the way citizens and governments engage with each other. As the traditional linkages of democratic governance show signs of wear, innovation and creativity in the civic space have flourished. Whether through developing or using new forms of information and communications technology or through harnessing the power of social movements to drive political change, citizens across the globe have been attempting to renew the interface between people and politics. Yet as these new platforms and mechanisms transform civic discourse, governments and institutions have often faced considerable lag in their responsiveness and capacity to adapt to these new forms of engagement.

Vibrant democracy requires active citizen participation during and between elections. In representative systems, this is usually conducted through intermediaries, including both national representative institutions and, increasingly, alternative movements and platforms. For democratic systems to function at their optimal level, politically engaged citizens must be involved in all phases and levels of political agenda setting and decision-making, including in critical functions such as electoral processes, peace- and constitution-building. Today, citizens are driving change by innovating and inventing new methodologies of participation and representation. Driven by demands of more control over representative bodies, more accountability in government and more meaningful participation beyond elections, citizens are striving to influence how policies are created and politics is conducted. This process has been profoundly transformed by new forms of technology which have given more citizens the ability to voice their views in larger public conversations that have the potential to decisively impact policy and political outcomes. Pressure to accommodate the increasing participation and changing demands of citizens, as well as a backlash against the perceived distance between citizens and professional politicians is creating space for systemic changes in many countries, particularly at the local level.

Further Resources

Change.Org⁷: Change.org is a website which allows users to create and sign petitions to advance various social causes by raising awareness and influencing decision-makers

Tracka⁸: Tracka is a community of active citizens tracking the implementation of government projects in their community to ensure service delivery.

Shine Your Eye⁹: Shine Your Eye is a platform that helps citizens find the elected officials that represent them at all tiers of government and connect with them.

AdvoKC¹⁰: is a Civic Tech platform established to help citizens engage, track and hold elected officials accountable.

PLAC BillsTRACK¹¹: BillTracker is a "real time" legislative bill tracking system that allows state agencies to track bills throughout the legislative process. It is available at any time from any device with an active connection to the Internet.

Africa Check¹²: Africa Check, the continent's first independent non-profit fact-checking organisation, supported by philanthropic organisations and individual donors, was established in South Africa in 2012.

FactCheck Hub¹³: The FactCheckHub is an initiative of the International Centre for Investigative Reporting (The ICIR) aimed at combating misinformation in the society. Established in May 2020 with headquarters in the Federal Capital Territory -Abuja, Nigeria's capital, we are an independent, impartial fact-checking organisation from Africa.

FactCheck Elections¹⁴: We are an independent, non-partisan and non-profit fact-checking platform. Our primary goal is to verify claims and debunk fake news around electoral activities in Nigeria using research, data and technological tools.

DUBAWA¹⁵: DUBAWA is a West African independent verification and fact-checking project, initiated by the Centre for Journalism Innovation and Development (CJID) and supported by the most influential newsrooms and civic organisations in West Africa to help amplify the culture of truth in public discourse, public policy, and journalistic practice. It has a presence in Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Liberia and The Gambia.

⁷ <https://www.change.org>

⁸ <https://tracka.ng/#/home>

⁹ <https://www.shineyoureye.org/>

¹⁰ <https://www.advokc.ng/>

¹² <https://placbillstrack.org/>

¹³ <https://africacheck.org/>

¹⁴ <https://factcheckhub.com/>

¹⁵ <https://factcheckelections.org/>

¹⁶ <https://dubawa.org/>



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