

DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE DIGEST

WHERE POLICY MEETS THE PEOPLE

DEEPENING DEMOCRATIC ACCOUNTABILITY: ELECTIONS, REFORMS AND GOVERNANCE

ANAMBRA GOVERNORSHIP ELECTION OBSERVATION REPORT

NILDS PERSPECTIVE ON THE 2026 ELECTORAL ACT

THE GENOCIDE DEBATE IN NIGERIA: FACTS, FEARS AND WHAT MUST BE DONE

ARE MANDATES TRULY OVERLAPPING IN NIGERIA'S NATIONAL ASSEMBLY?

NILDS 10TH NATIONAL QUIZ COMPETITION FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS

YOUTH, SOCIAL MEDIA & DEMOCRACY: ARE WE LOSING THE DIGITAL BATTLE?



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ABOUT THE DIGEST

Democracy and Governance Digest is a publication of the Department of Democracy and Governance, National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS). The Digest provides in-depth analysis, policy reflections, and expert perspectives on key trends in democratic governance across Nigeria and the African continent.

It aims to serve as a credible platform for lawmakers, scholars, civil society actors, and the public to engage with ideas that shape legislation, institutional accountability, political reform, and democratic resilience.

Each edition focuses on thematic issues ranging from electoral reform, civic participation, institutional capacity, security, inclusion, and parliamentary development.

Through thoughtful commentary, policy briefs, interviews, and field-based narratives, the Democracy and Governance Digest contributes to ongoing conversations on how democratic institutions can be strengthened to deliver sustainable development and equity.

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EDITORIAL **NOTE**

THE YEAR AHEAD FOR NIGERIA'S DEMOCRACY

As Nigeria enters 2026, our democracy stands at a moment of renewal, shaped by reflection, reform, and responsibility. The past year revealed both the progress and fragility of our democratic institutions, reminding us that democracy thrives not on events alone but on the everyday practice of accountability and participation.

For the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS), the year ahead is one of deepening impact. Through election observation, policy research, civic engagement, and capacity building, we remain steadfast in our commitment to supporting the National Assembly and other democratic institutions and actors in strengthening inclusive, transparent, and people-centred democratic governance.

Key priorities in 2026 include strengthening electoral reform, encouraging youth participation in governance, and enhancing legislative oversight through research-based policy support and evidence-driven advocacy. Across Nigeria and the African region, we will continue to champion collaboration, dialogue, and knowledge-sharing to sustain democratic stability.

For us at NILDS, democracy is not self-sustaining. It must be nurtured through action, innovation, and integrity. As this edition of the *Democracy and Governance Digest* captures, the work continues, and so does our collective hope for a more accountable and participatory Nigeria.

Christopher Ngara, PhD
Editor-in-Chief
Democracy and Governance Digest

VOICES FROM THE FIELD:

NILDS OBSERVATION OF THE 2025 ANAMBRA GOVERNORSHIP ELECTION

INTRODUCTION

As part of its statutory mandate to promote democratic consolidation in Nigeria, the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS), through the Department of Democracy and Governance, undertakes election observation and research to strengthen electoral integrity and public confidence.



The 2025 Anambra State Governorship Election was no exception. NILDS monitored the conduct of the election across the state's 21 local government areas through the analysis of official reports by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), civil society organisations, and verified media sources. This assessment focuses on voter participation, election conduct, and administrative performance, identifying lessons that can guide electoral reform and civic engagement efforts nationwide.

OBSERVATION METHODOLOGY

The NILDS Observation Team employed a multi-source assessment framework built on four key indicators:

Voter Turnout and Participation

Election Administration and Logistics

Integrity of Process and Transparency of Results

Electoral Environment and Civic Conduct

Data and insights were drawn from publicly available INEC materials, accredited observer statements, and credible media reports, including:

INEC official result summaries via IReV portal

Real-time polling and result updates

Field observations from civil society organisations

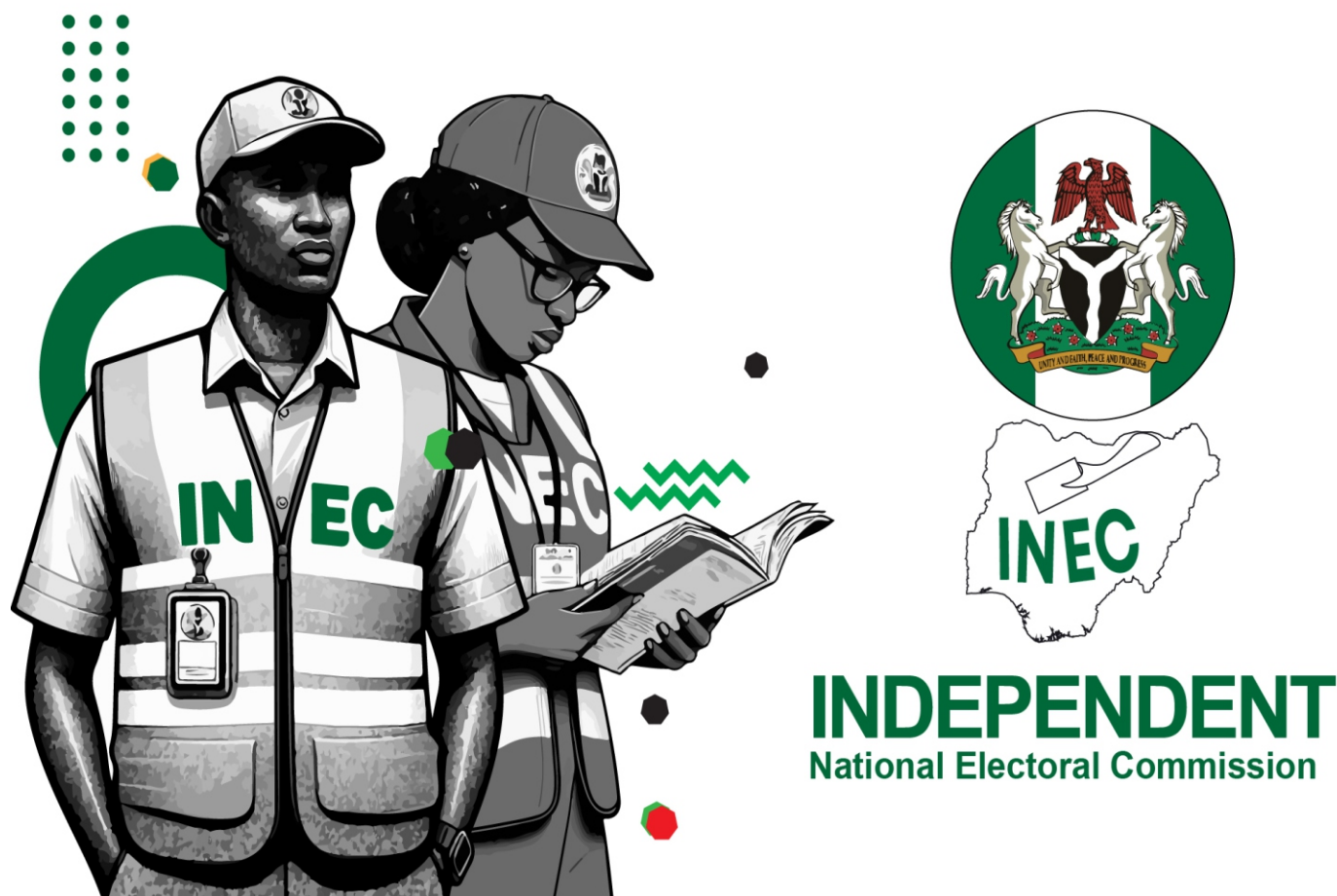
Media analyses from *Premium Times*, *The Guardian*, *ThisDay*, *The Punch*, and *BusinessDay*.

1. Independent National Electoral Commission. (2025, November 8). *Governorship election – 2025-11-08 – Anambra*. <https://www.inecelectionresults.ng/elections/68fbd8c9f2b7c78fc9917c22>
2. Channels Television. (2025, November 8). *Anambra poll: INEC uploads 99% of results on IReV*. Channels Television. <https://www.channelstv.com/2025/11/08/anambra-poll-inec-uploads-75-86-of-results-on-irev-portal>
3. Adebayo, O. (2025, November 8). *Interim statement by Situation Room on the 2025 Anambra State governorship election* [Press release]. Situation Room Nigeria. <https://situationroomng.org/interim-statement-by-situation-room-on-the-2025-anambra-state-governorship-election/>

FINDINGS

1. Voter Participation

Anambra State had 2,802,790 registered voters according to INEC data. Reports indicated a steep decline in voter turnout (about 58% lower than in 2017), reflecting persistent voter apathy. Despite this, polling was largely peaceful across all 21 local government areas. Early voting began around 8:30 a.m., though turnout remained thin in many urban wards due to citizen scepticism.



2. Election Conduct and Integrity

INEC successfully opened 5,718 polling units across the state and deployed over 24,000 officials. Within 24 hours of polls closing, more than 90% of results were uploaded to the IReV portal.

4. Yusuf, K. (2025, November 8). #AnambraDecides2025: Official results from local govt areas. *Premium Times*. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/833928-anambradecides2025-official-results-from-local-govt-areas.html>
5. Obianeri, I. (2025, November 8). Anambra records 58% drop in voter turnout in eight years – Group. *Punch*. <https://punchng.com/anambra-records-58-drop-in-voter-turnout-in-eight-years-group/>.
6. Njoku, L. (2025, November 8). #AnambraDecides2025: As Anambra votes, early turnout remains low amid citizen scepticism. *The Guardian*. <https://guardian.ng/politics/anambradecides2025-as-anambra-votes-early-turnout-remains-low-amid-citizen-scepticism/>

Observers commended INEC's use of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS), which enhanced result verification and reduced incidents of over-voting. However, isolated reports of vote-buying and interference by political agents emerged in parts of Anambra East and Onitsha North. Despite these challenges, the election was generally described as peaceful.

3. Electoral Administration

INEC demonstrated significant logistical preparedness, conducting mock accreditation exercises, extending PVC collection periods, and improving real-time reporting through its digital systems. Still, some polling units reported late arrival of materials and network disruptions that temporarily delayed uploads. These minor hitches, however, did not substantially affect the credibility of the process.

CHALLENGES

Persistent low turnout, particularly among youth and women, remains a key democratic concern.

Isolated cases of financial inducement continued to mar the electoral environment.

Inconsistent early arrival of personnel and materials in some areas affected voter confidence.

Voters still require greater awareness of their role in safeguarding electoral outcomes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. INEC, in collaboration with the National Orientation Agency and civil society organisations, should scale up and revitalise ongoing voter education initiatives through targeted civic campaigns and school-based democracy programmes that effectively engage youths, women, and rural voters.
2. INEC and security agencies should build on existing enforcement measures by strengthening institutional frameworks to ensure the consistent and swift prosecution of vote-buying cases.
3. Legislative amendments should build on ongoing reforms to further reinforce INEC's independence and enhance its operational efficiency.



4. NILDS, civil society organisations, and the media should sustain and deepen partnerships that advance evidence-based election monitoring and improve public awareness.
5. Political parties, INEC, and advocacy groups should strengthen efforts to broaden the participation of marginalised groups, ensuring they are actively included in voter mobilisation strategies.

CONCLUSION

The 2025 Anambra Governorship Election reflects a maturing democratic process in Nigeria, combining credible innovations in electoral technology with renewed civic expectations. The election was peaceful, generally transparent, and better managed than previous cycles, even as challenges such as voter apathy and vote-buying persist.

For NILDS, these lessons reinforce the importance of sustained policy engagement and legislative oversight in building stronger democratic institutions. The Anambra experience offers vital insights for Nigeria's electoral reforms and emphasises the Institute's continuing commitment to democratic governance that delivers trust, integrity, and inclusion.

Category	Key Figures & Facts
Election Date	Saturday, 8 November 2025
Registered Voters	2,802,790
Polling Units Opened	5,718 out of 5,720
INEC Personnel Deployed	Approx. 24,000
Results Uploaded to IReV (within 24 hrs)	~ 93%
Estimated Voter Turnout	Low – about 30–35% (? 58% from 2017)
General Assessment	Peaceful, largely credible, with isolated reports of vote-buying and late starts in some areas.
Key Technology Used	Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) and IReV Portal

QUICK INSIGHTS

Turnout remains the biggest challenge despite improved transparency tools.	INEC's digital infrastructure performed better than in previous cycles.	Vote-buying persists, but on a smaller scale.	Voter education and civic trust will be key to improving participation in future polls.
----------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

7. Iwok, I. (2025, November 8). Agents disrupting voting in part of Anambra East over vote buying. *BusinessDay*. <https://businessday.ng/news/article/agents-disrupting-voting-in-part-of-anambra-east-over-vote-buying/>
8. Sahara Reporters. (2025, October 29). Anambra governorship election: INEC assures of smooth poll despite network disruptions. *SaharaReporters*. <https://saharareporters.com/2025/10/29/anambra-governorship-election-inec-assures-smooth-poll-despite-network-disruptions/>
9. Gazette Nigeria. (2025, November 8). *Anambra election: INEC's joint mid-day situational report* [Press release]. *Gazette Nigeria*. <https://gazettengr.com/anambra-election-inecs-joint-mid-day-situational-report/>

VOICES OF DEMOCRACY



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE ELECTORAL ACT 2026

Electoral reforms are central to strengthening democracy anywhere in the world, and Nigeria is no exception. Each election cycle brings new lessons that must be addressed to improve transparency, public trust and the overall voter experience. This commitment to reform culminated in the signing of the Electoral Act 2026 by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, marking a significant milestone in Nigeria's democratic journey.

The Electoral Act 2026 replaces the Electoral Act 2022 with a more comprehensive legal framework designed to respond to emerging challenges such as the use of technology in elections, voter apathy, electoral offences, and the need for a more independent and better-resourced electoral management body. For Nigerians, the new law represents a concrete step toward improving the credibility of elections and deepening democratic stability.

WHAT THE ELECTORAL ACT 2026 PROVIDES

The Act addresses several gaps identified during the 2023 general elections and subsequent off-cycle polls. Key focus areas include:

- **Modernising the Electoral Process:**
The Act advances the use of technology for accreditation, verification and result transmission. It provides clearer legal backing for digital processes, strengthens safeguards against manipulation, and enhances transparency in the management of election results.
- **Strengthening INEC's Independence:**
The law reinforces the administrative and operational autonomy of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), including clearer provisions on funding and authority to manage elections without undue interference.
- **Continuous Voter Registration:**
The Act introduces more flexible provisions for voter registration, enabling broader participation and ensuring that more eligible Nigerians can register closer to election periods within clearly defined timelines.
- **Clearer Rules for Party Primaries and Candidate Nomination:** To reduce disputes and post-primary litigation, the Act establishes more predictable timelines and clearer procedures for internal party democracy and candidate substitution.
- **Stricter Penalties for Electoral Offences:**
Vote-buying, violence and intimidation remain major threats to credible elections. The Act strengthens sanctions and enforcement mechanisms to deter such practices.
- **Protection of Electoral Technology and Data:** Recognising the central role of technology in modern elections, the Act includes safeguards for data security, protection of electoral equipment, and improved transparency in electronic processes.

These reforms are designed to produce elections that are more transparent, less contentious and more reflective of the will of the people.

THE ROLE OF NILDS IN THE REFORM PROCESS

As the technical and research arm of the National Assembly, the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS) played a central role in the development and refinement of what is now the Electoral Act 2026. Its interventions combined rigorous research, broad national engagement, and hands-on legislative support.

The Institute convened a National Dialogue on Strengthening Electoral Integrity on 24 April 2025, bringing together experts, civil society organisations, political actors and practitioners to identify key gaps in the Electoral Act 2022 and propose priority reforms.





This was followed by a second dialogue on 24 June 2025 focused on Elections and Technology, which examined how digital tools could improve voter accreditation, enhance result transparency and curb manipulation.

A third dialogue, held on 22 July 2025, addressed election security, emphasising the need for stronger coordination between security agencies, election officials and other stakeholders to safeguard electoral processes.

The insights from these engagements were synthesised into detailed recommendations submitted to the National Assembly. Beyond convening discussions, NILDS researchers and legislative analysts worked closely with relevant committees, providing technical support, clause-by-clause analysis, comparative research and drafting assistance throughout the legislative process.

NILDS also participated actively in the public hearing of 13 October 2025, where stakeholders provided input on the proposed repeal of the 2022 Act and the enactment of what has now become the Electoral Act 2026.

WHY THIS REFORM MATTERS

“The Electoral Act 2026 is more than a legislative document.”

It represents a national effort to learn from past experiences, correct institutional weaknesses and strengthen public confidence in elections. It reflects the Legislature's commitment to a more modern, technology-driven and citizen-centred electoral system.

NILDS' role in the process underscores the importance of research, expertise and stakeholder engagement in shaping laws that are both ambitious and practical. Through continued collaboration with lawmakers and citizens, the Institute remains committed to ensuring that Nigeria's electoral framework evolves in ways that strengthen the country's democracy.

THE GENOCIDE DEBATE IN NIGERIA:

FACTS, FEARS AND WHAT MUST BE DONE

By: **Onosakponome Ekpu**
Public Affairs Analyst

When the United States redesignated Nigeria as a “Country of Particular Concern”, a familiar global debate resurfaced with renewed intensity:

? *is Nigeria facing a genocide?*

The term has appeared in international news, diplomatic circles and advocacy campaigns. But inside Nigeria, the conversation is far more layered, rooted in lived experiences, complex local realities and a shared national anxiety about insecurity.

At the heart of this debate is a painful truth. Communities across the country, both Muslim and Christian, continue to suffer devastating attacks. While perspectives differ on the framing of these tragedies, no one disputes the human cost. Families are grieving, livelihoods are collapsing and entire towns have been uprooted by violence.

But now that Washington has spoken, what does this moment require of Nigeria? And how can the nation respond in a way that protects its people, strengthens its institutions and preserves its unity?

A SHARED TRAGEDY, NOT A DIVIDED ONE

In public conversations, Nigeria's crisis is often framed as the targeted persecution of Christians by extremist groups. This framing is not without basis. Many Christian communities, especially in the Middle Belt and North-East, have endured unspeakable



horrors. Churches have been attacked, clergy abducted and villages razed in the dead of night.

BUT THE CRISIS DOES NOT FALL ALONG A SINGLE RELIGIOUS LINE.

“Muslim communities have also been ravaged, sometimes in even greater numbers.”

Entire mosques have been attacked during early morning prayers. Imams, traditional rulers and Islamic scholars have been targeted by extremist groups who brand them “infidels” for opposing radical ideologies. Rural Muslim villages in Zamfara, Sokoto, Katsina and Borno have been devastated by banditry, insurgency and criminal networks.

This is the uncomfortable but necessary context: the violence is real, the losses are immense, and both major religions are bleeding.



Experts consistently warn that collapsing these tragedies into a single narrative risks inflaming tensions and masking the complex drivers of insecurity, drivers that include land competition, climate pressure, terrorism, weak local governance, arms proliferation and economic desperation.

WHAT AMERICA'S LABEL MEANS AND WHY IT MATTERS

The U.S. designation has placed Nigeria under global scrutiny. While the Government of Nigeria has assured the world of its commitment to protecting all citizens, the label still carries diplomatic weight. It has implications for foreign relations, aid partnerships and global perception.

But a label, no matter how forceful, does not define a nation. What defines a nation is how it responds.

This moment is not about defending against criticism. It is about demonstrating that Nigeria is capable of confronting its challenges with honesty, unity and institutional strength.

THE ROAD AHEAD: WHAT NIGERIA MUST NOW DO

Across expert communities (security analysts, interfaith leaders, policy researchers), several consistent recommendations emerge. They point toward a roadmap that prioritises responsibility, partnership and long-term stability.

1. Present Clear, Credible Data

Global debates thrive in the absence of reliable information. Nigeria must strengthen its systems for tracking attacks, casualties and patterns of violence. Transparent reporting builds trust and ensures the country tells its own story, rather than allowing others to tell it for us.

2. Reinforce Security Institutions

Nigeria has made significant investments in security operations, but the scale of the challenge demands continuous strengthening. Improved intelligence coordination, modern surveillance tools, community-based security partnerships and increased training can all raise the effectiveness of national responses.

3. Deliver Justice that Can Be Seen

Communities across Nigeria want one thing above all: justice.

Perpetrators must be identified, prosecuted and punished. Courts need support. Victim support systems must be expanded. Justice that is visible restores faith, not only in the law but in the state itself.

4. Promote National Unity Through Interfaith Collaboration

Nigeria's diversity is one of its greatest strengths. At moments like this, Christian and Muslim leaders can play an important role by speaking jointly, visiting affected communities together and promoting messages of solidarity over division. Unity deprives extremists of oxygen.

5. Address Root Causes Beyond Security

Every conflict has a history. Nigeria must continue investing in policies that reduce the structural pressures that make communities vulnerable:

- RURAL UNDERDEVELOPMENT
- YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT
- LAND USE DISPUTES
- CLIMATE-RELATED PRESSURES
- PROLIFERATION OF SMALL ARMS

A long-term solution requires long-term thinking.

CHOOSING RESPONSIBILITY OVER RHETORIC

The genocide debate (however unsettling) presents Nigeria with a chance to reflect and to act. It calls for a sober acknowledgement of the pain so many citizens endure, while also resisting narratives that oversimplify the country's realities.

Nigeria is not a nation divided into victims and aggressors. It is a nation struggling against a complex crisis that affects everyone. And because the tragedy is shared, the response

must be shared.

Now is the moment for leadership that is thoughtful, evidence-based and unified. If Nigeria seizes this opportunity to strengthen its institutions, refine its policies and reaffirm its commitment to every citizen, the nation will emerge stronger, not because others have labelled us, but because we have chosen to rise above the label.

**THIS IS NOT A MOMENT FOR FEAR.
IT IS A MOMENT FOR ACTION, RESOLVE,
AND NATIONAL RENEWAL.**



EQUALIZER TO THE RESQUE:

ENHANCING OPPOSITION THROUGH OPTIMISED POLITICAL PARTY SWITCHING

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INTRODUCTION

Denzel Washington, as Robert McCall, in the Equalizer trilogy, deploys his skills as a former security agent to protect the downtrodden from violence. He equalizes by visiting gangsters, drug lords and human traffickers, with equal violence. Denzel Washington's violence is swift, in seconds and equal to and sometimes above that used by the perpetrators of violence. The sentiments and morals of the movies are so popular that a fourth sequel is reportedly in the making. There is also a successful series, starring Queen Latifa, as McCall. The popularity of both the movies and series suggests society's hunger for equity and equality. It appears that the trajectory of political party switching in Nigeria, calls for an equalizer to balance political party switching in order to enhance the value of opposition suggested by Mainwaring and Scully (1995). This commentary examines how an equalizer can be introduced to energise competition and improve representation through political party switching. It looks at the positives and negatives of political party switching to justify the call for an equalizer by removal of the two most negative contributors to political party switching.

POSITIVE VALUES

“ Political party switching can strengthen democracy by injecting fresh ideas and increasing political competition. ”



Huntington (1991) argues that flexible party systems adapt more readily to societal changes, allowing emerging interests to gain voice. For instance, legislators often switch to align more closely with evolving voter preferences, thereby enhancing substantive representation (Norris, 2004). It also facilitates coalition-building, which Lijphart (2012) identifies as crucial for stable governance. Reilly (2001) notes that it can enable consensus politics in divided societies thereby helping to manage ethnic or regional tensions.

Nigerian experience illustrates this upside. In 2023, Governor Samuel Ortom left the All Progressives Congress (APC) for the People's Democratic Party (PDP), citing a lack of internal

democracy in his former party (BusinessDay, 2025). The switch sparked intense debate about party primaries and forced both APC and PDP to clarify ideological competition. Similarly, the 2024 mass defection of 27 Rivers State legislators from PDP to APC, though contentious, prompted the court to order status-quo maintenance, compelling parties to engage in clearer policy differentiation and internal dialogue (Daily Post, 2024). Similarly, outside Nigeria, Zambia's 2021 shift of hundreds of former Patriotic Front members to the United Party for National Development (UPND), is credited with reinforcing performance-voting and accountability (The Post, 2021).

NEGATIVE DRIVERS AND IMPACTS

Bratton and van de Walle (1997) show that patron-client networks enable wealthy “godfathers” to fund candidates and compel loyalty shifts, turning politics into a market for personal gain. This monetisation fuels corruption and public distrust (Transparency International, 2021). Weak institutional checks compound the problem. Osei (2016) finds that lax anti-switching laws and vague constitutional provisions create loopholes for opportunistic switching, destabilising party discipline and policy continuity. Kuenzi and Lambricht (2001) link it to weak party institutionalisation, which undermines electoral accountability.

Nigerian media illustrate these vividly. The mass defection of 27 Rivers State lawmakers from PDP to APC in 2024 (Daily Post, 2024) exemplifies impact of godfathers and financial patrons. BusinessDay (2025) has similar reports of governors and legislators moving from PDP to APC raising fears of one-party dominance and underscoring the role of money-power. Sahara Reporters (2024) detailed similar reports.

Weak institutional checks are another negative driver. The Nation (2024) noted that constitutional loopholes under CFRN 1999 section 109 (1) (g) enable legislators in Anambra, Kogi, Enugu, Kaduna, and Yobe to switch parties with little consequence. Judicial responses have also been inconsistent (Vanguard, 2019; 2021).

REDUCING THE MOST NEGATIVE DRIVERS

To Equalize, some key negative drivers need to be removed. *First is Money-Power Influence.* Addressing this requires robust campaign finance reforms. International IDEA (2020) recommends public funding of parties and transparent donor disclosure to reduce reliance on private patrons. This will deter both illicit financing and reduce funders control (UNDP, 2019). Nigeria's experience shows that without enforcement, anti-switching clauses remain symbolic (Jega, 2007). *Second is Weak Institutional Checks.* Lijphart (2012) suggests tightening constitutional provisions on political party switching, for example, by mandating a minimum number of members before a switch triggers disqualification. Effective recall mechanisms can also empower constituents to remove switchers, thus reinforcing accountability (Desposato, 2006). Internal party constitutions should impose strict sanctions on members who switch without legitimate cause, fostering discipline (Sartori, 2005). Additionally, civic education campaigns can raise voter awareness of switching motives, creating social pressure against opportunistic and funders' manipulated switches.

CONCLUSION

The value of political party switching can be enhanced through introduction of the Robert McCall principle. However, instead of visiting perpetrators with violence, their main weapon money is removed. This means strengthening political party financing laws and removing private money as a factor. Nigeria must strike a balance between preserving flexibility for genuine realignment while curbing abuse through rigorous finance laws, institutional reforms, and civic engagement. Perhaps, this is where an ongoing empirical study by the NILDS' Department of Democracy and Governance will add needed value.

WHY EVERY NIGERIAN CITIZEN MUST BECOME A THINKER FOR DEMOCRACY TO THRIVE

By: Peace Obot

*Community Mobiliser Civic Participation Advocate
Public Thought Contributor*



“ Every successful democracy is driven by ideas. ”

Policies, reforms and strong institutions do not appear on their own. They are products of reflection, research and the willingness of citizens and leaders to think beyond the familiar. In this sense, think tanks play an essential role in shaping democratic development. They provide the intellectual space where national challenges are broken down, analysed and transformed into workable solutions that policymakers can adopt.

In Nigeria, traditional think tanks such as NILDS, policy centres, universities and research organisations help guide the democratic process by offering expert analysis, legislative support and evidence-based recommendations. Yet the deeper message goes beyond institutions. The real strength of a democracy depends on the ability of its people to think critically and creatively about the future of their country. A think tank is not just a place. It is a mindset. It is the habit of questioning, analysing and seeking better answers than the ones we inherited.

EVERY NIGERIAN AS A THINKER AND NATION-BUILDER

“ For too long, many Nigerians have believed that the task of improving governance rests solely with government officials. ”

However, no institution can be stronger than the people who demand its strength. The National Assembly cannot be more effective than the citizens who engage it. INEC cannot be more transparent than the society that insists on transparency. Our democratic institutions improve only when citizens raise the standard of thinking that guides national life.

This is where the idea of think tanks becomes relevant to the everyday Nigerian. A think tank culture exists anywhere people gather to discuss problems honestly and propose meaningful solutions. It exists in classrooms where students are encouraged to ask questions. It exists in market squares where traders debate daily challenges. It exists in homes where parents teach children the values of fairness and responsibility. These small spaces of reflection are the building blocks of a democratic society.

Institutions like NILDS deepen this culture by providing research support to the legislature, offering guidance on electoral reforms, strengthening civic education and creating platforms for public dialogue. Their work demonstrates that when ideas are taken seriously, reforms become more practical, institutions grow stronger and governance becomes more responsive to the people.

Nigeria's future will depend not only on the quality of policymakers but also on the collective imagination of its citizens. Complaints alone cannot build a country. Progress requires ideas that challenge old assumptions, inspire better decisions and expand our sense of what is possible. When citizens think critically and engage constructively, democracy becomes more than a system of government. It becomes a shared national project.

The message is simple and powerful. Nigeria needs more thinkers. Every citizen, regardless of background or profession, has something valuable to contribute. The stronger our ideas, the stronger our institutions. The more we reflect, question and propose, the more our democracy grows.

In the end, the work of building Nigeria is not reserved for experts. It belongs to everyone. Our democracy will rise on the strength of minds that are willing to rethink, reimagine and rebuild.



LEGISLATIVE UPDATES/BRIEFS



ARE MANDATES TRULY OVERLAPPING IN NIGERIA'S NATIONAL ASSEMBLY?

When Nigeria's 10th House of Representatives unveiled its committee structure in 2023, one detail instantly commanded national attention: 199 committees, the largest in the country's legislative history. Supporters described the expansion as a step toward stronger specialisation and more responsive oversight. Critics wondered whether the system was stretching itself too thin. But behind the politics and public debate lay a quieter, more consequential question:

DO THESE COMMITTEES TRULY PERFORM DISTINCT FUNCTIONS, OR ARE THEIR MANDATES CROSSING PATHS IN WAYS THAT AFFECT LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT?

To answer this, the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS) launched a groundbreaking empirical study, led by the Department of Democracy, Development & Governance (DD&G) and supported by three other research units. Their task was both simple and profound:

Map the real structure of committee responsibilities, and determine whether overlap is occurring and why it matters.

THE RISE OF COMMITTEE PROLIFERATION

Committee proliferation did not happen overnight. Over the past decade, successive assemblies have steadily increased their committees:

89 in the 7th Assembly

109 in the 9th Assembly

96 in the 8th Assembly

And now, **199** (and counting) in the 10th Assembly

This growth has often been interpreted as a response to emerging sectors, rising governance complexity, and an expanding democratic system. Yet civil society groups and scholars have long warned that unchecked expansion may bring challenges of its own, ranging from duplicated responsibilities to inconsistent oversight outcomes.

The NILDS study was set out to determine, with evidence rather than assumption, how these dynamics play out in practice.

A DATA-DRIVEN LOOK INSIDE COMMITTEE MANDATES

To understand the scale of overlap, researchers applied two key tools:

- **Functional Overlap Index (FOI):** Measures how similar committee mandates are, even if they supervise different agencies.
- **Agency Overlap Index (AOI):** Measures how often committees engage the *same* Ministries, Departments, or Agencies (MDAs).

The team studied 16 committees across four major sectors: **Health, Education, Security, and Petroleum.**

THE BIG REVEAL

The findings showed a clear pattern:

- **Functional overlap is widespread across all sectors.**
- **Agency overlap exists but varies significantly by sector.**



In Education, committees demonstrated consistent functional convergence (FOI at 0.67), meaning their thematic responsibilities strongly mirrored one another.



In Health, overlaps surfaced both in mandate structure and in interactions with agencies. Security committees shared substantial thematic responsibilities, especially around personnel welfare, training, and national security policy.



And the Petroleum sector displayed the most striking findings: FOI values between 0.70 and 1.00, indicating mandates that were almost fully aligned.

One Clerk captured the situation candidly:

“ Standing Orders give almost identical duties to committees. In practice, that means we often engage the same agencies or deal with similar issues across different committees. ”

For MDAs, the effect is tangible. Officials described attending multiple hearings on the same matter, sometimes within days or on short notice, often with identical documentation.



THE HIDDEN COSTS: FATIGUE, FRAGMENTATION & GAPS IN COORDINATION

The study identified three major institutional consequences of these overlaps:

1. Administrative Fatigue:

MDAs, already carrying heavy service-delivery obligations, frequently find themselves preparing multiple submissions for committees working within the same thematic space.

2. Fragmented Oversight

When two or more committees investigate similar issues independently, they may produce separate reports with differing recommendations, making it harder for the legislature to take unified action.

3. Coordination Challenges

Without a central system for managing oversight activities, committees often work in parallel rather than in partnership. This can leave accountability diluted and create opportunities for MDAs to prioritise certain engagements over others.

Civil society organisations have echoed these concerns. Yiaga Africa notes that an overly large committee system can dilute focus, while CISLAC has called for more joint sittings to prevent duplication.

IS OVERLAP ALWAYS A BAD THING? NOT QUITE.

Interestingly, the NILDS study does not conclude that overlap is inherently inefficient.

Functionalist Oversight theory suggests that some degree of redundancy can strengthen accountability, especially in environments where corruption risks are high. Multiple committees examining related issues can create a protective layer of scrutiny and help ensure that no single body becomes compromised or overstretched.

But the research makes an important distinction:

“Overlap becomes a challenge when it is not accompanied by coordination.”

Institutional Coordination Theory explains this clearly. The issue is not the number of committees but the absence of systems that help them work together effectively.

WHAT'S REALLY BEHIND THE OVERLAPS?

The study found that overlaps are not a result of deliberate duplication. Instead, committee responsibilities tend to be:

- structured broadly to cover entire sectors
- designed to accommodate evolving governance needs
- updated periodically during Standing Orders revisions

This broad framing naturally produces intersections, especially in sectors such as Health, Security, and Petroleum, where several agencies share responsibilities or operate under unified national policies.

In short:

“*Nigeria's committee system is expansive, and its mandates often intersect because sectors themselves are interconnected.*”

CHARTING A WAY FORWARD

To strengthen coordination and improve the overall effectiveness of the committee system, the study outlines a set of practical reforms that can work together to make oversight more coherent and efficient:

1. Identify Lead Committees in Overlapping Sectors

In areas where several committees interact with the same ministry or agency, a lead committee should be formally designated. This will help streamline engagements, reduce multiple invitations to MDAs, and ensure that other related committees work through a coordinated framework. Joint oversight sessions and a shared scheduling system would further minimise duplication.

2. Review Committee Mandates Regularly

Committee mandates should be examined periodically, using evidence and stakeholder input, to reflect changes in national priorities, sector reforms, and emerging governance issues. This may help maintain clarity and balance across committees as policies evolve.

3. Create a Central Oversight Management Platform

A digital platform can support the planning and monitoring of committee activities. By showing who is engaging which MDA and on what issue, the system would reduce overlap, improve transparency, and allow committees to share information more easily.

CONCLUSION: A SYSTEM READY FOR REFINEMENT

The NILDS study paints a clear picture of a legislative system that has expanded rapidly, creating natural intersections in committee responsibilities. These overlaps are not inherently detrimental; in fact, they can enrich oversight when well coordinated.

But they also emphasise an opportunity to update coordination mechanisms, streamline committee interactions, and strengthen the overall architecture of legislative oversight.

Ultimately, the evidence points not to a system in need of dismantling but one ready for thoughtful refinement.

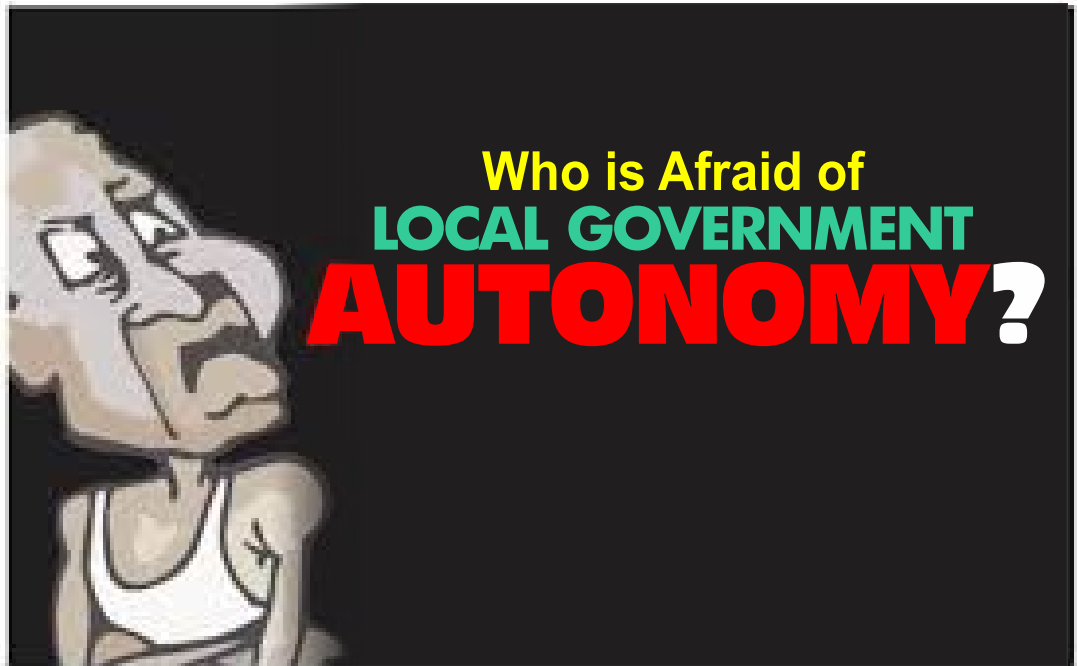
GRASSROOTS MATTERS:

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUTONOMY AND CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

WHY NIGERIA'S DEMOCRATIC FUTURE DEPENDS ON STRENGTHENING THE THIRD TIER

By Paul Ozegbe

Political Scientist Governance Analyst Electoral Officer, INEC



When Nigerians talk about democracy, the conversation often gravitates toward Abuja (elections, lawmakers, ministries, and high-level policy debates). Yet the everyday life of citizens is shaped far more by what happens in their own communities. The state of primary schools, the availability of clean water, functioning health centres, access roads, markets, and local security.

These are not abstract national concerns. They are local government responsibilities. And this is why the long-running debate on local government autonomy has become one of the defining governance questions of our time.

WHY THE GRASSROOTS MATTER

A functioning local government system is the foundation of responsive democracy. It is the level closest to the people, the first point of contact for service delivery, and the arena where citizens can most easily participate in decision-making.

Yet for decades, Nigeria's 774 local government areas (LGAs) have struggled to fulfil this potential. Weak finances, state-level interference, limited administrative capacity, and low citizen trust have combined to produce a tier of government that is visible on paper but often powerless in practice.

“Reforming this system is not simply about structure; it is about restoring the connection between government and the people.”

THE AUTONOMY DEBATE: MORE THAN JUST MONEY

When autonomy is discussed, the debate often focuses narrowly on financial independence. Indeed, the question of direct allocation to local governments remains at the heart of constitutional disputes. But autonomy is broader and deeper.

It includes:

- **Administrative autonomy:** the ability of LGAs to hire, plan, and manage their operations.
- **Political autonomy:** the ability to conduct credible elections and maintain elected councils without prolonged caretaker arrangements.
- **Functional autonomy:** the mandate to deliver services effectively without constant state-level override.

Without all three, autonomy becomes symbolic rather than transformative.

WHY AUTONOMY MATTERS FOR CITIZENS

The link between autonomy and citizen well-being is direct and measurable.

When local governments are empowered, citizens experience:

- **Better Service Delivery**
Empowered LGAs can respond rapidly to community needs such as fixing roads, improving sanitation, supporting local schools, and maintaining markets, because they are closer to the issues.
- **More Participatory Decision-Making**
Town-hall meetings, ward committees, and community-based planning only thrive in systems where local authorities have real decision-making power.
- **Improved Accountability**
Citizens know their local officials and can hold them accountable more easily than distant politicians. Autonomy reduces excuses and increases responsibility.
- **Stronger Local Economies**
Effective LGAs stimulate grassroots economic activity: agriculture, small businesses, local infrastructure, and community markets.
- **Enhanced Security and Social Cohesion**
Local governments are essential for early conflict detection, community policing support, and building trust networks.

THE CITIZEN PARTICIPATION GAP

Yet autonomy alone is not enough. Even when LGAs have resources, meaningful participation can lag behind if citizens are disengaged.

Why?

- Many citizens do not understand what local governments are responsible for.
- Meetings and budget processes are often opaque.

- Youth and women are rarely included in community-level decision-making.
- Citizens sometimes view LGAs as extensions of state politics rather than independent institutions.

Strengthening participation requires deliberate strategies, including public budget consultations, participatory planning frameworks, citizen feedback channels, and transparent reporting systems.

WHAT A REFORMED LOCAL GOVERNMENT SYSTEM COULD LOOK LIKE

Imagine a Nigeria where:

- Local governments receive resources directly and publish monthly expenditure reports.
- Councillors hold quarterly town halls at the ward level.
- Development plans are co-created with traditional institutions, civil society, women's groups, and youth leaders.
- LGAs have functional works departments repairing feeder roads and drainage systems.
- Primary healthcare centres are staffed, equipped, and supervised effectively.
- Community policing structures work hand-in-hand with local authorities for preventive security.
- Elections into local councils are regular, credible, and competitive.

This is not idealistic; it reflects global best practices in countries where local governance is the engine of national development.

THE ROADBLOCKS AND THE OPPORTUNITIES

Challenges remain: constitutional constraints, political interference, weak institutional capacity, and limited public awareness. But ongoing national debates, constitutional amendment proposals, and judicial interventions show that momentum is building.

Civil society is pushing for reforms.

Citizens are demanding transparency.

Courts are clarifying powers and responsibilities.

Some states are experimenting with stronger LGA structures.

The window for meaningful change has never been wider.

CONCLUSION: THE FUTURE OF DEMOCRACY STARTS LOCALLY

The health of any democracy is measured not only by what happens at the national level but also by how power is exercised where citizens live, work, and raise their families. Strengthening local government autonomy and deepening citizen participation are essential for building a Nigeria where governance is responsive, inclusive, and development-driven.

Simply put:

“ If democracy is to work for the people, it must work from the grassroots up. ”

YOUTH, SOCIAL MEDIA & DEMOCRACY: **ARE WE LOSING THE DIGITAL BATTLE?**

By: Dr. Dele Ishaka

Political Scientist and Research Fellow, NILDS

The story of Nigeria's democracy today is no longer written only in policy papers, legislative chambers or electoral commission reports. Increasingly, it is being written in short videos, trending hashtags, voice notes, memes and rapid-fire commentary from millions of young Nigerians who live, think and participate politically online. Social media has become a new civic arena, expansive, unpredictable, emotional and deeply influential. And because young people dominate this space, the future of Nigeria's democracy is closely tied to what happens on their screens

“ There is something remarkable about the way Nigerian youth inhabit the digital world. They are curious, bold and quick-thinking; ”

they absorb information at a pace older generations often struggle to understand. With creativity as their currency, they use social platforms not simply to entertain themselves, but to question leaders, expose irregularities, demand reforms and share alternative visions for the country. In cities and small towns alike, young Nigerians now shape national mood as much as any traditional institution.

Yet this growing digital power comes with an undercurrent of danger. The very platforms that empower also mislead. The same online spaces that encourage civic expression also incubate rumours and distortions. Misinformation spreads with breathtaking speed, outpacing fact-checkers and overwhelming even the most diligent online users. In the absence of structure or moderation, the digital environment becomes chaotic, leaving many young people unsure of what to trust or how to navigate conflicting narratives.

As a result, Nigeria's democratic conversation is sometimes



shaped less by truth and more by what is shareable. A misleading video can travel across the country within minutes. A poorly sourced graphic can sow distrust in institutions. A clipped audio can inflame tensions in already fragile communities. Because young people are the most active participants online, they are both the primary drivers and the primary targets of this digital volatility.

This creates a paradox. On one hand, never before have Nigerian youths had such a powerful voice in national affairs. On the other hand, never before have they been so vulnerable to foreign manipulation, political misinformation, coordinated propaganda campaigns and algorithmic bias. The digital space gives everyone a platform, but it does not guarantee fairness or accuracy. It amplifies voices, but it also amplifies chaos.

The question, therefore, is not whether young Nigerians care about democracy - they do. It is not whether they participate - they participate intensely. The real question is whether Nigeria is equipping them with the tools, protections and clarity they need to participate safely and meaningfully. Because if the digital space continues to drift unchecked, the country risks losing not only the online conversation but also the deeper project of building an informed, cohesive and resilient democratic culture.

Winning the digital battle will require effort from multiple sides. Young people must learn to pause, question, verify and reflect before sharing content that travels far beyond their immediate circle. Government institutions need to communicate more transparently and respond more quickly to rumours that can spiral into national crises. Civil society organisations must adapt to the realities of online mobilisation by developing new forms of digital civic education. Technology companies, too, must acknowledge the weight of their influence in shaping political realities in nations like Nigeria and take stronger measures to curb harmful content.



“Above all, Nigeria must invest in cultivating digital citizens rather than merely digital users.”

Users scroll; citizens think. Users react; citizens evaluate. Users consume; citizens participate with purpose. In a country where the median age is just above 18, the digital literacy of the youth is not an optional skill. It is a democratic necessity.

We are not yet losing the digital battle, but we are dangerously close to letting the space define us rather than us defining it. If Nigeria hopes for a democracy that endures, it must ensure that the next generation is guided not by the loudest voices online, but by the clearest truths and the most constructive values. The future will be shaped by the young, and the young will be shaped by the information they consume.

The digital age offers Nigeria a profound opportunity to build a more informed electorate, a more engaged citizenry and a more responsive state. This opportunity will not fulfil itself. It requires intentionality. It requires guidance. It requires the recognition that democracy is no longer only fought at polling stations, it is fought every day, scroll by scroll, screen by screen, share by share.

The question **“Are we losing the digital battle?”** is not a prediction of defeat but an invitation to act. If Nigeria chooses to act wisely, its youth may yet transform the digital space from a battlefield into a foundation for a stronger, smarter and more inclusive democracy.

LEGISLATIVE GOVERNANCE AND ANTI-CORRUPTION EFFORTS IN NIGERIA: EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY

By: James Nda Jacob, Ph.D

Professor of Political Economy, University of Abuja



The Constitution mandates the legislature to scrutinise executive policies, approve budgets, investigate financial irregularities, and monitor public programmes. Legislative committees play a particularly important role by conducting hearings, interrogating public officials, and producing reports that expose mismanagement or corruption. One of the most notable demonstrations of effective oversight was the 2012 fuel subsidy probe, where lawmakers investigated billions of naira misappropriated in subsidy payments. The inquiry exposed fraudulent transactions, demanded accountability, and pushed the government to recover diverted funds, illustrating how legislative scrutiny can illuminate opaque

Legislative Governance is a core pillar of democracy, ensuring that power is exercised responsibly, resources are managed transparently, and public officials remain accountable. In Nigeria, the National Assembly comprising the Senate and House of Representatives is constitutionally empowered to oversee the executive, make laws, and represent citizens. These functions are essential for public accountability, institutional integrity, and sustainable development. However, entrenched corruption, weak institutions, and executive dominance have often undermined the legislature's capacity to perform effective oversight. Despite these challenges, legislative oversight remains central to combating corruption, monitoring public funds, and protecting national resources.

processes and trigger corrective action.

Similarly, the “Dasukigate” scandal where funds meant for National Security were diverted showcased the legislature's ability to investigate high-profile corruption cases. Through hearings and public questioning of key officials, lawmakers highlighted systemic governance weaknesses and increased national awareness of misuse of public funds. Though prosecutions were limited, the investigative process itself underscored the importance of legislative oversight as a check on executive excesses and a driver of reform.

Nonetheless, several obstacles continue to limit oversight effectiveness. Executive dominance is

a major constraint. Presidents and Governors often control party structures and patronage systems, discouraging lawmakers from challenging corruption or mismanagement. At times, national budgets and policy proposals are passed with minimal scrutiny, enabling corrupt practices to persist. Internal institutional weaknesses also impair legislative performance. Many lawmakers lack access to robust research support, independent data, and technical expertise required for complex investigations. Moreover, corruption within the legislature such as bribery or collusion with executive officials further undermines oversight credibility and public trust.

Despite these challenges, legislative oversight has yielded measurable results. Committees overseeing the oil and gas sector, especially the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), have conducted audits that exposed inflated contracts, ghost workers, and unremitted revenues. These findings generated policy debates, improved transparency, and prompted partial reforms in revenue management. Oversight extends to financial institutions, procurement systems, and public projects, helping ensure that government programmes deliver value and achieve intended outcomes. The impact of these efforts is strengthened by active civil society organizations, investigative journalists, and public advocacy. Media exposure and civic pressure elevate the visibility of investigations, encourage follow-through, and foster a culture of transparency.

“ The legislature also contributes to anti-corruption by shaping laws and policies that reduce opportunities for mismanagement. ”

Through debates, amendments, and policy advocacy, lawmakers help tighten procurement standards, close regulatory loopholes, and reinforce financial controls. The enactment of the Public Procurement Act and periodic reviews of financial regulations demonstrate how legislative reforms institutionalize transparency. When combined with active oversight, such policies strengthen resilience against systemic corruption and support responsible governance.

To enhance the impact of legislative oversight, key reforms are needed. Expanding lawmakers' technical and research capacity is essential for conducting rigorous inquiries. Committees need access to expert analysis, independent data, and modern analytical tools to effectively scrutinise budgets, contracts, and public projects. Safeguarding committee independence from executive interference is equally important. Transparent practices such as public hearings, published reports, and digital monitoring tools can strengthen citizen trust and participation. Increased civic engagement and media involvement can amplify oversight outcomes, ensuring accountability becomes a societal norm.



Ultimately, humanising governance through legislative oversight involves promoting a culture of responsibility, transparency, and public engagement. By holding the executive accountable and ensuring efficient use of public funds, the legislature strengthens democratic institutions and public trust. While challenges remain, examples such as the fuel subsidy probe and Dasukigate reveal the potential of effective oversight to expose corruption and drive reform. Strengthening capacity, ensuring independence, and deepening transparency are crucial for maximizing legislative impact. A proactive National Assembly is essential not only for curbing corruption but also for advancing good governance and sustainable national development in Nigeria.



RECLAIMING HUMAN RIGHTS IN NIGERIA'S ELECTORAL BATTLEFIELDS

By: **Humphrey Ukeaja**

Political Analyst, Inclusive Friends Association, Abuja



“ *The Nigerian polling booth, meant to be a safe space for democratic choice, has sadly become a battleground where the integrity of the ballot faces violence and corruption.* **”**

The 2023 general elections highlighted this crisis, with over 200 violent incidents leading to nearly 100 deaths. At the core of this problem are two major issues: the open attacks by thugs, often backed by political parties, and the widespread practice of vote-buying. These actions are not just political disturbances; they undermine the people's will and damage public trust, breaking the vital connection between genuine choice and good governance in a nation where 93 million registered voters deserve a fair democracy.

The spread of this violence is troubling, with the Southeast region experiencing 46 major clashes. These attacks target supporters, candidates, and staff from the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), creating a fearful environment that disproportionately affects vulnerable populations. The resulting governance structure lacks democratic legitimacy and is constantly haunted by a mandate that is bought instead of earned. To regain faith, Nigeria must go beyond mere words of condemnation and adopt successful strategies that pave the way for real reform.

CROSS-COUNTRY BLUEPRINTS FOR BOLD REFORM

Nigeria does not need to start from scratch; it needs the courage to use proven methods. Other nations facing similar governance issues have successfully implemented technology and justice-driven reforms that cleaned up their electoral systems. For example, Kenya's 2017 "Not on Our Watch" campaign stands out as an excellent model. Youth-led civic tech applications like Ushahidi allowed citizens to track electoral violence in real time. This digital accountability pushed security forces to act quickly and led to judicial investigations, which reduced post-election deaths from 1,200 in 2007 to fewer than 50.

Similarly, Ghana's 2012 requirement for biometric voter verification provided a strong defence against electoral fraud. This system effectively eliminated multiple voting and discouraged bribes by ensuring voters could be verified. The increase in electoral integrity by 20% reinforced public trust. Additionally, transparent prosecutions for vote-buying discouraged political 'godfathers' by raising the cost of electoral misconduct. These are not distant goals; they are practical plans ready for adaptation in Nigeria.

HUMAN RIGHTS AT THE BALLOT'S HEART

A true democratic election is fundamentally about human rights. Centering the electoral process on human dignity means creating polling places where no voter fears violence or bribery. This demands a shift in perspective: viewing electoral violence not as "political passion" but as a serious crime, and treating vote-buying as major corruption. INEC and the Nigeria Police Force must rigorously enforce the Electoral Act's Section 130, enforcing strict penalties such as mandatory life sentences for thugs caught in the act. Furthermore, vote-buying should be classified as grand corruption, with strict asset forfeiture policies in place.

FIVE IMPLEMENTABLE LEAPS FORWARD FOR 2027

To move from despair to hope, Nigeria must adopt five specific reforms:

- 1. Tech-Shield Polls:** Quickly implement Kenya-style citizen violence reporting apps, combined with police drones and rapid-response units trained to de-escalate situations and secure polling materials. This uses technology to enhance safety.
- 2. Biometric Ironclad:** Make Ghana's biometric voter verification mandatory throughout the country. This should be paired with "indelible ink 2.0" systems and real-time blockchain-based tallies for full transparency, preventing serial voting and addressing integrity concerns.
- 3. Preemptive Justice:** Set up fast-track courts similar to those used successfully in post-conflict transitions. These courts should handle and resolve high-profile vote-buying and thuggery cases within 48 hours of arrest, with immediate public disclosure of convictions to deter future misconduct.
- 4. Youth Marshal Power:** Mobilise and professionalise 500,000 vetted "Election Guardians" from the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC). These guardians, who will receive competitive pay, would oversee polling stations, inspired by peace ambassadors in post-war Liberia who helped halve electoral violence by harnessing organised youth power.
- 5. Godfather Blacklist:** Change electoral laws to enforce a mandatory 10-year ban on political financiers and godfathers convicted of electoral fraud, while also freezing their assets through immediate collaboration with the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), targeting the financial roots of electoral misconduct.

By combining technology, strict justice, and committed community involvement, we can build an electoral system where every vote reflects human dignity. The future of Nigerian democracy hinges on one essential truth: the ballot must always prevail over violence.

As a Lagos market woman stated after the 2023 elections,

*"We no dey sell
our future again."*

*"Let's make
this a reality."*

SPOTLIGHT ON AFRICA



DEMOCRACY UPDATES FROM ECOWAS AND AFRICAN UNION



DID YOU KNOW?

Over the past months, West and Central Africa have continued to experience significant political shifts, with transitions, contested elections, constitutional reforms, and regional realignments reshaping democratic governance across the ECOWAS and African Union regions.

1. DID YOU KNOW... SAHEL JUNTAS HAVE FORMALISED THEIR BREAK WITH ECOWAS AND BEGUN THE ICC WITHDRAWAL PROCESS?

- On 23 September 2025, Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger (all military-governed) officially announced their withdrawal from the International Criminal Court (ICC), accusing it of “selective justice” and labelling it an instrument of “neocolonial repression”.
- Under Article 127 of the Rome Statute, withdrawal takes effect one year after notification, meaning the process is still ongoing and will not be completed until late 2026 unless reversed.
- In addition, the three countries formally exited the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) earlier in 2025, consolidating their shift toward alternative regional cooperation frameworks. This marks one of the most significant ruptures in West Africa's integration architecture in decades and signals a broader geopolitical realignment centred on sovereignty-first governance models.

2. DID YOU KNOW... GUINEA'S CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM WAS FOLLOWED BY A PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION?

- On 24 September 2025, provisional results showed that 89.38% of voters backed a new constitution.
- The new charter extends the presidential term from 5 to 7 years, renewable once, and introduces a Senate.
- The reform cleared the legal pathway for transitional leader Mamady Doumbouya to contest elections.
- A presidential election was subsequently held in December 2025. Official results declared Doumbouya the winner by a wide margin. Following the vote, regional bodies acknowledged the outcome as part of Guinea's transition process, and ECOWAS lifted remaining sanctions, restoring Guinea's full participation in regional affairs.
- While the transition has been formally regularised, domestic and international observers continue to debate the depth of democratic competition and institutional independence under the new constitutional framework.



3. DID YOU KNOW... CAMEROON'S OCTOBER 12, 2025 VOTE CONTINUES TO REVERBERATE?

- The 2025 presidential election was held on 12 October 2025.
- On 27 October 2025, Cameroon's Constitutional Council declared Paul Biya, age 92, the winner with 53.66% of the vote; his opponent, Issa Tchiroma Bakary, had 35.19%.
- The announcement triggered protests in several cities, including Douala and Yaoundé. Human rights organisations and UN sources reported that security forces used force against demonstrators, resulting in multiple civilian casualties and numerous arrests. Human Rights Watch reports that security forces used excessive force, with "dozens injured" and many arrested.
- Biya was sworn in for an eighth term on 6 November 2025, following his re-election.
- The African Union's observation mission said the election was "largely in accordance with continental and international standards" but acknowledged "logistical and transparency challenges".



4. DID YOU KNOW... REGIONAL BODIES LIKE ECOWAS AND THE AU REMAIN CENTRAL, BUT THEIR INFLUENCE IS BEING TESTED?

- The Sahel states' withdrawal from ECOWAS and their move to leave the ICC pose complex questions for the African Union's governance and accountability architecture.
- Guinea's constitutional transition illustrates how military-led regimes may seek



legitimacy through legal restructuring rather than immediate civilian restoration.

- In Cameroon, the gap between formal electoral validation and post-election unrest highlights ongoing tensions between institutional procedures and public trust.

WHAT TO EXPECT (MARCH - LATE 2026)

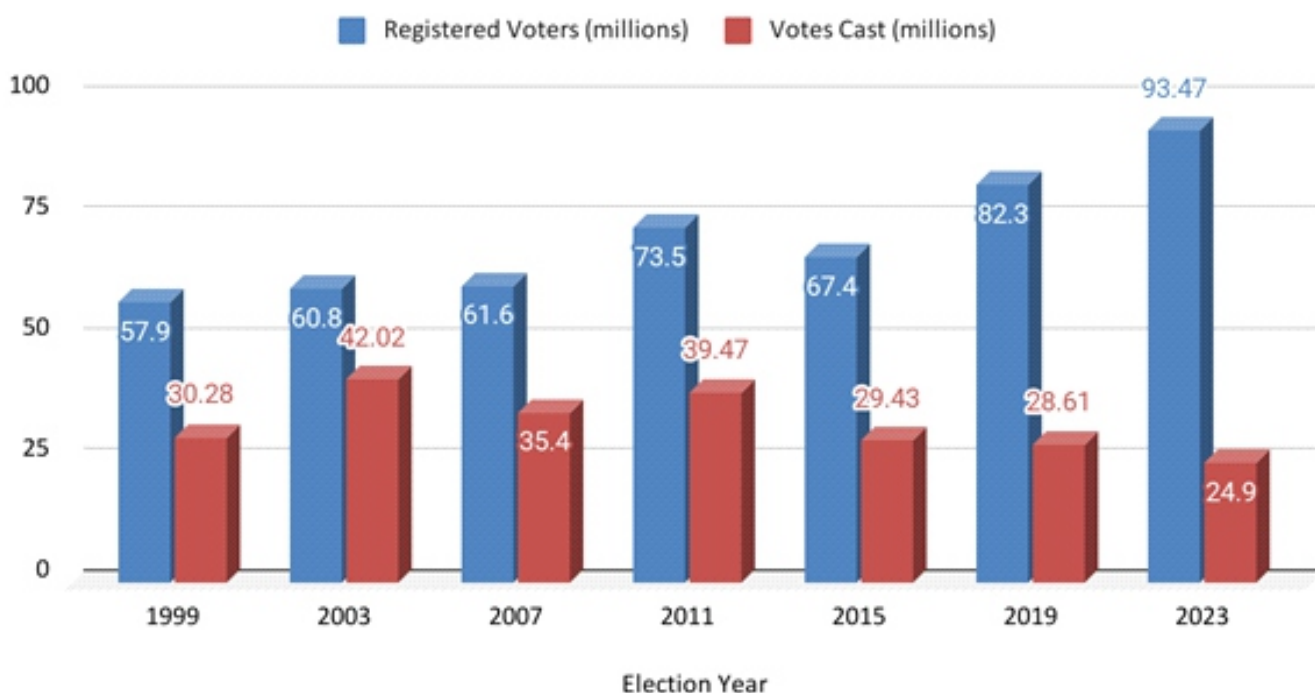
Here's what could unfold in the coming weeks and months, based on current trends:

- **Consolidation in Guinea:**
Attention will now focus on governance under the new constitutional order, including legislative implementation, Senate formation, and the independence of electoral and judicial institutions..
- **ICC Withdrawal Timeline:**
The formal withdrawal process for Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger remains underway and will only take effect after the one-year notice period lapses. Debate is likely to continue around alternative accountability mechanisms at regional or national levels.
- **Cameroon's Political Climate:**
Opposition mobilisation and human rights advocacy may persist throughout 2026, particularly around demands for electoral reform and investigations into post-election violence.
- **ECOWAS and AU Strategic Recalibration:**
Regional institutions are expected to refine their engagement strategies with transitional and military-led governments, balancing principles of constitutional order with pragmatic

DEMOCRACY IN NUMBERS

TRENDS IN NIGERIA (1999–2023)

Voter Participation Trends in Nigeria (1999–2023)



Election Year	Turnout (%)	Notes / Context
1999	~52.3%	First election after return to democracy; moderate engagement.
2003	~69.1%	Peak turnout in the period; high voter enthusiasm.
2007	~57.5%	Turnout begins to decline again.
2011	~53.7%	Slight decline from 2007.
2015	~43.6%	Major drop — turnout below 50%.
2019	~34.75%	Continued decline; ICIR also notes low engagement.
2023	~26.72%	Lowest turnout since 1999.

KEY TRENDS & ANALYSIS

1. Sharp Decline After Mid-2000s

- Voter turnout peaked in 2003 (~69%) but has generally declined since then.
- By 2015 and 2019, turnout dipped to below 45% and then to ~35%.
- The 2023 election recorded 26.72% turnout, the lowest in the democratic era.

2. Growing Voter Register, Lower Engagement

- While the number of registered voters has grown significantly (from ~58 m in 1999 to ~93 m in 2023), this has not translated into proportional turnout.
- Experts cite a “trust deficit” in the electoral process (fraud, manipulation) as a reason for low turnout.
- Voter apathy is also tied to the complexity and perceived inefficiency of the voting process.

3. Electoral Reforms & Technology

- Over the years, INEC has introduced reforms and technology (e.g., Smart Card Readers, BVAS) to improve the credibility of elections.
- While these reforms likely reduce manipulation, they may not sufficiently address political disengagement.

4. Socioeconomic Factors

- Some academic research has suggested that socioeconomic variables (education, income, health) significantly influence voting behaviour, possibly more than ethnic or religious identity in some cases.
- Areas with higher human development indices showed different voting patterns in 2023, indicating that development disparities may affect voter mobilisation.

IMPLICATIONS & WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

- The trend suggests a growing disconnect between voters and the electoral process: registration is up, but actual participation is falling.
- Low turnout could weaken the legitimacy of elected officials and reduce accountability, as governments may feel less pressure from a disengaged electorate.
- For democracy actors (civil society, INEC, international observers), there's an urgent need to re-engage citizens, especially young and socially marginalised voters.
- Continued electoral reforms are necessary, but they must be paired with awareness campaigns, civic education, and strategies to rebuild trust in elections.

WOMEN IN THE NIGERIAN LEGISLATURE (1999–2023)

Period / Assembly	Senate	House	Notes / Sources
1999–2003	3	13	<i>The Nation</i> / research data ¹
2003–2007	4	21	<i>The Nation</i> / research data ²
2007–2011	9	27	<i>The Nation</i> / research data ³
2011–2015	7	26	<i>New Telegraph</i> / research data ⁴
2015–2019	7	22	<i>New Telegraph</i> / research data ⁵
2019–2023	8	13	<i>New Telegraph</i> / research data ⁶
2023 (10th Assembly)	4	16	Data from <i>Meet the women of the 10th Assembly</i> ⁷

The Nation. (2022, March 25). *National Assembly and Women's Special Bill*.

¹ <https://thenationonlineng.net/national-assembly-and-womens-special-bill/>

² *ibid*

³ *ibid*

⁴ Nwaneri, F. (2025, October 13). *Hope rises for women*. *New Telegraph*.

<https://newtelegraphng.com/hope-rises-for-women/>

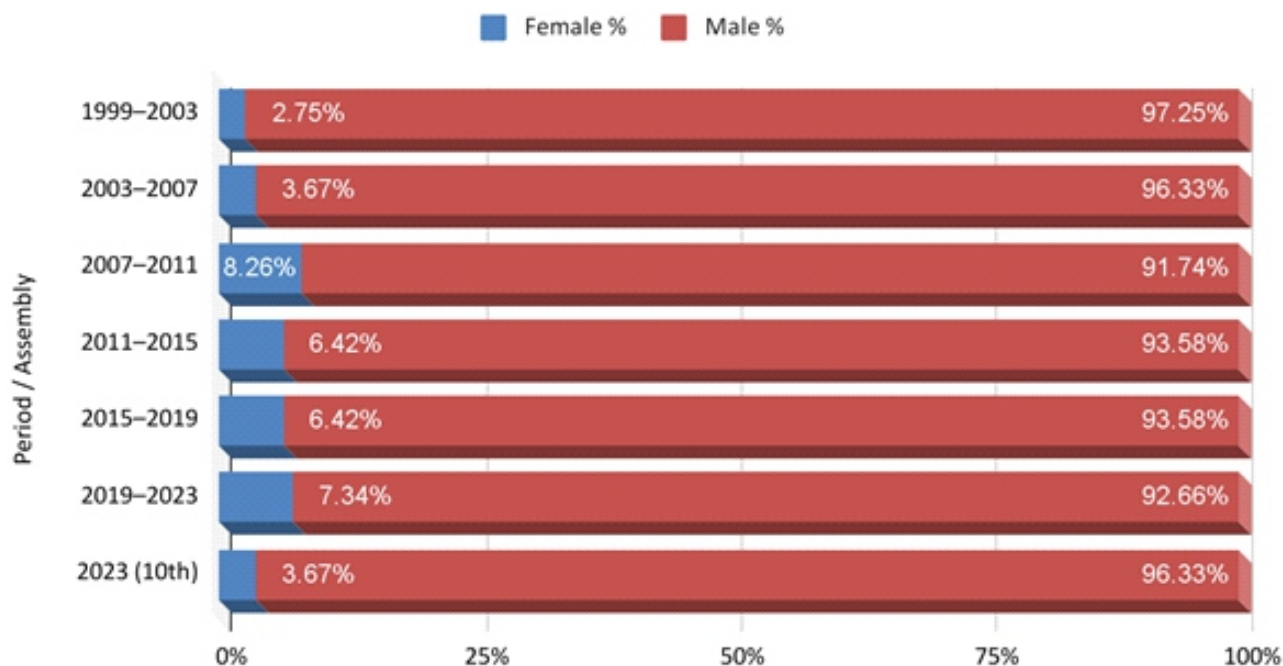
⁵ *ibid*

⁶ *ibid*

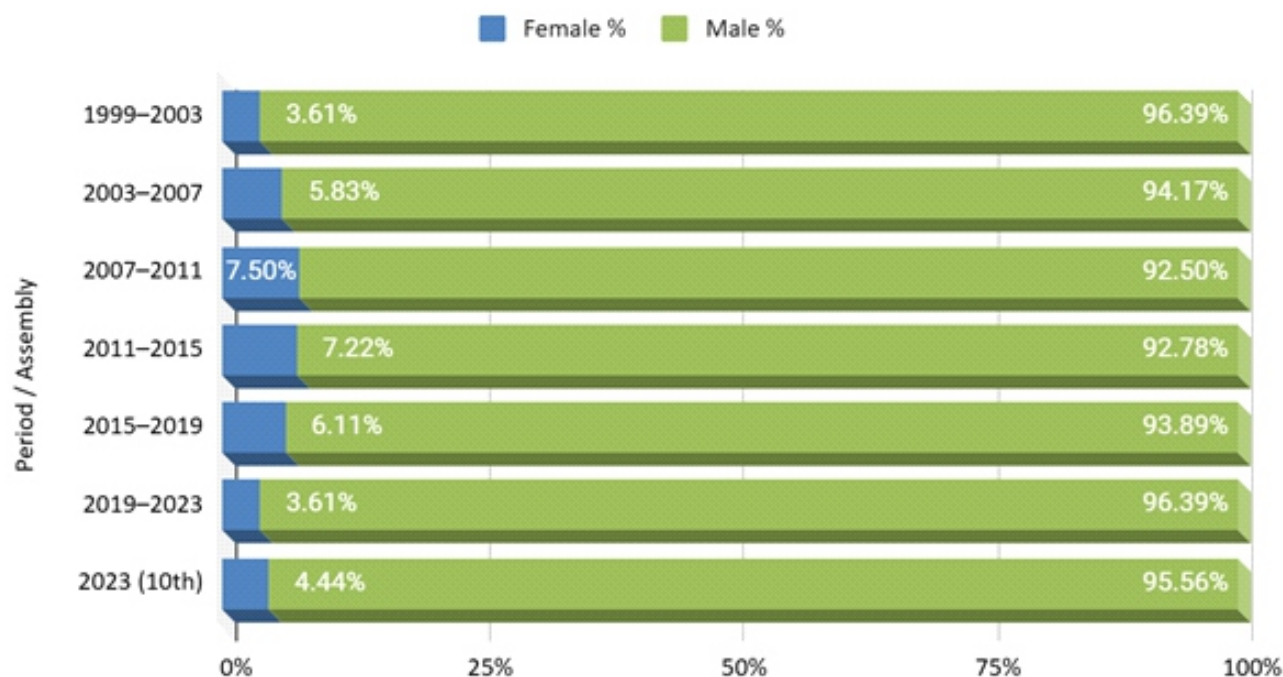
⁷ Igariewy, W. (2025, March 26). *Meet the women of the 10th Assembly*. National Assembly Library Trust Fund.

<https://nalif.gov.ng/meet-the-women-of-the-10th-assembly/>

The Nigerian Senate Gender Composition (%)



The Nigerian House of Reps. Gender Composition (%)



ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS & CONTEXT

- Statistics from the table and charts show that from 1999–2023, only about 180 women have ever been elected into the 469-member National Assembly (across both chambers) compared to more than 2,600 men over the same period.

- The peak number of women in the National Assembly was during the 6th Assembly (2007-2011), when there were 36 women (9 senators + 27 reps). New Telegraph reports this was about 7.7% of the legislature.
- The decline since 2007 is notable. From 36 women in the 6th Assembly to 21 women in the 9th (2019-2023) and just 20 in the 10th (2023-2027, as reported).

IMPLICATIONS

- Nigeria has very low women's representation in its National Assembly compared to global norms.
- The underrepresentation suggests structural and cultural barriers are still very strong. Despite decades of democratic rule, women's voices in legislative power remain marginal.
- There is growing advocacy for reserved seats / quotas for women. Some civil society groups and political observers argue that special measures are necessary to improve gender parity.

CONCLUSION

The persistent under-representation of women in Nigeria's National Assembly shows that the issue is deeper than numbers alone. While reserved seats or quotas may seem like a quick fix, they risk being politicised, potentially benefiting only women with elite connections rather than addressing systemic barriers. Cultural expectations, marital responsibilities, and the enduring role of women in homemaking also shape who can realistically participate in elective politics.

“ A more sustainable approach lies in the social reorientation of women, ”



i.e., building an environment that encourages women to engage in politics on the basis of merit and competence, while also recognising and accommodating the cultural and social realities they navigate. This requires empowering women through education, mentorship, access to networks, and public awareness campaigns that challenge stereotypes. By building a society where women are valued for their contributions and supported to compete, not gifted positions, Nigeria can gradually increase meaningful representation in ways that are equitable, culturally sensitive, and transformative for the nation's democracy.

RESEARCH & INSTITUTIONAL FOCUS

NILDS 2025 CONVOCATION CEREMONY: CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE IN LEGISLATIVE LEARNING

The National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS) reaffirmed its leadership in legislative capacity building with the successful hosting of the 2025 Convocation Ceremony on 27th October 2025. The event marked the graduation of students from the NILDS–University of Benin (UNIBEN) Postgraduate Programmes and the 4th Convocation Ceremony of the Institute's Higher National Diploma Programmes.

The ceremony was graced by dignitaries. The Director General of NILDS, Prof. Abubakar O. Sulaiman, was joined by representatives of the National Assembly leadership, the Senate President, Senator Godswill Obot Akpabio, GCON (represented by Senator Aminu Iya Abbas), and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Rt. Hon. Tajudeen Abbas, Ph.D, GCON (represented by Prof. Julius Ihonvbere, Leader of the House). Several other distinguished guests, partners and stakeholders in legislative development were also in attendance.

Altogether, 46 Master's, 19 Higher National Diploma, and 9 Postgraduate Diploma graduands were formally conferred with their degrees and diplomas. The atmosphere was joyful as families, staff and colleagues celebrated the academic journey and accomplishments of the recipients.

In his remarks, Prof. Sulaiman described the ceremony as *historic*, noting that the graduands' resilience and dedication reflect NILDS' commitment to producing well-trained professionals for Nigeria's democratic institutions.

With vibrant colours, emotional moments, and memorable photographs, the 2025 Convocation was not only a formal academic event. It was a celebration of growth, service and the promise of a stronger, knowledge-driven legislative system.





NILDS 10TH NATIONAL QUIZ COMPETITION FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS: BUILDING YOUNG DEMOCRATIC MINDS

The National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS) marked a decade of inspiring young Nigerians with the 10th Edition of the National Quiz Competition on Legislature, Democracy, and Governance.

As the competition entered its tenth year, it brought together brilliant students from across the six geopolitical zones, each representing schools that had earned their place at the national stage through months of preparation and regional contests. From Akure to Abuja, Gombe to Aba, the 2025 edition once again demonstrated the passion, intelligence and promise of Nigeria's next generation of leaders.

The zonal champions – Model Secondary School, Akure (South West); School for the Gifted, Gwagwalada (North Central); Annunciation Catholic College, Irrua (South South); Bilikisu International School, Kaduna (North West); Academic Planet, Aba (South East); and Pen Resource Academy, Gombe (North East) – arrived in Abuja for the grand finale with confidence and determination. Each team had mastered topics ranging from legislative functions and democratic principles to governance structures and constitutional history.

The Grand Finale, held on 10th November 2025, lived up to its promise. After a gripping contest that kept the audience on edge, **School for the Gifted, Gwagwalada, FCT**, emerged as the overall winner, displaying exceptional composure and depth of knowledge. Model Secondary School, Akure, secured second place, while Annunciation Catholic College, Irrua, claimed third. The hall erupted with applause as trophies and cash prizes were presented, marking a proud moment for students, teachers, and families.

The 10th Anniversary edition of the competition did more than crown champions. It showcased the diversity, brilliance and potential of Nigerian youth. It reaffirmed NILDS' belief that democracy is not sustained only by institutions but by citizens who are empowered, knowledgeable, and eager to participate.

Supported by vibrant photographs of excited teams, proud mentors and energetic moments from the competition floor, the 2025 edition of the quiz competition tells a compelling story of hope, that Nigeria's democratic future is in capable hands.





HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 60TH BIRTHDAY ANNIVERSARY OF PROF. ABUBAKAR O. SULAIMAN, DIRECTOR GENERAL, NILDS

On Thursday, 16th October 2025, the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS) gathered family, friends, colleagues and national leaders to celebrate the 60th birthday anniversary of its Director General, Prof. Abubakar O. Sulaiman. The event drew an impressive list of dignitaries whose presence reflected the esteem in which Prof. Sulaiman is held across Nigeria's governance and academic environments.

Among the distinguished guests was the President of the Senate, 10th National Assembly, His Excellency, Senator (Dr) Godswill Obot Akpabio, GCON, whose attendance showed the close working relationship between NILDS and the National Assembly. Also present was the revered Ooni of Ife, His Imperial Majesty Ooni Adeyeye Enitan Ogunwusi, CFR (*jájá II*), bringing royal warmth and cultural significance to the celebration.

They were joined by federal lawmakers, traditional rulers, senior government officials, development partners, and friends of the Institute, all gathered to honour a man whose leadership continues to strengthen legislative capacity and deepen Nigeria's democratic foundations.

It was an evening of heartfelt tributes, warm reflections and joyful celebration, moments beautifully captured in the images that follow.







NILDS PARTNERS CDD, RECAP AFRICA ON GOVERNANCE AND POLICY RESEARCH



The National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS) on Tuesday, 2 December 2025, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) and the Research Centre for Advocacy and Policy Advisory in Africa (ReCAP Africa) to strengthen collaboration in legislative capacity building, democratic governance, and policy research. The partnership is aimed at promoting knowledge exchange, joint research initiatives, and evidence-based policy engagement in support of democratic institutions.

The MoU is domiciled in the Department of Democracy and Governance, NILDS, which will coordinate the implementation of agreed activities and serve as the institutional focal point for the collaboration.



COMMENTARY & OPINION

WHEN FEAR VOTES LOUDER THAN HOPE: AN OPINION ESSAY ON SECURITY, TRUST, AND THE QUIET DEATH OF CHOICE

By: **Martins Solomon Udom, Ph.D**

Philosopher and Research Fellow, NILDS



would like to begin this conversation with the truism that:

“ when fear is louder than hope in any democratic setup, it begins to lose its soul.”

Perhaps, one will agree with me that the soul of democracy is not in its constitutions or its courts alone; it is in the everyday choice to keep hope alive, even when fear is screaming. Every election year, citizens walk into a polling booth, thump a ballot, and believe they are shaping tomorrow. That moment is supposed to be the triumph of hope over fear. Yet in many developing democracies, Nigeria included, the majority of people stop choosing; they start hiding behind the strongest voice that promises to protect them, not because they love the candidate, but because they are terrified of what will happen if the “other” candidate wins.

It will be nice if I mention here that fear is the oldest political weapon. It needs no manifesto, no

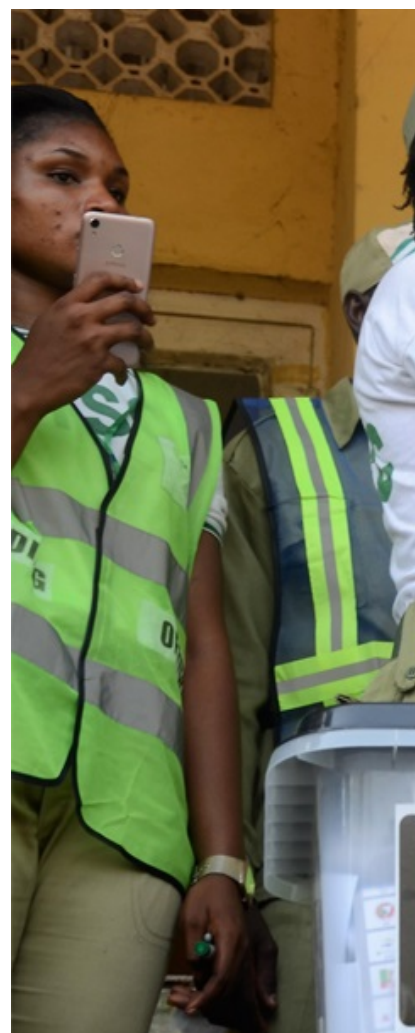
budget, nor record of past performance. It only needs a story that lands in the street: **“If these people win, there will be no Nigeria left.”** In Nigeria that story changes within a political season, sometimes it is about religion, sometimes tribe, sometimes **“the North will Islamise the South”** or **“the South will finish the oil and abandon the North,”** sometimes **“Fulani herdsmen will take your land,”** sometimes **“IPOB will tear the country apart”**. The details shift; the terror stays the same.

In 2015, it was **“If Jonathan wins again, the Chibok girls will never come home and corruption will finish us.”** In truth, millions did not vote for president Buhari in 2015 because they loved his 1983/84 record; they voted because they were told Jonathan's government could not protect them from Boko Haram. In 2019 it was **“If Atiku wins, he will sell NNPC to his Dubai friends.”** In 2023 it was **“If Obi wins, Igbo domination; if Atiku wins, Fulani caliphate; if Tinubu/Shettima wins, Christians will be sidelined”** – since they both are Muslims. None of the campaigns on the streets for the ordinary citizens were about electricity, jobs, or schools. They were about which ethnic or religious apocalypse was coming next. Finally, people vote against someone more than for anyone. In most cases, they do not love the winner; they just hate the nightmare painted on the other side. The result is sad but it is the way it is in any developing democracy. The central issue remains: can this process legitimately be regarded as democratic, or is it widely seen as falling short of democratic standards?

Fear is a powerful force used in politics, it shrinks the people to one question: who will keep me safe? When leaders, for instance, say **“If the other side wins, everything you have will be destroyed,”** makes many voters not hear politics anymore. What they hear is a fire alarm. And in that panic, they hand their vote to whoever shouts the loudest about putting the fire out. This is not new. This is a frequent weapon used to suppress citizen's political choices during each election year.

Two great philosophers explained it centuries ago. Thomas Hobbes said that when people are terrified, they will give all their freedom to anyone who promises order. Jean-Jacques Rousseau warned that true democracy only works when people vote for the common good, not when they are scared into picking a side. When fear wins, we stop acting like citizens and start acting like frightened children looking for a parent. The truth is, once citizens vote out of fear, they start accepting things they would never accept from the leader in the true sense. This is how democracy dies in most developing countries: not with tanks in the streets, but by voting out of fear. Fear is natural, but it is not invincible and it should not detect the system for us.

Every time a society has surmounted this contradiction, it has done three simple things: First, it rebuilt trust, brick by brick in the areas of independent courts that cannot be bought, journalists who can criticise without



disappearing, and election officials who count every vote the same way. Trust is also slow to be built, but it is the only known cure for fear. Second, it taught its children how to think instead of how to tremble. Civic education in advanced democracies is not a luxury; it is the vaccine against fear. When people learn to spot a frightening campaign story, to ask for evidence, to distinguish real danger from political theater, fear loses its superpower. Third, it refused to let security and freedom become enemies. Real safety includes the safety to disagree, to protest, to change your mind, to lose an election and try again next time. The moment we accept that some fears justify silencing others, we have already lost. There is a third option: courage. Courage is not the absence of fear; it is the decision to think clearly even when your heart is racing.

In conclusion, democracy has survived plagues, wars, depressions, rigged systems, and assassinations because enough ordinary people, at the crucial moment, decided to vote with their minds open instead of their fear. The ballot booth is still waiting in 2027. It does not ask for heroes. It only asks that we walk in remembering we are citizens, not refugees; that we are builders of a future, not just survivors of a nightmare someone else scripted for us. As long as we have the courage to choose hope over fear, the vote remains the most powerful weapon ever invented against misrule, because it reminds us that the future is not something that happens to us. It is something we decide, together, when we are brave enough to choose.



ENHANCING LEGISLATIVE PERFORMANCE IN NIGERIA:

THE INFLUENCE OF INSTITUTIONAL REFORMS, PARTY POLITICS, AND EXECUTIVE-LEGISLATURE RELATIONS

Dr Zekeri Momoh

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Legislative performance is often regarded as the heartbeat of any democratic system. It reflects not only the capacity of elected representatives to make laws but also their ability to oversee government actions, represent citizens' interests and uphold accountability. In Nigeria, the National Assembly, composed of the Senate and the House of Representatives, is constitutionally mandated to fulfil these roles. At the state level the State Houses of Assembly are also to perform similar functions. Yet, the effectiveness of the legislature in Nigeria has historically been undermined by weak institutional structures, intense party politics and complex executive-legislature relations. These challenges often compromise public accountability, hinder policy implementation and slow down national development. Despite these obstacles, there are notable examples where the legislature has exerted influence, promoted transparency and curbed corruption by showing that with the right tools and environment, legislative bodies can be powerful agents of governance and social change.

INSTITUTIONAL REFORMS AND LEGISLATIVE CAPACITY IN NIGERIA

In Nigeria, successive reforms have sought to improve institutional capacity, technical capacity and administrative efficiency of the National Assembly. Central to these reforms has been the creation of specialised committees, research units and procedural frameworks that enable lawmakers to conduct oversight, draft laws and monitor public spending. These reforms are not merely bureaucratic adjustments; they are the tools that allow legislators to interrogate government policies and ensure that public resources are used effectively.

“ A striking example of institutional effectiveness is the oversight of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC). ”

Historically, the NNPC has been a sector prone to mismanagement, corruption and lack of transparency. Through structured committee investigations, lawmakers uncovered inflated contracts, ghost workers and significant revenue losses. These enquiries prompted reforms in procurement processes, strengthened internal controls and highlighted the legislature's role in ensuring public accountability in one of Nigeria's most critical economic sectors. Beyond the NNPC, other committees, such as the Public Accounts Committee and the Finance and



Appropriation Committees, have played pivotal roles in auditing government spending, questioning mismanagement and ensuring that budgets are aligned with national priorities.

Institutional reforms have also improved legislative procedures and transparency. The introduction of public hearings allows citizens, civil society groups, and experts to contribute to lawmaking and oversight processes. Digital record-keeping systems and standardised committee reports have increased efficiency and accountability, enabling legislators to respond quickly to emerging challenges. Training programmes and workshops for lawmakers on governance, public finance management and technical aspects of policy evaluation further enhance the quality of legislative output. For instance, specialised training in monitoring infrastructure projects and evaluating national security expenditures has improved the analytical capacity of committees, allowing them to detect irregularities and make informed recommendations.

However, institutional reforms are not just about creating structures; they involve cultivating a culture of professionalism, integrity and diligence within the National Assembly. When combined with political will and citizen engagement, these reforms can transform legislatures in Nigeria from passive bodies into active agents of governance and development.

THE ROLE OF PARTY POLITICS IN LEGISLATIVE EFFECTIVENESS

Political parties play a critical role in shaping legislative performance in Nigeria. They determine the legislative agenda, influence committee appointments and affect how lawmakers approach oversight and representation. While party cohesion can facilitate the passage of key legislation and promote stability, excessive control can stifle independent judgement, reduce scrutiny of executive actions and limit the legislature's ability to represent the public interest.

During President Goodluck Jonathan's tenure (2011-2015), critics often described the National Assembly as a rubber stamp for executive proposals. Budgets were frequently approved with minimal scrutiny, and controversial policy decisions passed without rigorous debate. This period exemplifies how strong party influence can weaken legislative autonomy and compromise accountability. Conversely, periods of intense partisan competition can strengthen legislative performance. During President Muhammadu Buhari's administration (2015-2019), a more assertive opposition within the National Assembly led to robust debates over budget allocations, electoral reforms and anti-corruption initiatives. Notably, the Senate and House of Representatives

publicly questioned former military administrators and senior civil servants, demonstrating how party dynamics can empower lawmakers to hold the executive accountable and promote transparency. These debates, often broadcast widely, also increased public awareness of governance issues and encouraged civic engagement.

It is pertinent to note that party politics also affects lawmaking efficiency. A cohesive majority can accelerate the passage of critical legislation, such as budgets, electoral reforms, or anti-corruption laws. However, when party loyalty is enforced rigidly, legislators may suppress dissenting opinions and avoid critical evaluation of policies. This dynamic can result in weak legislation or ineffective oversight, undermining the legislature's core functions. Thus, party politics can act as both a catalyst and a constraint, depending on how political discipline is balanced with institutional autonomy and public accountability.

EXECUTIVE-LEGISLATURE RELATIONS

“The relationship between the executive and the legislature is a central determinant of legislative performance.”

Cooperation can facilitate timely budget approvals, smooth policy implementation, and effective oversight. On the other hand, adversarial relations or excessive executive dominance can compromise legislative autonomy, slow down lawmaking, and weaken accountability mechanisms. President Olusegun Obasanjo's administration provides a classic illustration of executive-legislature tensions. Conflicts over budgetary allocations, ministerial appointments and impeachment proceedings occasionally resulted in legislative gridlock. While these confrontations demonstrated the potential of the National Assembly to check executive overreach, they also slowed decision-making and policy implementation, showing the delicate balance needed between assertiveness and collaboration.

Conversely, collaboration between the executive and legislature has yielded positive outcomes. The 2010 Electoral Act amendment process is one such example, where constructive interaction facilitated the passage of reforms that improved electoral transparency. Similarly, the 2012 fuel subsidy investigation benefitted from a combination of legislative assertiveness and executive cooperation. Government officials were compelled to respond to committee enquiries, resulting in the recovery of misappropriated funds and increased public awareness of fiscal mismanagement.

Executive-legislature relations also directly impact the effectiveness of oversight mechanisms. When the executive provides timely access to information and respects parliamentary mandates, committees can investigate thoroughly, uncover irregularities, and recommend reforms. On the other hand, obstruction, delayed responses, or intimidation from the executive reduces the impact of legislative oversight, weakening accountability and public trust. Therefore, a constructive, respectful relationship between these branches is essential for a strong, independent, and effective legislature.

CHALLENGES TO LEGISLATIVE PERFORMANCE

Despite institutional reforms and procedural mechanisms, several persistent challenges hinder legislative performance in Nigeria. Technical capacity constraints remain a major limitation. Many lawmakers lack specialised expertise in areas such as public finance, energy management, and infrastructure development. Without access to independent data and analytical support, legislative scrutiny can be superficial or reactive, rather than proactive.

Excessive executive influence is another significant challenge. Control over political parties, patronage networks, and budget allocations can pressure legislators to align with executive interests, reducing autonomy and limiting their ability to challenge mismanagement. In some cases, internal corruption within the legislature exacerbates these challenges, further eroding public trust and weakening oversight functions.

Party politics, while sometimes facilitating lawmaking, can also constrain debate. Legislators may prioritise loyalty over constituents' interests, approving policies without rigorous scrutiny. This is especially evident when controversial budgets or policy proposals pass with minimal discussion due to party alignment, even if the public interest is at stake.

Finally, public perception and limited civic engagement weaken the effectiveness of the legislature. When citizens distrust parliament due to perceived corruption or inefficiency, they are less likely to hold lawmakers accountable. Similarly, inadequate media coverage and civic education on legislative activities reduce transparency and public participation, limiting the legislature's ability to influence policy effectively.

CONCLUSION

“Legislative performance in Nigeria is shaped by the interplay of institutional reforms, party politics, and executive-legislature relations.”

While reforms and procedural innovations have improved legislative capacity and oversight, structural weaknesses, executive dominance, and excessive party control continue to challenge effectiveness. Classic examples, including the oversight of the NNPC, the fuel subsidy probe, and electoral reform negotiations, illustrate both the promise and limitations of legislative interventions. Strengthening legislative performance requires a sustained commitment to institutional capacity building, balanced party discipline, constructive inter-branch engagement, and active civic participation. A robust and proactive legislature not only enhances accountability and transparency but also drives national development, promotes democratic consolidation, and fosters public trust in governance. By addressing these factors, Nigeria can transform its legislature into a powerful instrument of accountability, representation, and sustainable development, ensuring that public resources serve the collective good rather than private interests.

SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES FOR 2026 GOVERNORSHIP ELECTIONS

EKITI STATE

S/N	Activity	Date(s)	Remarks / Legal Provision
1	Notice of Election	25th June 2025	Section 28(1) of the Electoral Act, 2026 provides not later than 300 days before the election.
2	Conduct of Party Primaries including resolution of disputes arising from the Primaries	Commencement: 20th October 2025. End: 10th November 2025	To enable political parties democratically nominate candidates as required by Section 84 of the Electoral Act, 2026.
3	Submission of Forms EC9 & EC9B online (Nomination Portal)	9:00am, 28th November 2025 – 6:00pm, 22nd December 2025 <i>Access code for submission available from 10th Nov 2025.</i>	Section 29(1) of the Electoral Act, 2026 (not later than 120 days before election). EC9 = Personal Particulars of Candidates. EC9B = List of Nominated Candidates
4	Publication of Personal Particulars of Candidates (EC9) by the Commission	29th December 2025	Section 29(3) of the Electoral Act, 2026 provides for publication within 21 days of receipt of Form EC9.
5	Last day for withdrawal/replacement of withdrawn candidates by political parties	12th January 2026	Section 31 of the Electoral Act 2026 provides not later than 90 days to the election
6	Last day for submission of Nomination Forms (EC13B) by Political Parties	16th January 2026	To enable political parties comply with Section 30(1) of the Electoral Act, 2026.
7	Publication of final list of nominated candidates by the Commission	19th January 2026	Section 32(1) of the Electoral Act, 2026 provides at least 60 days before the election.
8	Commencement of campaign in public by political parties	21st January 2026	Section 94(1) of the Electoral Act 2026: campaigns begin 150 days before polling day and end 24 hours to the election.

9	Last day for submission of names of Polling Agents to the Electoral Officer	21st April 2026	Section 43 of the Electoral Act 2026: not later than 14 days before the election.
10	Publication of official Register of Voters for the election	11th May 2026	Section 10(4) of the Electoral Act, 2026.
11	Publication of Notice of Poll by the Commission	6th June 2026	Section 44 of the Electoral Act, 2026: not later than 14 days before the election.
12	Last day for campaigns by political parties	18th June 2026	Section 94(1): campaigns end 24 hours before polling day.
13	Date of Election	20th June 2026	Section 178(1) & (2) of the 1999 Constitution (as amended): election must be held not earlier than 150 days and not later than 30 days before expiration of the last holder's term.



OSUN STATE

S/N	Activity	Date(s)	Remarks / Legal Provision
1	Notice of Election	13th August 2025	Section 28(1) of the Electoral Act, 2026 provides not later than 300 days before the election.
2	Conduct of Party Primaries including resolution of disputes arising from the Primaries	Commencement: 24th November 2025. End: 15th December 2025	To enable political parties democratically nominate candidates as required by Section 84 of the Electoral Act, 2026.
3	Submission of Forms EC9 & EC9B online (Nomination Portal)	9:00am, 15th January 2026 – 6:00pm, 6th February 2026 <i>Access code for submission available on 15th December 2025.</i>	Section 29(1) of the Electoral Act, 2026 (not later than 120 days before election). EC9 = Personal Particulars of Candidates. EC9B = List of Nominated Candidates
4	Publication of Personal Particulars of Candidates (EC9) by the Commission	16th February 2026	Section 29(3) of the Electoral Act, 2026 provides for publication within 21 days of receipt of Form EC9.
5	Last day for withdrawal/replacement of withdrawn candidates by political parties	2nd March 2026	Section 31 of the Electoral Act 2026 provides not later than 90 days to the election
6	Last day for submission of Nomination Forms (EC13B) by Political Parties	4th March 2026	To enable political parties comply with Section 30(1) of the Electoral Act, 2026.
7	Publication of final list of nominated candidates by the Commission	9th March 2026	Section 32(1) of the Electoral Act, 2026 provides at least 60 days before the election.
8	Commencement of campaign in public by political parties	16th March 2026	Section 94(1) of the Electoral Act 2026: campaigns begin 150 days before polling day and end 24 hours to the election.

9	Last day for submission of names of Polling Agents to the Electoral Officer	23rd June 2026	Section 43 of the Electoral Act 2026: not later than 14 days before the election.
10	Publication of official Register of Voters for the election	22nd July 2026	Section 10(4) of the Electoral Act, 2026.
11	Publication of Notice of Poll by the Commission	24th July 2026	Section 44 of the Electoral Act, 2026: not later than 14 days before the election.
12	Last day for campaigns by political parties	13th August 2026	Section 94(1): campaigns end 24 hours before polling day.
13	Date of Election	15th August 2026	Section 178(1) & (2) of the 1999 Constitution (as amended): election must be held not earlier than 150 days and not later than 30 days before expiration of the last holder’s term.





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