

POLICY BRIEF

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Overlapping Mandates of Legislative Committees in Nigeria's 10th House of Representatives: Implications for Oversight Effectiveness

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Executive Summary

This Policy Brief examines overlapping mandates among Standing Committees of the 10th House of Representatives and their implications for legislative oversight effectiveness. Since the return to democratic governance in 1999, the committee system has expanded significantly, growing from 72 committees in the 4th Assembly to 199 in the 10th Assembly, including Parliamentary Friendship Groups. While this expansion reflects evolving policy demands and broader legislative participation, it has raised concerns about duplication of functions, intersecting supervisory responsibilities, and clarity of oversight authority. Unlike reform initiatives within the executive branch, the internal structure of the legislature has received limited empirical scrutiny.

The study focused on committees overseeing four strategic sectors (Petroleum, Education, Health, and Security) due to their fiscal significance, policy complexity, and relevance to national development priorities. Analysis of committee mandates, drawn from the House Standing Orders and complemented by key informant interviews, revealed that functional overlaps exist, particularly in the Petroleum, Education, and Health sectors, where multiple committees supervise related institutions or policy areas. The Security sector exhibited fewer instances of overlap, though intersecting responsibilities were still observed. Broadly framed mandate provisions and incremental committee growth without systematic rationalisation were observed to have contributed to ambiguity, administrative strain on MDAs, and occasional duplication of oversight activities.

The research noted that while limited overlap can provide the benefit of multiple perspectives in legislative scrutiny, uncoordinated duplication risks repetitive hearings, fragmented reporting, diffusion of accountability, and increased compliance costs on MDAs. The findings do not suggest systemic structural failure but indicate the need for targeted rationalisation and improved inter-committee coordination in areas where overlaps are most pronounced.

In light of these findings, the National Assembly, through the House Committee on Monitoring and Evaluation of Standing and Ad Hoc Committees, may wish to consider the following recommendations:

- **Review and streamline existing committee mandates** to identify and remove functional overlaps. Where multiple committees supervise related ministries or agencies, consolidation should be considered to improve coherence and reduce administrative burden. The review may also determine where issues can be better managed through temporary ad hoc committees rather than permanent standing structures. This approach will enhance flexibility while ensuring that standing committees retain focused, non-duplicative mandates.
- **Develop a formal coordination framework** to promote collaboration and communication among committees with related mandates. This mechanism may include shared oversight calendars, regular coordination meetings, and the designation of lead committees for cross-sector issues. Such an arrangement can prevent repetitive oversight activities, promote the exchange of information, and produce more coherent oversight reports.
- **Introduce a centralised digital oversight management platform** for recording committee activities, reports, and executive responses. This system can enhance institutional memory, prevent multiple committees from issuing identical requests to MDAs, and strengthen follow-up and accountability tracking.
- Review the Standing Orders to clearly delineate the scope of each committee's functions, specify procedures for handling overlapping issues, and formalise conditions under which joint oversight may be conducted. Codifying these provisions will establish a legal and procedural basis for coordination, ensuring efficiency and predictability in legislative oversight.
- **Institutionalise continuous capacity-building programmes** for committee clerks and secretariat staff, focusing on coordination practices, communication management, data sharing, and collaborative reporting. Strengthening capacity at this level may support effective inter-committee cooperation and ensure oversight processes are evidence-based and well-coordinated.

By implementing these measures, the House of Representatives can further enhance oversight coherence, reduce duplication of effort, and strengthen the effectiveness of its constitutional mandate in governance.

1.0 Background

The committee system serves as a principal institutional mechanism through which the National Assembly performs its constitutional functions of lawmaking, oversight of Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), investigation, and representation. Through committees, legislative work is organised, specialised, and structured for effective engagement with executive institutions. However, since the return to democratic governance in 1999, the committee architecture of the National Assembly has expanded considerably, prompting renewed attention to its structural configuration.

In the House of Representatives in particular, the number of committees increased from 72 in the 4th Assembly to 199 in the 10th Assembly (2025), including Parliamentary Friendship Groups¹. A comparable pattern of expansion has also occurred in the Senate². While such growth may reflect evolving policy demands and the need for broader participation in legislative work, the scale and pace of expansion, especially in the House, have generated concerns regarding the possibility of overlapping mandates among committees. Specifically, observers have questioned whether the proliferation of committees may increase the likelihood of duplication of functions and, in some cases, affect clarity of oversight responsibility, coordination with MDAs, and overall institutional coherence³⁴.

Notably, issues of duplication and overlapping mandates have been examined extensively within the executive branch through reform initiatives such as the Ayida Review (1995), the Ahmed Joda Committee (2000), and the Oronsaye Committee (2012)⁵. In contrast, comparatively limited empirical attention has been directed toward the internal organisational structure of the legislature. This study was therefore undertaken to address that gap by systematically examining the Standing Orders of the House of Representatives and analysing the mandates of selected sectoral committees in order to ascertain the extent and nature of any overlaps.

Against this backdrop, this Policy Brief draws on the findings of that empirical assessment to evaluate the scope, patterns, and implications of potential mandate overlaps within the House of Representatives. In doing so, it seeks to move the discussion beyond public speculation and provide evidence-based insights and practical recommendations to guide institutional refinement, particularly through the House Committee on Monitoring and Evaluation of Standing and Adhoc Committees and related reform processes within the National Assembly.

2.0 Scope of the Study

This study examined selected Standing Committees of the 10th House of Representatives to determine whether overlapping mandates exist and to assess their implications for legislative oversight effectiveness and institutional coherence.

The analysis focused on four strategic sectors: **Petroleum, Education, Health, and Security**. These sectors were selected due to their fiscal significance, policy complexity, and institutional breadth, as well as their relevance to national development priorities. By concentrating on these areas, the study aimed to capture sectors where the likelihood and consequences of jurisdictional intersections would be most observable.

¹ Our Reporters. (2023, July 29). National Assembly: Bloated committees, overlapping functions worry experts. *Daily Trust* <https://dailytrust.com/n-assembly-bloated-committees-overlapping-functions-worry-experts/>

² Odewale, T. (2023, August 7). 10th Senate and its 74 standing committees. *Blueprint Newspapers*. Retrieved from <https://blueprint.ng/10th-senate-and-its-74-standing-cttees/>

³ Salau, A. (2023, July 2). Mark slams N/Assembly's 152 Committees as unwieldy. *Daily Trust*. <https://dailytrust.com/mark-slams-n-assemblys-152-committees-as-unwieldy/>

⁴ Söderbaum, F., & Stapel, S. (2022). Institutional Overlap and Regional Governance in Africa. *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 60(1), 1–24.

⁵ *ibid*

Methodologically, the study reviewed committee jurisdictional provisions as contained in the Standing Orders of the House of Representatives. This was complemented by key informant interviews with relevant stakeholders and an assessment of areas of potential mandate intersection in practice.

Importantly, the objective was not to evaluate the performance of individual committees. Rather, the study focused on the structural configuration of committee mandates in order to identify whether functional overlaps or jurisdictional ambiguities exist within the committee system.

3.0 Findings from the Study

The study finds that overlapping mandates exist within selected committees of the House of Representatives. However, the overlaps identified are structural and sector-specific rather than systemic across the entire committee framework. It is also important to note that the findings are limited to the sectors examined and should not be generalised beyond them.

A primary finding of the study is the existence of functional overlap, defined as situations in which two or more committees exercise supervisory authority over similar institutions, regulatory functions, or policy domains. Such overlaps were most pronounced in the Petroleum and Education sectors, where committee mandates intersect around institutional supervision and sectoral oversight. In these sectors, multiple committees possess authority to engage the same MDAs on closely related issues.

Comparable patterns were observed in the Health sector, particularly in relation to oversight of the Federal Ministry of Health, where several committees exercise supervisory authority over different components of the same institutional framework. In contrast, the Security sector demonstrated comparatively fewer instances of intersecting supervisory authority, although areas of overlap were still evident.

In addition to functional overlaps, the study identified instances of jurisdictional ambiguity arising from broadly framed mandate provisions in the Standing Orders. In several cases, committee jurisdictions are defined in general subject-matter terms rather than through clearly demarcated institutional or functional boundaries. As a result, supervisory spaces intersect even where duplication may not have been expressly intended.

The study further observes that the incremental expansion of committees over successive Assemblies has not always been accompanied by systematic mandate harmonisation. This dynamic has increased the likelihood of overlapping jurisdiction in certain sectors. Interviews conducted during the study also confirmed instances where multiple committees invited the same MDA to address similar issues, thereby imposing administrative strain and additional compliance costs on affected institutions.

The implications of these findings are nuanced. While limited overlap may enhance legislative scrutiny through cross-verification and multiple oversight perspectives, extensive or uncoordinated overlap may result in duplication of hearings and investigations, increased administrative burden on MDAs, fragmentation of oversight outputs, and diffusion of accountability lines.

Nonetheless, the evidence of this study does not suggest systemic structural failure within the committee system. Rather, it points to the need for targeted mandate rationalisation and improved coordination mechanisms in specific sectors where overlap is most pronounced.

4.0 Areas for Legislative Consideration:

In light of the study's findings, the leadership of the House of Representatives, through the House Committee on Monitoring and Evaluation of Standing and Ad Hoc Committees, may wish to consider the following actions:

1. Review and streamline existing committee mandates to identify and remove functional overlaps. Where multiple committees supervise related ministries or agencies, consolidation should be considered to improve coherence and reduce administrative burden. The review may also determine where issues can be better managed through temporary ad hoc committees rather than permanent standing structures. This approach will enhance flexibility while ensuring that standing committees retain focused, non-duplicative mandates.
2. A formal coordination framework may be developed to promote collaboration and communication among committees with related mandates. This mechanism may include shared oversight calendars, regular coordination meetings, and the designation of lead committees for cross-sector issues. Such an arrangement may help prevent repetitive oversight activities, promote the exchange of information, and produce more coherent oversight reports.
3. Introduce a centralised digital oversight management platform for recording committee activities, reports, and executive responses. This system may help enhance institutional memory, prevent multiple committees from issuing identical requests to MDAs, and strengthen follow-up and accountability tracking.
4. The Standing Orders may be reviewed to clearly delineate the scope of each committee's functions, specify procedures for handling overlapping issues, and formalise conditions under which joint oversight may be conducted. Codifying these provisions will establish a legal and procedural basis for coordination, ensuring efficiency and predictability in legislative oversight.
5. Continuous capacity-building programmes may be institutionalised for committee clerks and secretariat staff. Training should focus on coordination practices, communication management, data sharing, and collaborative reporting. Strengthening capacity at this level will support more effective inter-committee cooperation and ensure that oversight processes are evidence-based and well-coordinated.

5.0 Conclusion:

The findings of this study emphasise the need for a more coordinated and efficient committee system within the House of Representatives. By reviewing mandates, strengthening inter-committee coordination, enhancing monitoring and evaluation, and promoting transparency, the House can improve legislative oversight, reduce duplication of effort, and ensure that committees effectively contribute to national governance.

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