

THE *Nigeria* WE WANT



NIGERIA
YOUTH
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Remarks



I commend LEAP Africa for the excellent work on The Nigeria We Want Report and I urge all Commonwealth Country representatives present in this room today to consider replicating this remarkable initiative in their respective countries. The recommendations will not only transform Nigeria but also Africa at large.

Mr. Sunday Dare

The Honourable Minister of Youth and Sport



We have a competitive advantage over any nation in the world when it comes to talent, youthful population, expanding market, policies and frameworks like the Nigeria Startup Act to realize the Nigeria of our dreams. NITDA is committed to working with LEAP Africa towards the realization of The Nigeria We Want.

Kashifu Inuwa

Director General, National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA)

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Abbreviations

AfCFTA African Continental Free Trade Area.

AfDB African Development Bank.

BVAS Bimodal Voter Accreditation System

COVID Coronavirus Disease

ECOWAS Economic Community of West African States

EFCC Economic and Financial Crime Commission

End SARS Decentralised social movement comprised of a series of mass protests against police brutality in Nigeria, which called for the disbanding of the Special Anti Robbery Squad (SARS), a unit of the Nigerian Police

EU European Union

FCT Federal Capital Territory

FDI Foreign Direct investments

Fintech Financial technology (alternative delivery of financial services via technology and innovation)

G20 Group of Twenty

GDP Gross Domestic Product

HDI Human Development Index

ICPC Independent Corruption and Other Practices Commission

IDEAS Innovation Development and Effectiveness in the Acquisition of Skills

IDP Internally Displaced Persons

LMI Labor Market Information

MSMEs Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises

NLSS Nigerian Living Standards Survey

NNPC Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation

NWG National Working Group

NYFF Nigeria Youth Futures Fund

NYS National Youth Summit

NYSC National Youth Service Corps

O-Y-O On Your Own

PVCs Permanent Voters Cards

RPA Robotic Process Automation

SDI Service Delivery Indicator

STEMM Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, and Management

TVET Technical and Vocational Education Training

UK United Kingdom

UNCTAD United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

US United States

Web3 or **Web 3.0** is the next evolution the World Wide Web which incorporates ideas such as decentralization, blockchain technologies, and token-based economics.

WEF World Economic Forum

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Acknowledgements

The Nigeria We Want is a report by Nigerian youths on the future. It is a critical review of the past, present and the future by the youths to present alternative scenarios of the future, a shared vision and a strategic agenda for national transformation. The exercise adopted a participatory process and included youth delegates from across the nation who participated in regional retreats across the six geo-political zones in Nigeria and two national retreats in Abuja. The process also included review workshops with a sub-committee of the national delegates in-between the two national retreats. These provided the opportunity for an in-depth review of the draft report.

The exercise was led by the LEAP Africa Team with support from the NYFF Advisory Board. A team of faculty led the design and facilitation of the exercise and preparation of the report.

The NYFF is funded by **Ford Foundation** and MacArthur Foundation.

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Otiri Uzochi Beverly	Imo
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**All involved participated in their personal capacity and the report does not represent the individual opinions of any single person or the organizations to which they are affiliated.*



Report Summary

Summary

In 2020, LEAP Africa, MacArthur, and Ford Foundation collaboratively established The Nigeria Youth Futures Fund (NYFF) in response to the End SARS protests. The initiative aims to sustain the work of burgeoning youth-led movements in Nigeria by providing targeted capacity building, youth ecosystem building, and financial support, as well as facilitating opportunities for learning and change. One of the three programming activities of the Fund is the national visioning process. It is a key part of these efforts. The visioning process was initiated to provide a platform for Nigerian youths to re-imagine, co-create, and frame the future so as to strive to build the Nigeria We Want. That is, to design the future that Nigerian youths desire. The process is national and will be supporting Nigerian youths to undertake evidence-based advocacy for Nigeria's transformation.

Nigeria is at crossroads and it is crucial that the youths who represent a significant portion of Nigeria's population play a vital role in envisioning the future of the country and in the design of what needs to be done to create a more desirable future for all.

It is evident that the future growth of Nigeria is linked to having an educated, skilled, healthy, and politically active youthful population that is involved in all facets of society, especially, in creating the future.

The Nigerian Youths adopted a strategic and participatory foresight methodology in the preparation of the "Nigeria We Want" report. This involved a competitive selection process of youths from across the country and organizing six regional retreats; one each in the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria. Delegates from the regions nominated participants for two subsequent national retreats. To ensure the report's quality, a sub-committee of the national delegates met in two review workshops between the national retreats and conducted an in-depth review of the draft report.

The first step in the foresight exercise was a strategic review of Nigeria's past and present to identify the country's current position. The team then explored various future scenarios, defined a vision, and formulated a national strategy. Although the process followed a sequential approach, the team iteratively reviewed and improved their work.



Nigeria 2050 Scenarios

To explore the future of Nigeria, we first reviewed the country's history. It is evident that Nigeria occupies a unique position and is currently confronting multiple existential threats. The war against Boko Haram and other terrorist groups in the northeast region and the incessant cases of banditry and kidnappings in the North-West, North-Central, and parts of the South-West have shaped the Nigerian security landscape. Additionally, the Southeast has experienced unrest due to separatist agitations and politically motivated killings. The fact is Nigeria is facing many crises from values, leadership, governance, corruption, education, infrastructure, growth, unemployment and the crisis of poverty. These realities in a fast-changing multi-polar world, call for radical shifts in order to build a more desirable country for all.

The good news is that Nigeria is not only facing existential threats. The emerging world of today, including emerging developments within the country, provides significant opportunities that can help to drive change and transform Nigeria over the medium to long term.

The emerging innovation ecosystem, exemplified by the rapid growth of fintech, provides a new frontier for growth. Additionally, Nigeria's resource base, from its youthful

population and large market size to its abundant primary resources, can be harnessed to power economic development. Additionally, Nigeria's growing dominance in the culture and creative economy, from music, and movies to fashion, can also contribute to its transformation. The question, therefore, is which Nigeria will prevail: The Nigeria driven by innovation and creativity or the Nigeria of banditry, terrorism and conflicts? At this juncture, Nigeria faces stark future options. All scenarios are plausible. What future, however, depends on the actions and inactions of all, especially those with powers to act.

The critical uncertainties which will play the determinant roles in shaping the future of Nigeria are the nature of governance and the capability to grow and diversify the economy. In reflecting on Nigeria's future, we must ask ourselves whether or not we can achieve good governance and rapidly grow and diversify our economy. The answers to these questions will largely shape Nigeria's future.

Putting the two critical uncertainties—governance and economic growth and diversification—in a two-by-two matrix produces four scenarios (E Don Cast, Sapa, O-Y-O (On Your Own) and Buga) on the future of Nigeria. They are:



E Don Cast

E Don Cast is a scenario of 'double wahala' leading to the breakdown of Nigeria. It is a hostile environment for peace and socio-economic development with a focus on how to ensure orderly separation in order to stop wars.

Sapa

Sapa is a scenario of lost chances and too little too late. In this scenario, there were efforts to improve governance. But other issues were not taken seriously early enough that despite the warnings, Nigeria and Nigerians were caught off guard by many things, including the end of the oil economy, the spread of conflicts and the agitations for self-determination. The result is more of the same, and a nation on the verge of collapse with high levels of poverty and misery.

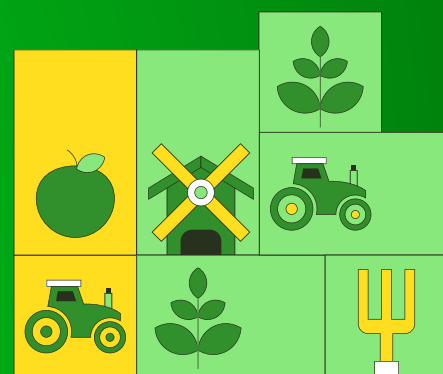


O-Y-O (On Your Own)

O-Y-O (On Your Own) is a scenario of a divided nation between the haves and the have-nots. Nigeria in 2050 has become the third most populous nation in the world and an unequal society. The elites, through their 'godfatherism' and 'chop I chop' strategy, have managed to seek accommodations among themselves. While the oil economy is about to end, the Nigerian economy was given a new lease of life, and it began to grow significantly as the nation discovered some sought-after minerals.



However, the resources are not well managed to ensure the necessary reinvestment and the development of new sectors or infrastructure. Whereas experts were raising alarms, the elites simply lived by the philosophy of “let the good times roll”. The chaos did arrive, leading to conflicts, and unilateral declarations of independence by some regions with significant consequences for the population.



Buga

Buga is a scenario of a country embarking on national transformation. It is a story of the re-birth of a federated Nigeria with a growing economy and improved governance. The boom was fueled by the emerging green economy sector, agriculture, mining and significant investments in innovations, as well as the continued growth of the cultural/creative industries, and the emergence of Nigeria as the center for tech innovations in the developing world. Fundamental reforms in governance and the deep reforms to address the challenges were key to the growth. Investments grew at double digits rates for a sustained period. The result is the emergence of a new Nigeria that is a full member of the G20 and a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. Although not all issues have been resolved in 2050, Nigerians, on the whole, ended the year with a renewed hope that prosperity will continue to reach many more people.

The Youth Agenda for Nigeria

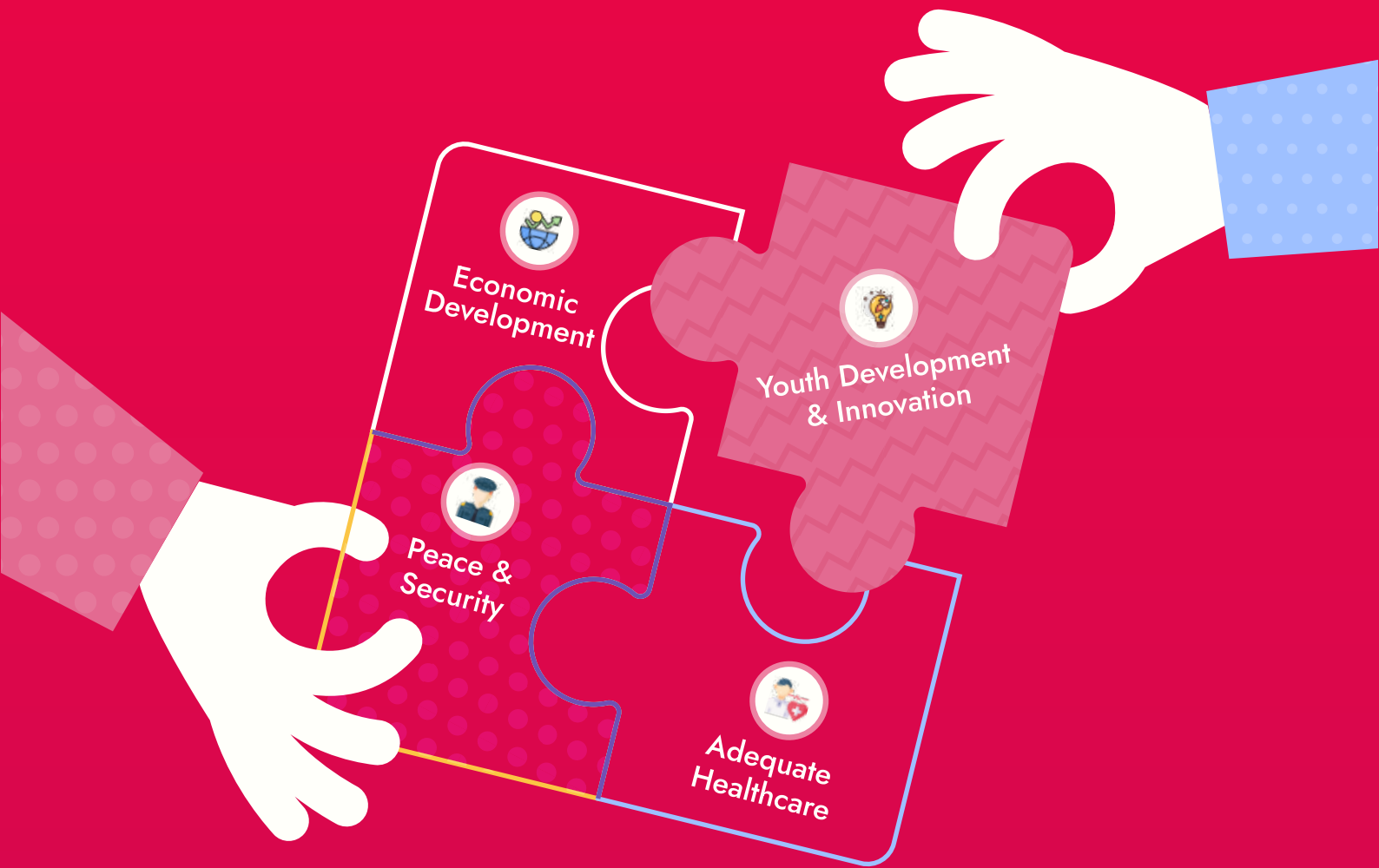


The Buga scenario lays out a story of how change and transformation is possible in Nigeria. This, however, calls for a vision that will provide a shared sense of purpose as well as robust, coherent and effective strategies to realize the desired future. The youths proposed a strategic agenda for Nigeria which includes a vision for the desired future and a set of recommendations on how to bring the vision to life. In the proposed vision, Nigeria must strive to build:

“A Prosperous (Federal) Nation where all people in every generation are secure, free, happy, and dignified.”

The vision calls for a new and transformed Nigeria. A prosperous Nigeria. This means a country free of absolute poverty, where every Nigerian can have their basic needs met and will be able to strive for self-actualization. In this imagined Nigeria, there is dignity for all. The people are free from want. Peace, unity and equity within and between generations are valued. Development is sustainable, and resources are sustainably used to ensure that future generations can meet their own needs. However, this will not come free of charge; while the leaders have critical roles to play, all Nigerians will have to engage in the process of national transformation actively.





Building the Desired Future

The desired future of Nigeria requires a strong foundation and pillars like a well-built house. A strong foundation and pillars will allow the Nigerian house to stand strong, withstand adversities and seize opportunities within the environment. Laying a strong foundation for the future requires investing in resolving fundamental challenges and ensuring good governance. Nigeria must build pillars to support the nation, beginning with a commitment to developing robust national technology, innovation, and entrepreneurial ecosystems, then focus on investing in human capital development to signal that development is about people and investing in sustainable development and infrastructure. It is about enhancing the productive base and ensuring that Nigeria builds a world-class infrastructure to facilitate enhanced productivity and the emergence of new sectors and to promote a good quality of life for the people.

A Call to Action

The gaps between the realities of Nigeria today and the vision for the future call for a sense of urgency not just to act but to mobilize all the country's energies for change and transformation. There is no time. The fact is that 'muddling through' is no longer a viable option for Nigeria, as business-as-usual approaches are likely to lead Nigeria into a nightmare scenario of E Don Cast. All Nigerians, including the leadership and followers, must play their part. An important and key segment that must boldly lead is the youth. Not only are the youths a significant portion of the nation now, but they are also 100% of the future. It is crucial that Nigerian youths engage, get committed, and take a seat at the table in all spheres of society, invited or not. For youth participation to be meaningful, it must be intentional, sustained, and embedded in all nationwide decision-making processes. The time for the Nigerian youths to take action is now.



Photo of North Central visioning exercise held in Abuja, credit: NYFF



Christabel Altraide

Rivers State

→ *What do you do for a living?*

I'm an entrepreneur in the recycling industry

→ *Express your view about the Nigeria of today and expectations for the future.*

The Nigeria of today is a wasteful society, usurping all of the Nation's resources without considering the needs of the next generation. I see Nigeria, ruled by considerate leaders who take into account the sustainability of the Nation in order to make life worth living for the next generation.

→ *How do your views about Nigeria and expectations for the future affect the choices you make?*

I try to be such a leader in all of my work and use all my platforms to advocate the need for sustainability as a lifestyle for everyone.

→ *What Nigeria do you want, and how do we get there?*

I want a sustainable Nigeria and we can get there by rethinking our systems of production and consumption. Manufacturers should design their products in a way that generates the least amount of waste and make use of already existing materials instead of using up more natural resources. Likewise, consumers should consume just what they need per time in order to reduce the amount of waste they generate and also try to recycle as much as possible.



Marwan Umar Gwamba
Kebbi State

→ **What do you do for a living?**

Project Management Professional

→ **Express your view about the Nigeria of today and expectations for the future.**

Today's Nigeria is facing a lot of challenges affecting our economy, security and corruption. This has hindered youth employment and increased unemployment in the country.

→ **How do your views about Nigeria and expectations for the future affect the choices you make?**

My expectations for the future are to strengthen our policy that will enable ease for Nigerians; policies and effective implementation, monitoring and evaluation will give us the Nigeria we want in the future.

→ **What Nigeria do you want, and how do we get there?**

Effective policy review, such as Local Government autonomy that, will help reshape and give grassroots social amenities, capital and infrastructural development, and ease of doing business.



01

Introduction

Nigeria at Crossroads

Nigeria has been at crossroads during certain times, where the actions and inactions of its leaders and people had momentous implications for the future. The road that the country and its people took drove Nigeria towards radically different futures. One of these times was the pre-independence period when the founders of modern Nigeria negotiated the contours of the new country to be formed and with the British for independence. The time just before the civil war with the country facing several existential challenges also qualifies. The result of the actions and inactions then led to a protracted fratricidal civil war. The consequences are still with us today, over fifty years later.

While many countries were moving their citizens

We are now in one of the momentous times for Nigeria, at the proverbial crossroads. The question is which road will the country take. Nigeria faces multiple existential threats despite the major progress since independence. The fact is Nigeria has become notorious for many things. Nigeria is now the world's capital of poverty.

out of poverty, Nigeria was (and is still) creating more poor people. We now have more people in abject poverty than in China in absolute numbers. A sizable share of the population now lives in abject poverty. In a recent report by Nigeria's Bureau of Statistics, 133 million Nigerians are multi-dimensionally poor, representing about 63% of the population. As a nation, we are already facing the climate change crisis, which is hindering the ability of many to secure decent livelihoods, especially in agriculture.

It is fueling migrations and conflict over resources. There is also the challenge of insecurity. Criminal gangs have turned kidnappings for ransom into a big and fast-growing business. We have terrorists fighting the state, insurgency, banditry, farmer-herder clashes, and ethnoreligious killings. At the same time, we have separatists agitating for secessions in parts of the country. Many are asking for a fundamental restructuring of the Nigerian state even though there is no clear formula or consensus on what should emerge thereafter.

All these are happening when oil, the so-called black gold, is no longer what it used to be. Oil's long-term value is in question as many are predicting the end of the oil economy¹. But Nigeria remains highly dependent on oil for most of its export earnings. Over 90% of the nation's foreign

¹Rabah Arezki and Per Magnus Nysveen (2021). "End of the Line." Finance and Development, Summer 2021. Source: <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2021/06/the-future-of-oil-arezki-and-nysveen.htm> (Vied on: 06/02/2023).

exchange earnings come from the export of crude oil. The low export capacity and lack of diversity have contributed to substantial trade deficits yearly and a continuously declining currency, particularly when considering both the official and unofficial exchange rates over the long term. Other issues include high levels of unemployment and underemployment. Coupled with the economic management challenges are the issues of resource management. The management of the commonwealth is ridden with corruption and mismanagement. Despite the multiplicity of agencies to fight corruption and their efforts, the problem has deepened over decades. It seems to have become an essential element or feature of the Nigerian system.

One of the consequences is a national debt level that seems manageable if one looks only at the national debt to GDP ratio, which stood at 35.2% of GDP in September 2022². Compared to Nigeria, some of the advanced industrial economies have debts approaching a hundred percent of their GDP. However, the capacity to pay back or service the debt differs.

There are times nowadays when Nigeria's debt service is more than government revenue.

On average, the debt service as a percentage of government revenue stands at about 81% for 2022³. Despite the reality on the ground, successive governments continue to implement some incomprehensive policies or simply turn a blind eye to the theft of the commonwealth by the elites, whether it is illegal oil pipelines,

unaccounted for revenue, or embezzled project resources. For example, Nigeria's oil subsidy program, which largely benefits the elite class, costs more than the annual investment of the federal government in education and health care combined.

The main outcome today is the nation is currently at war against terrorists within the country, with the military actively deployed in most of the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria due to rising banditry, ethnoreligious killings, terrorism, and conflicts. Additionally, the country seems to have the inability to organize elections, as seen in the debacle of the 2023 presidential and federal legislative elections. Given these realities, it is crucial to ask how Nigeria can build a better and more desirable future for all its citizens and what the future holds.

Nigeria is facing not only threats but also significant opportunities that can facilitate change and transformation over the medium to long term. Today's emerging world, including developments inside the country, offers various avenues for growth. For instance, Nigeria can leverage the emerging innovation ecosystem, as demonstrated by the rapid growth of fintech, to drive economic development. The country's resource base, including its youthfulness, huge market size, and primary resources, can be harnessed to power economic growth. Through its dominance in the culture and creative economy, Nigeria's growing soft power, such as music, movies, and fashion, presents more opportunities for transformation. These are some of the opportunities that Nigeria can harness to transform itself.

The question, therefore, is which Nigeria: A Nigeria driven by innovation and creativity or a

² <https://nairametrics.com/2023/01/06/nigerias-debt-to-gdp-ratio-is-35-2-as-total-public-debt-stock-rises-to-n67-58-trillion/> (Viewed on : 06/02/2-23).

³ <https://nairametrics.com/2023/01/06/nigerias-debt-service-to-revenue-ratio-rises-to-81-in-2022/> (viewed on 06/02/2023).

Nigeria of banditry and conflicts? The future options of Nigeria at this juncture are stark. All scenarios are plausible. However, the future depends on the actions and inactions of all, especially those with the power to act. Additionally, the realities of Nigeria today call for a sense of urgency not just to act but to mobilize all the country's energies for change and transformation. There is no time. 'Muddling through' is no longer viable for Nigeria as business-as-usual approaches could lead to a nightmare scenario.

The What

The issues of marginalization combined with the challenges facing Nigeria. Various groups, from ethnicity, religion, and age, to gender, claim that they are being marginalized. Marginalization, whether real or perceived, drives the calls for separation, agitations and the 'poisoning' of the polity in Nigeria. Urgent actions are required from multiple fronts.

We, the youths, who are said to own the future, are barely given the opportunities we deserve to be at the table. We are told to wait our turn. In the meantime, our future is being mortgaged and compromised all around. The systems in place, from institutions to cultural practices, tend to defer to age and are designed to exclude us from the places where decisions about our futures are made.

The END SARS agitation was a reaction to these and all the other challenges facing Nigeria. While the symbol was the arm of the security forces, which had become a threat to the civilian population, especially the youths, the goals were

larger. It was about bringing the desired change in Nigeria. While the agitation showed what is possible and how the youth can mobilize for change, it also highlighted the limitations of bringing change when the existing forces are deeply entrenched.

Nigerian youths need a new strategy. Even the success of the Not Too Young to Run movement is only relative. The legal changes have been signed into law, but the reality on the ground has not changed much.

One simply has to look at the 2023 general elections. While a few youths and women may have broken through to be candidates, it is clear that institutional structures that exist have made it very difficult for Nigerian youths, women and other marginalized groups to participate fully in the political process.

There is a new movement emerging. More youths and their organizations are engaging at the grassroots level and in the communities. Since the END SARS movement, youths have been organizing and demanding change. The Nigeria We Want exercise has emerged to help imagine what is possible, strategize, and mobilize youths and other well-wishers for progress in Nigeria. The end goal is to build the Nigeria We Want. This effort is organic, and it is different. It involves being more strategic, and forward-thinking, building the youth ecosystem and mobilizing the society at large for change. The process has begun. This report is the fruit of the initial process of reflection.

The movement favors strategic reflection, mobilization and collective actions. The first

phase, aimed at reflecting on the Nigeria We Want, has adopted a strategic foresight approach for the Nigerian youths to reflect on the future of our country collectively. The youths represent a significant proportion of the population. Youths are defined as those from 15 to 29 years old. The National Youth Policy (2019-2023) indicates that they constitute 35.6% of the country's population. This implies a population of 76 million out of the approximated 213.4 million population of the country.

The Nigeria We Want aims to provide a voice for Nigerian youths and a platform to engage with policymakers on national policies and other stakeholders to drive change in Nigeria. This initial phase of the exercise provides reflection and aims to propose a blueprint for the future the Nigerian youths would like to build. The reflections were undertaken at the regional and national levels, challenging the youths to think about Nigeria's past, present and future. The thinking was undertaken using participatory foresight tools.

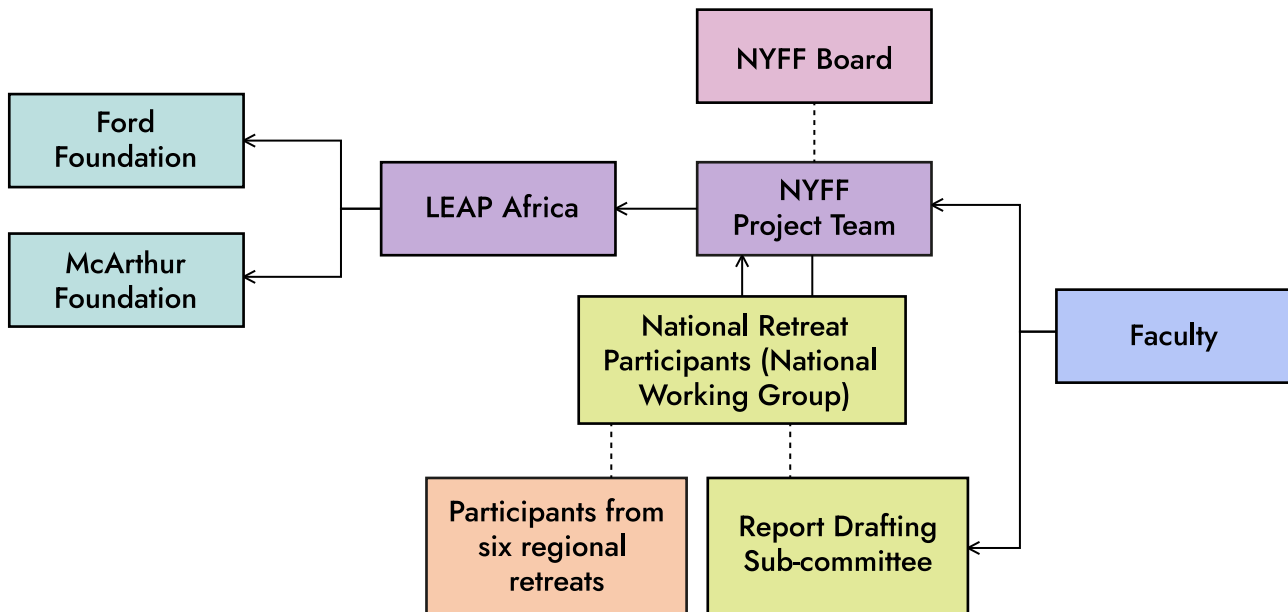
The second phase of the exercise will include the mobilization of those with the “powers to act” to help drive change in Nigeria. This will include using the Nigeria Youth Futures Fund, the platform established to drive the Nigeria We Want program, to mobilize support for developing the Nigerian youth ecosystem. This will include policy advocacy, capacity building, and financing for youth-based organizations. An important objective and programmatic axis of the Nigeria Youth Futures Fund is making resources available for programs by Nigerian youths to promote change and transformation in Nigeria. Support for youth-driven initiatives will aim to facilitate the mobilization of the people to drive the country's transformation. The reality is that change and transformation in Nigeria must involve everyone, even if the youths should be the main drivers.

The Players

At the core of the Nigeria We Want exercise are the Nigerian youths. However, they have had helping hands. LLEAP Africa, a non profit organization is the custodian of the Nigeria Youth Futures Fund. LEAP has been active across the continent over the last two decades in youth leadership development as well as the promotion of social enterprise and innovation. The Nigerian We Want project is funded by two international foundations with histories and offices in Nigeria: The Ford Foundation and The MacArthur Foundation. While LEAP Africa is seeking additional resources, the initial startup funding for the youths to reflect on the Nigeria We Want, as well as to fund some of the youth ecosystem development projects were provided by the two foundations.

The project's Advisory Board has been set up at the apex of the institutional framework to guide and provide oversight for the exercise. The Advisory Board consists of individual personalities within Nigeria's youth ecosystem and the funders. They were chosen due to their contributions in different fields and the communities and various segments of society they represent. The board meets regularly and provides supervision for the project management team.

ILLUSTRATION 1 ▶ The Players



The Nigeria Youth Futures Fund (NYFF) is the vehicle created to develop and manage the project. LEAP Africa manages it, and the Board undertakes the supervision. The day-to-day execution is managed by the NYFF project team, which is made up of experts who are largely members of the youth demographics. The team leads the day-to-day execution of the project tasks to ensure the goals are realized.

Supporting the project team for the strategic reflection and foresight phase is a Faculty team who are consultants that were recruited to serve as facilitators and help guide the exercise. The faculty includes four members, and their role was mainly to support the design of the foresight processes, facilitate the various engagements and dialogues, and lead the process of preparing the Nigeria We Want report.

At the core of the exercise were the youths that participated and engaged in the various consultations across the country. A highly selective process was designed and implemented

to identify active youths from all states of the Federation, including the Federal Capital Territory (FCT- Abuja). The teams were grouped according to the six geopolitical zones. Each state zone had a coordinator.

In selecting the participants for the various regions, emphasis was placed on representativeness with the goal of ensuring diversity and representation of all groups. Various sensitivities and viewpoints were also taken into account, recognising that the future belongs to everyone. At the regional levels, representatives were selected from the region to serve in the National Working Group (NWG). The members of NWG participated in the two national retreats. Additional participants that did not participate in the regional retreats were also selected to ensure balance and broaden the representation. A sub-committee was established from the National Working Group to work closely with the faculty to draft the Nigeria We Want report.

The Visioning exercise has given me a different approach to think about a better Nigeria. It gave me an understanding that the Nigeria we Want is possible, and the transformation we desire is a daily step of what we can do and not just what we expect the government to do. It also reinstated the hopes that we have for a better Nigeria"

Chidimma Chima
Journalist, Enugu State

The How

The Nigeria Youths Futures Fund is a comprehensive program that involves strategic reflection in mapping out a future agenda for Nigeria from the viewpoint of the youth while supporting the development of the youth ecosystem in Nigeria. This section focuses on the approach to the first part, strategic reflection.

As a future exercise, the Nigeria We Want employed the strategic foresight approach. Essentially, the exercise explores future possibilities to outline a vision for the future and propose a set of transformative strategies. The Nigeria We Want is not a strategic plan, nor is it a medium or long-term plan in the mold of government planning exercises. It is not about forecasting or predicting the future of Nigeria.

Nigeria We Want is a future exercise that allows youths to imagine a future for the country. It provides an analysis of the past, present and emerging trends to explore future possibilities.

Foresight is particularly important in times of turbulence and high uncertainties. This is the context Nigeria is in today. In a rapidly changing world, foresight provides decision-makers with the opportunity to explore alternative futures and examine their implications, as well as to expand and widen their frame of what is possible.

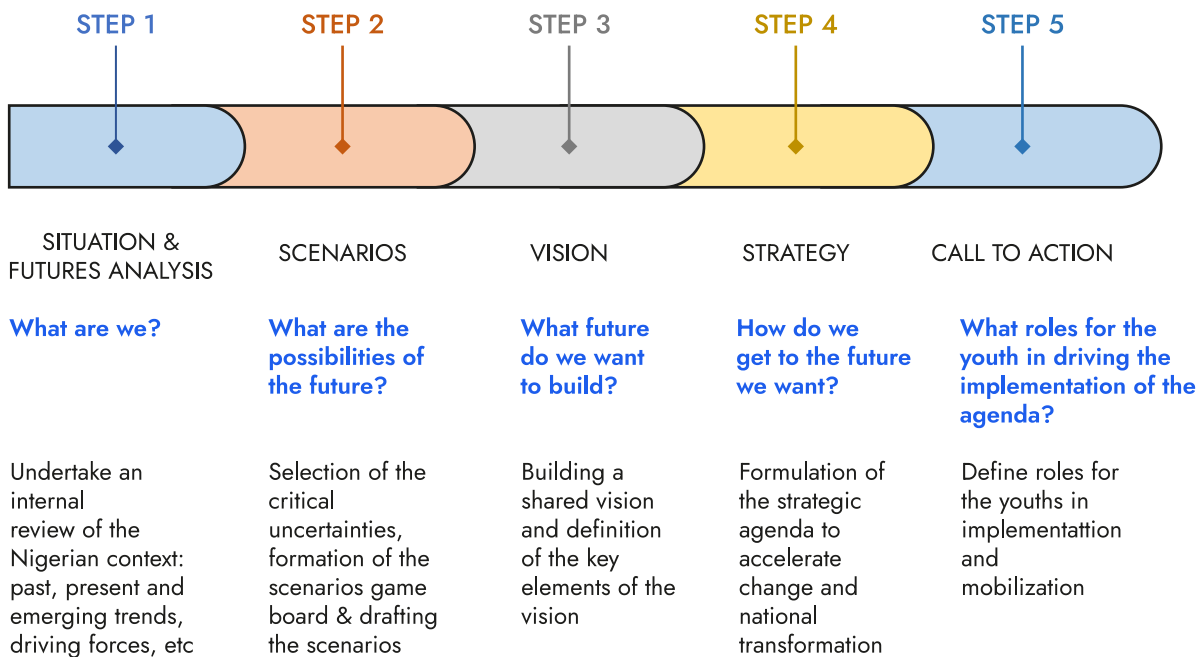
While the future is inherently unknowable, foresight provides tools for scanning the horizon, analyzing major trends, and constructing alternative scenarios. As such, it facilitates rehearsing the future before it happens and allows decision-makers to be better prepared for alternative futures. For the Nigeria We Want, the process was participatory as it included many youths nationwide. It emphasizes tapping into their collective intelligence through the organization of six regional retreats and two national retreats.

More specifically, the process tasked the youths involved in the exercise to answer basic but

critical questions about the future, including where we are as a country, where the country could be headed, what should be the desired future and how we could build this future. These questions provided a basis for the analytical work and many dialogues that took place over four months. The youths examined the major trends and their driving forces. The driving forces were

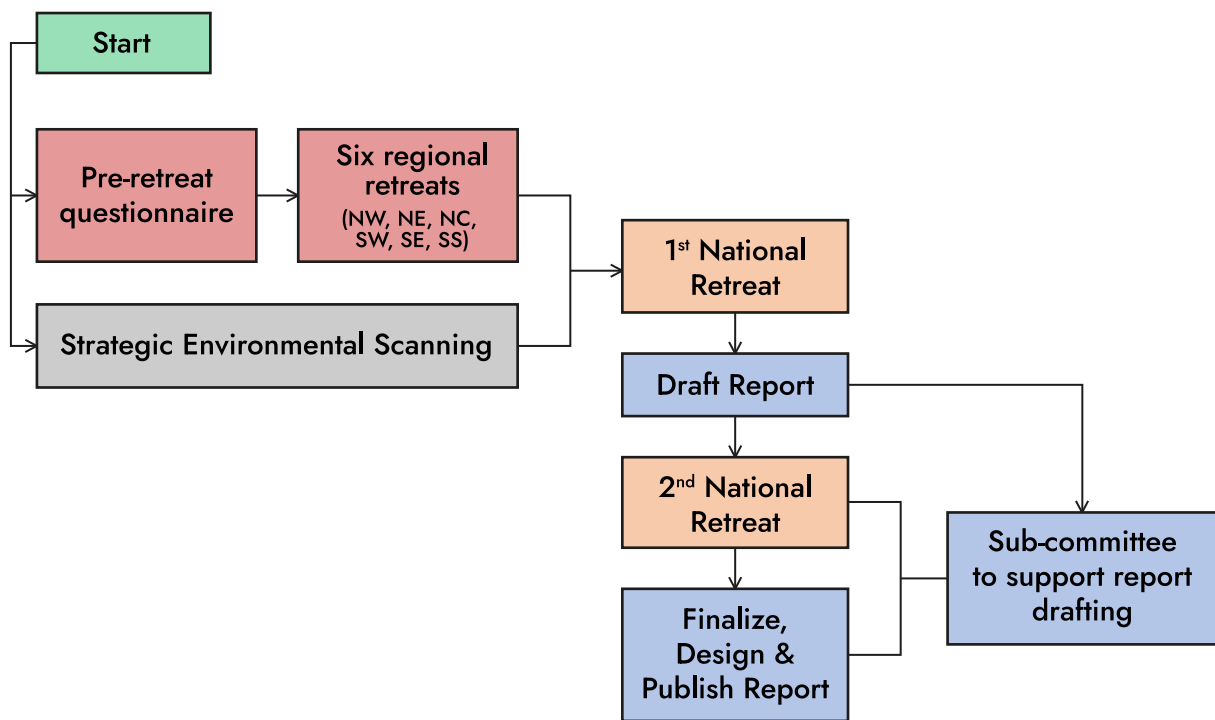
then classified as predetermined or uncertainties. The two most critical uncertainties were selected to develop the scenarios game board. The critical uncertainties and the other outputs became the basis for constructing the scenarios. The process was followed by defining a shared vision for the future and the broad strategies to realize the vision, including the roles of the youths.

ILLUSTRATION 2 ▶ Strategic Foresight



All the regional retreats followed this process and prepared and consolidated the outputs, which were then used as inputs for the national retreats. The work at the national retreats started from the outcomes of the regional retreats. The national retreats reviewed and analyzed the consolidated outputs, using a foresight approach to deepen the analysis. Although the methodology was sequential, the implementation was iterative, allowing for deepening the analysis at the national level and synthesizing the outcomes of the regional retreats into one national report.

ILLUSTRATION 3 ▶ Process Plan

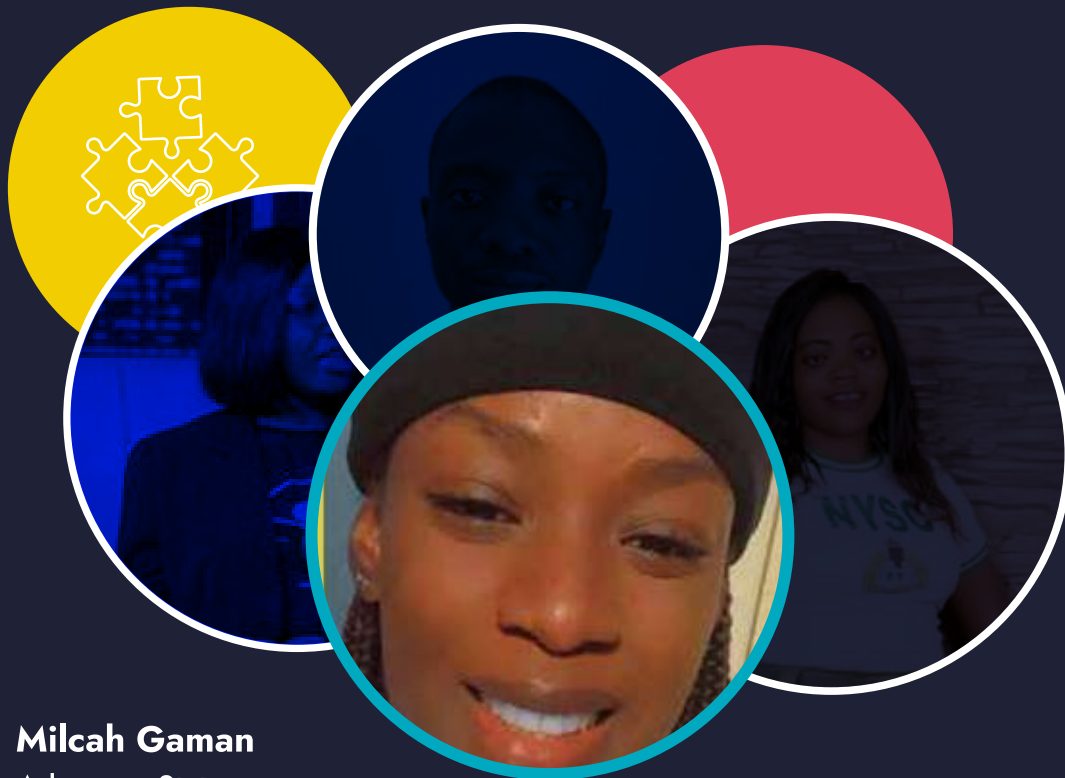


The Report

This report on the future of Nigeria is the outcome of the Nigeria We Want. The report is presented in five chapters. The first chapter serves as an introduction that provides the why, and an overview of the exercise, approach, and outcomes. The second chapter presents Nigeria today from the eyes of the youths; it takes a deep dive into the context while exploring the challenges and opportunities. Chapter three presents four alternative scenarios for the future of Nigeria, highlighting the critical uncertainties, key decision points, challenges, and opportunities. Chapter four presents the youth agenda for Nigeria's transformation, which includes the vision of the future, the main elements of the vision, and a proposal of the strategic agenda for Nigeria to realize the vision. Finally, chapter 5 is a call to action by Nigerian youths and it explores the roles that they can collectively play in realizing the Nigeria We Want.



Photo of North Central visioning exercise held in Abuja, credit: NYFF



Milcah Gaman
Adamawa State

→ ***What do you do for a living?***

Humanitarian Worker

→ ***Express your view about the Nigeria of today and expectations for the future.***

Nigeria of today is a country of anarchy, people are disenfranchised to access quality education, healthcare services, a safe environment to live and means of livelihood. My expectations for the future would be to have a government that is transparent, committed and accountable. I expect to see inclusivity in every policy and that the rule of law is respected.

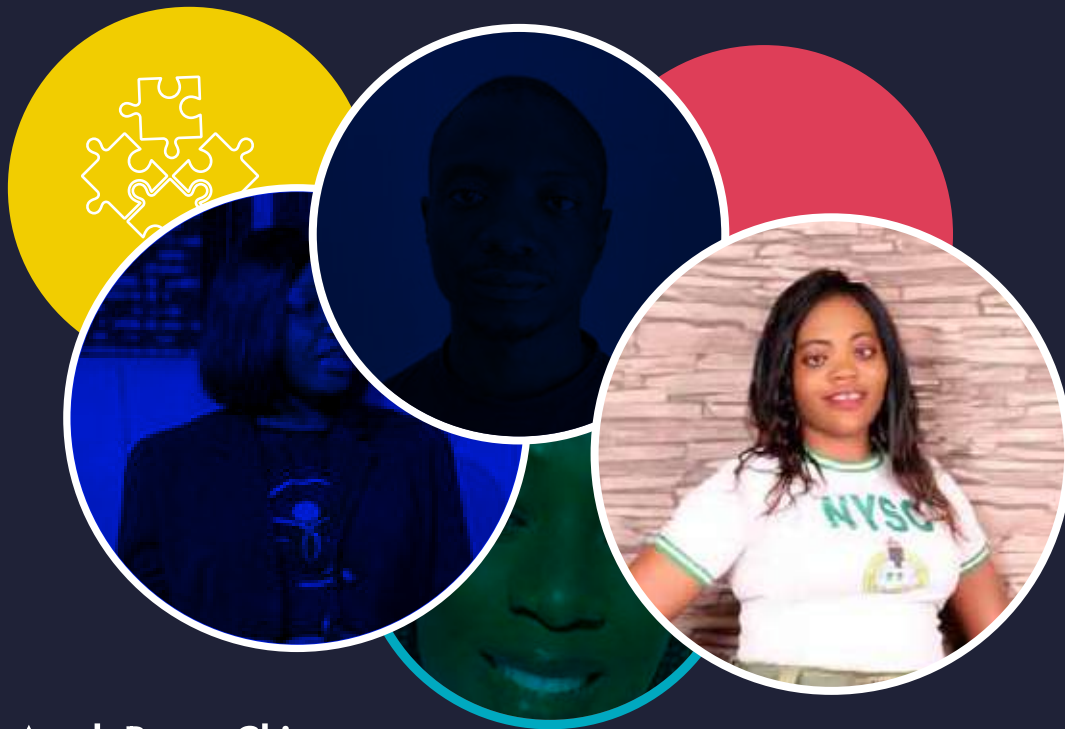
→ ***How do your views about Nigeria and expectations for the future affect the choices you make?***

My views about Nigeria and my expectations for the future affect my choices, both negatively

and positively. Negative in the sense that I know that I won't see an immediate result in my pursuit for change, despite the fact that some services require immediate attention, E.g healthcare services, because this has to do with life. And positively because I am optimistic that my advocacy for a better Nigeria would give the future generation a life of dignity and peace.

→ ***What Nigeria do you want, and how do we get there?***

Through consistent advocacy, getting involved at the grassroots level, giving your expertise whenever needed, not waiting on the government for every solution and by being the change we seek, we can achieve the Nigeria I seek where there is value for all lives and dignity of labor.



Ameh Peace Chinenye
Enugu State

→ **What do you do for a living?**

Youth Corp Member

→ **Express your view about the Nigeria of today and expectations for the future.**

Nigeria of today is underdeveloped and occasioned by bad governance which has resulted in the poor state of our economy. My hope is for the Future of Nigeria that nurtures innovation and creativity, good governance at all levels of government and a country that has transitioned from consumption-driven to production driven.

→ **How do your views about Nigeria and expectations for the future affect the choices you make?**

My views of Nigeria and expectations for the future emphasizes the need for us all to get involved in bringing about the desired change in Nigeria, especially electing the right leaders who will be accountable to the people.

→ **What Nigeria do you want, and how do we get there?**

I want to see Nigeria take its place as the giant of Africa amongst the Committee of Nations not just for our population but for the value that we offer the world. This can only happen if the right kind of leaders and when citizens play their part.



02

**The Nigeria
We Want:
Challenges
& Opportu-
nities**

Introduction

The Nigeria We Want provides a unique platform for us, the Nigerian youths, to explore the future. The goal is to design a future that the youth would like to see, including formulating an agenda to realize the preferred future. Like any foresight exercise, the first steps involve reviewing the past and present to see where we are today as a country. This chapter presents the review while highlighting the key factors that will shape the future of Nigeria. It provides the building blocks on which the scenarios will be constructed, essentially giving a panoramic review of the Nigerian context while covering the main trends as well as the challenges and opportunities. The next steps involve exploring the possibilities of the future (scenarios), defining a vision, and formulating strategies to build the desired future.

When we review our country's history, it becomes clear that Nigeria is in a unique position. Over sixty-two years of independence, the country has witnessed many ups and downs. Nigeria started out in the 1960s with a parliamentary, federal and democratic system of governance. The early period was characterized by euphoria and abundant hope that the future will be bright, with spectacular results in socio-economic development. However, the euphoria, like in many African countries in that period, quickly gave way to military coups. In 1966, Nigeria had its first in a series of military coups to come, and by 1967, civil war had broken out. Despite the mantra of no winner, no loser, the effects and consequences of the civil war are still felt within the polity today, over 50 years after the war. The key question now is where Nigeria goes from here - that is, what future lies ahead for our nation?

The World is Changing

We now live in a fast-changing world. The pace of change continues to rise, and Nigeria is not immune to the changes taking place around the world. In fact, the intermingling of emerging global trends with internal developments, coupled with our actions and inactions as a nation, is creating new circumstances and realities for Nigeria. Among the global trends with significant implications for Nigeria are developments in science, technology and innovation, the changing global order and power dynamics, climate change and its impacts, rising inequality within and between countries, distrust of institutions and authority, fast-growing population and health epidemics.

Coupled with these are rising levels of 'religiosity' and religious intolerance, the deepening of corruption, the decay of moral values in the public sphere, rising levels of criminality, whether in the forms of rising oil bunkering, banditry, insurgency, kidnappings, or farmer-herder conflicts to cybercrime. The rising levels of criminality and internal conflicts, along with the effects of climate change, are fueling forced migrations and internally displaced persons. Moreover, there is an increasing sense of marginalization by various communities within the country, which is fueling increased agitations from calls for restructuring to secessions.

We now live in a world of technology ascendancy. The reliance and dependence on technology is unlike any period in human history. This is now coupled with an unprecedented acceleration of scientific and technological innovation. The fact is, the pace of change is likely to continue to rise

with the convergence of various innovations, from automation and artificial intelligence to blockchains and the emergence of digitally powered platforms. These developments are fueling the rise of automation and new forms of business and economic organizations. Nigeria today is home to several unicorns in the fintech space, and its fintech enterprises are emerging as dominant forces across the continent.

At the same time, technological innovations are fueling the emergence of new social realities. Social media, built on digital innovations, has made the world highly interconnected. Telecommuting has become a reality, changing the nature of work. It is also creating many new phenomena, such as hate speech, cyberbullying, and fake news while empowering new social movements and powering increasing youth consciousness and self-coordination.

The rise of social media is also empowering and facilitating change. As in other parts of the world, tech-enabled media has become the tool of choice for social mobilization among Nigerian youths. It is the base on which youth-led revolutions of recent years are built. It was the base for the ENDSARs protest. It helped galvanize support for the efforts by Nigerian youths to pass the "Not Too Young to Run" bill in 2018. The tech-enabled tools are availing us the opportunity to raise our voices and to mobilize. Even in the 2023 general elections, Nigerian youths used tech and especially social media to power their engagement and mobilization in support of their

preferred candidates.

The various trends will have huge implications over the long term, and they are shaping the challenges and opportunities that Nigeria is facing. The challenges facing our nation are numerous and existential for us, the Nigerian youths. We recognize that there are numerous opportunities on the horizon, despite the deep-rooted challenges fueling the new "Jappa" wave primarily in the South. It is these opportunities that keep many of us hopeful for a better future for all. (Box 2.1).

When we review our country's history, it becomes clear that Nigeria is in a unique position. Over sixty-two years of independence, the country has witnessed many ups and downs. Nigeria started out in the 1960s with a parliamentary, federal and democratic system of governance. The early period was characterized by euphoria and abundant hope that the future will be bright, with spectacular results in socio-economic development. However, the euphoria, like in many African countries in that period, quickly gave way to military coups. In 1966, Nigeria had its first in a series of military coups to come, and by 1967, civil war had broken out. Despite the mantra of no winner, no loser, the effects and consequences of the civil war are still felt within the polity today, over 50 years after the war. The key question now is where Nigeria goes from here - that is, what future lies ahead for our nation?

Box 2.1 **Nigerian Youths: What Keeps them Awake and Hopeful About the Future**

As part of the exercise, six regional retreats were organized with youths across all the geopolitical zones—Northwest (Kano), Northeast (Gombe), North-Central (Abuja), South-West (Ibadan), South-South (Akwa Ibom), and Southeast (Enugu)—of Nigeria. In each of the regional retreat, a small exercise was undertaken as part of the introduction. It was meant as an icebreaker exercise to challenge participants to reflect on two questions:

What keeps them awake at night? The idea is for them to raise the issues that they are worried about with respect to the future of Nigeria.

What keeps them hopeful about the future of Nigeria? Essentially, why are they hopeful that things could change for the better?

All participants were given a few minutes for silent reflection. Afterwards, using a round robin process, participants were to provide an idea each until all ideas were exhausted. The resulting ideas were then discussed; not to decide whether specific ideas were right or wrong, but for the participants to begin to get a feel for the critical issues that will drive the future of Nigeria.

Despite the regional differences, what is clear from this simple exercise is that the issues and challenges facing Nigerians all across the nation are similar, especially the youths. Also, it was clear that many still believe in the future of Nigeria. There are calls for change; but the reality however is that most see a better future ahead if the people can come together collectively to drive change.

What Keep the Youths Awake

Principal among the challenges keeping the youths awake is the issue of governance. There is a wide realization that bad governance and bad leadership has consistently hindered Nigeria's development, affecting all the sectors of the nation. The persistently high rates of inflation, depreciating the value of the naira, high levels of unemployment and underemployment, and rising levels of insecurity are perceived as the results of the bad leadership and governance plaguing the nation. For Nigerian youths, it is as if we have built a country in which it seems nothing works. So the question for many is whether it is by design, given the huge resistance to change and to implementing policies that can foster growth and development.

Other critical issues identified were:

Poor healthcare, with increased mortality and morbidity rates.

The lack of quality and effective education for children, especially those in rural areas and underserved communities, and the high numbers of out of school children.

The lack of inclusion of persons with disabilities, women and young people in governance as they have been perceived as a threat to the existing order.

Rising levels of nepotism, ethnic and religious intolerance.

The absence of an enabling business environment.

The huge deficits in infrastructural amenities which is (a) limiting economic growth and development, worsening the effects of climate change, and the lackadaisical attitude in the care for the environment and the subsequent pollution impacting livelihoods across the nation.

Growing poverty and hunger in the nation, with the threat of famine rising daily.

Rising levels of corruption and its impacts on all aspects for society.

The continuous rise in the national debt, which may plunge the next generation into deep economic chaos given the potential for debt default.

The growing culture of waste and the accompanying untapped resources.

The lack of accountability from our leaders, promoting moral decadence, nepotism, ethnic, religious strife, and marginalization

The rising levels of insurgency, conflicts, banditry, ethno-religious killings and kidnappings with the negative impacts on the people and economy.

What Keeps the Youths Hopeful

While Nigerian youths have many reasons to be pessimistic about the future, they also see potential for change for the better. Nigerian youths as the majority see opportunities in their numbers. Inevitably they see the youths taking over to facilitate change in Nigeria. In addition to the numbers, they see the awakening by Nigerian youths whether it is the Not Too Young to Run efforts, the

ENDSARS movement to the engagement by the youths in the 2023 elections. For many, these are harbingers of the change to come.

In a way, they are hopeful about their capacity to help drive change in Nigeria and eagerly looking forward to working to improve governance, contribute to building a stable and fast growing economy as well as ensuring the emergence of accountable leaders that they can be proud of, and are able to build a good working system. Additionally, they see opportunities for change and transformation in the:

- Size of the Nigerian market as a definite leader on the continent
- Emergence of Nigeria as a hub for technology and innovation with the developments in tech startups and the growing number of Nigerian unicorns

- Fast growing cultural and creative sector in music, films, etc.

- Growing democratic space in Nigeria with emergence of new candidates and political parties in the 2023 elections

- The AfCFTA agreement as an emerging opportunity

Importantly, Nigerian youths see hope in the Nigerian culture of respect and the emphasis on family despite the decay in moral values in other aspects of society. This is manifested in people helping and supporting family members. The Youths also see a future driven by technology and innovation as the way that Nigerians can overcome the daunting challenges facing the country. For the youths, change is possible but that everyone, especially the Nigerian youths, must lead if it is to happen sooner rather later.



Challenges

Nigeria is at a momentous time. The issue is not that we, as a nation, are facing tremendous challenges- all nations have their problems. The issue is the nature and breadth of the challenges facing our nation. In many ways, we continue to face many foundational issues that should have been resolved at the time of independence or at least decades ago, while newer ones are also emerging as a result of the intersections of global and local trends, as well as the actions and inactions of Nigerians as a people. The results are the various crises that the nation is facing as we march towards the future.

“What keeps me up at night is 10 million out-of-school children. Unemployment, the insecurity in the country. imagine those children growing up unemployed or underemployed and without any education for backup. That’s a really scary future. I’m also worried about the existential crisis that we are facing. virtually every part of the country is dealing with an issue from banditry and kidnapping in the north west to boko haram in the north east. We are also dealing with several other problems in other parts of the country. My expectation about leadership for this country is youth inclusion”

Naufal Ahmad
Communications consultant

“Looking at the level of corruption and insecurity in Nigeria, I always ask myself what is happening in Nigeria? A country previously known for a peaceful coexistence now turning into a shadow of itself. A diverse country is gradually becoming intolerable of diversity. A country’s mineral resources and commonwealth are being looted by the 1% of the population. This always gets me thinking and always keeps me awake. My hope for Nigeria is to see young people using data and digital technology to demand accountability in changing decision-makers and be on the table about policy dialogues and their policy advocacy to ensure that we have a better in Nigeria”

Muazu Alhaji Modu
Social Accountability Advocate

The Crises of Values and Leadership

At the core of the challenges facing Nigeria today are the crisis of values and the failure of leadership⁴. Our nation has come to epitomize one of the seven social sins that Mahatma Gandhi aptly warned against many decades ago. Sadly, we have become a nation in which Politics is without Principle and Commerce is without Morality. It is clear that these two plagues are very much present in our public life. The pursuit of quick riches at the expense of the public has reached new heights. People who have been entrusted to lead and hold public offices have simply used the opportunity to control and turn the public purse into personal piggy banks using various means⁵.

Bribery, corruption and lawlessness are now seen as a way of life by too many people. It is for this reason that Nigeria has ranked quite poorly on the corruption index for several years now. Nigeria is ranked number 150 out of the 180 countries in the world in terms of corruption, as published in the 2022 Transparency International Corruption Perception Index, with an average corruption index score of 24 out of 100⁶. The level of decay in values is not limited to stealing in high places, but it is also manifested in the levels of killings, maiming, robberies, lootings, kidnappings and other forms of social maladies that have now led to an alarming scale of insecurity.

“My expectation about leadership is that we get to the point where citizens are confident about their leaders”

Mitong Dapal
Lawyer & Social Entrepreneur

To be fair, successive governments have tried to address the moral aspects of the Nigerian crisis. Over the past four to five decades, different regimes have initiated campaigns of ethical transformation or reorientation aimed at

entrenching values at the core of society. However, success has been quite elusive. Importantly, the leadership has largely modeled bad behaviors. Put simply, they have not modeled the behaviors for which they are campaigning.

⁴ Shanum S. (2013). “Democracy and bad leadership in Nigeria.” Premium Times. Source: <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/opinion/127105-democracyand-bad-leadership-in-nigeria-by-simonshanut.html> (Viewed: 10 March 2023).

⁵ Muhammed, I. (2004). “Leadership, the Bane of Nigerian Civil Service.” Ankpa Journal of Arts and Social Sciences (AJASS), 2(1), 49-55.

⁶ Transparency International data, 2022. Source: <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2022/index/nga> (Viewed: 10 March 2023).



Photo of North Central visioning exercise held in Abuja, credit: NYFF

Nigeria's developmental problems, for many of us, young people, are a direct result of leadership failure. Leadership is, no doubt, a key factor in managing societal affairs. Nigeria's inability to produce a critical mass of exemplary, service-oriented, and ethical leaders can directly be blamed for the failures in addressing the problems facing the nation, from the inability to unite the population around a common purpose to the runaway corruption that seems to permeate all aspects of society despite the many agencies devoted to fighting it or to ensuring basic security for all citizens.

The leadership challenge, however, is not just in politics or at the level of the presidency only. The failure is general. It is at all levels of governance and other areas of society, from the private sector, and civil society to religious institutions. Rather than transformational leadership, the bulk of our leaders are transactional leaders content on rent-seeking activities and cronyism. The unwillingness or inability of our leaders in all spheres of society to rise to their responsibilities is largely at the base of the many crises facing the nation.

“ What keeps me awake is the high rate of inequality. We have a country that is so divided against itself, resources, and manpower. The lack of trust amongst ourselves. There is just so much inequality in the land. The rich wants to get richer without considering the minority in the society”

Oluwatomisin
Broadcast Journalist

Crisis of Institutions

Our weak institutions are one of the main consequences of the crises of values and leadership. Institutions are the established and prevalent rules, whether formal or informal, that govern social interactions. In Nigeria, the challenge is that the rules simply do not apply to all. We live in a country where anyone with authority, known as the 'big man' or 'big woman', can easily manipulate or bend institutions to their will. The numerous cases of police brutality and abuse of power towards citizens, which was the rallying cry of ENDSARS, or the sex for grades scandals in academia, are examples of this rampant abuse of authority at all levels. This has significant implications for development.

Weak institutions tend to favor impunity and lawlessness, which in turn can have major implications for investments, whether local or foreign. Weak institutions dampen economic activities. It also has implications for trust. The trust deficit is a global problem but particularly problematic in Nigeria. Trust in institutions or the government, at all levels, is almost non-existent. Lack of trust comes from the inability of the government to deliver basic services, the gaps between realities and the promises of various administrations to date, and the feeling of marginalization by groups. The failures of the Nigerian state and the desire by groups to have more control over their affairs.

For many, the root of these challenges is that our structure as a federal state is inherently defective. The closest to a true federal structure was during the 1960s when Nigeria had four regions. Since the introduction of essentially a unitary system of government by the military in 1966, our federal structure has yet to fully return to what it once was, with many consequences. One of these is the call for restructuring or secession by various

groups, as many people simply do not believe in nor trust the existing structures and systems.

The fact is that no institution runs itself. They are embedded in social systems and highly dependent on the nature of the political institutions. The political element matters, and the ability of a state or society to build effective institutions highly depends on the distribution of political power. A key part of the inability to undertake systemic institutional reforms in Nigeria is linked to this basic fact, and efforts to undertake systemic reforms are stymied by vested interests and the absence of a strong civil society.

The results in Nigeria are largely weak and ineffective institutions manifested in poor enforcement of the rule of law and mismanagement of public resources. Sadly, this is a vicious cycle in which weak social systems, including decaying values and leadership failures, lead to weaker institutions, which in turn fuel more impunity and corruption. A critical challenge is the law enforcement agencies and the judiciary, which are as corrupt as the other institutions. The reality is that these challenges make a mockery of the idea of the rule of law and equal justice under the law.

The corruption and societal decay that one witnesses in Nigeria today thrives where institutions are weak and moral values are eroded by greed.

Sadly, corruption runs through every level of the Nigerian government and permeates many, if not most, aspects of our society, including the

legislative and judiciary arms of government. From considerable contract fraud at the top to petty bribery, money laundering schemes, embezzlement and collecting salaries of 'ghost' workers, it is estimated that corruption within the state apparatus costs the country billions of dollars annually. The legislature votes millions of naira to themselves for constituency projects which are never implemented. Impunity and corruption threaten good governance, democratic process, and fair business practices⁷. They are critical threats to the socioeconomic, and political development of Nigeria.

The Nigerian government has taken various measures and strategies to address corruption. Some measures include public service reform, and the establishment of anti-graft agencies such as the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC), Independent Corruption and Other Practices Commission (ICPC) and the ongoing sanitization of the Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation. Despite these efforts, corruption continues to permeate and pervade every facet of Nigeria's society and national life.

Crisis of Insecurity

The nation is facing a major crisis of insecurity today, both internally and emanating from within the region. Nigeria has its internal security challenges, with a growing population of internally displaced persons. Additionally, the region is facing increased insecurity, including terrorism, affecting many countries in West Africa, from Niger, Chad, Cameroon, and Burkina Faso, to Mali.

The war against Boko Haram and other terrorist groups in the northeast region and incessant cases of banditry and kidnappings in the North-West and parts of the South-West have shaped the Nigerian security landscape. The South East continues to witness unrest resulting from separatist agitations. Insecurity seems to be one of the things all regions of Nigeria have in common when viewed from any geo-political angle, be it North-East, North-West, South-West, South-South, South-East, or North-Central.

The insecurity ranges from armed robbery and ritual killings in the South-West to secessionist agitation in the South-East, Boko Haram insurgency in the North-East, and banditry and illegal mining in the North-West⁸. In the North-Central, the challenges of unknown gunmen attacks, farmer/herder clashes, and ethno-religious killings are rampant. These challenges across the country are creating many internally displaced persons (IDP) and IDP camps. Between 2011 and 2022, Nigeria was severely affected by Boko Haram's terror attacks. States in the North-East register the highest number of deaths. Borno is by far the most

⁷ Ogbeidi, M.M. (2012). "Political Leadership and Corruption in Nigeria since 1960: A Socio-Economic Analysis." *Journal of Nigeria Studies*, 1, 1-25.

⁸ Adegbam, A. (2013). "Insecurity: A Threat to Human Existence and Economic Development in Nigeria." *Public Policy and Administration Research*, 3(6), 32- 43. Source: <https://iiste.org/Journals/index.php/PPAR/article/view/6348> (Viewed: 10 March 2023).

threatened state, as Boko Haram has caused over thirty-five thousand deaths in this area⁹. In 2019, Nigeria recorded the second largest number of deaths related to terrorism worldwide¹⁰. The South-West of Nigeria is plagued by a surge in cybercrime, kidnapping, domestic crime, extrajudicial killings, herder-farmer conflicts, and banditry. In 2018, there were 838 reported kidnapping cases in Nigeria. Of these cases, 140 were under investigation, while 176 were charged to court¹¹.

The South East also has a problem of ritual killings, commercial crime, herder-farmer clashes, and attacks by unknown gunmen, while the South-South remains threatened by militancy, kidnapping, and environmental agitation. The North-East has been subject to a humanitarian crisis lasting over a decade, caused by the Boko Haram insurgency and the Islamic Government in

West Africa Province. Meanwhile, the North-West is enmeshed in illegal mining and ethnoreligious killings.

The insecurity crisis has a detrimental impact on people's lives and well-being, including their physical and mental health.

It has discouraged individuals from leaving their homes in search of food or other basic needs out of fear¹². It has claimed thousands of lives, caused extensive damage and loss of property and upended the daily lives of too many Nigerians. The impact of insecurity is reflected in the performance of macroeconomic indicators, investment inflow, and economic performance. As of 2020, over \$40.6 billion worth of foreign investments were diverted from the Nigerian economy as a result of insecurity, according to the global terrorism index¹³. This had implications for job creation and economic prosperity.

Crisis of Governance

The various crises facing Nigeria have culminated in the crisis of governance. These issues impact our capacity to govern ourselves as a country, and the ineptitude of government responses further compounds the challenges. Key results have included the inability to deliver the necessary infrastructure, such as good quality roads, electricity or water, and the sad state of our public education system and healthcare facilities. Nigeria now spends more

money “subsidizing” imported refined fuels than on education and healthcare, a significant portion of which is simply for corruption.

Over the decades, there has been a recurrent and sustained argument that the Nigerian Government underperforms due to a lack of capacity to deal with the contemporary complexities of governance. The Nigerian Government, confronted by sociopolitical

⁹ <https://www.cfr.org/nigeria/nigeria-security-tracker/p29483>

¹⁰ Institute for Economics & Peace. Global Terrorism Index 2020: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism, Sydney, November 2020. Available from: <http://visionofhumanity.org/reports>

¹¹ Annual Nigeria Bureau of Statistic, 2019

¹² Ibid, Adegbami, A. (2013).

¹³ IEP (2020). Global Terrorism Index 2020: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism. Institute for Economics and Peace, Sydney, Australia. Source: <https://www.economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/GTI-2020-web-2.pdf> (Viewed: 10 March 2023).

instability and poor macroeconomic management, continues to display the attributes of a Government in crisis¹⁴.

Successive governments in Nigeria have lacked the political will to sustain policies of structural transformation to reposition the country for greatness.

No matter the upsurge of globalization and the prospects of the borderless world, the expectation is for governments to take a decisive role in economic transformation, growth, and development. With the weakness of the Nigerian government and its ineffectiveness, it has become challenging to eradicate impoverishment, engage in infrastructural development, and stem the tides of insurgency and terrorism.

The country is facing massive developmental challenges as a result. The inability to address the nation's fundamental crises to ensure better governance, including improved public financial management, is creating many secondary challenges. These include the huge infrastructure deficit, decaying educational and health systems, poor economic performance, rising unemployment, alarming poverty and insecurity.

The nation's infrastructure deficit is huge due to decades of neglect. The value of the country's total infrastructure stock represents only 35 percent of the GDP, which is significantly below the 70 percent average for an emerging economy. Estimates suggest Nigeria requires an annual financial commitment of US\$ 80 billion over 10 years to address its infrastructure deficit. The gap includes a lack of good roads and a railway network that can drive economic activities, poor and, in some instances, non-existent power

generation, transmission and distribution systems, decaying public educational facilities, dilapidated government-owned hospitals (including tertiary healthcare facilities) and even airports, among others. The state's inability to generate revenue or manage what it collects prudently makes sourcing the funding to finance in the current macroeconomic environment a daunting challenge. The current high debt service to government revenue ratio might constrain the nation's borrowing capacity.

Human capital formation, including education and health, is key to development. Human capital is an area where Nigeria's high levels of inequality are on display for all to see. Millions at the bottom of the pyramid simply do not have access. The large majority of the poor and working class are stuck with the failing public systems. The relatively well-to-do send their children to the myriad private sector options available, and the elite class get their services, whether in health or education, outside of Nigeria. Nigerians spend more on healthcare and education outside of Nigeria than the federal government budgets for these services at home. In the meantime, our educational system has regressed on so many levels. Professors are constantly on strike, and the last university strike in 2022 lasted over eight months. Educational infrastructure has declined across the country in the public school system. Additionally, the quality and relevance of education at all levels leave much to be desired. It seems that what matters is only the acquisition of certificates rather than learning. The pursuit of certificates has dumbed down the educational system.

Yet, human capital is the base for national development. Human capital increases workers' efficiency and helps economies move up the

¹⁴ Akinola A. O. (2008). "Socio-economic reforms and the future of Nigerian state." *International Review of Politics and Development*, 6, 1254-1268.

value chain beyond manual tasks or simple production processes (WEF 2016). The crisis in education and learning is on the rise, and so is the population of illiterates within the country. This is an area of concern. Nigeria now has over 10.5 million children who are out of school while those in school are barely learning on average¹⁵. It has been noted that the quality of basic education, measured in terms of student learning outcomes, is low in Nigeria¹⁶. According to international standards, children who have completed the third grade are expected to be fully literate. In Nigeria, only 66 percent of public school students can read at least one of three words, and 78 percent can add single digits after completing the fourth grade¹⁷.

In 2013, the Service Delivery Indicator (SDI) Survey administered a test to grade 4 pupils across different states, which resulted in an overall low score of 32 percent. The ranking showed the two southern states leading with 59 and 54 percent, while the two northern states had significantly lower scores of 23 and 20 percent¹⁸. Similarly, secondary school students' performance was not different, with only 48% passing English and Mathematics in the 2021 external examination¹⁹. The higher education institutions' product is also similar, with many Nigerian university graduates being unemployable²⁰. Others have noted the

substantial deterioration of education quality offered by higher education institutions in recent times in Nigeria²¹. The incessant strikes and the lack of priority placed on education by the government at all levels in Nigeria only exacerbate the situation. The health sector is no different, with elites seeking routine medical care outside the country, symptomatic of the poor state of the health sector. At one point, the nation's president spent about six months outside the country for medical care. Estimates by the Nigerian federal government show that Nigerians spend between US\$ 1.2 billion and US\$ 1.6 billion outside of the country for medical care annually²².

The economy has also taken a hit. Economic performance is down for many reasons, from an unfavorable international environment to unimaginative approaches we have taken as a nation to manage the economy over the years. National fortunes remain highly dependent on oil exports, given the inability to significantly diversify our export base and collect tax revenue. As a nation, we borrow to fund consumption, and the nation's stock of debt continues to rise while debt service as a share of government revenue is approaching unsustainable levels.

The results are continued depreciation of the naira, rising inflation, high levels of unemployment and under-employment, and

¹⁵ UNICEF (2022). UNICEF warns of Nigerian education crisis as world celebrates International Day of Education amid COVID-19 concerns. <https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/press>

¹⁶ World Bank (2017). Federal Republic of Nigeria World Bank Program-for-Results Financing Better Education Service Delivery for all (BESDA). Environment and Social Systems 21. Assessment (ESSA) (P160430). Source: <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/577861487889380249/text/Environment-and-social-systems-assessment.txt> (Viewed on 10 March 2023)

¹⁷ Ibid, World Bank (2017).

¹⁸ World Bank (2013). Service Delivery Indicators Health Survey 2013 - Harmonized Public Use Data Source: <https://doi.org/10.48529/qz7v-4r76>

¹⁹ Kanabe, Medinat (2022). "WAEC releases 2021 GCE results, records 48.61% pass." The Punch, 14 February 2022. Source: <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/511521-waec-releases-2021-gce-results-records-48-61-pass.html?tztc=1> (Viewed: 10 March 2023).

²⁰ Ogunode, N.J. and Ahaotu, G.N. (2021a). "Effects of incessant closure of schools on school administration in northern Nigeria." International Journal of Innovative Analyses and Emerging Technology 1(4), 98-103

²¹ Mohammed, M.O.B. & Gbenu, J.P. (2007). "Public universities on the brink of collapse in Nigeria private sector participation as a way out." In Babalola J.B., Akpa G.O., Ayeni, A.O. and Adedeji S.O. (Eds). Access, Equity and Quality in Higher Education. Ibadan: NAEAP 63-73

²² Guardian Editorial Board (2022). "Counting the cost of medical tourism." The Guardian. 27 December 2022 <https://guardian.ng/opinion/counting-the-cost-of-medical-tourism/> (Viewed on: 06 February 2023).

widespread poverty in the country²³. In recent years, Nigeria has seen a persistent surge in inflation rates, reaching the highest levels in four years, amid skyrocketed food prices and stagnating income, and purchasing power continues to decline. In January 2023, inflation rose to 21.82% from 21.34% in December 2022²⁴.

There are simply too many unemployed youths who are out of school and have no prospects for the future. Nigeria's labour market has not kept pace with the increasing number of labour force entrants in recent years. The unemployment rate is at 33% for the general population, while youth unemployment and under-employment are 42.5% and 21%, respectively²⁵. While unemployment rates have increased substantially for Nigerians across all education levels over the years, it has become progressively challenging for educated Nigerians to find employment opportunities. Nepotism thrives because there are few jobs compared to needs. So, the few that are available are reserved for those connected, and this further widens inequalities. The qualified people are either forced to migrate out of the country for greener pastures or take on other menial jobs, wasting their talents that could be useful to the country. The inability to create jobs for the rapidly growing population is a challenge which, if not checked, will turn the potential population boom into a burst.

All these fuel a poverty crisis in Nigeria, causing the number of poor to grow at an alarming rate. As a result, Nigeria has earned the label of the world's poverty capital. The poverty assessment in the 2022 Nigerian Living Standards Survey (NLSS) presents²⁶ the latest evidence on the profile and drivers of poverty in Nigeria. According to the report, as many as 4 in 10 Nigerians live below the national poverty line. In the country's northern region, many Nigerians lack education and access to basic infrastructure like electricity, safe drinking water, and improved sanitation. The report notes that small-scale household farms and non-farm enterprises engage most workers, but these jobs do not translate Nigerians' hard work into an exit from poverty. Only 17 percent of Nigerian workers who hold wage jobs are best able to lift people out of poverty. Climate and conflict shocks disproportionately affect the poor, and COVID-19 has compounded their effects. Yet government support for households is scant. Households are adopting dangerous coping strategies, including reducing education and scaling back food consumption, which could have negative long-run effects. The Nigerian government's 2022 report indicates that over 133 million Nigerians are multi-dimensionally poor (Box).

²³ Oluwole V., (2022) "South Africa, Namibia, Nigeria have the highest unemployment rates in the world – report." Business Insider Africa, 25 August 2021. Source:

<https://africa.businessinsider.com/local/markets/south-africa-namibia-nigeria-have-the-highest-unemployment-rates-in-the-world-report/6zh1b63>.

²⁴ Nigeria Bureau of Statistics. Source: <https://nigerianstat.gov.ng/elibrary/read/1241285> (Viewed: 10 March 2023).

²⁵ Nigeria Bureau of Statistics. Source: <https://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng/> (Viewed on: 06 February 2023).

²⁶ Nigeria Bureau of Statistics. Nigeria Multidimensional Poverty Index (2022). Source: <https://nigerianstat.gov.ng/elibrary/read/1241254> (Viewed: 10 March 2023).

Box 2.2 **Poverty in Numbers**²⁷

Multidimensional poverty is higher in rural areas, where 72 per cent of people are poor, compared to 42 per cent of people in urban areas. 70 per cent of Nigeria's population live in rural areas, yet these areas are home to 80 per cent of poor people.

63% of persons living within Nigeria (133 million people) are multidimensionally poor.

65% of the poor (86 million people) live in the North, while 35% (nearly 47 million) live in the South. Poverty levels across States vary significantly, with the incidence of multidimensional poverty ranging from a low of 27% in Ondo to a high of 91% in Sokoto.

In general, the incidence of monetary poverty is lower than the incidence of multidimensional poverty across most states. In Nigeria, 40.1% of people are poor according to the 2018/19 national monetary poverty line, and 63% are multidimensionally poor according to the National MPI 2022. Multidimensional poverty is higher in rural areas, where 72% of people are poor, compared to 42% of people in urban areas.

Two-thirds (67.5%) of children (0–17) are multidimensionally poor according to the National MPI, and half (51%) of all poor people are children. The highest deprivations are in the indicator of child engagements – where over half of poor children lack the intellectual stimulation that is pivotal to early childhood development.

Child poverty is prevalent in rural areas, with almost 90% of rural children experiencing poverty.

Across the geo-political zones, the child MPI shows higher poverty in the North-East and North-West (where 90% of children are poor) and lower poverty in the South-East and South-West (74% and 65.1% respectively). The incidence of Child MPI is above 50% in all States and greater than 95% in Bayelsa, Sokoto, Gombe and Kebbi.

²⁷ [https://nigerianstat.gov.ng/news/78#:~:text=63%25%20of%20persons%20living%20within,million\)%20live%20in%20the%20South.](https://nigerianstat.gov.ng/news/78#:~:text=63%25%20of%20persons%20living%20within,million)%20live%20in%20the%20South.) (Viewed on : 06/02/2023).

It is time for deeper national reflection, especially in this age of renewed activism by Nigerian youths. Can we expect national transformation to take place if we do not find answers to these multiplicities of existential crises facing our nation? What future will there be for the majority of Nigerians, and upon what can the needed change in Nigeria be based?

Opportunities

Upon what can Nigeria's transformation be based? While Nigeria is facing many daunting challenges, it is not all doomsday. There are things that are right with Nigeria, and importantly there are emerging seeds of change that could be the basis of national transformation. These opportunities must be harnessed. Nigeria has important assets or comparative advantages that can be converted to competitive advantages to ensure national development.

Among the assets that stand out are, a large market with huge resource endowments, a youthful population, skilled labor, diaspora, creative and emerging digital economies.

A Large Market With Huge Resource Endowments

Nigeria's population size and resource endowments make it well-known for its economic potential. The country's abundant resources and

coastal location make it capable of emerging as a strong growth pole for Sub-Saharan Africa. Nigeria has numerous resources, but it requires appropriate policies, management, and governance to harness its potential.

The potential of the agricultural sector in Nigeria is huge. The country boasts approximately 70 million hectares of agricultural land and is the largest producer of cassava, with major crops including corn, yam, beans, cashew, mango, papaya, millets, sorghum, and sesame.

Horticulture, forestry, fisheries, and animal production also hold significant potential. Despite the challenges facing the sector, agriculture contributes about 22 percent of the total Gross Domestic Product and engages about 70% of the population²⁸. Weaknesses in the ecosystem, particularly the inability to implement robust policies, management, and governance for the sector, have made agriculture in Nigeria largely subsistence-based. As a result, each government launches policies and programs which are largely ineffectual. However, recent policies have significantly impacted rice cultivation, even though the country is yet to be self-sufficient.

By implementing the right policies to address the constraints facing the sector, such as poor access to modern inputs and technology, inadequate access to markets, weak financial sector and poor access to credits, weak research and extension services, and inadequate transportation and storage, Nigeria could utilize agriculture as a significant contributor to the country's development. Agriculture has the potential to provide food for the population, raw

²⁸ Source: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1165865/contribution-of-oil-sector-to-gdp-in-nigeria/> (Viewed: 10 March 2023)

materials for the manufacturing sector, and employment opportunities for millions of youths, while simultaneously reducing the country's reliance on foreign exchange and imports.

Although Nigeria is commonly known for its oil economy, it also possesses abundant mineral resources ranging from industrial metals to precious stones. Large quantities of solid minerals such as iron ore, gold, copper, lithium, limestone, baryte, bitumen, coal, lead/zinc, talc, gypsum, rock salt, gemstones, and kaolin are found within the country. Nigeria also has abundant reserves of natural gas, which could serve as a source of transition fuel in the fight against climate change. The challenge lies in moving from mere talk to action, as the mining sector has yet to reach its full potential. Successive governments have talked about solid minerals and gas. Still, little has been done to formalize the mining sector and attract huge investors, whether local or international, building the necessary infrastructure and removing institutional barriers. Building skills within the sector and creating an enabling environment to attract major players is crucial, as the minerals sector could provide options for economic diversification and sustainable development.

Nigeria's huge and rapidly growing population and resource base make it the biggest market in Africa. The country's size and potential make it an attractive destination for investors and products. For instance, the Nigerian eCommerce market generated a revenue of US\$7.6 billion in 2021, ranking it 38th globally, ahead of Pakistan and behind Finland²⁹. The Nigerian eCommerce market contributed to a worldwide growth rate of 18% in 2021, with an increase of 44%. Nigeria can potentially serve as a base for production and

export to the rest of the continent, especially with the recently signed African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). It could also serve as a gateway to West Africa and the rest of the world.

Youthful Population And Growing Skilled Labor Force

The nation can utilize the abundant energies, dynamism, and creativity of Nigerian youths, who represent an important asset. No matter how you measure it, the youths constitute a sizable portion of the Nigerian population. Those between the ages of 15 and 29 years represent about 35.6% of the population, while those below 15 years represent 42%, and those below 30 years represent 70%. Nigerian youths have built Nigeria into a world music powerhouse (afro beats), sports, and fintech, demonstrating their entrepreneurship, imagination, and innovation. Despite various constraints, they have grown technology startups, showcasing their remarkable entrepreneurial spirit. The youths embody the potential of Nigeria for transformation. However, the country will have to make strategic investments in the youth population if the nation is to ensure that they are a positive force for development.

We cannot overemphasize the need for youth empowerment. To ensure that Nigerian youths provide the momentum needed for development, it is crucial to put programs in place to resolve their challenges. Emphasis will need to be placed

²⁹ eCommerce market in Nigeria. Source: <https://ecommercedb.com/markets/ng/all> ((Viewed: 10 March 2023))

on meeting the youths in their diversity, and specific approaches should be tailored to the diverse categories of youths in Nigeria. One approach could be deploying special grants and incentives to youth-led startups. It is also important to ensure an inclusive education policy that enables youths to learn and build problem-solving, critical thinking, and entrepreneurship skills. Nigeria must enable its youths to participate actively in all sectors, including politics. The nation must engage youths and provide special opportunities to participate actively in politics. The government, in collaboration with the private sector, must prioritize creating employment and economic opportunities and providing health facilities. Innovative policies and programs that empower youths to combat poverty are essential to ensuring that the bulging population translates into economic growth and development. Nigeria must develop specially tailored strategies and programs to support the growth of MSMEs and harness the entrepreneurial spirit of its youths.

Nigerian youths possess inherent innovation and passion but require the right environment to unleash their creativity and solve the nation's many challenges. The responsibility for expanding the space for employment, mentorship, and apprenticeship cannot be left to the government alone; non-state actors should be encouraged to participate. Moreover, policy implementation oriented towards youth development and, by extension, national development must be continuously upheld. Nigeria's sizable and youthful population offers great potential to expand the nation's capacity as the regional economic hub of Africa and the world.

This potential is realized through a vast labor force, with millions of youth seeking job opportunities despite the challenges posed by the educational system. Nigeria graduates millions of youths annually from secondary schools, technical colleges, polytechnics, and universities, representing a huge asset. Unlike many parts of the world, Nigeria's youth population is still growing, and a sizable proportion of the youth are acquiring skills. An increasing trend is Nigerians doing remote work for international firms, while many young Nigerian professionals are sought after, with a significant share emigrating to Canada and the UK annually. Transforming these emigrating professionals into opportunities for development and transformation in Nigeria requires innovative thinking and experimentation.

Labor plays a crucial role in producing goods and services in an economy. To drive Nigeria's transformation, it is essential to improve the skills of the new working-age population.

The classical training approach is no longer enough; instead, the formal skills development system requires revamping to incorporate connections between curriculum design and labor market information (LMI), especially from industry and enterprises³⁰. It is vital to increase investment in technical and vocational education training (TVET) ecosystem while creating a special program to support MSMEs. Emerging projects such as the Edo Economic Transformation Project and the Innovation Development and Effectiveness in the Acquisition of Skills (IDEAS) demonstrate best practices for establishing links between industry and curriculum design.

³⁰ World Bank (2015). More, and More Productive, Jobs for Nigeria: Profile of Work and Workers. Source: <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/650371467987906739/pdf/103937-WP-P146872-PUBLIC-Nigeria-Jobs-Report.pdf>. (Viewed: 10 March 2023).

Huge Diaspora With Know-How And Capital

Nigeria's diaspora population is a secret asset that is growing in size and making significant impacts in their host countries across the globe. Nigerians are everywhere, and their achievements are noteworthy. The reasons for leaving range from pursuing education and not returning to simply seeking opportunities unavailable locally. The total number of Nigerian emigrants grew from 448,500 in 1990 to 1.3 million in 2017³¹.

Similar to Asian countries such as China, India, South Korea, or Taiwan, Nigeria's diaspora population can be a boon. They possess significant resources and disposable income. However, a clear diaspora strategy is necessary to take advantage of their know-how, entrepreneurial spirit, and investment potential in Nigeria. In short, the nation must begin to think beyond remittances and invest in transforming potential brain drain into brain gain. This is necessary for many reasons. Nigerians abroad are high achievers who can contribute more to Nigeria's transformation beyond merely sending money to feed or solve family problems back home.

The Nigerian diaspora population in the United States possesses a significant proportion of bachelor's or advanced degrees, with 37% of individuals aged 25 and older holding a bachelor's degree compared to 20% of the overall American population. Moreover, 29% of the same age group have a master's or PhD degree, in contrast to only 11% of the general US population³². They earn high incomes, and many are entrepreneurs.

In 2019, 2020, and 2021, the Nigerian diaspora community sent remittances of US\$25.5 billion, US\$29.8 billion, and US\$34.8 billion, respectively.³³

In 2018, the government received slightly less than US\$11 billion from NNPC transfers, whereas the official inflow of migrant remittances was estimated at US\$22 billion. Thus, the diaspora provides more than twice the foreign exchange that oil supplies to all levels of government. According to the AfDB, unofficial flows like the Aboki system constitute approximately 50% of official remittances. If this estimate applies to Nigeria, remittances will amount to around US\$40 billion, over three times the revenue from oil. The challenge now is for Nigeria to tap into the extensive knowledge base of its diaspora and encourage them to bring their capital and entrepreneurial expertise to launch ventures in Nigeria.

³¹ <https://nidcom.gov.ng/power-of-the-diaspora/>

³² Migration Policy Institute (2015). "The Nigerian Diaspora in the United States". RAD Diaspora Profile. Prepared for the Rockefeller Foundation – Aspen Institute Diaspora Program. June 2015 Revised. Source:

³³ PWC, 2019b

Emerging digital and creative economy

Nigeria is making waves in the digital and creative economy spaces. Over the last decade, the country has built a globally competitive fintech sector that dominates the African space, and other tech-based companies are also emerging. Despite facing constraints such as a lack of access to funding and overbearing regulatory and institutional environments, several unicorns have emerged.

The trailblazers have created jobs for many and opportunities for other emerging startups. As of 2021, Africa counted four unicorn startups valued at over one billion U.S. dollars each. Nigeria housed three unicorns, the e-commerce startup Jumia, and the fintech Interswitch and Flutterwave³⁴. Besides fintech, we have other tech companies like e-commerce giant, Jumia. Other exciting startups include Moove, Reliance Health, Vandease, and Omnibiz, just to mention some emerging firms. Excitingly, technology is ever expanding; the opportunities for innovation in it are diverse, and Nigerians are going everywhere, providing solutions from cloud computing, robotic process automation (RPA), virtual reality, Web3, machine learning, and artificial intelligence.

In a way, tech innovation is allowing Nigeria to change the narrative. More FDI is now flowing into the Nigerian market as a result. Nigeria's inflow of Foreign Direct investments (FDI) increased by 3.5% from 2019-2020 despite the global economic crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic; the FDI flows rebounded strongly in 2021³⁵. In 2022, Nigerian Fintech companies raised a venture capital funding of \$1.2 billion.³⁶

Nigeria's creative sector, from Nollywood films and fashion, has also taken the world by storm. Nigeria's Nollywood, with an annual output of nearly 2,500 films, is the world's second-largest film industry after India's Bollywood³⁷. From humble beginnings of low budget and low quality films, Nigerian filmmakers are now making big-budget films, winning awards, and attracting a global following. The success of Nollywood has generated copycats across the continent. Nigeria is also making waves in the fashion industry, exporting to diaspora markets and Africa. The sector is expected to generate over US\$ 1.9 billion in 2023, with a growth rate of over 11%.

The music scene is in a different category. Nigeria's Afro beats have taken the world by storm, becoming dominant on many digital

³⁴ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1250055/african-unicorn-startups-by-country/p>

³⁵ UNCTAD (2021). World Investment Report 2021. UNCTAD, Geneva. Source: https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/wir2021_en.pdf (Viewed: 10 March 2023).

³⁶ <https://www.statista.com/outlook/dmo/fintech/nigeria>

³⁷ <https://www.studiobinder.com/blog/what-is-nollywood/>

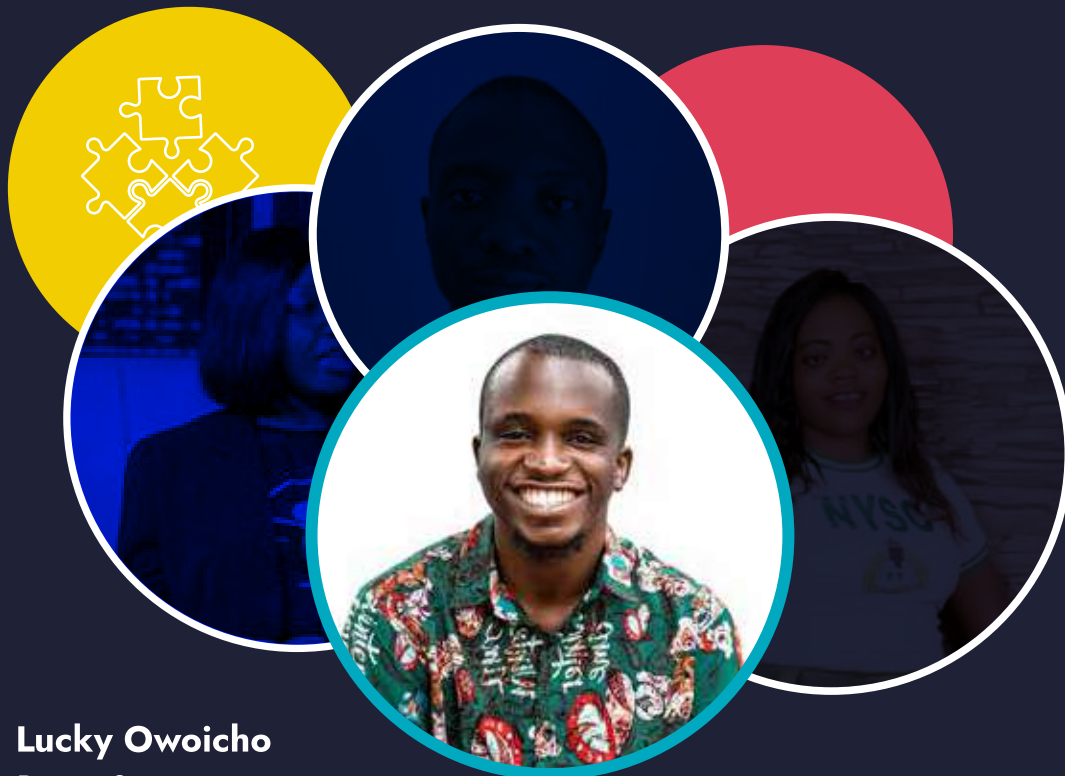
streaming platforms. The rise of megastars and the industry has made Nigeria the hub of Afro beats. Global labels are investing in Nigeria and making major pushes to discover the next generation of megastars.

Nigeria is emerging as a global brand in entertainment with the global discovery of Nigerian movies, music and fashion, and this is a soft power which can significantly benefit Nigeria. While there has been significant progress and achievements, Nigeria is capturing only a fraction of its digital and creative economy potential. It will need to make strategic investments to develop dynamic and transformative digital and creative economy sectors.

Innovation holds significant opportunities for many other sectors, from agriculture to the green economy. The challenge now is adapting the formula that facilitates the growth of fintech and creative sectors for other sectors like agriculture. With a robust policy framework and an enabling institutional environment, Nigeria could build robust ecosystems for innovation that will allow the country to fast-track the continuous growth of its creative industry (including movies, music and fashion) and the transformation of other critical sectors like agriculture. Nigeria has the ingredients, and the key is to ensure a strategic intent and the right leadership. Nigeria could make innovation its core engine of growth and transformation in this 21st century.

Conclusion

Nigeria's future is largely in the hands of Nigerians. It will be the result of the actions and inactions of all Nigerians. The question, therefore, is which Nigeria will emerge in the future: Will it be the Nigeria of the rising fintech unicorns and fast-growing creatives sector with music, film and fashion as the leads? Or will it be the Nigeria of Boko Haram, ethnoreligious killings, insurgents and kidnappers? The context review has shown that the seeds of transformation are emerging in Nigeria while the trends of doomsday are also very much present. Anything is possible. The choice will be based on our collective actions and inactions. The next chapter focuses on exploring alternative possibilities, and scenarios, of the future in order to inform decision-making.



Lucky Owoicho
Benue State

→ ***What do you do for a living?***

Development Worker

→ ***Express your view about the Nigeria of today and expectations for the future.***

The Nigeria of today is not commensurate with the expectations as young people and other Nigerians want to see for the future.

In Nigeria today, a whole lot of challenges we face and this has a lot to do with leadership deficiency.

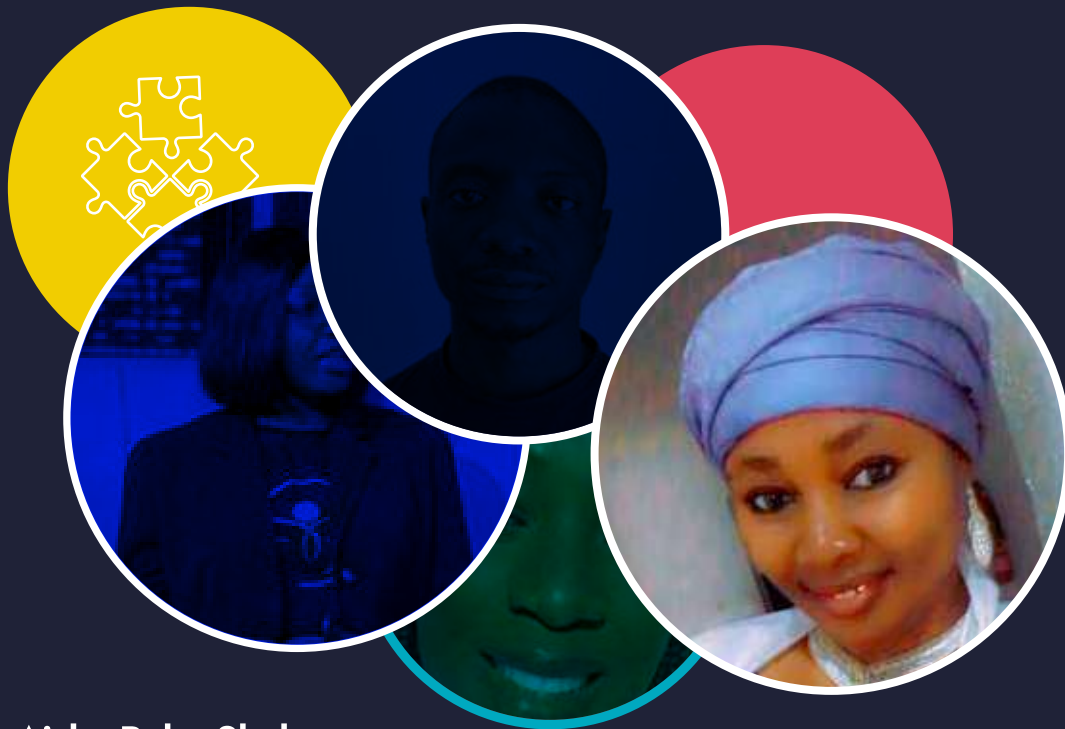
→ ***How do your views about Nigeria and expectations for the future affect the choices you make?***

My expectations for the future are to see our nation thrive amongst developed countries and to see every citizen become proud of their nation. My choices have always been from a standpoint of being a solution to the problems because complaining won't solve these issues but only deliberate efforts.

→ ***What Nigeria do you want, and how do we get there?***

A Nigeria that is peaceful, void of banditry attacks, kidnapping and other violence that has hampered the growth of our nation, since we need to stay alive first before we can pursue our goals as individuals and collectively.

A country where the youth can thrive on the basis of the working conditions placed at their disposal.



Aisha Baba Shehu

Borno State

→ *What do you do for a living?*

I am a Humanitarian working with an NGO.

→ *Express your view about the Nigeria of today and expectations for the future.*

I will describe the Nigeria of today as a failing state. Just like a mother that has neglected her children. The elite keeps the resources and opportunities within their circles while the poor face insecurity, hunger, lack of employment, climate crisis, and educational setback to mention but a few. A country where corruption is the order of the day can never make progress and its economy will keep being poor which will bring about inflation.

→ *How do your views about Nigeria and expectations for the future affect the choices you make?*

My hope for Nigeria is to maintain its status as the giant of Africa by utilizing its untapped resources, becoming a leading nation with a strong economy, and creating a united country where citizens prioritize what is right. They aspire for a sound educational system, job opportunities, and a focus on technology to aid in the development of the nation.

→ *What Nigeria do you want, and how do we get there?*

We can only achieve all this when there is a shift in our mindset towards what is right and being patriotic citizens, willing to bring about the needed change in our fatherland. Change begins with me but no man is an island, so we need to act collectively as a nation.



03

**Nigeria
2050:
Alternative
Futures**

Scenarios are stories that provide alternative pathways of how the future could or might unfold. Scenarios are used in strategy formulation and decision-making. Traditional forecasting tools have become inadequate for long-term planning due to the rapid pace of change and complexity which now characterizes much of the world. We live in a world beset by increasing uncertainties and volatility. In this emerging world, decision-makers must find improved ways and tools to manage uncertainties. Scenarios provide a way to explore and examine the future before it happens, highlighting critical factors and key decision points likely to shape it.

The scenarios approach was adopted for Nigeria, a complex country on many levels, with a highly heterogeneous population, cultures, and languages. Furthermore, these are highly charged times, with many agitating for fundamental changes in the country's organization. Some are seeking secession, while others are advocating for restructuring the state. The challenge, however, is the lack of consensus on the type and nature of restructuring needed.

As highlighted in the previous chapter, alarming trends such as conflicts, banditry, ethnoreligious killings, farmer-herder clashes, and kidnappings have risen and spread nationwide. A large and growing segment of the population faces declining quality of education while rising levels of corruption have permeated all sectors and levels of society. The quality of personal and public leadership is also decreasing, and unemployment and poverty rates are rising. Despite these challenges, an emerging innovation ecosystem in Nigeria is driving change and potentially leading to new economic sectors. Furthermore, Nigeria has become a global leader in the cultural industries, particularly in music and films.

To inform the agenda for Nigeria, "The Nigeria We Want" engaged in building scenarios to outline alternative futures. The process involved gathering information and constructing outline scenarios in the regional retreats, which were then synthesized and further developed in the national retreats. The results of this process are the four scenarios presented in this chapter.

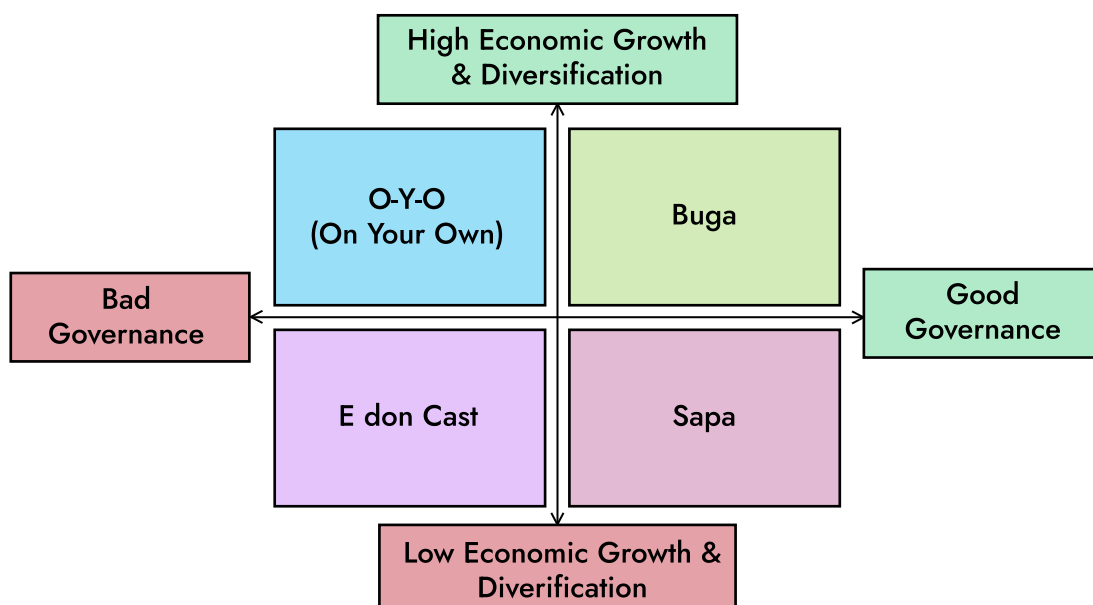
The scenarios are not created to predict how Nigeria may, might, or could turn out, but to challenge assumptions and explore alternative outcomes. Our goal is to highlight the key issues and major decision points, including the pull and push factors driving the country towards more positive or negative futures.

The Scenarios Game Board

To prepare the scenarios game board, we need to answer the first question, “What are the two most important and uncertain factors that are likely to drive the future of Nigeria?” We identified the nature of governance and the capability to grow and diversify the economy as the most critical uncertainties which will play determinant roles in shaping Nigeria’s future. This does not imply that other factors will not play important roles. Therefore, we incorporated the main trends and their driving forces into the scenarios.

We identified economic performance and governance in various forms as the core issues that will largely determine the future of Nigeria across the six geo-political zones. The fundamental questions in reflecting on the future of Nigeria are whether Nigeria will have good governance, that is, whether governance will aim to improve the lives of ordinary Nigerians and make progress for the majority of the population Or whether governance will prioritize the self-aggrandizement of a small elite rather than embarking on the arduous work of national transformation. Secondly, we need to consider whether the country will be able to grow rapidly and diversify its economy. Given the looming end of the oil economy and the high rate of population growth, can Nigeria’s decision-makers find the right formula to ensure high and sustained economic growth and diversify the economy away from over-reliance on oil? The answers to these questions will significantly shape Nigeria's future.

ILLUSTRATION 4 ▶ The Scenarios Game Board



E Don Cast

“E Don Cast” portrays the breakdown of Nigeria, telling the story of “double wahala”. It is mid-2050, the United Nations and Africa Union’s sponsored yet another failed peace meeting on Nigeria, causing millions of refugees to flow to countries in the sub-region and displacing many more internally. The Africa Union and the international community, fearing continued disintegration, were racing against time to raise a peacekeeping force. The force’s mission is to protect civilians trying to migrate to safer areas and maintain peace within and between the newly declared republics, and what remained of the Federal Republic. The situation is complicated by international mercenaries and some neighboring countries that have joined the fray to either protect the integrity of their nation or partake in the theft of natural resources. At the end of the international conference, the focus was on ensuring orderly separation and preventing the conflicts from degenerating into a regional war. The only hope was for the accord to begin negotiations on separation in December 2050, even though there is no clarity or well-defined lines of separation.





Sapa

Sapa is a scenario of lost chances and too little too late. In this scenario, there were efforts to improve governance. But the larger and deeper issues were not taken seriously early enough. Despite the warnings, Nigeria and Nigerians were caught off guard by several developments, including the end of the oil economy, the spread of conflicts, and the agitations for self-determination. As a result, there was a low investment, huge infrastructure deficits, and an inability to diversify the economy or achieve rapid growth that could meet the needs of a fast-growing, urban, and youthful population. Although there were regular elections and some efforts to bring about change, the political process was dominated by “godfathers”, making the reform process too timid to effect the necessary radical changes. Consequently, the country is facing the same issues, and by 2050, it could be on the verge of collapse, with high levels of poverty and famine.



O-Y-O (On Your Own)

O-Y-O (On Your Own) presents a scenario of a nation divided between the haves and the have-nots. By 2050, Nigeria has become the third most populous nation and the most unequal society in the world. The average citizen has little to desire from governance, as the elites have managed to secure accommodations among themselves through their 'godfatherism' and 'chop I chop' strategy. The Nigerian economy is given a new lease of life amid an impending end of the oil economy. The country began to experience significant economic growth as it discovered minerals in large commercial quantities. The old corrupt system was simply retooled to meet the needs of the elites as the mining began and revenue increased, leaving the average Nigerians to their own devices and the middle class striving for the crumbs. The country managed to delay the inevitable. However, the old corrupt system continued as the resources were mismanaged, and necessary reinvestments were not made to build new economic sectors or infrastructure. Although experts were raising alarms, the elite simply lived by the philosophy of "let the good times roll". It was back to the 'good or bad old days' depending on who one asks. The chaos ultimately arrived, leading to conflicts and unilateral declarations of independence by some regions, with significant consequences for the population.



Buga

Buga is a scenario of Nigeria that is embarking on national transformation. It is a story of the re-birth of a federated Nigeria, with a growing economy and improved governance. Buga is fueled by the emerging green economy sector, agriculture, mining and significant investments in applications of innovations ranging from cloud computing, robotics, and virtual reality to artificial intelligence, addressing critical issues and transforming the economy. The rise of new economic sectors has powered the long boom, the continued growth of the cultural/creative industries, and the emergence of Nigeria as the center for tech startups in the developing world.

Fundamental reforms in governance are important in addressing the critical challenges facing the nation. Adopting technology to fight corruption, and insecurity and to enhance governance reforms, unleashes a new sense of urgency. Investments grow at double digits for a sustained period. A new Nigeria has emerged, becoming a full member of the G20 and a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council by 2050. Although not all issues have been resolved by 2050, Nigerians, on the whole, ended the year with renewed hope and the conviction that prosperity will continue to reach more people.

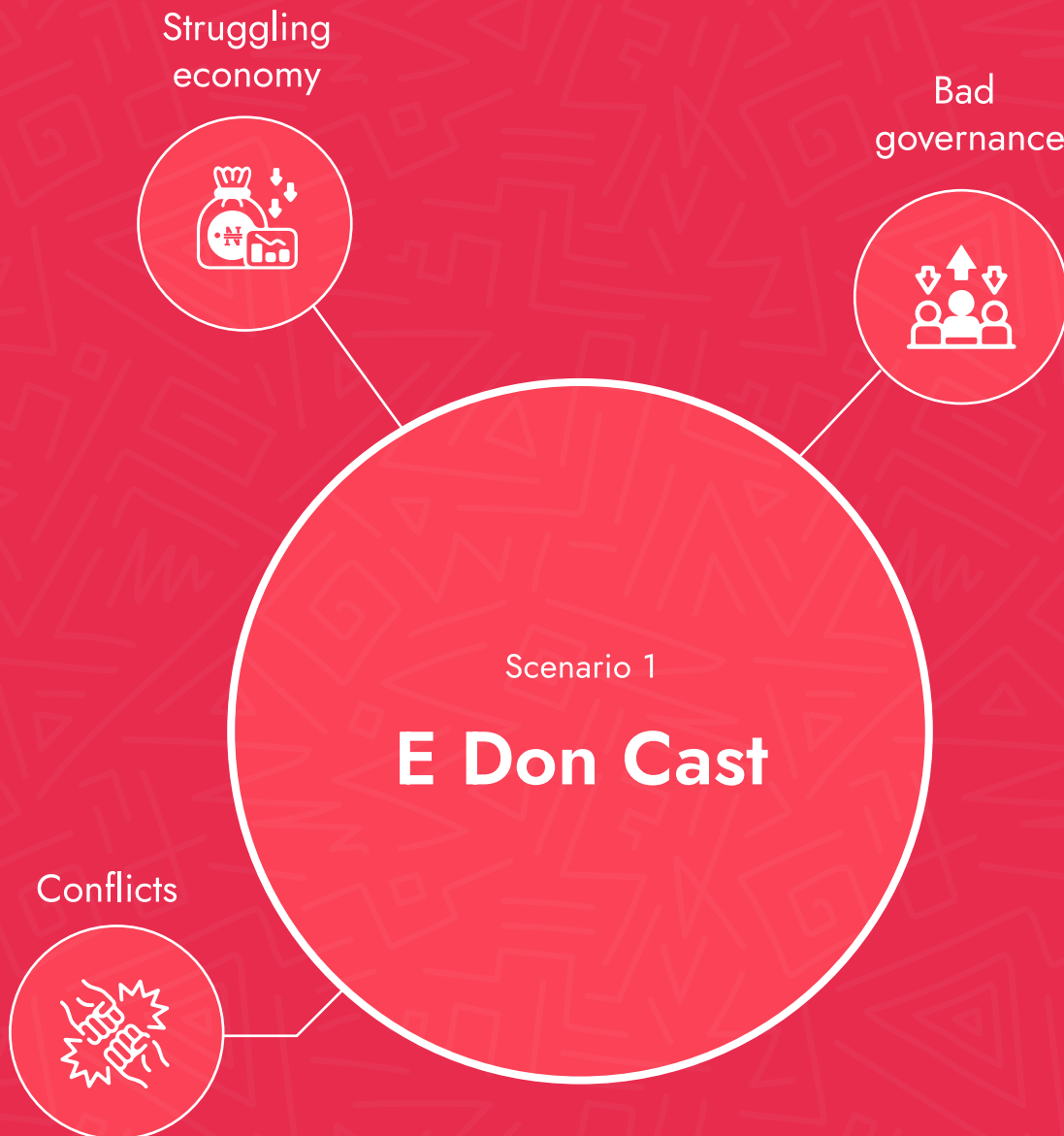
E Don Cast

Sapa

Four Alternative Scenarios

Buga

O-Y-O
(On Your Own)



E Don Cast scenario is a perfect storm of bad governance and a struggling economy conspiring to end the Nigerian dream. In this scenario, it is unclear what is left of Nigeria. The country has fragmented, and several regions have declared independence. Conflicts arise in the seceded regions as minorities agitate for further division in the continuous search for resource control and self-determination. The federal government's capacity has significantly weakened, facing conflicts and terrorism on many fronts, with no oil revenue. The internal conflicts have turned many regions into no-go areas.

The Post-Elections Unrest And The Crackdown

This story began in 2023. Many Nigerians went to the polls for the general elections with renewed optimism. Although the turnout remained low, it was the highest compared to earlier elections from 1999 to 2019. However, problems with late arrivals of voting materials, the difficulty with using the BVAS, and targeted voting disruptions in many areas prevented millions from voting. This resulted in a sizable portion of the population that showed up to vote but simply could not, and in some areas, hooligans took away polling materials.

Many disenfranchised did not see the results as legitimate and were convinced that the system was rigged against their preferred candidates.

After the 2023 election, calls for a redo were made, and some went to court to claim what they believed was their mandate. Demonstrations and civil disobedience followed, along with counter-demonstrations. The demonstrations and counter-demonstrations reached a high point just after the swearing-in ceremony in May, and the court dismissed the cases due to technicalities. Rather than settling, the rhetoric reached a new low, with allegations that the opposition was planning a coup and working on usurping the people's mandate. Rather than cooling the polity, the failure to end the demonstrations and the rhetoric simply led to an ultimatum to vacate the streets, which was not headed. The next step was a violent crackdown.

Government forces responded to elements not necessarily in the opposition who were ready for the violent crackdown with violence. While a coalition of youth-led civil society pushed for peaceful demonstrations and called for a new election supervised by the international community, others saw chaos as a means of achieving their objectives. The government rejected the proposal. Coupled with the aftermath of the elections and the rising levels of insecurity, an organized militia declared an independent republic in the South East. As the military moved to end the secession, a vacuum emerged in other regions. The Islamic State declared an independent state in the North while other groups publicly mulled over declaring their republics.

The Emergence of War Lords

While the country slowly burned, the leadership focused on grandiose declarations, and corruption and pillaging of public resources continued unabated. Some warlords seized oil wells, gaining a sizable share of the resources from the “black gold”, while others controlled the mining of rare materials. Warlords and self-declared autonomous regions could build their military or militias and hire foreign mercenaries with autonomous financing. In the meantime, the international powers are dealing with their issues emanating from social challenges and other problems, including the effects of climate change and epidemics. Nativist groups in the industrial nations continue to grow, pushing only one agenda: Let’s take care of our own. Appetites for foreign adventure declined due to growing internal challenges, and available support was limited and largely ineffectual.

Sadly, by 2030, the Nigerian economy, highly dependent on imports and foreign exchange from oil, began collapsing without a clear agenda or leadership. The 2027 election was no better than that of 2023, and many areas were simply no-go zones. Politicians, warlords, and their militias, as well as what remains of the Nigerian military, caught the people in between them, worsened by godfatherism.

The Economic Collapse of The Economy

More people joined separatist and religious movements promising change here and now or in the hereafter. The leadership lacked strategic attention and engaged in wishful thinking, and the inability to diversify or grow the economy led to more misery. The dream of building an innovation-driven economy fell by the wayside, as resources were siphoned. Consequently, investment in education, which was already low, declined further, and there were more strikes due to pay and insecurity in educational institutions. The situation with healthcare was the same. The elites’ solution was to take what they could and ensure their families, especially children, were shipped overseas.

The Nigerian diaspora continues to grow as “Japa” becomes more commonplace and is no longer a southern phenomenon.

Instead of investing at home, the Nigerian diaspora essentially became a source of welfare for those left behind and a critical source for funding the various separatist movements. The belief was that creating and securing our homeland would improve things for our people. However, without a clear vision and strategy, chaos ensued, and by the botched 2031 elections, many respectable people who still believed in the idea of Nigeria began to publicly call for a military coup to save the country from total disintegration.

The coup to save the fatherland

On the 1st of January 2035, in the middle of very violent political campaigns, the military finally staged a coup to save the fatherland. The leaders of the coup indicated that they intervened to cool the polity, end the violence, rebuild the economy, redesign the country to ensure a sense of belonging by all and end to conflicts. By this time, the “Japa Syndrome” affected not only individuals but also corporations that moved their head offices out of Nigeria. The emerging Nigerian tech scene became a shell of the past, and the major tech companies that arose were largely in the US or other international financial centers. They moved simply to ensure continued investment and operations.

Many Nigerians saw the New Year coup as the only solution and were elated, while the world talked about the misgivings of military coups. Although lofty ideas were proposed initially, the challenges of governance and the multiplicity of crises facing the nation quickly bogged down the coup leaders. By December 2034, the default in debt repayment an economic crisis. Negotiations with the self-declared autonomous regions did not start well, as none were willing to cede their basic source of revenue, authority or semblance of independence. Worse still were the discussions with the warlords controlling sizable portions of the territory.

By 2037, the crisis had spread. Even within regions that declared their autonomy, issues arose. Some had historical grievances to contend with, and marginalization once again became a critical issue in the regions. The result was groups asking for further division. The challenges of climate change further exacerbated the conflicts. As such, by 2040, internal migration was at an all-time high, with people moving to where they could secure their livelihoods and avoid the impacts of climate change, such as flooding.

The Age of Secession

From 2035, when the coup was launched, until 2040, many separatist movements emerged. The coup makers’ efforts to organize national dialogue and reconcile the people to reach a settlement seemed too late. Some elements of the coup leadership advocated for change, while others simply sought accommodations with emerging regional governments and warlords. Corruption was also high, derailing attempts to regroup and reform a strong Nigerian army.

By 2045, the Nigerian state had withered, investment was down, and the ability to control and wield power was low.

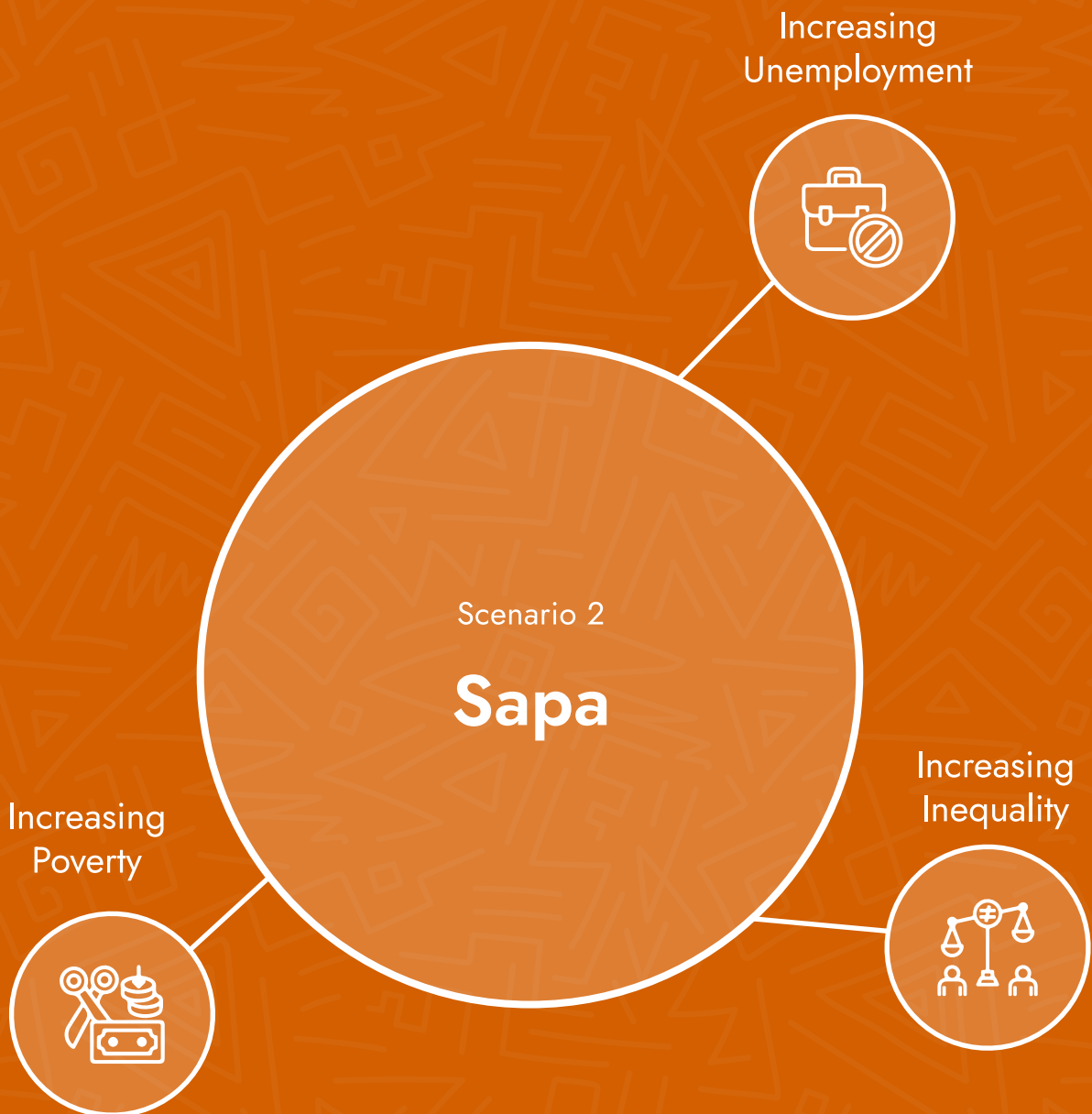
Regional leaders and warlords declared themselves presidents. International efforts to support the coup leaders organize peace conferences did not pan out. The assistance was largely focused on organizing meetings rather than providing soldiers or the funding needed. Many experts suggested supervising an orderly breakup of Nigeria, given that some powerful self-declared republics were gaining global allies.

The perfect storm

In 2050, multiple crises converged to create a perfect storm for Nigeria." As Thomas Hobbes stated, Nigerians lived in nastiness, poverty, brutality, and shortness of life. Rampant poverty and the lingering effects of war forced millions of refugees to flee to neighboring countries, and a significant portion of the population became internally displaced. Even diehard nationalists realized they had lost the battle, and the only way to move forward was to seek accommodation and an orderly process before a complete breakdown happened. The disparate groups had to face whether they could make peace that their people would accept and that would foster economic growth and development. The key issue was whether the groups and their supporters had the magnanimity to make the necessary concessions and work towards resolving the multiple crises facing the country. The looming question was whether the country would descend into an all-out war without end, or if they could arrange an organized breakup.



Photo of South South visioning exercise, credit: NYFF



Sapa is a scenario in which Nigeria began gaining control of its governance, but the economy remained a challenge. This led to low economic growth and hindered economic diversification, resulting in a rise in unemployment, poverty and high levels of inequality. The population had experienced a boom that ultimately led to a burst, leaving many youths without jobs or hope for the future. The decision-makers and leaders across various sectors face the challenge of rapidly turning around the economy to prevent Nigeria from being forced into the E Don Cast scenario by circumstances.

United we stand

The story began in 2023. The elections were conducted, and their conduct and results were disappointing to many. This led to protests on the streets. However, the new leadership took swift action by convening a national unity conference with major political parties after the Supreme Court ruling. The conference produced an agreement which established a unity government. The new government acknowledged the flaws in the elections and took steps to prevent the situation from deteriorating. This included offering government seats to opposition parties and encouraging states to do the same. As a result, unity governments were established at the national level and in some states.

The national unity government was focused on getting governance right.

A joint review committee, consisting of members from both the Senate and House of Representatives, along with experts from civil society and major opinion leaders, was set up to review recommendations from previous national conferences and consultations. A national consultation was organized with various stakeholder groups, ethnic nationalities and experts. In 2025, a proposal was presented to both houses of the national assembly, which detailed a restructuring plan, amalgamating the best ideas from previous national conferences and consultations.

True federation, new majority and stalled reforms

The debate and dialogue consumed significant attention during the approval process, causing a lack of economic change. However, the prospects of restructuring provided hope for salvaging and building up Nigeria into a powerhouse. The elections in 2027 and the political space witnessed major shakeups and realignment. The unity government that emerged from this formed a new party and won the elections, promising to bring about necessary reforms and restructuring.

On the eve of the 2031 elections, the restructuring bill to turn Nigeria into a true federation passed.

The President signed it with the necessary approval from states for a successful constitutional amendment. The optimism after this achievement was palpable. The agitation for secession receded, with many saying, "Let's implement and give the new structure a chance to succeed."

The 2031 elections had surprises in store as the ruling party won the presidency but with reduced majorities in the national assembly and the state governments. Many smaller parties also gained seats at the state and national levels. The lack of a clear majority meant nothing major could be done without the support of the smaller parties. While some differences were driven by ideology, others were due to outsized personalities. This resulted in a stalemate because key reforms and the necessary investment to grow and diversify the economy were not made. Nigeria was essentially sleepwalking towards the end of the oil economy. Although governance problems have been reduced, the quality of leadership in dealing with the long-term issues plaguing the country remains problematic.

Leadership counts

The players largely remained the same, but the structure changed. Corruption did not end overnight. The backroom deals that brought restructuring did not facilitate rapid progress because everything had to be done by consensus. As a result, not much consequential work was accomplished afterwards. The needed economic reforms remained undone. The newly created regions were just getting settled and still largely dependent on the center. Rebuilding the economies region by region after decades of depending on oil revenue sharing at the center was challenging.

By 2035, the oil economy was facing a certain end. The effects of climate change and weather events in the decades before had driven industrial countries to invest in new energy sources that were being commercialized, while newer and promising sources were under development. Major oil producers were decommissioning their oil blocks. The European Union (EU) initiated the first carbon tax on exports produced with fossil fuels. A proposal for the US to follow the EU policy was under discussion in Congress. With the US on the verge of signing on to the EU proposals, mainstream investment banks and development finance institutions stopped investing in fossil fuels. Nigerian oil assets, like many others in the world, were losing value, and although they still generated revenue, it was minuscule compared to the days when oil was crowned the black gold.

Nigeria was highly indebted, facing a looming debt default, and had no substantial resources to invest in diversifying the economy or speeding up the economic growth rate.

It's the Economy

In 2035, the election functioned as a referendum on the economy and how to continue the restructuring process. The smaller parties had increased power, leading to a murkier result than in previous elections. The presidency and many regional governments required a runoff. The assemblies were highly divided. The newly elected governments at all levels began to focus on the economy, facing numerous challenges due to stagnant investment in education, healthcare, agriculture, and infrastructure, and the fact that many highly skilled professionals had left the country. Furthermore, major Nigerian firms had relocated their headquarters outside of Nigeria, given the high levels of uncertainty and lack of progress in the preceding decade.

Nigeria needed to reboot, but the elite and the people were not ready to make the necessary sacrifices. As a result, the “muddle through strategy”, without a clear reform agenda or consensus on the way forward, was implemented. The inability to undertake structural reforms and restructure the economy hindered productivity, growth and employment. Reforms were happening but were not deep or wide enough to bring about transformational change. By 2040, Nigeria had become the third most populous country in the world, suffering from the effects of climate change, including drought in some regions and flooding in others. Additionally, a series of pandemics appeared in regular cycles. The governments at all levels attempted to respond, but their actions were inadequate to address the nature and number of the challenges.

The debt overhang

Before the 2043 elections, the economic crisis peaked with a default in debt payments. Three regional governments could not meet basic payments and expenditures, spreading poverty among Nigerians. The economy became the central issue in the election, and the ruling party was ousted in a landslide victory.

The new government focused on the economy and assumed that governance reforms were here to stay. The priority was to rebuild the economy to prevent the nation from collapsing. While creditor nations allowed some leeway, they did not forgive the debt. The country initiated reforms, reorganized priorities, and pushed for debt restructuring.

Progress but not enough

The nation began to see some improvements. But in the first instance, the results were not widely shared, as the benefits were largely captured by the elites. The government preached patience. With growth returning, the government began repaying the debt after the moratorium. Investments in public infrastructure were also launched. Efforts to relaunch agriculture to reduce imports, enhance exports and simply ensure that the nation can feed itself were embarked upon. The government won re-election easily, although with a reduced majority.

The nation began to see some progress. But it was simply not enough to overcome the backlog of challenges which had deepened over the previous decades nor to cover the needs of a fast-growing and youthful population. It is the end of 2050, the President has just given her end-of-the-year address to the Nigerians. In her words:

“Nigeria is now about 250 million people and the third most populous country in the world. Our growth has improved. More children are in school. Unemployment has reduced. We are now able to restart paying our debt. So, we will be leaving the nation better than we took over. But the global environment has not been friendly. The challenges for our nation and the next government continue to be huge and daunting.

The question before us as a nation is how to fast-track the reforms which we launched to speed up growth and development to address the huge developmental backlogs facing our nation. We must do what is necessary for the sake of future generations.

God Bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria.”



Photo of North Central visioning exercise held in Abuja, credit: NYFF



Photo of South South visioning exercise, credit: NYFF



O-Y-O (On Your Own) is a Nigeria experiencing high economic growth rates, but the nation continues to face significant governance crises, resulting in operating much below par. Poverty and social ills from drugs, banditry, and conflicts at various levels are on the rise.

Gas for the world

After the COVID-19-induced global lockdown, The conventional wisdom was that the 2022 war on Ukraine had a detrimental effect on the developing world, with its impact on global logistics, energy costs and food prices. High levels of inflation were felt in most nations and Nigeria. However, for Nigeria, it was also a blessing in disguise. It made the world realize that natural gas could be a transition energy, leading to increased support for projects in Nigeria that were previously not receiving funding.

The new government, after the 2023 elections, took note and decided to capitalize on the opportunities provided by the country's abundant natural gas and build on initial plans.

The priority was building the gas pipeline to Europe, followed by a focus on building a gas pipeline across West Africa. The strategy aimed to overcome the energy challenge hindering industrialization in the region and unleash the capacity of West African countries to produce and ensure energy access for all. The energy sector reforms were strengthened, and a stronger institutional base was developed through the ECOWAS Commission to ensure the pipeline could reach all of the countries in the region. The initial focus was on the industry, with later plans to ensure access to electricity for all the population.

Reforms to build on progress

Nigeria undertook reforms to enable Nigerian sovereign wealth funds, insurance companies, and pension funds could invest in these projects. It also used its soft power to convince countries in the region and major private sector entities in Africa to invest in these projects, billed as Africa's second independence.

The immediate results were an employment boom in the energy sector, with many people employed in building the infrastructure across the region.

As energy became more available at a reasonable cost, society began to feel the impacts in the prices of inputs, energy availability, and productivity increases.

Greening the economy and growing the revenue

The push to "green" the world economy, due to the increasing frequency of weather events caused by climate change and their significant impact on livelihoods worldwide, also enhanced economic growth. Nigeria discovered more resources that could help in the world's "green agenda" and provide a lifeline and substitute for oil as a significant revenue source. Through technology, the government captured more revenue and substantially increased the government's revenue share of the national GDP to approximate global averages. However, exploiting these new resources essentially followed the same model as oil.

Electoral landslides but limited ambition

The ruling party has been rewarded with a substantial majority in the 2027 and 2031 elections. The party's success in providing energy and expanding and growing the economy has given people confidence. It has become dominant in Nigeria's electoral system by co-opting key people from other parties. While the economy has enjoyed substantial growth based on resources, the national agenda has been timid and not ambitious enough. Exploitation has been left largely in the hands of foreign firms, with some local participation. Corruption continues unabated, and the ruling elites prioritize access to the national cake, which they largely share among themselves, hoping that some will trickle down to those at the bottom. Many initially bought into this vision, but as the gaps between the rich and poor widened and the promised prosperity did not materialize, the people began to ask questions.

Agitations for a re-run

In 2034, the agitations that had been reduced suddenly appeared on the front pages, and people demanded more. Many individuals spoke about seeing a similar scenario in the past where primary resource-fueled growth failed to have a lasting impact due to corruption and ineffective policies. With one of the worst inequalities in the world, the agitations became increasingly widespread. The civil defense forces' disproportionate response was a turning point, and the youths vowed to push things to a logical conclusion by calling for the government to resign.

The issues of ethnicity, religion, poverty and marginalization flared up, and the government's further repression of the demonstrators brought back the old fault lines with a vengeance. Sadly, the repressions were not evenly distributed across the regions and many people saw this as evidence. As a result, they joined various groups that called for resource control, restructuring or outright secession. Dormant movements from earlier times re-emerged with a vengeance and now with sophisticated tools. A series of miscalculated moves and strategic mistakes simply compounded the problems and made things worse.

The nation was consumed with conflicts, and a few groups began taking up arms while calling for secession.

The government declared an all-out war on secessionists and all other groups agitating for change, lumping them all together.

Sleep-walking into a war

The nation's lack of strategic approach has caused it to stumble into wars on many fronts by 2040. The government has indefinitely postponed the elections, citing the prevailing lawlessness as a reason for being unable to organize them. The government launched a national reconstruction initiative, but many viewed its composition and actions as a coup by a particular segment of the population to seize power. Instead of calming the political situation, the perceived coup has only served to further inflame divisions.

A group arose to organize a conference of nationalities to deliberate on the future of Nigeria. Some elements within the group were adamant about the need for a breakup and insisted that the conference must focus on developing a roadmap for an organized breakup of the country. The government saw these activities as direct confrontations and warned against the conference. But there was no backing down. On the eve of the conference, the leadership was rounded up by the military. Despite the arrests, many were defiant and showed up at the conference site the next day to initiate their deliberations. For the government, this was an affront and the violent breakup of the conference caused significant damage to property and many deaths.

There was outcry but not enough to dissuade investors keen on seeking huge returns from the resource-fueled economy. The major sources of primary products for exports and transport routes were heavily protected. The economy continues to grow albeit much slower than before. The income from the resource exports was used mainly to fund the military while the rest was largely captured by the elites to fund their lifestyles.

Growing national division

The people were highly divided. Divisions based on wealth, ethnicity and religion were pervasive, creating artificial barriers to organizing the population to deal with the fundamental challenges facing the nation. Despite the lack of unity at the national level, many were simply now open to going on their own. The results were several regions making a unilateral declaration of independence. The regions declaring independence quickly recognized each other and began the journey of convincing other nations to recognize them too.

By 2045, there were tensions between some of the regions over natural resources and borders, leading to conflicts.

At the same time, what remains of the Nigerian Federal government continues to claim that the country is indivisible, seeing the regions declaring independence as errant. However, the federal government no longer had the resources to engage in wars on multiple fronts simultaneously. Importantly, some regions that had declared their independence began collaborating on the war against the federal government.

The peace treaty?

With further deterioration and a major economic slowdown, the breakaway regions called for a definite peace treaty, and an international conference was held in 2048. Interestingly, some of the breakaway regions had returned to electoral democracy with elected governments and parliaments, while others were still ruled by the strong men that led the breakaway. The first meeting led to an agreed roadmap focused on ending boundary and resource conflicts. Essentially, the people were tired of conflicts. Pressure mounted on the federal junta to relinquish power and for the country to return to democracy. The question is, which country is being referred to here?

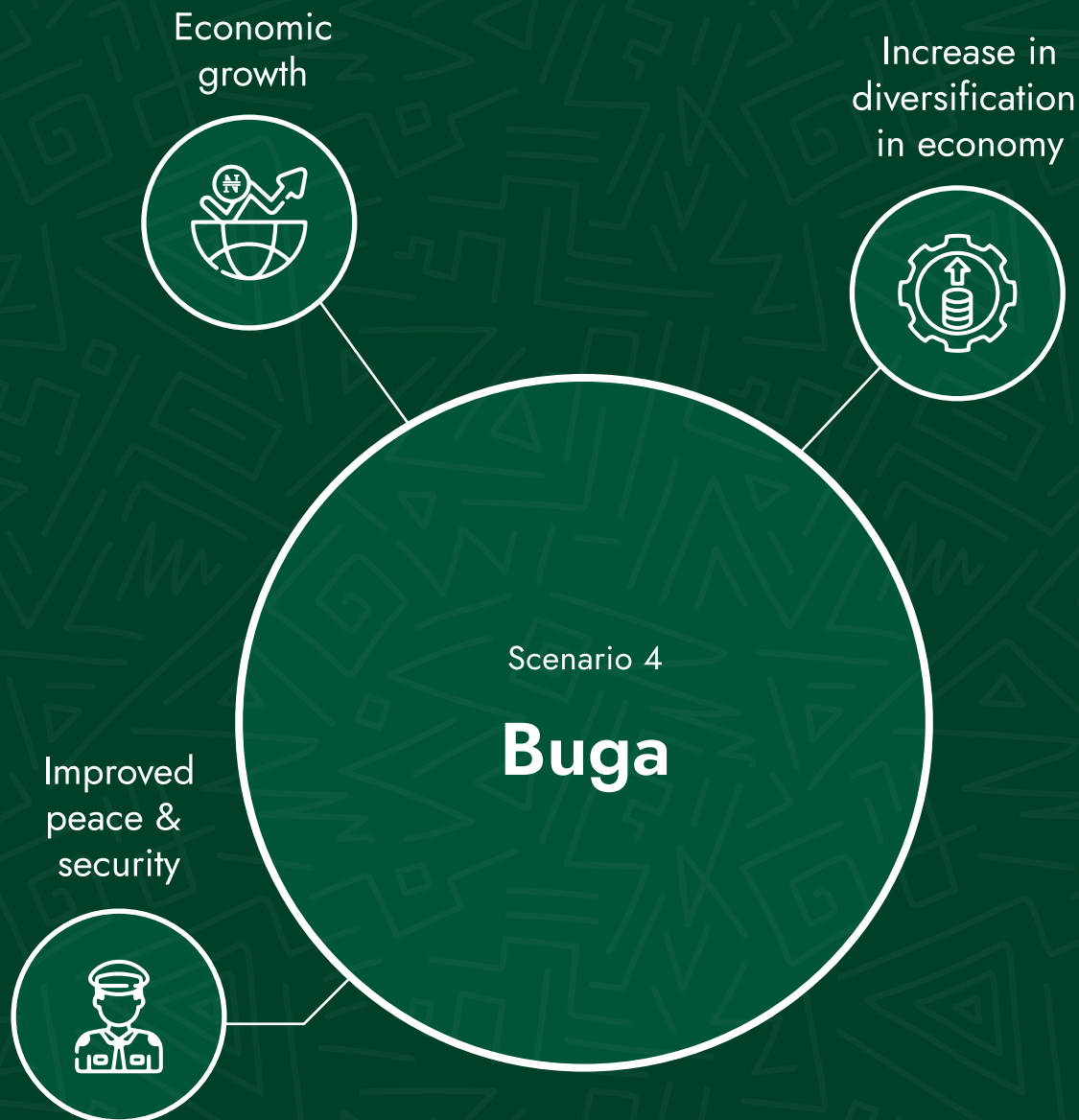
By 2050, Nigeria and the breakaway regions were facing difficult challenges. The issues before the country were very clear: What should be the relationship with the breakaway nations? Will the resolution be based on negotiations or an all-out war?

Two major parties arose as part of the upcoming elections: One of the parties campaigned on a manifesto to organize amicable and final agreements for each region, so they can form their own country and achieve a final peace settlement. The other party campaigned on the need to build a strong federation, with the promise of bringing the breakaway countries back but into what they called a true federation.

**Which party will win?
What will be necessary to achieve
either of the two divergent visions
of the future?**



Photo of North Central visioning exercise held in Abuja, credit: NYFF



Buga is the story of Nigeria's long boom. Despite the initial conditions and the challenging elections of 2023, the leadership and the people found a way out to begin the slow and painful process of change and transformation. This however did not come by chance or miracle; it came through persistent push and engagement by the population at large as well as the leadership. Despite persistent challenges, Nigeria's economy was growing rapidly and Nigeria was leading the African continent. Nigeria had become a full member of the G20 and a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council by 2050. The Buga scenario is the story of how Nigeria embarked on the path of transformation and sustained growth. It was not easy. But through a rallying vision, robust strategy and efforts to carry most people along, Nigerians were able to bring about change.

The difficult elections

The change began after the 2023 elections, which for many Nigerians, were the most important since the return to democracy in 1999. The various campaigns generated interest among the populace. However, as usual, there were many administrative, logistical, and institutional challenges on election day. Many did not receive their PVCs and there were issues with accreditations. In many places, voting materials arrived quite late, and there were disruptions to voting. The promised electronic transmission of the results of the election through BVAS did not happen, which led many people to question the validity of the announced results. Some candidates even went to court to challenge the outcome.

The Civil Strife

Many, especially the youths felt disenfranchised. Many political parties declared the election stolen, and some decided on joint action. Initially, they launched a peaceful demonstration and went to court. Many in the fringes saw the aftermath of the elections as a time to double their agitations. While the court did not invalidate the results, the process did show a lot of malpractice. The result was civil strife with more demonstrations. The global economy was still tempered by the conflict in Ukraine and the resurging pandemic. The elected President and his team and important national leaders were concerned about the disintegration of Nigeria. They began working with a few credible national leaders and political parties to create a national unity government based on competence and values orientation.

The Government of national unity

Arrangements were quickly made to put in place the Government of National Unity as a result of the cross-party accord to address the key national questions. The national questions include finding solutions to the fundamental challenges facing the country, including restructuring, economic growth and diversification, peace/conflicts, accountability, transparency and corruption. The contours of an agreement were put together by the new government with support from a group of wise women and men; the proposal was assented to largely by the parties and the national assembly as a governing framework with the purpose of building a new prosperous Nigerian Federation where all people in every generation are secure, dignified and happy. While it was not easy, the parties were able to sell the accord to their followers bringing calm to the polity.

Governing for change

In early 2024, the government launched their medium strategy for development focused on five key missions: (i) improving governance with emphasis on restructuring, transparency, accountability, enabling business environment and ending corruption, (ii) facilitating innovation and entrepreneurship, (iii) ensuring sustainable infrastructure, (iv) investing in human capital and (v) rebuilding the Nigerian federation with a critical emphasis on ending conflicts, building peace and reorienting the country.

Co-opting all with the power to act for change

The difference this time around was that the strategy was not implemented in a classical way; a whole-of-society approach was adopted including the national assembly (House and Senate), ministries and agencies, states, municipalities as well as the civil society and business communities. Immediate results were improved coordination and investment facilitation. Critical reforms were quickly undertaken to improve the business and economic environment.

This led Nigeria to one of the top 50 countries to do business within five years.

A strategy to overwhelm and defeat terror groups was formulated and implemented. Not left out was the need to deal with banditry and kidnapping through both a carrot and stick approach. The people were tired and ready to collaborate with a government that seems to be making the right moves.

Delivering results through actions

The various missions, given the holistic and multi-stakeholder approach, began to show results, raising the confidence of the population and the business community as well as investors. The result was an increased investment. A strategy to capture opportunities and exploit the comparative advantages of Nigeria, including abundant resources, the large and growing consumer market, strong banking and financial sector, emerging innovation ecosystems, and

market access, was formulated. Attractive incentives and business environment reforms were instrumental in changing the business narratives. A major push was also made on education and health care to stem the decline and begin to invest and reform these two critical sectors.

Governance with a national purpose

The governance mission had significant support for the agenda to build more efficient and effective open governance that is highly transparent and accountable with no tolerance for corruption. Several high-level officials and senior business leaders had to resign from their positions and were publicly prosecuted for corruption. Most were found guilty and had to forfeit their assets as well as go to prison. The no-nonsense approach and high open government standards rekindled hope among the population and led to a new values movement to stem out many of the ills that have come to signify Nigeria. Civic tech innovations were employed by a coalition of civil society organizations to monitor government performance and to expose corrupt practices as well as leaders.

The performance of the government changed the political landscape with the unity government parties coalescing into one grouping. They easily won the 2027 elections in a landslide on the promise that they will continue the government of growth and reforms. They also presented a national reform agenda to transform Nigeria into a true federation modeled along the lines of what was obtained in the 1960s before the civil war with some changes to meet the needs of the time. While there were many other parties from the left and right ideological base or regionally inspired, they were not strong enough to stop the government's agenda. Although they

were loud in their criticism and raised issues with governance.

With majorities in the House of Representatives and the Senate as well as in over two-thirds of the states, the government was able to embark on a national agenda for restructuring. The necessary constitutional amendments were passed in 2028 and the process of reorganizing the country into six federating units along the current geopolitical zones was embarked upon. The restructuring devolved significant powers to the regions, each with the ability to tax and run the affairs of their region including policing. The federal government's main roles were focused on defence, foreign and monetary policies. There is also an allowance for federal taxes to allow the transfer of resources from the resource-rich regions to the resource-poor regions to support development activities. The newly revised constitution also allowed for independent candidates and recall elections for political office holders as well as effective quotas to ensure gender parity in elected offices.

Employing technology for revenue generation and security

Substantial resources were invested in collecting taxes, using technology and policies to drive economic activities online even in the informal sectors. Strategies were employed to drive the nation towards a cashless society. Surveillance technologies were deployed to make it difficult to hide incomes and those found guilty were subjected to legal consequences. Similar surveillance technologies were used to deal a death blow to terror groups and bandits. Preemptive strikes against and arrests of bandits as well as terror groups became the norm.

These policies and the zero-tolerance approach to corruption changed the dynamics and increased optimism about change. The cancellation of expensive subsidy programs which the state could no longer afford after extensive public education and campaign expanded the fiscal space so the government could invest in human capital and fund key technological challenges to promote innovation and economic transformation in key sectors and governance.

Among the key focus of these innovation challenges were agriculture, digital economy, mining for rare materials, the green economy value chain and governance.

Training the global workforce

By 2033, Nigeria had trained millions of certified software developers and digital nomads who provided offshore services to companies worldwide. Nigeria became a global hub for skilled professionals, with many Nigerians working remotely from within the country. This was made possible by increased investment in digital infrastructure, liberalization of the communications market, effective regulation, and deep reforms in the educational sector that emphasized training students to learn, think critically, and solve problems.

The income from remote workers was substantial and provided a crucial offset to declining revenue from oil.

The government invested resources and struck deals with enterprises to deduct taxes and transfer them directly to the government, similar to local entities.

These new resources fueled investments in agricultural renewal and the growth of new technological sectors. Nigeria made huge investments in innovative technologies, including cloud computing, robotics, virtual reality, and artificial intelligence, to address critical issues and transform the economy. The rise of new economic sectors, along with continued growth in the cultural and creative industries, led to Nigeria emerging as a global center for tech startups in the developing world. This was a significant boost for the economy and marked the beginning of the process of laying the foundation for economic transformation.

Dealing with development backlogs and persistent challenges

The nation was witnessing high growth rates. However, many old problems and emerging challenges persist. Nigeria had a significant backlog of development challenges from huge infrastructure deficits (energy, transport, water, etc.) to too many young adults without the education or skills for the labor market. While progress has been made in the social sectors, health and education, huge investments still need to be made to make up for what has not been done in the past.

The reality was not everyone had benefited or could have benefited from the progress. The 2035 elections hinged on the issues of

inequality across the board and the devolution of power. There are different camps on the issue of devolution of powers, ranging from those seeking additional federating units to those asking for further reduction in the powers of the federal government. Some argue for a federal parliamentary system to save on the costs of governance and ensure a more responsive government, while others propose confederation. Others simply argue that the long-term solution is for each region to become a country and all can collaborate via ECOWAS. Tensions rose before the 2035 elections.

These policies and the zero-tolerance approach to corruption changed the dynamics and increased optimism about change. The cancellation of expensive subsidy programs which the state could no longer afford after extensive public education and campaign expanded the fiscal space so the government could invest in human capital and fund key technological challenges to promote innovation and economic transformation in key sectors and governance.

Things were not helped by three major challenges that have built up over some years: droughts in the north, floods in the south, and another global health pandemic.

The new pandemic, coupled with the effects of the weather events, deepened the challenges facing the country. The problems showed that while Nigeria has made progress, a lot more remains to be done. The improved economic conditions and management provided some space to address the fallouts. However, a sizable portion of the population was nonetheless affected.

The narrow win is a boom

It was a hard-fought election. A group of the opposition won in the second round and barely had a majority in parliament. While they have enough support to govern, the government does not have enough to undertake the major constitutional reforms on which they campaigned. However, they were able to institute more economic reforms and build on the previous government's programs. By the next election in 2039, growth had spiked due to increasing economic diversification and inclusive manufacturing. Rising costs in Asia and the emergence of consumers keen on reducing their carbon footprint made them more interested in consuming products produced in relatively closer markets. This provided Nigeria with an advantage in the European markets. Nigeria's leadership on the continent, as well as the implementation of the AfCFTA, also provided the country with an advantage in the African markets.

The poverty elections

Whereas economic growth had lifted many out of poverty, many were still caught in the poverty cycle. The inability of the government to institute a robust and wide social welfare program was a challenge for policymakers. Trying to ensure a delicate balance between raising spending to meet the needs of the poor and ensuring a stable macroeconomic environment was a challenge. However, a few strong opposition parties formed an alliance on the need to break the back of poverty through social programs. They preached the model of investing in welfare programs and ending poverty. They built a reasonably strong coalition that was able to deliver the vote to win the elections.

The new government continued on the previous

reforms and built on achievements while innovating new approaches to address the issues of poverty in partnership with regional governments. One was to put in place a minimum level of support for families living below the poverty line. The second was a massive national program to build the capabilities of the poor and marginalized to enhance their productivity and ability to participate in the economy. Massive skills training and acquisition programs were instituted using various media through open universities, technical colleges and polytechnics to provide technical training schemes. Civil society organizations as well as religious institutions became partners in the skills acquisition process to train millions. A national educational platform as well as certification programs were put in place for anyone to learn and get certified. In addition, the state in partnership with banks launched huge financing and advisory support programs for MSMEs.

The social welfare programs were highly impactful. Despite some waste, the overall impact was very positive and allowed the government to win a second term in 2047. With a steep decline in insecurity and crime, resources were over time directed to social spending and human capital development. These in turn helped to fuel growth and development. The government working together at all levels was also able to build the necessary institutional and infrastructure needs to support development efforts.

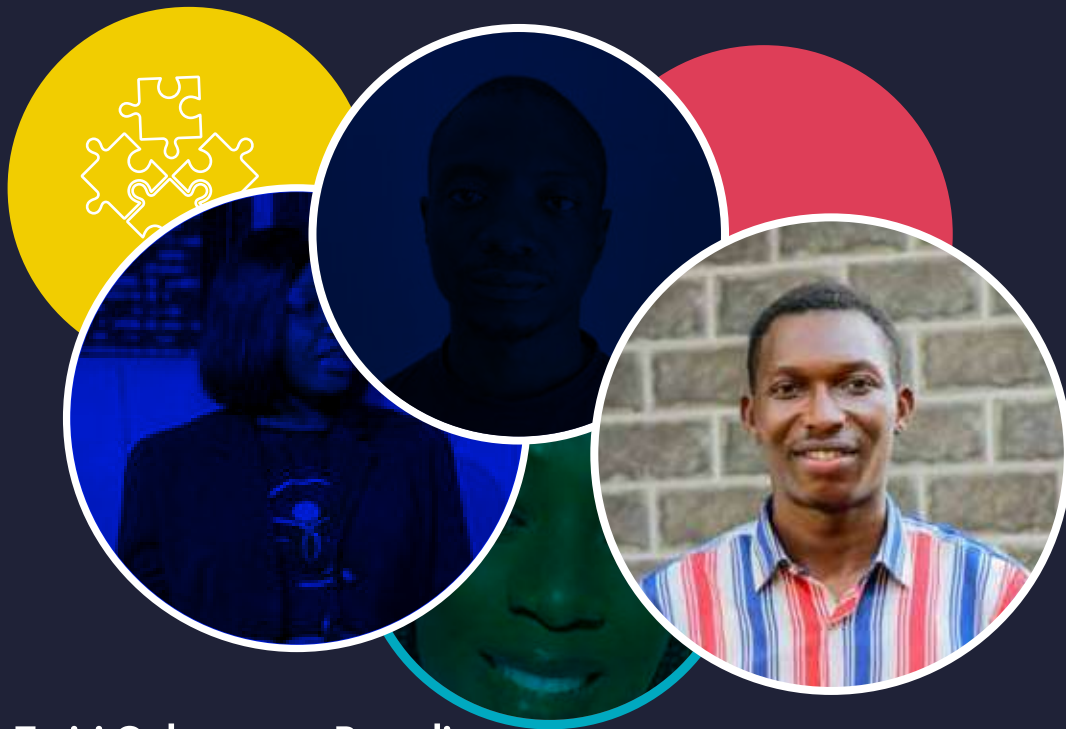
The result was a Nigeria in 2050 that was truly leading the African continent, a full member of the G20 and also a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. While issues remained, the people looked at the future with optimism.

Conclusion

The scenarios—E Don Cast, Sapa, O-Y-O (On Your Own) and Buga—are all stories of how Nigeria might or could evolve between 2023 and 2050. They are not meant to be forecasts or predictions as the future is unknowable. However, each scenario is plausible. They were developed as part of the strategic reflection on the future of Nigeria, *The Nigeria We Want*. The exercise is meant to propose a youth agenda for Nigeria. The scenarios in this exercise are meant to map possibilities of the future and they highlight the push and pull factors for one scenario or the other and in the process shed light on some of the key decision points and the critical issues of the future. The next chapter presents the strategic agenda including the vision and strategies to build the Nigeria we want.



Photo of North East visioning exercise, credit: NYFF



Tesiri Oghenetega Benedict

Delta State

→ *What do you do for a living?*

Graphics Designer

→ *Express your view about the Nigeria of today and expectations for the future.*

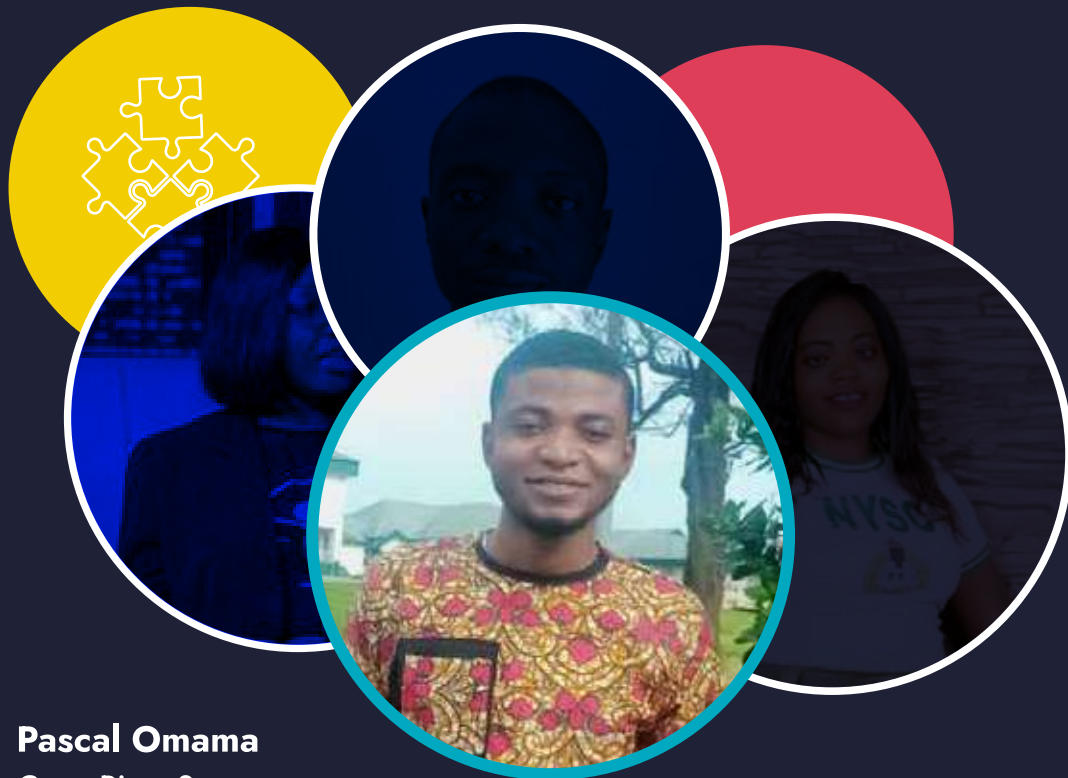
The Nigeria of today is faced with challenges of insecurity, a high rate of unemployment, poor implementation of govt policies & increased corruption, My expectations for the future of Nigeria: as a people, we must begin to see beyond our personal interest, we must be able to see what we can do for Nigeria, where hope, resilient, where people of content & character & voted in, where businesses will thrive.

→ *How do your views about Nigeria and expectations for the future affect the choices you make?*

It affects my choices because it determines the opportunities that will be available to me and makes participation in how things are shaped today very important.

→ *What Nigeria do you want, and how do we get there?*

I want a Nigeria where there is Peace, Unity, Equity & Justice. A Nigeria where leaders are not voted on the basis of their political parties but on the basis of their character and integrity, a Nigeria where there is a reward for loyalty & service, a Nigeria where the northerner can embrace a southerner and say this is my brother we are Nigerians, where leaders are accountable to themselves & to their people.



Pascal Omama
Cross-River State

→ **What do you do for a living?**

Social Worker

→ **Express your view about the Nigeria of today and expectations for the future.**

Nigeria today is characterized by poverty, hardship, insecurity, corruption and slow development of infrastructure, owing to bad leadership. I believe if we can get the right leaders who can control, manage and create policies that will put into good use the resources of Nigeria, our future will be glorious. I see Nigeria attaining her title in reality, as the "Giant of Africa" devoid of economic hardship, insecurity, corruption, ethnic and religious sentiment.

→ **How do your views about Nigeria and expectations for the future affect the choices you make?**

My views above about Nigeria have made me very conscious and calculative with the way I do things; because I know, if things don't go the right way with what I envisage for the country in future, the results will be disastrous.

→ **What Nigeria do you want, and how do we get there?**

This is why I have been advocating for good governance among my peers and community. I believe to get the Nigeria we want, everyone needs to contribute their quota and must be ready to change before looking up to the leaders. This is also why I encourage those in my community to collect their PVC and vote in the coming election, for those they believe have the capacity to develop the country, without any form of sentiment. Our decision today will translate to the kind of leaders we are going to have, be it bad or good



04

**A Youth
Agenda for
Nigeria**

After examining the Nigerian context and exploring possibilities for the future, the next step is formulating a strategic agenda for the nation. The exercise aims to present a youth agenda for Nigeria that mobilizes all Nigerians to bring it to life. The agenda presents a vision for Nigeria and its core elements and also proposes a strategy that, if well implemented, will facilitate its realization.

Although Nigeria faces daunting challenges, we, the Nigerian youths, continue to be optimistic about the future of our country and the potential for change. The concerns are significant, but we believe that Nigeria can be transformed if bold steps are taken. We are keen on playing active roles in building and transforming our nation into a source of pride. It is why we have proposed an agenda for 2050 that all Nigerians could commit to and contribute their quotas to realizing. The vision, its core elements, and the strategies emerged from the various regional and national retreats organized under the “Nigeria We Want” exercise. The ideas provide a glimpse into the future that the Nigerian youth leaders envision for our country and should be considered a foundation for developing future policies for Nigeria.

Visioning is Key

Successful countries have a clear vision of the future and are even more successful when the vision is truly shared. The importance of a shared national vision cannot be overemphasized, especially for a nation as diverse and challenging as Nigeria. The purpose of a shared vision is to serve as a guide, the *raison d'être* for which national strategies and policies will be designed and implemented. A shared vision also provides a purpose that those with the power to act and the population at large can rally around. In short, a truly shared vision serves as a mobilizer.

It is difficult today to find a country that has succeeded in transforming its society but does not have a shared vision and a clear national agenda. There is always a sense of shared purpose and agenda. Today's challenge for Nigeria is that beyond the national documents, such as the constitution and national development plans, it is difficult to see a well-laid-out vision for the future—a vision that is lived and that the people know. They not only know, but they also have a clear idea of what the vision means for them in terms of rights and responsibilities.

We have the desire, the ideas, and the audacity to envision and contribute to realizing a bold vision to transform Nigeria. This was clearly seen in the 2021 ENDSARS movement, which had a clear five-point agenda. The fallout of this movement

has since led to an increase in the number of youth participating in politics today and gaining a foothold in the corridors of power, with hopes of influencing and making policies that can deliver the future we want.

Visioning is powerful. However, the ability to visualize and articulate a possible future state for the nation is vital for success. The visioning process must consider and align the current context with the desired future. An unrealistic vision not based on reality will ultimately fail. To achieve a successful vision for the nation, collaboration from all stakeholders is necessary, particularly the input of the future generation, the youth.

Visualizing the vision as such is not enough. The vision must be brought to life. Creating the vision is only the beginning; implementing it requires ongoing support and designing a robust execution process. Examples abound of countries in the same situation as Nigeria in the 1960s and 1970s but have been able to transform their societies. A clear and collective vision sets the course for the country's development, defines the criteria for human, social, and economic development, and strives to ensure the best quality of life for its citizens. A clear vision that leverages the power of imagination can galvanize support from the people.

“One thing I am hopeful for is that young people are getting informed everyday and these young people are ready to save the country by being selfless to make Nigeria better. The Nigeria Youth Futures Fund project is an example of such. My expectation for leadership in Nigeria is Inclusion. The more young people are included in the policy formulation, intervention, there will be more leaders”

Aisha Tofa
Founder, Startup Kano

“I want a Nigeria where there are equal opportunities for the girl child”

Aisha Baba Shehu
Gender equality and climate change advocate

“The Nigeria I want is one where “the son of a nobody can become somebody without knowing anybody” , a Nigeria that is safe to travel at night, and complete eradication of hunger”

Karima Abdulaziz
Social Entrepreneur, FCT

“My goal is to improve the lives of persons with disabilities. We want inclusion for persons with disabilities. My expectation about leadership is that it starts with us”

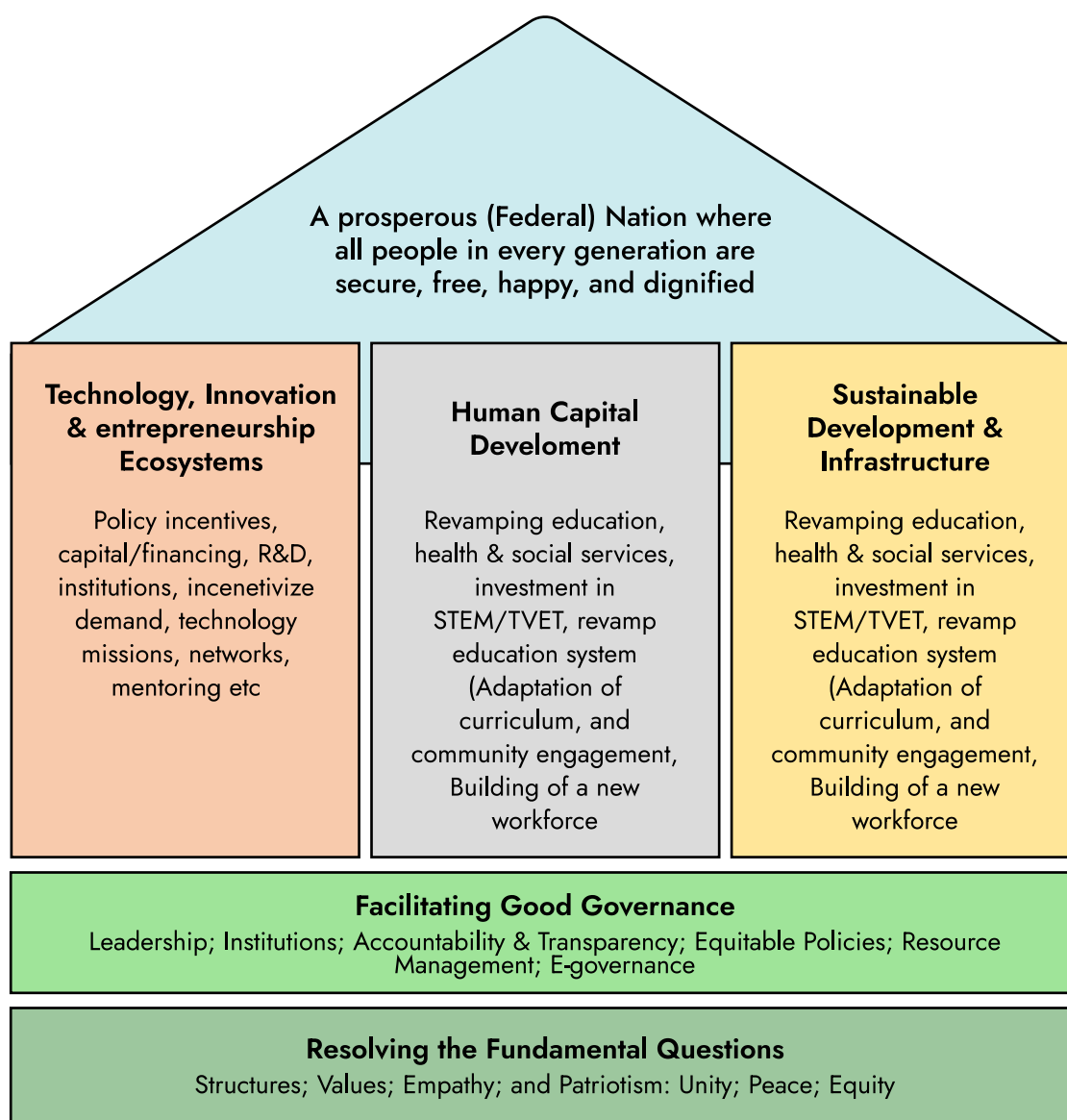
Nafisa Imam
Founder of Kanawa Educational
Foundation for the Disabled

The future we want

The regional and national retreats included a key part, which was to determine the future that we, the Nigerian youths, want. The organizers tasked us to look beyond barriers and impossibilities and tap into our subconscious to envision a new Nigeria. The goal was to create a vision that would provide a shared sense of purpose and propose a robust set of coherent and effective strategies to create the desired future. The organizers presented the strategic agenda as a result of these efforts. (Figure).

Among the assets that stand out are, a large market with huge resource endowments, a youthful population, skilled labor, diaspora, creative and emerging digital economies.

FIGURE 4.1 ▶ Youth's Strategic Agenda for Nigeria



The vision

Nigerian youths sum up their vision for Nigeria in four words: Good People, Great Nation. Their fundamental desire or ideal is for a great nation with good people. Further expounded, their vision is for Nigeria by 2050 to become:

“A Prosperous (Federal) Nation where all people in every generation are secure, free, happy, and dignified.”

The desire to address some of Nigeria’s lingering and fundamental challenges has birthed this vision. The aim is to make all the people of Nigeria, present and future, the focus of the national development agenda. Creating a prosperous [federal] nation by 2050 will be challenging, requiring a concerted effort by all stakeholders, including the government, private sector, civil society, and private citizens.

The core elements of the vision

Nigerian youths envisioned a good people and a great nation with some deep characteristics, including the following:

Prosperous: The youths yearn for Nigeria to become a prosperous nation that can diversify and transform its economy, and compete in global markets. The goal is to create a fast-growing and highly performing entrepreneurial economy that offers satisfying career opportunities for people and leads the world in critical areas. This envisioned world will have superb technological capacity, and Nigeria will build a robust national innovation system that

allows the country to become globally dominant in some key sectors of the future. A key part of this prosperity is that it is shared, allowing everyone to partake in the growth and share in the wealth.

Nation: This is about nationhood. We aim to build a united nation that unites the various peoples and cultures that make up Nigeria while celebrating our diversity. We should aim to become one people and one nation rather than just a collection of separate groups. Every individual should be able to move and live freely in any part of the country, regardless of their background, ethnicity, or religion. We can achieve this while still celebrating our diversity.

Federal: Nigerian youths call for a true federal system that allows each state or region more local control. The core idea of the vision is a federal system that increases citizen participation, effectiveness, stability, equitable development, regional autonomy, accountability, and transparency.

People: Our desire is to build a nation that serves its people. The development of the people is at the center of all national actions. We envision a citizen-centered nation where all systems and sectors work in the interest of the people. We prioritize human development and equity to ensure equal opportunity for all, regardless of gender, age, personal disability status, religion, or ethnicity. We also recognize the importance of responsibility and call for individuals to be part of the solution rather than the problem and contribute to national life while supporting local initiatives.

Every generation: Our vision emphasizes sustainability and the need to respect future generations. It is about "living today for tomorrow" and intergenerational solidarity. The state and all citizens, including corporations,

must operate with the ethos of sustainability, not harming the environment or exploiting resources without compromising the needs of future generations.

Secure, free, happy, and dignified: All human-beings have the need and desire to live a secure, free, happy and dignified life. We strive to meet the basic needs of all Nigerians and promote prosperity while ensuring that everyone can meet their necessities. The security of individuals and their property is crucial, and we guarantee all fundamental human rights.

In summary, this vision calls for a transformed Nigeria that is prosperous and free of absolute poverty. We aim for a country where every Nigerian's basic needs are met and each person can strive for self-actualization. Dignity for all, peace, unity, and equity within and between generations are valued. Development is sustainable, and resources are used sustainably to ensure that future generations can meet their own needs.

Building the desired future

What strategies can Nigeria implement to ensure that it achieves its goal of becoming "a prosperous (federal) nation where all people in every generation are secure, free, happy, and dignified" by 2050? There are many things that Nigeria can do, but the challenge today is the existence of too many resource constraints. Therefore, Nigeria must concentrate its efforts on a few strategies that are truly transformative.

Nigerian youths have proposed a strategic agenda to create the desired future, as presented

in figure 4.1. The proposed strategic agenda uses the metaphor of a house. A good and solid house requires a solid foundation, sturdy pillars, and a good roof. The combination of a robust foundation and strong pillars will allow the Nigerian house to stand strong and endure adversities, while seizing opportunities within the global environment.

To lay a strong foundation for the future, Nigeria must invest in resolving the fundamental questions or challenges facing the nation and facilitating good governance. Next, Nigeria must build the pillars that will hold the nation up. The first pillar should be a commitment to building robust national technology, innovation, and entrepreneurial ecosystems. The second pillar should focus on investing in human capital development to signal that development is about people. The third pillar should prioritize sustainable development and infrastructure. This means enhancing the productive base and ensuring that Nigeria builds world-class infrastructure to facilitate enhanced productivity, the emergence of new sectors, and promote a good quality of life for the people, all while ensuring sustainability.

Resolving the fundamental questions facing Nigeria

Nigeria must resolve the fundamental challenges facing the nation to survive and thrive in the long term. As the saying goes, "a house divided cannot stand." The Nigerian nation is currently highly divided on fundamental levels and issues. Some groups actively and openly campaign for regions to have the option to opt out and secede, while others see re-invigorated federalism as the way out. However, there is currently no consensus on what form of federalism to adopt.

Moreover, the nation's values are problematic. Greed, nepotism, and corruption have become the norm, while kidnapping and banditry are fast-growing business opportunities. Additionally, large swathes of the population feel marginalized, and there are high levels of inequality, with a few controlling state resources for themselves while the vast majority falls deeper into poverty.

As a nation, what are our values? How can we regain our footing? How can we undertake a new values orientation, given that successive attempts before have never really achieved the goals, despite the efforts to create institutions?

This is a whole-of-society challenge. Everyone has to be involved, and each and every one of us must start the change. All Nigerians will have to model the desired behavior and values. Churches, mosques, traditional religions, civic organizations, and private institutions must engage to help drive home new ways of doing things. This challenge is much bigger than the government; it requires a mindset shift in society at large. For example, we must stop celebrating corrupt officials who should be treated worse than common criminals. This is not about law or government agencies; it is about how we behave as individuals.

Linked to this is the need to see ourselves as citizens, with rights and responsibilities. We must not only seek to take but also contribute to the commonwealth. Civic and media organizations must rise up to fill the values and patriotism vacuum and begin the arduous tasks of

re-education and re-orientation. This must also include curriculum redesign to ensure that the values we want to promote, such as patriotism, empathy, generosity, kindness and honesty, are taught right from the first day of kindergarten to the high places of learning, such as universities. As a society, we must also encourage the emergence of institutions that can drive and enforce agreed-upon rules and regulations. We are not more corrupt as a people than the other countries where corruption index is low; the difference is that their institutions work. We must encourage social sanctions. "Big men or women thieves" should not be rewarded with presidential pardons or elective office, while a petty thief risks death at the hands of the mob. Impunity must end, and equal justice must be the rallying cry.

To start the clean-up, we will need to restructure the country into a proper federation. The current structure of the federation has become a problem because it encourages defending the indefensible on the basis of ethnicity; "He is our thief, mumu, or goat, so let's rally around him." To address this issue, we urgently need to return to true federalism, which will allow for the restructuring of the polity and the way the nation is run and managed. We need a new federal structure that will facilitate efficiency and effectiveness in governance and that will enable the nation to address the issues of equity, marginalization, and the right to self-determination quickly and robustly. In addition, we need to address the issues of insecurity that have become omnipresent in our national life. We have entered a new reality in which no one is safe from attacks, kidnapping, or violence. To combat this, we need a concerted and local effort to address the issues of insecurity, and real devolution of powers to the various regions will be a superb start to addressing security and many other lingering issues. We must enlist the people to help the security agencies, and we must also adopt smart

technologies to fight the purveyors of insecurity in Nigeria.

Restructuring the nation as a true federation is not about breaking up; rather, it is about redressing perceived wrongs and injustices. We need to focus on what is important: addressing the fundamental issues facing our nation so we can begin the challenging tasks of nation building and ensuring prosperity for all.

Facilitating Good Governance

Various retreats have clearly highlighted the significance of governance in ensuring Nigeria's transformation. The issue emerged in various forms during the analysis of the context in Chapter 2, in the construction of scenarios in Chapter 3, and in the development of the vision and its various core elements.

This is understandable since sustainable development and national transformation require good governance. The government must play important roles in driving human capital development, entrenching values in our culture, and promoting a strong innovation-entrepreneurship ecosystem. Additionally, government at all levels has critical roles to play in resource management and in formulating and administering economic policies. Policy incentives play a critical role in supporting and enabling youth innovations that align with the national strategy.

Governments have an important role to play in creating enabling environments for economic development. To achieve this, they must create

inclusive governance structures that involve private sector players, donors, and youth in developing strategies and visions for development. It is crucial to establish efficient, inclusive, sustainable, and effective governing structures. All levels of government - federal, state, and local - have significant roles to play. It is imperative to shift the focus to state and local governments, which are closer to the people and responsible for service delivery. The democratization of local governments in Nigeria is necessary; they require autonomy and accountability to the people. The roles of the various levels of government must be clearly defined, and each level should have the autonomy to act and pursue its mandates as per the Constitution.

To ensure good governance, Nigeria must invest in institutions and ensure that rules are respected. Rules and regulations must be clearly defined, and systems must be in place to ensure compliance. Those who violate the rules must face justice through due process. Investments in organizational capacity across institutions that support and facilitate good governance, including transparency and accountability in government dealings, are critical.

The issue of openness, transparency, and accountability has become even more urgent given Nigeria's current challenging context. The nation must invest in ensuring that the government is open, transparent and that all those who have any public trust responsibility are accountable. A well-functioning judiciary will be key to ensuring accountability and ending impunity, which has become a norm for the elites in Nigeria. The judiciary must be granted autonomy and provided with the means to act.

Governance involves managing and administering various aspects of society, including economic and resource management. It

requires formulating and implementing robust policies to ensure effective and sustainable resource and economic management, which is essential for development. Therefore, it is crucial for governments to establish institutional capacity for long-term reflection, strategy formulation, policy-making, and monitoring and evaluation.

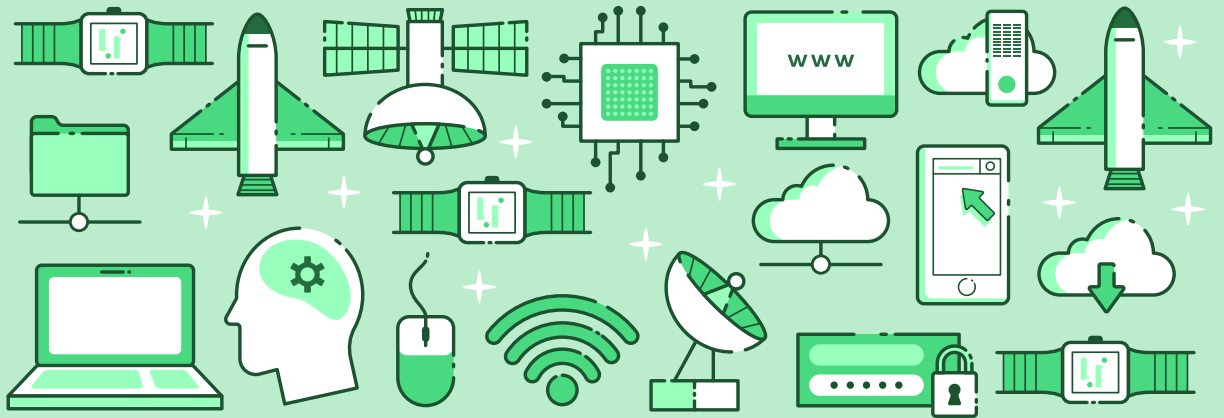
In policy-making, governments must prioritize equity to ensure that no group feels left behind. Equity should be a key aspect of policy-making and implementation, with special attention given to engaging and involving women, youth, and people with disabilities as stakeholders throughout the design, implementation, and monitoring process.

For too long, many people have seen leadership as a means for self-enrichment rather than sacrifice for the greater good of the nation. To address this, formal leadership learning opportunities should be embedded within the administration and private sector to train youth leaders.

To support the various functions of government, efforts should be made to bring the government closer to the people and involve them better in governance through e-governance. Introducing civic tech and digital tools to governance can improve service delivery effectively and efficiently, ensuring government proximity. This is important in helping the people build trust and confidence in the government.

Nigeria needs to invest in identifying and forming good leaders across all levels of society, especially in government.





Building A Robust Technology, Innovation, And Entrepreneurial Ecosystems.

Science, technology, innovation, and entrepreneurship are the engines of growth and national transformation. No nation has transitioned from developing to industrially developed economies without building its technology, innovation, and entrepreneurial ecosystems. The need is even more pressing in today's world of rapid technological shifts. The good news is that Nigeria's technology, innovation, and entrepreneurial ecosystems have begun to emerge. It is why Nigeria has made significant leaps in the digital economy space; the progress can be deepened as part of the effort to ensure rapid growth and transformation (Box 4.1).

The challenge or opportunity is how Nigeria can replicate the same fintech success in other economic sectors, from health and education to agriculture. It is important for the nation to put in place critical policies to drive innovation and

entrepreneurship to address the various challenges facing the country today. The problems are opportunities, and ways must be found to transform them into opportunities for development.

Nigeria will do well to invest more in building a robust national innovation system. This will include implementing effective policies and providing the right incentives. Technology, innovation, and the entrepreneurial ecosystem rarely emerge due to an invisible hand or spontaneously. They need to be nurtured and developed through policy incentives. Nigeria must become audacious and more ambitious about what it wants as a nation and put together the necessary policies and administrative support to make it happen. It is not for the state to lead but to serve as a catalyst, mobilize actors through incentives, and provide support to drive the necessary change.

Box 4.1 **Growing Nigeria's Digital Economy**

One area that needs special mentioning and attention is the Nigeria's digital economy which has experienced growth in recent years, with increased investment in areas such as e-commerce, fintech, and mobile technology. The country has emerged as one of the largest e-commerce markets in Africa. Mobile technology investment has also risen. Both foreign and local investments have contributed to this growth. Foreign investment has been significant, with international companies and investors investing in e-commerce and fintech startups. However, local investment has also been crucial, with Nigerian venture capital firms and groups supporting local startups and driving innovation at the initial stages. A bit of local investments mixed with much of foreign investments, have also laid the foundation for the subsequent foreign takeovers of successful startups, such as Paystack, Andela, Flutterwave, Popout, and VoguePay, leaving successful start-ups into the hands of foreign investors with no vested interest than business and profit. To support local investment and expand Nigeria's digital economy for Nigerians, by Nigerians, the following policies are recommended:

Implementing a "Smart Nigeria" Initiative: The Federal Ministry of Communication and Digital Economy, in partnership with local government councils, should launch a "Smart Nigeria" initiative aimed at encouraging investment in smart government and community solutions. This initiative should promote research on start-ups in Local Governments, as well as the use of data analytics, sensors, and minimal levels cloud computing to improve the delivery of public services at the local level.

Domesticating the Start-Up Act: The Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment, in collaboration with state governments, should domesticate the Start-Up Act across all states in Nigeria. This should be done by setting up a State Council for Digital Innovation and Entrepreneurship, which will be responsible for developing and promoting start-ups and innovation policies, providing grants and funding, and offering training and skills development programs. The Council should be accessible and accountable to ensure that the benefits of the Start-Up Act reach all states in Nigeria.

One-Stop Shop for Nigerian Investors in the Diaspora: The Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in partnership with the Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission (NIPC), should establish a one-stop shop for Nigerian investors in the diaspora to set up or fund startups. This one-stop shop should provide access to a network of diaspora investors and mentors, making it easier for Nigerians abroad to invest in their home country.

Thriving Start-Up Ecosystem: The Federal Ministry of Communication and Digital Economy, in collaboration with stakeholders, should work to create a thriving start-up ecosystem in Nigeria. This should include the establishment of incubators, accelerators, and co-working spaces and access to market opportunities. This will provide a supportive environment for startups to grow and succeed.

Encouraging Banks and Creating Fiscal Pathways: The Central Bank of Nigeria, in partnership with commercial banks, should encourage banks to create fiscal pathways for startups to raise funds. This could be achieved through the creation of venture capital funds, business incubators, and accelerators. This will provide startups with the necessary funding to grow and succeed, thereby

Lack of access to capital is a key challenge facing innovators and entrepreneurs in Nigeria today.

Scaling ideas is largely hindered by the absence of adequate funding. While some basic support is available for those in the early stages, raising funding to scale innovation is challenging. Despite the considerable amount of foreign direct investment going into Nigeria's tech scene, it is mostly directed towards a few firms in a limited market. The nation will have to use its policy space to drive the emergence of a more

responsive and robust financial sector that caters to local needs concerning the development of technology, innovation, and entrepreneurial ecosystems. MSMEs are a critical element of the entrepreneurial space, and tailored programs must be designed to ensure access to financing and necessary advisory services. Government, banks, and incubators should work together to implement MSMEs support programs.

The government can also use its consumption power to drive innovation locally. There is a huge need for civic and e-governance technology in Nigeria to drive efficiencies and effectiveness. Launching challenges for local entrepreneurs and innovators to develop solutions that can be tested and adopted by the government will facilitate commercialization and perfection. This approach will enable emerging tools and products to be exported to other countries, starting in the region. Issues and problems can and should be used as opportunities for growth and development, using challenges to get local innovators to develop solutions that can later be commercialized.

Another approach is to promote technological missions to solve national problems.

As part of the national planning efforts, the state can set technology missions in collaboration with stakeholders. Public and private resources can be mobilized to address national problems or opportunities. Tech missions around agriculture, education, and cutting-edge areas such as biotech, artificial intelligence, and cloud computing can be set in collaboration with the private sector and civil society organizations. Resources can be mobilized from all partners to fund research, development, and commercialization of innovations around technology missions. These could serve as boosters for the takeoff of key sectors, such as the green economy sector in Nigeria.

Nigeria must also facilitate the emergence of support institutions to help drive the growth of technology, innovation, and entrepreneurship. The creation of support institutions that can facilitate networking, mentoring, coaching, and skill acquisition is critical. Such support could be

provided by national research funds, incubators, and hubs to assist business and tech incubation and the scaling of innovations. Support can also be provided through the creation of organizations to facilitate the commercialization of innovations emerging from universities. Governments and stakeholders should realize that totally free markets, despite the emergence and dominance of some countries in the innovation space, do not exist. The governments of nations that are leaders in the innovation space are heavily involved in driving progress through various institutions.

Engaging the diaspora is also a way to facilitate the emergence of robust ecosystems for innovation and entrepreneurship.

The government can expand the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) program to the children of Nigerians in the diaspora under the same conditions to provide them with the opportunity to discover their ancestral land and contribute to Nigeria's development. Engaging the diaspora can also be extended to all Afro-descendants around the world to facilitate tourism and return by those who have an interest in Nigeria. This could promote tourism and facilitate investments. The government will have to enact enabling rules and processes to make it easier to visit, invest, and naturalize.

Investing in Human Capital Development



The human development index (HDI) is an important measure of development that obtains data from education, health, and income. Nigeria needs to revamp its educational sector by investing in promoting quality and access for all. Over the years, the quality of education in Nigeria has slowly declined, reducing many learning institutions to mere shells of their former selves. It is crucial for the state and other stakeholders to find ways to invest in education and ensure that the funding is used to enhance the quality of education and its relevance to the needs of the job market.

Reforming the curriculum from preschool to university education is a key part of the necessary changes. Education must shift its focus beyond memorizing facts or obtaining certificates, and begin teaching students how to learn, define and solve problems, and think critically. The educational system must also promote entrepreneurship and engage citizens in building a more prosperous Nigeria.

Nigeria must make significant investments in science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and management (STEMM), as well as technical and vocational education training (TVET), which are critical aspects of the innovation and entrepreneurial ecosystems. Regardless of their course of study, everyone must engage with or be exposed to STEMM education at some point in their schooling career. The economy's functioning is dependent on technical and vocational education training, and those with a vocation for technical education must be encouraged, and training opportunities must be made available. They will be the front line

workers in the industrial and manufacturing economies that Nigeria must build to ensure a prosperous future for all. Community engagement in the educational sector is also essential.

The reality is that Nigeria must build a new workforce capable of competing in the emerging knowledge economy. Nigeria needs to train knowledge workers who can think and solve problems. The new workforce must also be entrepreneurial. The goal is no longer to train people for the assembly line but rather entrepreneurs who can innovate and help solve problems, essentially people who can transform problems and challenges into opportunities.

As part of its human development efforts, Nigeria needs to overhaul its healthcare system, invest in training, and restructure the system to ensure primary care access for all. Nigeria's health sector, like the educational sector, has declined substantially for decades, with the decline primarily in the public space where ordinary citizens receive services. The elites go abroad or to local private clinics, while most people depend on decaying public services. Therefore, change must be the top priority. Nigeria needs to make significant investments in health, find ways to save money from waste, leakages, and ineffectual subsidies, and help rebuild a new national health system emphasizing quality service delivery, access, and the training of new healthcare workers. Importantly, everyone must have access to primary healthcare at a minimum.



Promoting Sustainable Development And Infrastructures

Society and the economy depend on sustainable and high-quality infrastructure. While it involves several risks and stakeholders and is complex and long-term in nature, it is essential for delivering better and more inclusive economic, social, and environmental conditions, as well as supporting growth by expanding access to vital services and improving economic opportunities for all.

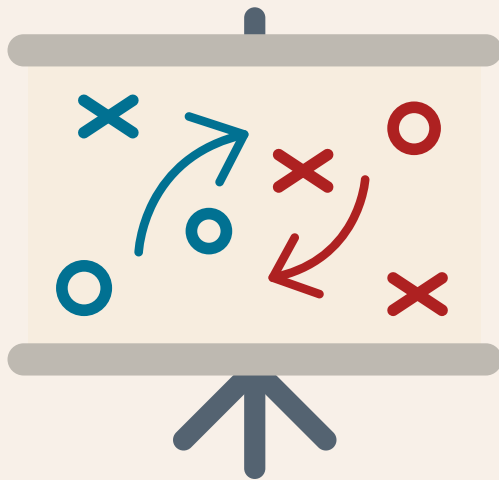
In order to diversify the economy, Nigeria must expand and build new economic sectors and introduce modern techniques to facilitate high levels of productivity. Key goals must include reducing the cost of inputs, enhancing productivity, growing new economic sectors, and introducing new techniques and management into old and new sectors. Nigeria can make a bet on sustainable agriculture given the huge size of its arable land as well as the youth population. Sustainable and smart agriculture could make Nigeria the food basket of the world. Success will require opening up and modernizing the sector to drive growth.

Natural resources management is another critical sector for Nigeria. The country is blessed with not only oil but also huge deposits of many solid minerals. The diversity of the mineral base is large and these minerals, with proper strategy,

planning, and partnerships, could be the basis of rapid growth and economic transformation. Beyond solid minerals, there are also gas reserves which could be a game changer if properly exploited.

For Nigeria to benefit from its natural resources, it must find a better way to govern and manage them. There will be a need to end insecurity across the country and illegal mining operations by elites, criminal gangs, and their foreign partners. Enhanced and robust management of natural resources is a must. This will include sustainable exploitation, raising the value addition, and going up the value chain so as to increase the income for the nation. Strategically, this can be the beginning of a push to industrialize using its mineral resources and agriculture as a base. Another critical area is the circular economy for which Nigeria needs a strategy. It is crucial to deal with the waste challenge as well as ensure the emergence of new economic opportunities.

Building enabling world-class and sustainable infrastructure is critical. The nation will have to find innovative financing and approaches to develop and build world class as well as climate resistant infrastructure. No matter what approach is adopted, the key is to ensure value for money and delivery of quality infrastructure.



Strategies for Implementation

In light of the realities facing Nigeria, implementing change to achieve the vision of building a prosperous (federal) nation where all people in every generation are secure, free, happy, and dignified will be a daunting task. It requires sustained investment, political will, and active engagement from all stakeholders. Robust strategies and the commitment, buy-in and engagement of all are necessary. Moreover, the leaders must be committed to driving the change. To achieve the vision and the following actions must be taken:



Obtain buy-in from all stakeholders

Encourage ownership and commitment to change from all stakeholders, including youth, government officials, policymakers, and industry leaders. This will reduce resistance to change and ensure that citizens feel included and valued.



Create implementation plan for change

Develop a detailed plan that highlights critical milestones and addresses potential barriers to change.



Establish a Change Management Agency

An agency to oversee continuous improvement efforts, undertake ongoing review and monitoring, as well develop scorecards. The agency should be staffed with people who are driven and excited leading change. The team should provide support to other institutions across the government while engaging the private sector and civil society.

Exhibit strong leadership



maintain and exemplify the qualities of a great leader, such as inspiring the team and stakeholders, demonstrating strategic thinking, and being transparent and flexible.



Maintain open communication and transparency

Clearly communicate the reasons for change, the benefits for the organization, and the individual benefits for all. The goal is to build support for change across the nation. It is also important to communicate effectively and to share all important information about the change implementation process with stakeholders to gain consensus and feedback.



Set deadlines for change

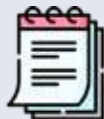
During pilot testing, obstacles may arise, and solutions may need to be modified. Setting realistic and practical deadlines for pilot testing and a full launch is essential and should be communicated to all stakeholders.



Conduct small-scale pilot tests

Instead of implementing a change that will have an immediate impact on the entire organization or nation, it is sometimes useful to conduct small-scale pilot tests to identify any technical issues or problems. Look to youth and early adopters to help champion the initiative.

Document the process



Document what worked well during the change process to replicate success in future change initiatives. Standardizing best practices and processes for change helps create a reliable system and processes.



Learn from the experiences of other countries

Look to countries that have invested in transformative-driven change for inspiration and to learn from their experiences.



Don't expect change to happen overnight

A longer, more strategic rollout is often the best option, rather than a quick shift in direction. This gives citizens time to adjust to the change and allows government officials to address any issues before the change is implemented.



Akan Etim

Akwa Ibom

→ **What do you do for a living?**

Researcher and Speechwriter

→ **Express your view about the Nigeria of today and expectations for the future.**

Nigeria today is a country fraught with various internal issues, which have slowed its steps toward rapid economic development.

My expectation for the future is to have a country whose citizens love absolutely, through good and bad. A country that provides the basics for youths to thrive, and for the aged to appreciate. A country that can and should play a massive/critical role across the World.

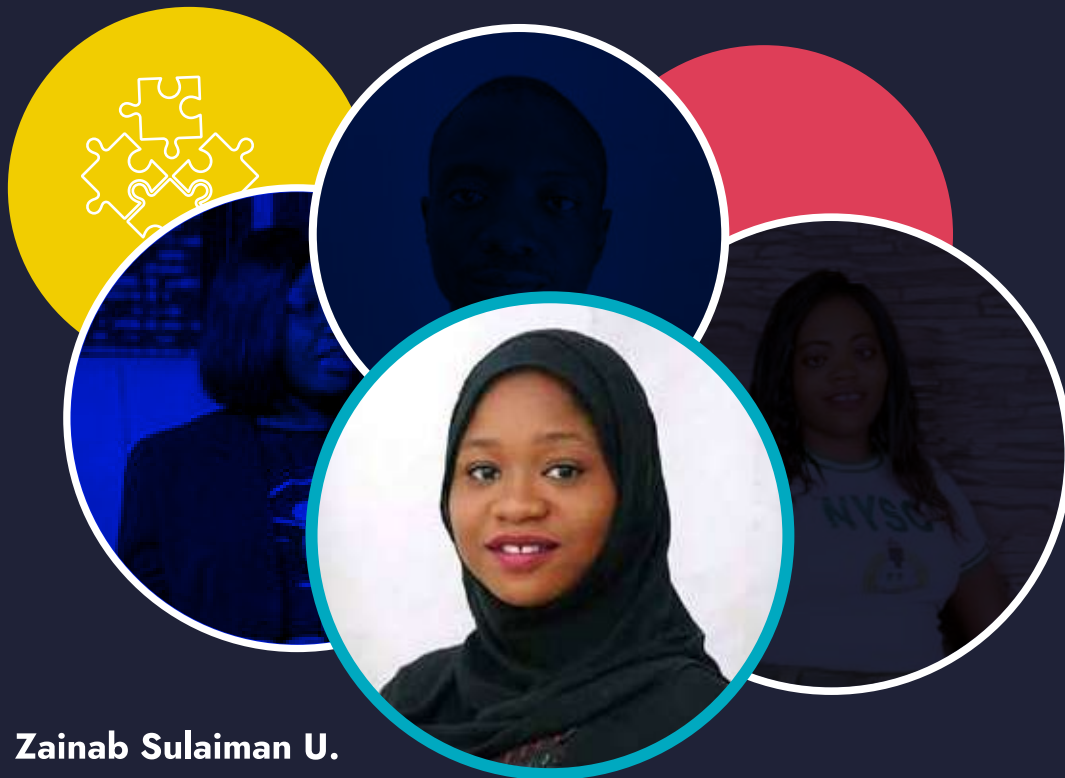
→ **How do your views about Nigeria and expectations for the future affect the choices you make?**

My views about Nigeria are consistent, and the decisions I try to take today are those that I believe should be consistent with my expectations for the future and the decisions I believe I would take in said future.

→ **What Nigeria do you want, and how do we get there?**

I want a Nigeria where citizens are morally upright.

By disabusing our minds and learning to shun social vices. Not everyone will be rich, and not everyone will be poor. We need to learn this as a guiding principle towards our future.



Zainab Sulaiman U.
Kano State

→ **What do you do for a living?**

Entrepreneur/Activist

→ **Express your view about the Nigeria of today and expectations for the future.**

Nigeria has failed us today, looking at the way everything is deteriorating. Economically and politically.

My expectation is to see more young people actively participate in the electoral processes so that we can actually achieve the Nigeria we want.

→ **How do your views about Nigeria and expectations for the future affect the choices you make?**

I view Nigeria as a great country but our main problems are our leaders.

→ **What Nigeria do you want, and how do we get there?**

I want a Nigeria Corruption Free Nigeria, A Nigeria where everyone is treated accordingly without respect, A Nigeria free from kidnapping and banditry, A Nigeria free from political thuggery, I want a Nigerian where our girls can walk and go to school freely without fear.



05

**A Call to
Action**

Introduction

The vision for Nigeria's future and its current reality demand an urgent sense of mobilization of all energies of the country for change and transformation. We cannot afford to waste any time. Business as usual approaches will lead the country to a nightmare scenario, and "muddling through" is no longer a viable option. Therefore, all Nigerians, including the leadership and followers, must play their part to facilitate change and national transformation.

The youths are an essential and key segment of the population and should boldly lead the nation. They constitute the majority of Nigeria's population and are 100% of the future of the country. We believe that youth participation in government and public institutions must be intentional, regular, sustained and embedded in all decision-making processes across the nation. More importantly, the youths must adopt a strategic approach.

This chapter focuses on what society and government can do to ensure the full participation of youths in all aspects of nation-building. It also explores and proposes ideas on how the youths themselves can play critical roles in bringing about change to the status quo.

'My experience has made me realize that there are a lot of youth who are actually willing to make sure that the Nigeria of tomorrow is a beautiful one. My message for the Nigerian youth is that the Nigeria that we want, dream about and want to create is actually possible and we can do it together'

Gambo Yakubu Wakili
Lawyer & An advocate for
inclusive governance

'The youth are the image and changemakers with the power to change the situation of the country. Therefore, young people need to be deliberate and intentional in the process of driving a new Nigeria. The Nigeria I want is one where mediocrity is not celebrated, a country where the youth will not be used as instruments of praise singing'

Tega Ogenetesiri
Entrepreneur

'My message for the Nigerian Youth is that they need to take up space, let their voices be heard in the places that matter, come out and vote, and use their offices to advocate for inclusion and not be silenced'

Christabelle Altraide
Social Entrepreneur

'I believe that the problems of the country have more to do with followership and not leadership. We must hold our leaders accountable. We need to step up and get involved in governance. Engagement, involvement and participation is key to governance and development'

Ikenna Ugwu
Entrepreneur

Strategy For Youth Engagement

The youths are a main resource for Nigeria, and the country must put in place the necessary strategy for youth engagement. Such a strategy needs to be approached from three main vantage points, including supporting youths as leaders and policymakers, engaging youths as partners and volunteers, working with youth as beneficiaries, and building the ecosystem to enable and empower youths.



Photo of South South visioning exercise, credit: NYFF



Supporting Youths As Leaders And Policy Makers

Youth frontline participation in nation-building at all levels of government and decision-making in Nigeria is essential. Adults and young people must work together to achieve agreed outcomes through youth participation. Engaging youth as policymakers can transform national identity, belonging, and purpose in powerfully engaging ways for young people and adults. The Youth can become substantive nation-builders whose roles ensure relevance, effectiveness and sustainability if they are given opportunities to be elected to office, serve in governmental roles and conduct official business

It is important to engage youths in policy-making and implementation to bring youthful energy, passion and innovation into the mix while the older generation can bring the necessary experience.

Some of the key features of this approach to ensure the engagement of youth in leadership and policy-making, include:

Electing and appointing youths into leadership positions across all levels of government and civic life.

Ensuring leading roles for youths in key areas of national life and expanding the coverage of such engagements.

Investing more in personal leadership and professional development for youths across all areas of life, taking into account gender equity and the needs of people with disabilities

Giving greater visibility to youth successes, start-ups and innovations.



Photo of North Central visioning exercise held in Abuja, credit: NYFF



Engaging With Youth As Partners And Volunteers

The youth can partner or volunteer with existing institutions to learn the ropes and build their capacity. Key agencies and organizations can place youths in internship or fellowship programs to gain experience and participate in national life as part of this engagement. The goal is to build an ethos of selflessness and public service in our youth by engaging them in planning, designing, delivering, and reviewing policies through partnerships with government and non-governmental initiatives. Some of the key features of this approach include:

Encouraging and providing volunteer opportunities for youths to build a good work ethic, promote skill acquisition, and build personal self-esteem.

Advocating affirmative actions that create opportunities for youths.

See youths as genuine partners rather than token appointments and fleeting patronages.

Create reward systems that will inspire and encourage youth participation and inspire a volunteering revolution.

Another concrete way to engage the youths in the necessary change is to launch a National Mentorship Program where young people can mentor other youths. The program can facilitate and broker mentoring for youths in secondary schools, universities, and those just starting their careers. The program will serve as a matchmaker, provide guidance and make information available for volunteers on how to serve as mentors.



Working With Youths As Beneficiaries

Most youths are not taking advantage of the numerous services and opportunities that society offers, and they are not even aware of them. Therefore, youths need to maximize the various opportunities available to them and use these platforms as springboards for greater engagement and participation in public life. Options for engaging youths include:

Nationwide public enlightenment campaign that creates greater awareness about existing opportunities and how to access them.

Promotion of inclusivity and equal opportunities for all youths by expanding existing opportunities within the government and non-governmental sectors.

Increase in funding for youth-focused programs across the federation.

Appoint youth champions and ambassadors to promote existing services and growth opportunities.

To ensure that young people evolve from beneficiaries to leaders, we need to invest in building their capacity by improving their access to education, health, and skills development across the country.

Building The Ecosystem To Enable And Empower Youths

To fast-track change and national transformation and ensure that youths take their rightful place in society, significant government engagement is necessary. Given governments' critical role in leading national development, they can drive many activities at all levels. Specifically, governments in Nigeria can engage in various actions, including:

Mapping the youth ecosystem.

As a part of youth empowerment, it is important to conduct a mapping of youth-led and youth-serving organizations in the country. The mapping exercise will develop a database of youth-led initiatives and analyze the characteristics of youth-led and youth-serving organizations in each state to determine:

- *Which organizations exist where and by location.*
- *What are their thematic areas of focus?*
- *What are their capacities and their limitations?*
- *What are the ways to nurture collaborative engagement on the part of a collection of youth-led and youth-serving organizations?*

The ministry responsible for youths can lead this action to ensure that information is available on what exists, what can be done to empower youths, and to build a network of youth organizations active in driving the youth development agenda.

Youth Impact Assessment

The government and society must take deliberate actions to create enabling environments for Nigerian youths. These actions should not be ad-hoc processes but encompass efforts to push for change in all aspects of national life and to engage youths in the process.

**Youth Impact Assessment
could be made mandatory
before any new policy is
implemented.**

Similar to Environmental Impact Assessment, the goal will be to explore the impact of policies on youths and ensure that their interests are taken into account. This will not only reinforce the focus on the youth population as assets but also ensure a proactive adaptation of policies to drive youth development across the government. Providing practical and tangible opportunities for youths to become engaged in the work and see the outcomes of nation-building is essential. Whether activities and programs are youth-led or rely on youth/adult partnerships, it is important to show young people specifically what they can do and the positive impact they can make.

Identifying groups of marginalized youth and implementing remedial actions.

Any strategy must be adapted to cater to the peculiarities of different cohorts of the youth population. There is a need to identify marginalized youths and adjust strategies to cater for peculiarities. The following are five categories of marginalization that can exist within the Youth population:

1

Social Equality (inc Gender)

Includes marginalization on education, literacy, housing, disability, women, minorities, etc.

2

Cultural Marginalization

Includes marginalization on creative expression, religion, ethnicity, language, etc.

3

Economic Marginalization

Includes marginalization due to unemployment, low income, inequitable income for commensurate work, lack of voice in the workplace, etc.

4

Geographic Marginalization

Includes remoteness and influence on the quality of life because of environmental effects, either human-made or natural environmental crises such as global warming, landslides, infertile soil, drought, etc. This also includes issues relating to the rural-urban divide and how the Youth can participate in public life regardless of where they live.

Young people face a range of obstacles that impede their ability to participate in policy or governance processes. Strategies must be adapted to overcome these barriers and cater to the peculiarities of different cohorts within the youth population.

Governments and other public institutions must improve access to information critical to young people's lives and ensure clear and accessible communication with youths on their preferred platforms.

Promoting youth participation in decision-making requires governments' greater use of social media to reach and engage with this demographic.

Decision-makers must apply a long-term and intergenerational lens when enacting policy. They should also ensure that power is shared across generations and promote inter-generational collaboration. This is particularly important as young people face generational shockwaves from the global warming crisis and international economic instability. Governments must identify the barriers to youth participation in their localities and develop appropriate strategies to remove them.

Categories	Elements
<p>Physical Barriers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geographical location • Access to/support for opportunities in rural areas • Transportation and access • Lack of information and knowledge regarding participation opportunities
<p>Social Barriers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult stereotypes about youth as a population group • Stigma • Feelings of being unwanted • Class/social status
<p>Cultural Barriers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural concerns over mixed-gender activities in parts of the country • Notions of community and vision • Cultural norms (including religious beliefs)
<p>Political Barriers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature of local decision-making • Political concerns about the high cost of access to party politics • Access and support for encouraging opportunity in urban areas • Conflict and social disorder

Roles for Nigerian Youths

While the society and government have a lot to do to ensure youth engagement; Nigerian youths must organize and mobilize themselves for collective actions in favor of the change that they want. Mobilization and associations must be prioritized to ensure the youths work as a collective. Some of the actions that Nigerian youths can undertake are as follows.

“I want a Nigeria where young people are interested in policy making, governance and politics”

Augusta Nneka

Civic Consciousness

The Youth need to be fully aware of major developments in the civic arena. Only enlightened youth can bring needed understanding and innovation to solve problems. This is also linked to a revamped educational system with an updated curriculum that promotes greater awareness of happenings in the civic space. However, building one's consciousness is also an individual decision. The youths have to want it, and they have to do what is necessary to seek information, educate themselves, and engage in civic life. This decision is at the personal level. But youths can also reach out to colleagues and organize themselves into groups to raise the consciousness of their peers.

Learning and Development

Nigerian youths must be aware that passing through school or university is just the beginning and must be open to lifelong learning. They should actively seek out ways and opportunities to continue learning, allowing a culture of teachable people to emerge who are ready for whatever the future holds. It's not just about obtaining certificates but learning about life, society, politics, and other topics to upskill and ensure they have the necessary knowledge to participate in society actively. By being open to ideas, youths can learn from every experience.

Evidence-based advocacy

Nigerian youths need to master the details and nuances of issues so their advocacy can be evidenced based. One scenario is for youths to mobilize for the creation of a youth-oriented think-tank that can help undertake studies on critical national policies of the day from the perspective of young people. Beyond the think-tank, the need for evidence-based advocacy also requires that individuals take it upon themselves to engage and participate in the public sphere, including developing detailed knowledge of issues through their learning and research. Nigerian youths must engage in a paradigm shift to become more skilled in understanding the details and nuances of policies. Mastery of details increases the credibility and depth of youth interventions in the polity.

Active Political Participation

Active political participation is crucial for Nigerian youths to make an impact. While there have been some successes as a result of the not too young to run bill, a lot more can be done. Nigerian youths must learn to be in the political arena to stand a better chance of quickly changing the narrative to promote youth-centered policies. Participation is at the heart of democracy and the practice of citizenship. Democratic, civil and political participation are concepts that are interwoven; none can exist in the absence of the other. Establishing a democratic system requires the full participation of the people and is a civic duty. This participation may be direct or indirect and must be by all citizens.

For political systems to be representative, they must include all parts of society. Political processes disenfranchise or disengage young people, depriving a significant portion of the population of a voice or influence in decisions that affect their lives. This undermines the representativeness of political systems. To make a difference in the longer term, it is essential to engage young people in formal political processes and in formulating policies. Engaging in the political space does not require one to be a candidate for office, although it is important that many do. There are several options for participating in politics without running for office, as outlined in Box 5.1 below.

Box 5.1 **How the Youth Can Participate in Politics Without Contesting Elections**

BE AN INFORMED CITIZEN: Look for information in newspapers, magazines, and reference materials and judge its accuracy. Avoid being a victim of Fake News and Misinformation campaigns. Use corroboration and multiplicity of sources to verify information.

BE REGISTERED TO VOTE AND VOTE: Voting in local, state, and national elections is a key expression of political participation.

ENGAGE IN POLITICAL DISCUSS AND DEBATE: Participating in political discussions, seminars and debates are key manifestations of an engaged youth population.

BECOME A POLITICAL EVANGELIST: Spread the word to your friends and family on the need to vote and be engaged in politics. Become a political persuader. Become an expert at one-to-one personal persuasion.

BECOME A POLITICAL ACTIVIST: Demonstrating through marches, Peaceful Civil Disobedience, boycotts, sit-ins, or other forms of protest. Demonstrating to show that a law or policy is unjust is an expression of political engagement.

BECOME A PARTY DONOR: This can be done with or without being a member of a political party. It involves contributing money to a party or candidate.

JOIN A POLITICAL PARTY: Become a local member of a political party and be active as a member. Attend meetings to gain information, discuss issues, or lend support. This also allows you to serve as a delegate for internal party elections. This will help strengthen the internal operations of political parties in Nigeria; many of who lacks internal democracy. No point complaining of the bad choices of candidates we are being presented with if you do not engage to influence who wins at primaries.

BECOME A POLITICAL LOBBYIST: lobbying for laws that are of

Box 5.1 **How the Youth Can Participate in Politics Without Contesting Elections**

special interest to your communities with the Legislatures. This can be done as an individual or as a part of a group.

BECOME AN INSTITUTION BUILDER: A lot of influence is exerted by civil servants and institutional operatives in all government departments. So, consider joining the public sector.

BECOME A RELIABLE AND FORMIDABLE INFORMATION SOURCE: With Technology, you can become your own online newspaper overnight. Start a Blog or online information sharing site. Become a reliable source that will inform, educate and enlighten the Youth population.

SUPPORT A CANDIDATE AND/OR A PARTY: Join the staff of your chosen candidate or a political party either as a paid staff or volunteer. There are many voluntary roles in political parties, especially during electoral campaigns. For example, many parties choose their polling agents from their volunteer pools.

BECOME A COMMUNITY ORGANISER AND START LOCAL: You stand a better chance of making changes and impact at the local level than at national level. A lot are decided at the local level than many appreciate. Find an issue that affects your community and organise around it. Politicians will always engage with people that have numbers behind them. If your voice can influence 10,000 people, they will talk to you. It is easier to distinguish yourself when you start local.

TAKE ON FORMAL ELECTORAL EDUCATION AND DISSEMINATION: If you can write briefs, articles and/or books that will educate and inform, do so. If you are into Arts and Entertainment; produce plays, TV Soaps and films that will pass on the message of active engagement and good citizenship. Organise seminars and conferences. Write articles for various media houses.

Box 5.1 **How the Youth Can Participate in Politics Without Contesting Elections**

GET INVOLVED IN CIVIC GROUPS: Join local community organizations and become active in their activities. This will not only help build your leadership skills but also keep you informed about the local political climate.

USE SOCIAL MEDIA: Utilize platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to share your views, engage in discussions and spread awareness.

ENGAGE IN INTERNSHIPS AND APPRENTICESHIPS: This will give you a hands-on experience in politics and help you understand the workings of the political system.

PARTICIPATE IN VOLUNTEERING: Participating in volunteer work for political campaigns can give you a firsthand experience of how campaigns operate and help you build relationships with political candidates.

BECOME INVOLVED IN CANDIDATE SELECTION: Be part of the process of selecting political candidates through the primaries. This will give you an opportunity to influence the candidates that represent your views.

JOIN A PRESS CONFERENCE: Attend press conferences and other events where politicians are speaking to learn more about their views and engage with them directly.

Launch of a national re-orientation campaign

Changing the mindset of the people, especially the older generation and those in positions of power, on the need to ensure that the youths are at the table when important decisions are made is very important. They must be brought on-side to see things differently and support the active engagement of youths. Many youths also need to have a mindset reset. So, a new national re-orientation campaign will be recommended. This will seek to educate and shift old paradigms that have contributed to the nation's current state. Such an exercise must be designed and led by the youths. There is a need to mobilize and form teams to drive this initiative.

Launch annual awards

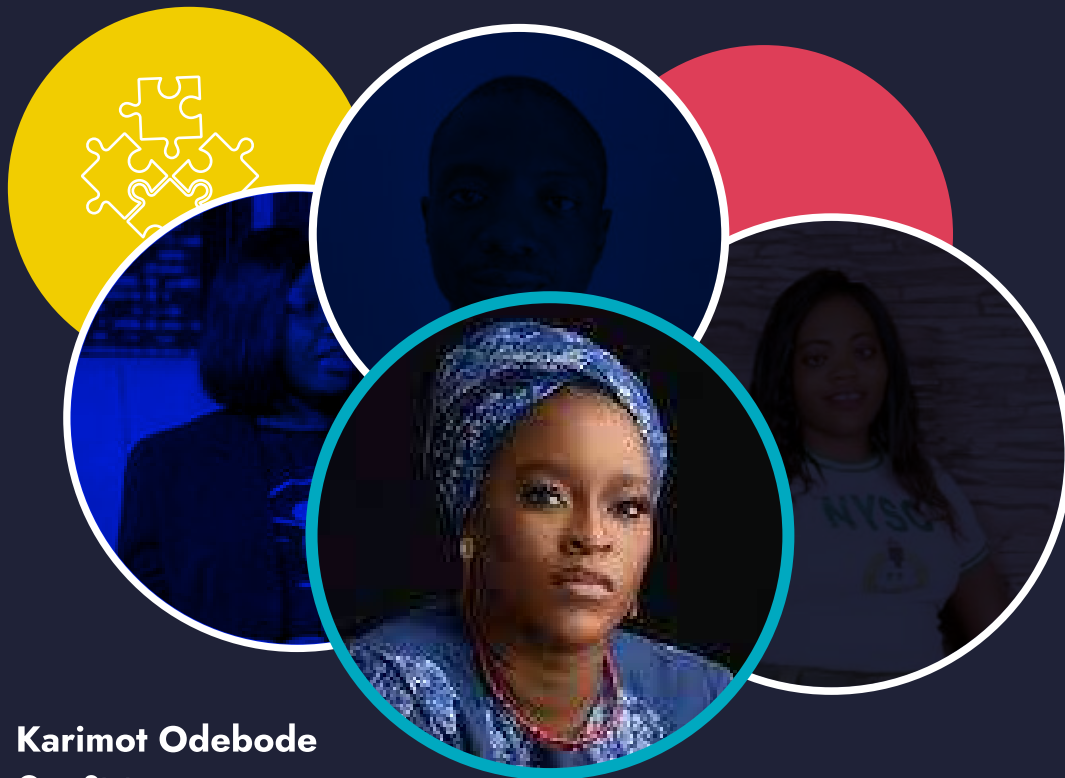
Inclusivity and equality are very high on the priority list of the Nigerian Youth. Therefore, we recommend launching an annual Civic Excellence Prize (CEP) focused on inclusivity and equality. The prize will recognize organizations that practice inclusivity and equality, which could display best practices and encourage others to do more. This will also highlight organizations best placed to support the youth agenda. Another recommended annual award should focus on academics and innovation. The goal is to promote learning and problem-solving by youths and celebrate excellence in academics, learning and innovation.

Organizing a National Youth Summit (NYS) every year.

A well-resourced and professionally organized NYS every year would focus the public's attention on the roles of youths in national development. It would particularly sensitize the society at large to the need for more inclusivity and to promote youth participation actively. The NYS would also become an ideas factory for ways to enhance youth engagement and involvement. youth-oriented non-profits could design and develop such a summit with the involvement of governments at various levels. Nigerian youths could lead the effort while involving leaders from governments, the private sector, and civil society in participation.

Establish an Implementation Framework

Ongoing follow-up and mobilization are necessary to facilitate the implementation of the youth agenda. We need to make efforts to create conditions for implementing and monitoring the progress towards the implementation of the agenda. We recommended transforming the NYFF Secretariat into an implementation agency to facilitate and monitor the implementation of the youth agenda. The NYFF should work towards building a strong coalition of stakeholders, including civil society, government, industry leaders, and youth, to support the change initiatives actively. This approach will reduce resistance to change and increase buy-in from all stakeholders. NYFF must lead its partners in collectively implementing a robust monitoring and evaluation system to track progress, identify challenges, and measure impact. This will ensure that the change initiatives are on track and help identify improvement areas.



Karimot Odebode
Oyo State

→ **What do you do for a living?**

Lawyer, Poet

→ **Express your view about the Nigeria of today and expectations for the future.**

The Nigeria of today is one that has not realise its potentials and the potential of its citizens. It is one living in the past and controlled by leaders who care less about the nation.

I want a Nigeria where all the systems are working for the citizens. A Nigeria where Poverty is a thing of the past. A Nigeria where its leaders are ready to build the nation without any selfish interests whatsoever.

→ **How do your views about Nigeria and expectations for the future affect the choices you make?**

My views about Nigeria and expectations for the future affect the choices I make because I am intentional about what I do and how it will affect the larger population.

→ **What Nigeria do you want, and how do we get there?**

The Nigeria I want is one that centers the development of its citizens. I believe we will get there by making selfless decisions and electing leaders that really care about developmental growth.



Saheed Rahmon
Lagos State

→ ***What do you do for a living?***

Programs manager at MICA Nigeria and also a Lagos state youth ambassador.

→ ***Express your view about the Nigeria of today and expectations for the future.***

Nigeria is currently in a state of crisis with various pressing issues emerging every day, causing frustration and diminishing patriotism among its citizens. Unfortunately, instead of uniting to collectively tackle these problems, Nigerians are becoming increasingly divided, exacerbating our misery. The future of our country hinges on the choices and actions we take today. Until we break free from the cycle of endless finger-pointing between leaders and followers, we cannot effectively address our challenges.

→ ***How do your views about Nigeria and expectations for the future affect the choices you make?***

Personal experiences and Nigeria's current situation significantly influence my decisions, from education to security. Despite the temptation to seek better amenities elsewhere, my patriotism drives me to make a difference in Nigeria. I am committed to contributing to its progress and development, refusing to abandon my country.

→ ***What Nigeria do you want, and how do we get there?***

I envision a Nigeria with accountable leaders, responsible followers, justice, fairness, and recognition for diligence. Achieving this requires revamping our value system, starting at the grassroots, and embracing integrity, honesty, and hard work to build a prosperous and just society.

Conclusion

To achieve the ambitious objectives articulated in this report, young people need opportunities and means to acquire the education, skills and experiences needed to make an impact. They also need to be involved in developing and implementing policies and programs that affect their lives. Whether invited or not, the youth must take their place at the table. Engaging with the Nigerian youth and promoting their participation in public life and governance requires a deliberate strategy. We have identified the salient issues that are priorities for the bulging Nigerian youth. They can be encouraged and supported to participate in public life in a transformative way. For this, the youths must rally around an agenda like the Nigeria We Want, build networks, and mobilize for collective action. The time for the youth to take action is now, not tomorrow in the future. The future is built today.

The roles of youths in nation-building and development are very critical. The direction Nigeria takes on democracy, economy, technology and climate change will depend largely on the youth. They carry the hopes of the future. History has shown that in every dispensation, the next generation has been the harbingers of change. Nigerian youths are capable and have the energy, passion, numbers and power to bring about change. It is time for them to take on leadership roles and champion the changes needed to create the Nigeria We Want. But they must move from passivity to proactive engagement. Nigerian youths must take power. They cannot wait for the goodwill of current political elites to access power. ; They must become involved and engaged at all levels.

The Youth can and do drive positive social change, with powerful ripple effects that fuel progress on many levels in all societies. Nothing is more sustainable for a nation than investing in the confidence and capacities of its energetic youth population. They will become the engine for future growth and national transformation.



Photo of North Central visioning exercise held in Abuja, credit: NYFF

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