

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Abuja October 8th, 2024

The YERP-Naija Campaign Welcomes the National Assembly from Recess, Call for Expedited Action on the Constitutional and Electoral Reform Process.

Introduction

The Youth-led Electoral Reform Project (YERP-Naija) national coordinator Kimpact Development Initiative (KDI) and our regional partners welcome members of the National Assembly from their annual recess. The YERP-Naija campaign and our youth and multi stakeholder allies across Nigeria's 36 states pledge our continued collaboration and support to the National Assembly to address the priorities of Nigerians such as electoral reform. Democracy has been defined as the government of the people by the people and for the people. The foundation of the democratic process is therefore conducting free, fair and credible elections that reflect the wishes of the people. It is also important to state that credible elections are more likely to produce leaders that will address the development needs of the people.

The Urgent Need for Constitutional and Electoral Reforms and the Reform Proposals Made by Nigerian Youth

In the early part of 2024, KDI and its regional partners embarked on a youth-led electoral reform advocacy journey with the objective of amplifying young Nigerians' voices in the national dialogue on electoral reforms. This initiative, **supported by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and National Endowment for Democracy (NED)**, aimed to gather input from youths across Nigeria's six geo-political zones to identify their electoral reform priorities based on lessons from the **2023 elections**. Our **nationwide survey** revealed that **57%** of **4,324** respondents were dissatisfied with the electoral process in the 2023 elections, and **94%** emphasised the **urgent need for constitutional and legal reforms** to improve the system.

Through this process, we hosted **12 youth forums**, engaging over 400 young people, including political party youth leaders, social-cultural youth organisations (such as Miyetti Allah Youth and Ohaneze Ndigbo), transportation unions, entrepreneurs, and other groups previously excluded from electoral reform conversations. Representatives from various sectors, including the **National Youth Council of Nigeria (NYCN), Nigerian Youth Parliament, media, and persons with disabilities (OPDs)**, participated in shaping the reform agenda.

The recommendations submitted to the National Assembly committees on constitutional review and electoral matters by young Nigerians focused on several critical aspects, including:

- Independence, neutrality, and efficiency of INEC
- Adjudication of election petitions and the prosecution of electoral offences
- Qualifications for contesting elections
- Strengthening political party ideology

Through **expert review and harmonisation meetings**, 87 recommendations were distilled into **35 prioritised proposals**, and a **National Multi-Stakeholder Forum** refined these into **13 key recommendations** for constitutional amendments. The youth advocacy led to the identification of **5 priority reforms**, which reflect the desire for a more transparent and inclusive electoral process in Nigeria.

The top 5 youth electoral reform priorities in Nigeria include:

1. **Establishment of an Electoral Offences Commission:** Create an independent body to prosecute electoral offenders and uphold election integrity.
2. **Post-Election Petition Resolutions:** Conclude all post-election disputes before inauguration to ensure stability and fairness.
3. **Timely Transmission of Election Results:** Implement electronic transmission of election results from all levels of collation to a central place where citizens can access for quicker and transparent election outcomes.
4. **INEC Leadership Selection Process Reform:** Create an independent selection committee to nominate INEC leadership to the National Assembly to remove political influence.
5. **Interpretation and Amendment of Continuous Voters Registration Provisions:** Interpret the word continuous in section 10 of the Electoral Act 2022 to allow for continuous voter registration, making it easier for all-round voter registration.

We are encouraged by some positive developments, notably the **Southwest Zonal Legislative Interactive Session (SZLIS)** in Ibadan, Oyo State, where youth representatives engaged directly with members of the **National Assembly Joint Committee on Electoral Matters**. This dialogue provided a platform for youth to present their recommendations firsthand to legislators, underscoring the strength of their advocacy. However, we recognize that more action is necessary to move from discussion to implementation. The integrity challenges with the recently concluded off-cycle gubernatorial election in Edo state reinforces the need for urgent and far reaching electoral reform in Nigeria. Nigeria can indeed do much better.

A Reminder of Commitment to Timely Reforms

As the National Assembly resumes this crucial legislative session, we remind members of the timeline commitments made for advancing these reforms. We urge the National Assembly to prioritize the youth's five key electoral reform recommendations and work swiftly towards amending the Electoral Act 2022 and the Constitution.

Key Calls to Action for the National Assembly:

1. **Prioritise the Recommendations:** Youth across the nation have worked diligently to formulate specific amendments that address critical challenges within the electoral process. We call upon legislators to prioritise these reforms and push forward with the amendments without delay.
2. **Transparency and Accountability:** Keeping the public informed is paramount. We request that the Constitution and Electoral Reform Committees maintain open channels of communication, ensuring that the reform process is transparent and accountable to the Nigerian people.

- 3. Adherence to Timelines:** As future elections approach, passing these reforms in a timely manner is essential. Sticking to the agreed timelines will reinforce trust in the process and ensure that critical reforms are in place well before the next elections.

Our Collective Efforts and Momentum

KDI and other YERP-Naija campaign partners continue to drive this movement forward through various advocacy efforts, including:

- **Extensive Media Campaigns:** We've utilised traditional and digital media to raise awareness about the urgency of electoral reform. Today's press conference is part of our broader effort to keep the public informed and engaged.
- **One-on-One Advocacy:** We have engaged directly with lawmakers, youth groups, traditional leaders, and religious leaders at the grassroots level to foster wider support for these reforms.

A Call to the Media: Championing Accountability

The media plays a vital role in holding our leaders accountable. We call on journalists and media outlets to continue amplifying the voices of Nigeria's youth, who are championing these reforms. Your coverage of this process will help ensure that lawmakers remain transparent and committed to the reforms that Nigeria's democracy desperately needs.

A Call to the National Assembly: Keep the Commitment to Reform

As the National Assembly resumes, we call on its members to remember the commitment made to electoral reform. The future of Nigeria's democracy depends on an electoral system that is fair, transparent, and inclusive. The youth of Nigeria are watching closely, and they will continue to demand these reforms until they are fully realised.

In conclusion, KDI and our YERP-Naija campaign regional partners and countrywide network of volunteers and allies remain steadfast in its commitment to a more inclusive, transparent, and accountable electoral process in Nigeria. With the continued support of youth advocates, civil society organisations, and the media, we believe that the National Assembly will take the necessary actions to pass these essential reforms. Together, we will work towards a stronger and more democratic Nigeria that all citizens can be proud of.

Signed:

Bukola Idowu
Executive Director,
Kimpact Development Initiative (KDI)

[About YERP_Naija Consortium](#)

The Youth-led Electoral Reform Advocacy Consortium (YERP_Naija) is a coalition of youth-focused non-governmental organisations working to elevate the voices of Nigerian youth in electoral reform discussions. Supported by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), the Consortium engages with young people from all six geo-political zones and across the 36 states and the FCT to advocate for critical reforms in Nigeria's electoral system.

Members of the Youth-led Electoral Reform Consortium include:

- *North-Central & National Partner: Kimpact Development Initiative (KDI)*
- *North-West: JESZ Development Foundation*
- *South-West: The New Generation Girls and Women Development Initiative (NIGAWD)*
- *South-South: Whillz Trust Foundation (WTF)*
- *South-East: Catch Them Young Initiative (CATYCOI)*
- *North-East: Child Protection and Peer Learning Initiative (CPPLI)*

END