

The Youth Voice

Updates from the Youth-led Electoral Reform Project



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YERP-Naija

Welcome to the fourth edition of The Youth Voice Newsletter, where we spotlight the incredible progress of young Nigerians advocating for electoral reform. This edition focuses on youth-driven advocacy for electoral reform and the critical partnerships formed with key stakeholders in government and civil society. Here's how Nigerian youth are shaping the nation's democratic future.



Chairmen of the National Assembly Electoral Reform Committees pledge support for YERP-Naija campaign

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About YERP-Naija

The Youth Electoral Reform Project (YERP-Naija) empowers Nigerian youths to build consensus on electoral reforms and advocate for their enactment. It unites youth-focused CSOs and activists from all states and the FCT, promoting active youth engagement in politics through advocacy, education, and collaborations to amplify youth voices in reforms.

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INSPIRATION HUB

Pushing the Boundaries of Electoral Reform: *The Youth-Led Advocacy for a Democratic Future*

Muhammad Adamu Oyanki's victory in the March 18, 2023 election for the Doma North Constituency, at the Nasarawa State House of Assembly, highlights the emergence of young leaders in Nigeria's political space. As one of the youngest legislators, Oyanki represents the potential of the "Not Too Young to Run" initiative, which promotes youth involvement in governance.

His success reflects the growing acceptance of youthful leadership and underscores the need for young Nigerians to actively shape the nation's future. With electoral reforms on the horizon, young voices are crucial to ensuring a fairer and more inclusive political process. By engaging in policy-making, advocating reforms, and holding leaders accountable, Nigeria's youth can drive the changes needed to strengthen democracy.

Oyanki's journey from young politician to legislative representative demonstrates that the aspirations of youth can lead to real leadership. As Nigeria moves toward electoral reform, it's essential for young people to be part of the discussions, making their influence felt in shaping their future.

Chairmen of the National Assembly Electoral Reform Committees pledge support for YERP-Naija campaign

Kim pact Development Initiative (KDI), the national partner of the YERP-Naija consortium, held a strategic meeting with Senator Sharafadeen Abiodun Alli, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Electoral Matters. KDI presented the *National Youth electoral reform priorities*, which reflect youth-driven demands for a more inclusive and transparent electoral system.

Senator Alli committed to championing these youth-centric recommendations within the legislative agenda. His commitment to advocating for the inclusion of these reforms in Senate deliberations signifies a step in the right direction for the YERP-Naija movement. This development shows that persistent advocacy can turn policymakers into powerful allies, ensuring that Nigerian youth have a voice in shaping the electoral future.



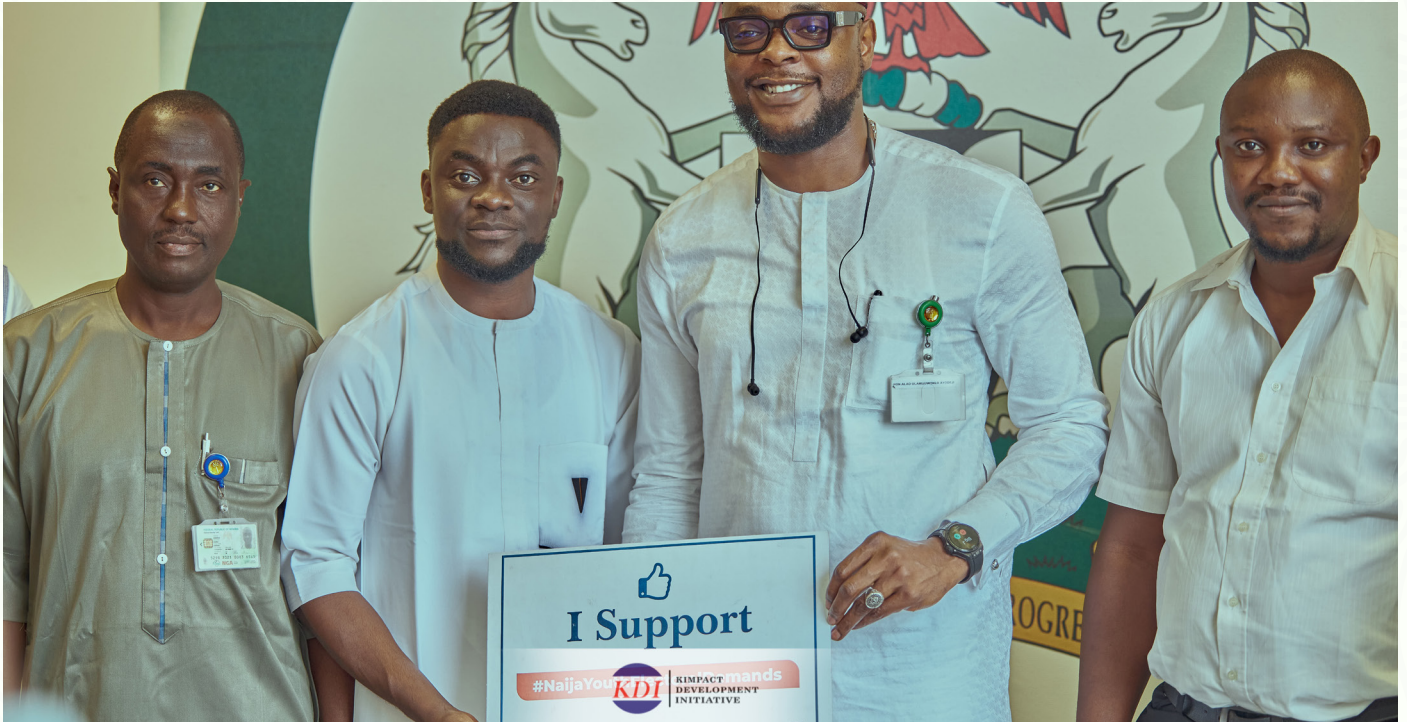
The same day saw the KDI team meeting with Honorable Prince Bayo Balogun, Chairman of the House Committee on Electoral Matters. The detailed presentation of the Youth electoral reform priorities impressed Hon. Balogun, who expressed his enthusiasm and promised unwavering support

“ I commend YERP-Naija’s systematic approach to prioritizing youth-led electoral reforms. As Chairman, I pledge to advocate for these demands. Your expertise is invaluable and crucial in shaping our electoral reform decisions ahead of the public hearing.

Honorable Prince Bayo Balogun
Chairman of the House Committee on Electoral Matters.

YOUTH IN PARLIAMENT

Building Bridges with Honorable Olamijulo Alao-Akala



YERP-Naija's national partner; KDI, held a meeting with Honorable Olamijulo Alao-Akala, Chairman of the Youth in Parliament and Young Parliamentarian Forum. This meeting further solidified youth engagement in Nigeria's legislative process. Alao-Akala's excitement about the YERP-Naija project underscores the growing recognition of the pivotal role young people play in electoral reform. This engagement lays the groundwork for long-term collaboration, with Hon. Alao-Akala offering his committee's support to deepen youth involvement in parliamentary decision-making. His invitation to maintain communication with the forum's secretariat ensures a continuous partnership, further embedding youth perspectives within the National Assembly.

NORTHWEST YOUTH ADVOCACY

Amplifying Electoral Reform in the sub-National Legislative House and the Media

In the Northwest region, youth-led advocacy continues to drive the adoption of the youth electoral reform priorities. Through the efforts of the Jesz Development Foundation (J-Dev), youth advocates engaged with key figures such as Hon. Rilwanu Sahabi Magarza, the youngest legislator in the Kebbi State House of Assembly. Magarza pledged his support, signalling his intent to push the recommendations forward within both state and federal assemblies. Additionally, JDEV volunteers spoke at radio programs including Caliphate Radio in Sokoto, Vision FM in Katsina and Nagari FM in Kebbi. These provided platforms for youth to share their electoral reform agenda with the public. These media engagements are a critical tool in raising awareness, and ensuring that youth voices resonate across the region.



From L-R; Kabir Musa, Hauwa Aliyu Musa, Hon. Rilwanu Sahabi Magarza is, Salome Jibrin, Mikailu Ladan Fakai

NORTHEAST SPOTLIGHT

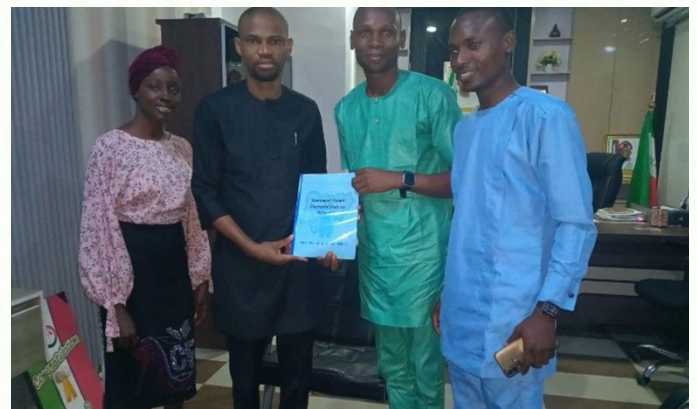
Youth Leaders Win Support in Yobe and Bauchi

Northeast youth have been equally proactive, with the YERP-Naija team in Yobe State meeting with the Speaker of the Yobe State House of Assembly, Hon. Nasiru Hassan. He expressed gratitude for the youth's contributions and pledged to push the electoral reform recommendations within his legislative networks. Similarly, in Bauchi, the team's visit to the Emir of Dass garnered enthusiastic support for the youth reforms. The Emir's promise to advocate for these recommendations in his advisory role to state leaders highlights the importance of traditional rulers in advancing democratic reforms.



Youth-Led Push for Electoral Reform Gains Momentum in Ogun State

The Ogun State YERP-Naija team met with Ogun State House of Assembly Minority Leader, Hon. Lookman Adeleye. Key issues discussed included mandatory electronic transmission of results, year-round voter registration, and transferring INEC appointment powers to a non-partisan body. "If the youth are not part of the system, they cannot drive the changes they desire," said Adeleye, affirming his commitment to supporting youth involvement in electoral reforms and calling for increased youth voices in politics.



ROYAL ENDORSEMENT FOR ELECTORAL REFORM

Obas in Ekiti Rally Behind Youth Movement

Abimbola Aladejare-Salako, Executive Director of NIGAWD, led a YERP-Naija advocacy meeting with 73 traditional rulers in Ekiti State. The leaders pledged their support for youth-led reforms. The Olojudo of Ido-Ekiti remarked, "We, as traditional leaders, must ensure that the youth's voices are heard and their recommendations championed." The meeting emphasized the importance of the electoral reform recommendations being presented to the National Assembly, with the Chairman, Council of Obas, and the Olojudo of Ido-Ekiti, committing to sign a pledge card on behalf of all the kings to support this initiative.



Youth Voices Takes Centre Stage in Ondo State



YERP-Naija, under the leadership of NIGAWD, met with Ondo State INEC Resident Electoral Commissioner (REC), Hon. Oluwatoyin Babalola. The focus was on increasing youth voter participation for the forthcoming elections advocating the youth agenda for electoral reform. Babalola emphasized, "Youth engagement is crucial to ensuring Nigeria's electoral integrity." Babalola praised the movement's role in mobilizing youth voters and expressed commitment to considering YERP Naija's administrative recommendations to improve the electoral process, including extending PVC collection centres and enhancing youth voter participation. "These recommendations are critical to ensuring a free, fair, and credible election," she emphasized, pledging to implement them in preparation for the elections.

Edo State GOTV Campaign

In the run-up to the Edo State governorship elections, YERP-Naija volunteers launched a dynamic Get Out the Vote (GOTV) campaign across 18 Local Government Areas. By engaging directly with youth in public spaces such as markets, motor parks, and churches, the campaign has been instrumental in mobilizing a new generation of voters, urging them to exercise their democratic rights. This grassroots mobilization is critical to ensuring robust voter turnout, especially among youth, a demographic that has often been disengaged from electoral processes.



Strategic Engagement with Edo State Security Agencies and Media



Ahead of the Edo elections, the WTF Team made crucial advocacy visits to the Edo State Commissioner of Police, media organizations, and civil society groups. The purpose was to emphasize the importance of security, transparency, and administrative reform in the electoral process. These advocacy efforts culminated in a press conference, where the team unveiled five priority recommendations concerning electoral security, the deployment of INEC officials, and real-time results transmission. The press conference, attended by 10 media organizations, ensured widespread dissemination of these recommendations, amplifying youth perspectives in the lead-up to the elections.



South-East Mobilization Advocacy at the Highest Levels



The South-East region has been particularly active, with advocacy visits to key political and traditional leaders. The YERP-Naija youth volunteers met with Senator Victor Umeh, who voiced strong support for the youth reform agenda, particularly the establishment of an Electoral Offenses Commission and the adoption of continuous voter registration. Umeh pledged to ensure that these recommendations would reach all 109 senators, signalling a potentially significant shift in the legislative discourse surrounding electoral reform.



Similarly, the President of Ohaneze Ndigbo Worldwide, Obi Chukwuemekalum Udodeme, met with youth leaders to discuss how traditional institutions can amplify these electoral reform demands. He vowed to use his platform to promote the youth agenda, including featuring the reform priorities on Anambra Broadcasting Station (ABS), highlighting the deepening connection between youth and traditional power structures in advocating for democratic change.

GAINING RELIGIOUS ENDORSEMENT

Cardinal John Onaiyekan's Support for Youth Electoral Reform

To bolster the YERP-Naija advocacy efforts, KDI sought the moral support of Cardinal John Onaiyekan, Archbishop Emeritus of Abuja. His endorsement of the Youth electoral reform priorities marks a pivotal moment in the movement's expansion into broader societal and religious circles. Cardinal Onaiyekan's influence as a respected moral authority in Nigeria

offers the YERP-Naija project an invaluable ally. His commitment to supporting these reforms speaks to the universal importance of youth participation in governance and electoral processes, providing a critical boost to the project's outreach to influential religious communities.



I commend YERP-Naija for gathering youth input and formulating recommendations to strengthen our democracy, ensuring every voice, especially our youth, is heard and respected in our electoral system.

His Eminence John Cardinal Olorunfemi Onaiyekan
Bishop Emeritus, Abuja Catholic Diocese

SPOTLIGHT

Concluding Post-Election Disputes Before Inauguration—*A Pathway to Stability and Fairness*

One of the critical priorities in the youth electoral reform agenda is ensuring that all post-election disputes are resolved before the swearing-in of elected officials. This recommendation addresses a significant gap in the current electoral system, which allows candidates with unresolved cases in court to assume office, potentially giving them undue influence over the judicial process.

Key Constitutional Amendments:

- **Pre-Election Cases:**

- ◇ Section 285(10): Reduce the timeframe for hearing and determining pre-election matters from 180 days to 60 days.
- ◇ Section 285(12): Shorten the appeal window for pre-election matters from 60 days to 30 days at the Appeal Court.

- **Post-Election Cases:**

- ◇ New Addition to Section 232(1): Grant the Supreme Court original and final jurisdiction in presidential election disputes, removing appellate delays.
- ◇ Section 239(1): Empower the Court of Appeal with original jurisdiction to hear governorship election disputes.
- ◇ Section 285(2): Limit eligibility for filing post-election petitions to candidates/parties with at least 20% of the total votes.
- ◇ Timeline Reduction: Shorten the days for hearing post-election cases to 50 days, enhancing efficiency in the process.

Rationale: Currently, the prolonged litigation timeline undermines electoral integrity by allowing candidates with ongoing court cases to assume office. This creates an uneven playing field where incumbents can leverage the powers of their new office to influence the outcome of their election cases. By ensuring all cases are concluded before inauguration, this reform will:

- **Foster fairness:** Elected officials won't be sworn in under a cloud of legal uncertainty, creating a level playing field for all parties.
- **Reduce pressure on the judiciary:** Judges will have a fixed timeline to resolve disputes without the complexity of dealing with sitting officeholders.
- **Enhance confidence in the electoral process:** Voters will trust the outcomes, knowing that their votes have not been overturned by undue advantages from already installed officials.

This recommendation ties directly into broader amendments within Section 139(1) of the 2022 Electoral Act and should be passed along to the Senate Committee on Electoral Matters for further action.

By addressing these legislative gaps, Nigeria's electoral system will become more transparent and accountable, ensuring that elected officials take office with legitimacy and without the shadow of unresolved legal disputes.

Get Involved

Join Our Advocacy Campaigns



Join Our WhatsApp Community

Your voice matters! Participate in our advocacy campaigns to push for the implementation of youth-led electoral reforms. Also, We are always looking for passionate individuals to join our team. Check out our volunteer opportunities and contribute to the movement for a fairer electoral system.

Follow us on social media for real-time updates and join the conversation using [#NaijaYouthElectoralDemands](#)



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