



The Youth Voice

Updates from the Youth-led Electoral Reform Project

December 2024 | Volume 5



Welcome to the fifth edition of the Youth Voice Newsletter! This issue celebrates the inspiring progress of the Youth Electoral Reform Project (YERP-Naija) and highlights the incredible impact of youth-led advocacy efforts across Nigeria. In this edition, we delve into:

The Power of Participation spotlights how young people are driving change and taking centre stage in democratic processes.

The influence of Edutainment, a creative blend of education and entertainment, mobilises young voters and amplifies their voices for electoral reforms. The vital partnerships forged with key stakeholders to advance the youth-led reform agenda.

Join us as we explore how Nigerian youth are reshaping the democratic landscape and building a brighter, more inclusive future for our nation. Stay engaged, stay inspired, and keep your voice heard!

Advocacy in Action: Youth-led Electoral Reform Champions Build Legislative Momentum

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Inspiration Hub

Youth at the Helm: A Vision for Inclusive Democracy



In an era where youth leadership is reshaping Nigerian politics, Hon. Olamijuwonlo Alao-Akala, Chairman of the House Committee on Youth in Parliament, serves as a watershed for electoral reform advocacy. His commitment to amplifying youth voices in governance shines as a beacon for the next generation of change-makers.

The transformation of Nigeria's electoral landscape is increasingly driven by young leaders who know that meaningful reform must begin from within. As Hon. Alao-Akala aptly notes, "The representation our constituents deserve is not just about presence, but about persistent advocacy for systemic change."

Dedicated to serving his constituents, Hon. Alao-Akala exemplifies how young leaders bridge the gap between traditional governance and modern democratic aspirations. His leadership blends respect for institutions with a bold vision for reform, proving that youth leadership can be both innovative and measured.

The future of electoral reform in Nigeria rests increasingly in the hands of its youth. Through dedicated leadership and strategic advocacy, young parliamentarians are not just participating in the conversation—they're reshaping it entirely. As we witness this transformation, one thing becomes clear: the path to robust democratic institutions will be paved by those who have the most at stake in its success—the youth.



Advocacy In Action: Youth-Led Electoral Reform Champions Build Legislative Momentum

In a remarkable advancement for electoral reform, the South-East YERP-Naija team has successfully rallied support from influential legislative figures in the region for youth electoral reform initiatives. The team was led by Nonso Orakwe, Executive Director of CATYCOI, and Program Manager Israel Orji, and they undertook strategic advocacy visits to the National Assembly, securing commitments from six House Representatives and three prominent Senators.

The delegation engaged with a diverse group of legislators from various constituencies across

the South-East. Notable discussions took place with Hon. Chinedu Ogah (Ezza South/Ikwo), Hon. Agbodike Paschal (Ihiala), and Hon. Alex Mascot Ikwechegh (Aba North/South). Additional backing came from Hon. Prof. Paul Nnamchi (Enugu East/Isi Uzo), Hon. Engr. Anayo B. Onwuegbu (Aninri/Awgu/Oji River), and Hon. Ikenga Ugochinyere (Ideato North/South).

The advocacy engagements also gained significant support from key Senators, including Orji Uzor Kalu (Abia North), Osita Ngwu (Enugu West), and Enyinnaya Abaribe (Abia South).

These fruitful meetings not only secured commitments but also generated strategic recommendations aimed at enhancing youth-focused electoral reforms.

This successful engagement marks a pivotal moment in amplifying the voices of young Nigerians in the electoral process, showcasing the growing momentum behind the #NaijaYouthElectoralDemands campaign. Stay tuned for updates on how these legislative partnerships will evolve into tangible actions for electoral reform.



Strategic Youth Advocacy in the North-West: Partnering with Legislators for Electoral Change



List of Legislators Engaged:

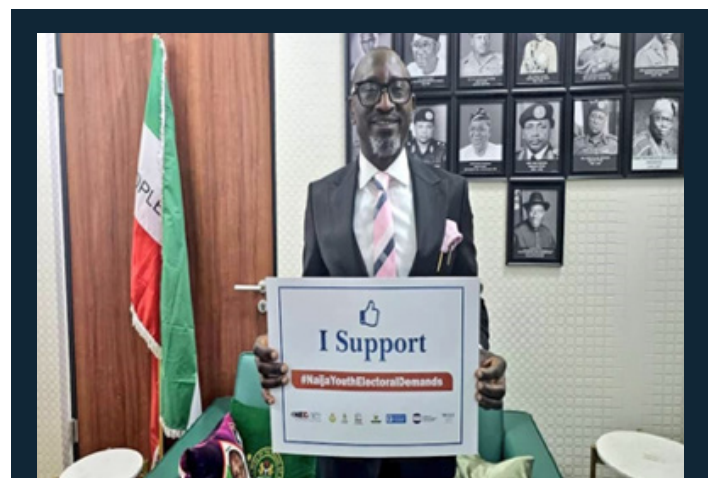
- Hon. Ahmadu Kabiru of Tsafe/Gusau Constituency, Zamfara State
- Senator Muntari Dandutse Muhammad, Katsina South Constituency, Katsina State
- Senator Ibrahim Khalid Mustapha, Kaduna North Constituency, Kaduna
- Hon. Amos Gwana Magaji, Zangon-Kataf/Jaba Constituency, Kaduna State
- Hon. Ango Abdullahi, Sabon Gari Federal Constituency, Kaduna State.

Jesz Development (J-Dev) Foundation, the North-West partner, held a series of advocacy meetings with members of the Senate and House Committees on Constitutional Review and Electoral Matters from the North-West geo-political zone of Nigeria. These visits aimed to promote the inclusion of YERP-Naija's priority electoral reform recommendations in the ongoing constitutional and electoral amendment process.

J-Dev utilized these meetings to raise awareness of youth priority recommendations and to secure legislative support, ensuring that youth voices are integral to electoral reforms. The engagements resulted in significant commitments from legislators who pledged their backing for these priorities.

Legislators expressed readiness to support reforms that reduce barriers limiting youth political participation, such as high nomination fees and restrictive party structures. There was also a pledge to advocate for quotas ensuring greater youth representation in political offices, both elected and appointed. Additionally, legislators committed to advancing measures that enhance transparency and accountability in electoral processes to rebuild trust.

These advocacy efforts signify progress toward embedding youth voices in Nigeria's democratic reforms. J-Dev remains resolute in fostering sustained dialogue with policymakers.



South-West Youth Advocacy: Advancing Youth Electoral Reform Agenda in Key National Assembly Meetings



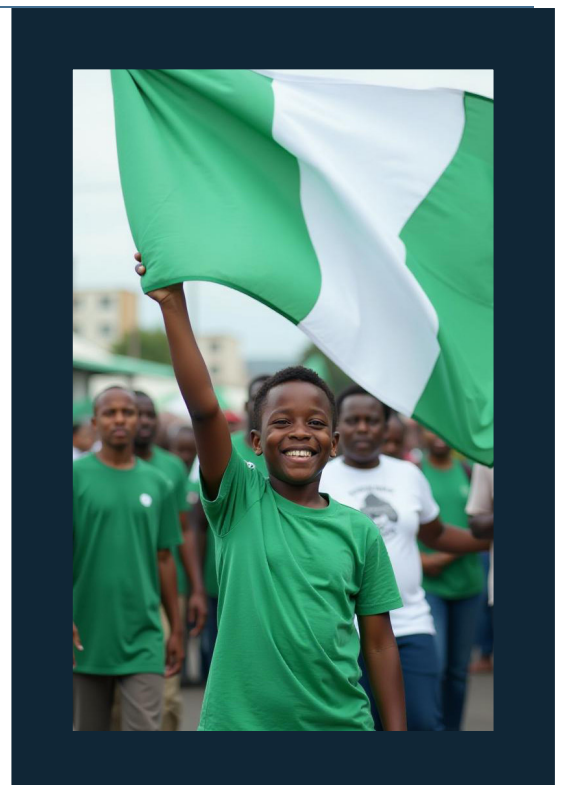
In a series of high-level meetings at the Federal House, Mrs. Abimbola Aladejare Salako, Executive Director of NIGAWD, engaged in one-on-one advocacy sessions with key members of Nigeria's National Assembly to promote the Youth-led Electoral Reform Project (YERP-Naija). The discussions focused on enhancing youth participation in Nigeria's electoral processes and presented top-priority recommendations that received significant backing from influential legislative figures. Hon. Adebayo Balogun, chairman of the House Committee on Electoral Reform and representative of Ibeju-Lekki Federal Constituency, noted that several administrative recommendations concerning INEC are currently under active consideration, highlighting the initiative's timely relevance to ongoing reform efforts.



Senator Adegbonmire SAN, representing Ondo Central Senatorial District, expressed his commitment to reducing structural barriers for young voters and pledged to advocate for these necessary reforms. Similarly, Rt. Honourable Kareem Tajudeen Abiodun of the Saki East/Saki West/Atisbo constituency affirmed his dedication to championing reforms that would make the electoral system more accessible for Nigeria's youth. Additionally, 20 other members of the Assembly met with her and committed to supporting the recommendations during both the committee stage and on the Assembly floor when presented.

“
Young people should be at the forefront of global change and innovation. Empowered, they can be key agents for development and peace.
”

Kofi Annan

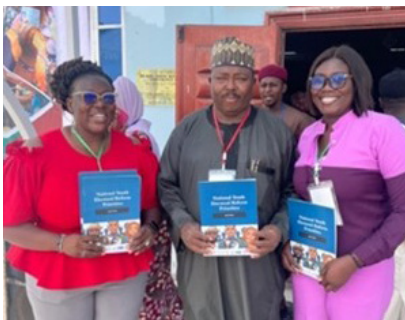


Connecting for Change: Youth-Led Advocacy Engaging Legislators to Drive Electoral Reform Initiatives in the North- Central

The North-Central youth-led advocacy team undertook strategic advocacy visits to key legislators in the region. The one-on-one meetings helped to secure legislative support for the youth-led electoral reform recommendations. These meetings provided a

platform to present priority recommendations aimed at enhancing the electoral processes and increasing youth participation in elections. The lawmakers expressed their commitment to the youth-led electoral reform recommendations promising

to use their influence to ensure successful passage. These advocacy visits have strengthened the relationship between the youth-led advocacy team and their legislative representatives, laying the groundwork for meaningful electoral reform.



Voices of Change: Northeast Legislators Champion Youth Electoral Reform Recommendations

In an unprecedented wave of advocacy success, YERP-Naija's strategic outreach across the Northeast has garnered substantial support from key legislative figures at both federal and state levels, marking a significant milestone for youth electoral reforms in Nigeria. Distinguished Senator Amos Yohanna (Adamawa North) set a positive tone during consultations at the National Assembly, emphasizing the

timely nature of the YERP-Naija's efforts amid Nigeria's current challenges. "This is indeed timely, especially in a time where Nigeria is gradually losing it," remarked Senator Yohanna, pledging to advance discussions with his Northeast colleagues. In a parallel development, Hon. Bitrus Laori Kwamoti demonstrated enthusiastic support during meetings at the House of Representatives

Wing, acknowledging ongoing discussions about similar reforms among his peers and committing to further regional consultations.

A particularly productive engagement with Senator Abdul Ahmed Ningi (Bauchi Central) yielded concrete action plans. The Senator, recognizing the potential impact of the youth priority recommendations, requested 30 copies for



distribution and it was used at the legislative retreat that took place in Katsina, creating an opportunity for broader legislative awareness. Senator Ningi's commitment extended to offering ongoing support and guidance to the YERP-Naija initiative. Also, Senator Iya Abbas (Adamawa Central) emerged as a strong youth advocate, pledging not only to support the motion but also to actively lobby colleagues for comprehensive reform implementation. As a younger legislator himself, his commitment adds significant momentum to the youth-led initiative.

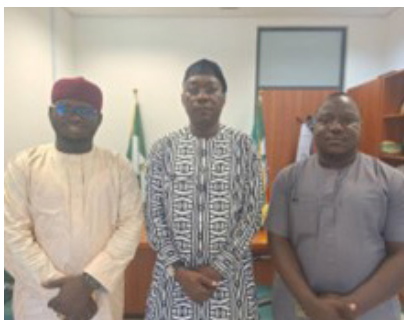
The advocacy campaign achieved another milestone

at the Adamawa State House of Assembly, where the CPPLI State Coordinator and YERP-Naija volunteers secured meetings with five influential state legislators:

1. Hon. Mohammed Buba Jijiwa (Deputy Speaker, Jada/Mbulo constituency)
2. Hon. Kate Raymond Mamuno (Majority Leader, Demsa constituency)
3. Rt. Hon. Kabiru Mijinyawa (Yola South constituency)
4. Hon. Ibrahim Musa Italy (Mayo Belwa constituency)
5. Hon. Japheth Hammajabu (Verre constituency)

The team presented the five key priority recommendations, receiving thoughtful consideration from all legislators. Notably, Hon. Japheth Hammajabu's stance emphasized substance over symbolism, declaring that his support would be demonstrated through actions rather than photo opportunities.

This comprehensive engagement across federal and state legislative chambers demonstrates growing momentum for youth-focused electoral reforms in Nigeria's Northeast, setting a promising precedent for national adoption.



“

The voices of young people matter. A democracy that ignores its youth is a democracy without a future.

Justin Trudeau

”



On November 5, 2024, CPPLI State Coordinator, and other YERP-Naija volunteers visited the Adamawa State House of Assembly in Yola, where they met with five legislators: Hon. Mohammed Buba Jijiwa (Deputy Speaker) representing Jada/Mbulu constituency, Hon. Kate Raymond Mamuno (Majority

Leader) of Demsa constituency, Rt. Hon. Kabiru Mijinyawa from Yola South constituency, Hon. Ibrahim Musa Italy of Mayo Belwa constituency, and Hon. Japheth Hammajabu of Verre constituency. During the visit, the team presented five key priority recommendations to address pressing local issues. While

the meeting was productive, Hon. Japheth Hammajabu declined to participate in photo documentation, stating that his support for the advocacy cause does not rely on his picture being taken, as he believes his actions will reflect his commitment.



A Call for Change: Ondo Students Use 'Edutainment' to Amplify Calls for Reform



In a landmark initiative to amplify youth voices and enhance civic participation, the New Generation Girls, and Women Development Initiative (NIGAWD) the Southwest partner has completed its innovative "Campus Storm" campaign across Ondo State's three senatorial districts. The Youth Electoral Reform Project (YERP-NAIJA) engaged over 600 students from three

major tertiary institutions, connecting them with electoral officials, law enforcement representatives, and campus administrators. This dynamic program featured a blend of educational sessions and creative "Edutainment" performances aimed at promoting PVC collection and encouraging electoral participation. Technical sessions addressed crucial topics such as electoral reforms and student concerns about voting safety, catalysing increased youth engagement in Nigeria's democratic process, especially considering the upcoming November 16 off-cycle gubernatorial elections. A standout feature of the initiative was the active involvement of electoral officials, who facilitated access to PVC collection centres near each campus. This effort marks a significant advancement in YERP-Naija's goal to strengthen youth participation in Nigeria's democratic future. The "Campus Storm" campaign has proven to be a resounding success, empowering students to take a more active role in the electoral process. By bridging the gap between youth and electoral authorities, YERP-Naija is paving the way for a more inclusive and responsive democracy. The impact of this initiative extends far beyond the classroom. Participating students are now equipped with the knowledge and tools to become ambassadors of change within their communities. As Nigeria prepares for the upcoming gubernatorial elections, YERP-Naija is poised to continue its vital work in cultivating the next generation of engaged and informed citizens.



Aligning Interests For Mutual Benefits: Advocacy Engagement With Other Critical Stakeholders

At the national level, the KDI team paid an advocacy visit to the president of the Nigeria Union of Journalists, Dr. Chris Isiguzo. The objective of the meeting was to secure media support and coverage for youth-led electoral reform initiatives, enhancing public awareness and fostering informed dialogue on electoral processes. Highlighting the objectives and efforts of the YERP-Naija project, the advocacy team focused on the five priority recommendations and the need to amplify youth voices in electoral discourse. The advocacy asks were centered on - **A youth/media collaboration, Integration of youth voices in mainstream electoral discussions and a platform allocation for youth reform advocates.**



Advocacy Engagement with the Chairman, Nigerian Union of Journalists – Benue State Chapter

The Benue team paid an advocacy visit to Mr. Vincent Niyongu, who is the Chairman, Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) - Benue state chapter. The chairman pledged his support for the reforms and emphasized that the Union is open to amplifying the recommendations of Nigerian youths on electoral reforms through press conferences and through the print media.

“
*The youth of today are the leaders of tomorrow.
Their involvement in democracy ensures a
thriving and inclusive society.*
”

Nelson Mandela



Sustaining Grassroot Momentum and Support for the Youth-led Electoral Reform Recommendations

Advocacy Engagement with the Leader and Council Members (Councilors) of Jos North LGA-Plateau State

The Plateau State team conducted an advocacy visit to the Jos North Local Government Area (LGA) council to present YERP-Naija objectives and youth-led electoral reform recommendations. The visit marked a significant milestone as it was the first advocacy engagement received by the newly elected council leader. Key participants at the meeting were the YERP-Naija Plateau State Team, Jos North LGA Council Leader and Council Members (Councillors). The team met with a positive reception and the council leader expressed delight at hosting the advocacy team. He pledged full support for the youth-led electoral reform recommendations. He pointed out the need for collective approaches in pushing for the reforms as this will help to improve youth interest and participation in electoral processes in Nigeria. The council leader demonstrated enthusiastic support for the initiative, marking a promising start to potential collaboration between YERP-Naija and local government authorities.



Advocacy visit to the Speaker of the Rivers State Youth Leaders Assembly

The Rivers State advocacy team for the YERP-Naija Project made an advocacy visit to the Speaker of the Rivers State Youths Leaders Assembly at the secretariat, which is located at Abuloma Road, Port Harcourt. The team was received by the Speaker Amb. Prince Tonye Jeminimiema, who in response appreciated the consortium and the key partners for the project adding that it was laudable and would promote the participation of the youths in the political process, showed his commitment by saying he would support the campaign by mobilizing youth leaders across Rivers State for a sensitization program to popularize the key recommendations and the YERP-Naija project and for the youths to buy into the key recommendations. This was received with gratitude by the advocacy team.

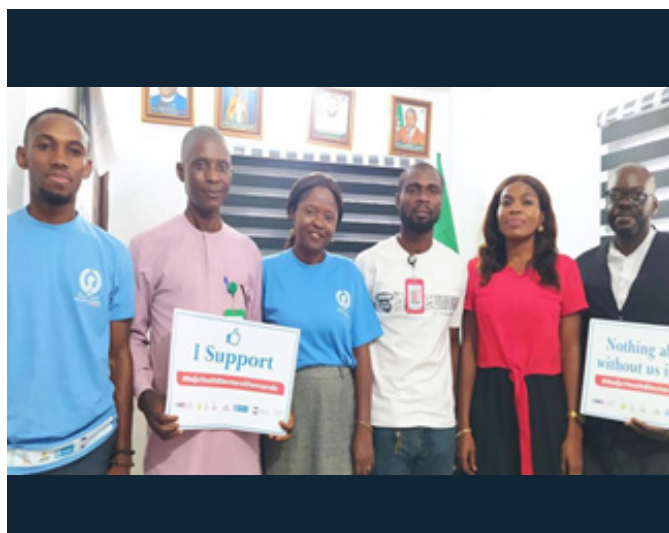


Advocacy visit to Anambra State Association of Town Unions (ASATU)

The Catch Them Young Community Initiative (CATYCOI) team, led by Executive Director Nonso Orakwe, conducted an advocacy visit to Comrade Ken Okoli, the President of the Anambra State Association of Town Unions (ASATU). During the meeting, Nonso Orakwe gave an overview of the dissatisfaction of 90% of Nigerian youths with the outcome of the 2023 general elections, which led to the project on Youth-led electoral reform and gave details of how the priority recommendation was developed.

Nonso Orakwe shared that 87 recommendations were initially developed from the project, and later refined into the top five electoral reform priorities. These recommendations included the establishment of an independent Electoral Offenses Commission, the timely transmission of election results, reform of the INEC leadership selection process, and a more genuine interpretation of continuous voter registration. CATYCOI's Program Manager, Israel Orji, also emphasized the need for these reforms to promote transparency and accountability in the electoral process.

Israel Orji called on ASATU's support to achieve these goals, recognizing the organization's influence as a strong ally in advocating for these reforms. In response, Comrade Ken Okoli expressed his commitment to partnering with YERP-Naija and pledged to facilitate a meeting with the Deputy Governor of Anambra State. He also promised to promote the electoral reform recommendations within ASATU and to use his social media platforms to raise awareness at the grassroots level. The meeting concluded with a gesture of gratitude from the CATYCOI team and the formal handover of the electoral reform document to the ASATU President.



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When the whole world is silent, even one voice becomes powerful. Youth participation is not just a right; it's an essential investment in the future.

”
Malala Yousafzai

Advocacy visit to the Youth Wing of the Christian Association of Nigeria

An advocacy visit was made to the Chairman of the Youth wing of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN). CAN comprises the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, Christian council of Nigeria, The Pentecostal fellowship of Nigeria, Organization of African Instituted Churches, the Evangelical Church Winning All and the Fellowship of Churches of Christ in Nigeria. CAN is a very strong voice and a critical stakeholder in Nigeria and that is why WTF decided to make this





We need to ensure young people are not just heard but are actively included in decision-making processes to shape the future they will inherit.

Ban Ki-moon



visit. The WTF team was received by the Chairman AP. Amb. Dimkpa Thankgod I., the Vice Chairman Evang. Simple Joe Akwae and the Legal adviser Bar. John Awunde S.

After the advocacy team made their submissions on the reason for the visit, the

Chairman appreciated the team for their visit, adding that the project and the key 5 youth electoral reforms were a laudable initiative. He said this was long overdue, that the youths need the reform to be adopted to promote their participation in the electoral process. He showed his support for the initiative by committing to mobilize youths across the Christian focused churches to popularize the project and the 5 key priority recommendations. He also promised to use the opportunity to include the key recommendations in all the youth sensitization programs in CAN from the year 2024 to 2025.

Advocacy visit to the Paramount Ruler of Elenwo Community

The WTF team also visited the Palace of Eze Sunny Weli, the Paramount Ruler of Elenwo community in Obio-Akpor LGA. The visit was carried out to inform the king of the Project and the 5 key priority recommendations. The meeting was also to get access to Hon. Kingsley Chinda Ogundu (Minority Leader), fAkpor Federal Constituency, who is a member of the Constitutional Amendment Committee in the House of Representatives. In his response, Eze said the project and the initiative were commendable and that he would use his position as the Elenwo King to populate the YERP-Naija project among the youths, not just in his community. He promised to reach Hon Chinda on this, informing him about the visit and the outcome.



Advocacy visit to the Olu of Warri



The South-south advocacy team held a meeting with the Olu of Warri. This visit took place at his Palace in Warri. Ogiame Atuwase III, the Olu of Warri and the 21st ruler of Warri/Itsekiri Kingdom is one of the most influential traditional rulers, with the welfare and development of the youths as one of his priorities. The advocacy team was received by the members of his cabinet. WTF team briefed the King on the YERP Naija project and the efforts of the consortium towards the adoption of the 5 youth priority recommendations. The Team also used the opportunity to appeal to the King to popularize the Key Recommendations and to reach members of the Senate and House of Representatives in Delta State. In his response, the King appreciated WTF for their visit, while also applauding the initiative. The King promised to reach Senator Ned Nwoko and other Senators in Delta state on this, citing that if the 5 key priority recommendations are adopted by the legislators, it will be beneficial to the youths.

Advocacy Visit to Catholic Bishop of Umuahia Diocese

The Abia team paid an advocacy visit to Most Rev. Michael Kalu Ukpung, Catholic Bishop of Umuahia Diocese, at Mater Dei Cathedral on Wednesday, October 16, 2024. The Coordinator, OnyinyeChi Nwosu introduced the YERP-Naija project, highlighting its history, and emphasizing the Top 5 Youth Electoral Reform Priorities as key to an acceptable electoral system that will rekindle youth interest and participation in electoral processes. A copy of the priorities was presented to Bishop Ukpung, outlining his vital role as a religious leader. He praised the project, blessed the team, and promised support, encouraging them to continue their efforts towards a better Nigeria.



Comr. Nwanokwara Ncheta, the Anambra State Coordinator paid an advocacy visit to the Executive members of the Students Union Government, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, at Awka Capital Territory Premises. I took turns to explain the overview of the YERP-Naija project, highlighted its history, and emphasized on the Top 5 Youth Electoral Reform Recommendations and the need for the active participation of the youths in electoral processes.

The SUG President Comr. Ezeh Samuel on behalf of his executive joyfully expressed happiness for the visit emphasizing that they are not aware of this kind of project in the state and pledged their readiness and continuous support for the success of the project. He equally promised to educate and sensitize other students within their reach in the campus about the Electoral Reform Project. A copy of the top five (5) Youth Led Electoral Reform Recommendations was presented to the SUG President.



Get Involved

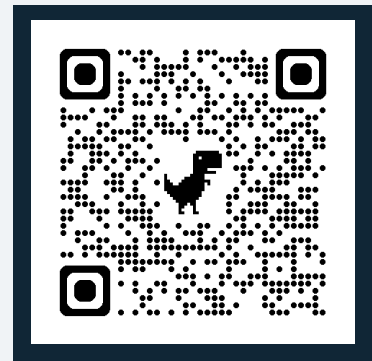
Join Our Advocacy Campaigns



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



<https://chat.whatsapp.com/Ke-HI3MtNpekKc4zbLIXW0g>

Merry
Christmas
AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR
IN ADVANCE

