



Youths March to Presidential Villa for Buhari's assent to Not Too Young To Run Bill

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YIAGA Africa Urges Improved Monitoring of Budget for Women



British High Commissioner Lauds Nigerian Youths Over NotTooYoungToRun Bill



The Demand for a Youth Inclusive Constitution, By Cynthia Mbamalu

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Bounce Corruption YIAGA Africa Mobilises Students against Corruption



YIAGA AFRICA URGES IMPROVED MONITORING OF BUDGET FOR WOMEN

Fresh from reviewing the 2018 budget allocation for youth development which it describes as unrealistic and insufficient, YIAGA Africa has lauded the increased programmes targeted at women and girls while urging the improved monitoring and evaluation of such allocations as sometimes funds are not expended in reality.

This is contained in the report of the 2018 Budget Gender Review conducted by YIAGA Africa's Centre for Legislative Engagement.

The review, which was presented by Barrister Stella Odiase to stakeholders at a validation meeting in Abuja, shows that for the first time within the past decade, more sectors like Health, Education Solid Minerals, Environment, Niger Delta and Communication Technology have included funding that targets women and girls specifically.

During the presentation, Barrister Odiase also revealed that some Ministries have, for the first time, included the implementation of sector policies that target gender disparities as part of their respective budgets in 2018. "For instance, there is funding to implement the gender policies of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and Ministry of Health.



From L-R: Cynthia Mbamalu, Programs Manager YIAGA AFRICA; Distinguished Guest and Presenter of Review, Barrister Stella Odiase; Yetunde Bakare, Senior Programs Officer YIAGA AFRICA-CLE and other distinguished guests at the Gender Review meeting held recently.

The Ministry of Women Affairs have budgets for the implementation of the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act 2015", she said.

The 2018 Budget Gender Review which seeks to address the limitations that either gender faces when it comes to accessing public goods and services, also revealed that there are opportunities in every sector to improve the situation of women and girls during the implementation of generic programmes at little or no additional costs especially at the level of research and development, Monitoring and Evaluation, stakeholder consultations, skills transfer and training.

Meanwhile the 2018 budget has also retained the N500 billion Social Investment Portfolio (SIP) allocations for third fiscal year in a row, which presents an opportunity to further expand opportunities and access for women and girls. The SIP portfolio was introduced in 2015 by the Buhari Administration under the auspices of the Federal Government's National Social Investment Office (NSIO).





YOUTHS MARCH TO PRESIDENTIAL VILLA FOR BUHARI'S ASSENT

Thousands of Nigerian youths gathered at the Unity Fountain in Abuja for the Not Too Young to Run National Day of Action march to solicit President Buhari's assent for the Not Too Young to Run bill. The bill which gained majority support from the National Assembly and 35 State Houses of Assembly seeks to reduce the age qualification for running for elective office in Nigeria.

Young Nigerians, from all walks of life, representing different youth groups across geo-political zones, from Rivers, Bauchi, Sokoto, Kano, Katsina, Kogi, Ekiti, Imo, Plateau, Bornu, Kaduna, Enugu, etc, turned out in their numbers to demand for a youth inclusive government.

While calling on President Buhari to sign the #NotTooYoungToRun Bill, the group reminded President Buhari about his campaign promises to Nigerian youths in 2015. Young people at the march held up signs that read "Youth Inclusion is Youth Development" "Nothing for Us Without Us" as they made their way peacefully to Aso Villa.

The group also called on the National Assembly to finalize the harmonization of the constitutional amendment bills, which was submitted to them by the State Assemblies more than a week ago and transmit the amendment bills to the President for his assent.

The group stressed that failure to transmit the Not Too Young to Run bill to President Buhari for his timely assent will disenfranchise young Nigerians who are eagerly waiting for the outcome of the bill to commence their campaign process.

Speaking at the rally, Executive Director of YIAGA Africa, Samson Itodo called on young Nigerians nationwide to go out en-masse to collect their permanent voter's card so that they can fully participate in the electoral process in 2019.

At about 3:30pm the Minister for Aviation Mr. Hadi Sirika came out from the Federal Executive Council meeting to address the youths, who had been waiting patiently irrespective of the scorching heat of the sun.



Minister for Aviation Mr. Hadi Sirika addressing the youths

While speaking on behalf of the President, Mr. Sirika assured Nigerian youths that President Buhari will assent to the bill; "The President is a democrat, and if Nigerians have spoken he has no choice but to do the needful" he said. Mr. Sirika collected the letter addressed to the president and signed an acknowledgement copy as evidence of collection.

The group wishes to unequivocally state that the news on some media platforms, reporting that today's March, was a protest to President Buhari's Rejection of Electoral Act Amendment Bill is false. The Group wishes to reiterate that the purpose of the #NotTooYoungtoRun National Day of Action peaceful march was to call on the National Assembly to expedite action and transmit the constitutional amendment bill to reduce the age for elective office in Nigeria to President Muhammadu Buhari's and for the President to assent to the bill in a timely manner.



British High Commissioner Lauds Nigerian Youths Over NotTooYoungToRun Bill

British High Commissioner to Nigeria, Paul Arkwright has commended YIAGA Africa and young Nigerians for securing the passage of the Age Reduction Bill, popularly referred to as #NotTooYoungToRun Bill by both National and State Houses of Assembly, as the bill awaits Presidential assent. Mr. Arkwright stated this during the Commonwealth Big Lunch event on Thursday in Abuja.

The Big Lunch event had participants from various Youth Organizations in attendance, including YIAGA Africa. In his address, Mr. Arkwright noted that, the Big Lunch event in Nigeria is themed around Youths who are important to the Commonwealth as 60 per cent of Commonwealth Nations citizens are below 30 years of age. He further stated that, 40 per cent of the world youth live in Commonwealth countries and 1 Billion people living in Commonwealth countries are under 25 years of age.

The High Commissioner noted that, activities of youth organizations are important to the Commonwealth and matters to the future of Nigeria as well, saying young people in Nigeria face challenges and the good work youth organizations carry out provide solutions to those challenges.

Citing example of efforts of young people in Nigeria, the High Commissioner stated, "For example, you should all be proud of your role to secure the passage of the #NotTooYoungToRun Bill, a reform that has been long overdue and a reform that I and a number of other High Commissioners here present have also supported. I was delighted to meet the YIAGA Group earlier and many congratulations to you for pushing through. I hope that it leads and open the doors to greater youth participation in politics and in policy making throughout Nigeria."

“Activities of youth organizations are very important to the Commonwealth and matters to the future of Nigeria. British Prime Minister Theresa May have put youth at the heart of the upcoming Commonwealth Summit in London. She has invited youth delegates to address commonwealth leaders in New York in September to talk about their vision for the Commonwealth”, he said Employment, Climate Change, Peace and Security and how to improve trade amongst Commonwealth countries are all part of the agenda for the September Summit according to the High Commissioner.

“At the Summit before the leaders meet, there will be a Commonwealth Youth Forum that will provide the opportunity for young people of the Commonwealth to build cross-cultural connections and networks to debate the challenges facing young people and to agree youth-led initiatives to influence decision makers and to ensure young people have a voice in their future”, he added “I encourage you to see the Commonwealth as a network and vehicle for supporting your campaigns on behalf of young people in Nigeria. My team and I look forward to working with you on the commitment that would be made at the London Summit. The future of Nigeria is the future of young people and if young people are not included in that debate, then the future of Nigeria will but be a happy one. I am confident that it will be a happy one because people like you will be involved and I encourage you to stay involved and get involved in elections and vote. Make sure your votes count”, he concluded.

Not Too Young To Run The Demand for a Youth Inclusive Constitution

By Cynthia Mbamalu

The #NotTooYoungToRun movement presents a model for citizens’ activism, because for the first time in my lifetime and that of so many Nigerians, I see Nigerians uniting across religious, ethnic and political lines driven by one goal – youth political inclusion. That to me is the Nigerian spirit that we all need.

“Today I march because I want to run for elections in 2019 and if the president for any reason does not give his assent to the age reduction bill it means I will have to wait until the next election cycle and I do not have four years to wait” – Benedicta Ndi Kato

“Greatest Nigerian youth, today we ask for inclusion, today we build the future, today we decide our destiny, today we walk towards inclusion, we have worked, National Assembly has passed the Bill, the State Assembly has passed it and now we need the President to Assent...” – Rinsola Abiola



This is the current reality of young Nigerians who have worked in different capacities in their communities and beyond, but whose aspiration to run for elective offices have been constantly fettered by the Nigerian Constitution. The Constitution ordinarily should be the guarantee of the protection for the exercise of rights in a democracy. As a people, we should be worried that when we go to the polls during elections, our options of candidates into the various elective offices from the Presidency to the State Assemblies are limited to a select few who are not a true reflection of our population. We should be worried that the face of government at the different levels do not reflect youth or even women, in a country where the youth demography is projected to be over 50 percent of the total population, and the number of women projected to be almost half the population of Nigeria. The NotTooYoungToRun bill, which seeks to reduce the age for contesting elections in the Constitution is an affirmation of the need for a more inclusive political system and electoral process. It is a bill that is long overdue and a youth movement that is much needed in a country where young people are beginning to lose hope in the government and in Nigeria. So, when we marched on March 14, 2018 from the Unity Fountain to the presidential villa in Abuja, we did not march under the scorching heat of the sun because we wanted to participate in a fun activity.

We marched because we need the presidential assent for the #NotTooYoungToRun bill to become law; it is long past the time for complacency over the outright injustice in a system that has constantly excluded the youth from government. Considering that in the 2015 general elections in Nigeria, only 11 percent were youth candidates for the Senate, 10 percent for governorship, 18 percent for the House of Representatives, 29 percent for the State Houses of Assembly election, with almost half of that number not qualified to run for the election based on the age criteria in the Constitution. We marched because we believe that inclusion is a fundamental principle in a democracy. We marched because each time we see the news and reports highlighting the increase in the rate of youth unemployment and poverty, we are shaken and worried about the threat that this poses to national development.

We marched because Nigeria is ours and we are major stakeholders in the development of our democracy and sustainable development in Nigeria. For the movement, we recognise that the process of socio-political transformation begins with the Constitution.

The Constitution-making process in modern times provides an opportunity for socio-political transformation, especially to the extent to which the process incorporates citizens' participation.

More countries in sub-Saharan Africa, such as Kenya, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, are adopting a more participatory process in their constitution making processes, which have produced more progressive constitutional guarantees, ranging from constitutionalising more social economic rights, the rights of women and youth to the adoption of affirmative action for the promotion of political inclusion for women and youth.



The Kenyan Constitution, for instance, adopts conscious and targeted steps to ensure youth political inclusion by aligning the voting age with the eligibility age for contesting election at 18 years, with special seats reserved for the youth in the national assembly, Senate and the county assembly. Within the West African region, our close neighbour and sister country, Ghana, guarantees the rights of young people in the country to run for election into their parliament from 21 years old. In Gambia, young people can run for the legislative seat from 21 years old, and 30 years for the presidency; in Liberia young people from the age of 25 years can run for election into the House of Representative, at 30 years for the Senate seat and at 35 for the office of the president. This has enabled more youth candidates to emerge as elected officials from the recently concluded elections in the mentioned countries.

This time around, both the national and international interests in the constitution amendment process in Nigeria was sparked and has been sustained by the enthusiasm of young people leading the #NotTooYoungToRun campaign and engaging the constitutional amendment process. March 14, 2018 was the second time we marched for this bill and each time I see hope and a future for our democracy.

Notably, there are challenges to youth candidacy in Nigeria and even Africa beyond age limitation, ranging from money politics to the lack of internal party democracy. However, we have tested our ability to

organise and we have seen the power in our organising democratically based ideologies, and in our number.

The NotTooYoungToRun movement models it all. Convened by YIAGA Africa with a Strategy Team at the federal level, State coordinators for each of the 36 States and leadership teams consisting of young people from the local government areas in each State, the movement began with simple forms of advocacy. We learnt to leverage on both social media and traditional media, engage our respective communities, write as many letters as possible, with advocacy visits to both federal and State lawmakers, tracking the progression of the bill and constantly sharing information on the bill with the public, making the necessary phone calls and text messaging, engaging political, traditional and religious institutions and calling on the support of international friends. The Age Reduction Bill, which was introduced as a private member's bill in the House of Representative by Honourable Tony Nwulu and in the Senate by Senator Abdulaziz Nyako became a subject of national discourse with young people at the different levels, leading the conversation on youth inclusion and why young people must engage the Constitution amendment process. The Age Reduction Bill was successfully passed by the National Assembly and 35 State Assemblies and is currently at the More countries in sub-Saharan Africa, such as Kenya, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, are adopting a more participatory

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conversation on youth inclusion and why young people must engage the Constitution amendment process.

The Age Reduction Bill was successfully passed by the National Assembly and 35 State Assemblies and is currently at the stage of presidential assent. As one of the leading movements emerging from Nigeria and connecting young people in Africa and beyond, NotTooYoungToRun is a proof that we are in the era of the youth, where the power for socio-political transformation begins with young people setting the political agenda and influencing political behaviour.

Perhaps we should consider the fact that our constitution-making process in Nigeria has over the years remained somewhat closed and elitist, with the decision-making process driven by the law makers in the National Assembly and State Houses of Assemblies, at least since our transition to democracy.

There is no doubt that at different points in our democratisation journey, issues have been raised questioning the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria as a true representation of the will of the people. As such, almost every Assembly has made attempts to amend sections of the Constitution with some being successful and others failing, like the 2012 constitution-making process, which failed at the stage of the presidential assent.

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The #NotTooYoungToRun movement presents a model for citizens' activism, because for the first time in my lifetime and that of so many Nigerians, I see Nigerians uniting across religious, ethnic and political lines driven by one goal – youth political inclusion. That to me is the Nigerian spirit that we all need. The youth, as it is, have learnt to unite in our demand for accountable leadership and national development.

As citizens, we have a responsibility to ensure that we build a Nigeria that works for all citizens and that our democracy does not become the dictatorship of a majority that is not a true representation of our vast population. The only option we have is to engage until we achieve results because as young Nigerians we have a higher stake. #NotTooYoungToRun is history being made.

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Bounce Corruption YIAGA Africa Mobilises Students against Corruption

....Takes Public Integrity Debate to North-East, North-West Tertiary Institutions

The Bounce Corruption Public Integrity Debate in the North East Zone of the country provided an intense debate among students from Gombe State University, Federal Polytechnic Mubi and University of Maidguri took to stage to debate on the efficacy of the current administration anticorruption strategy. This is part of effort to mobilise 20 million young Nigerians to fight against corruption in Nigeria. The students explored an intensive approach in choosing to criticize or uphold their stand of their perception of the government anti-corruption strategy and its provision in improving an accountable society.

The debaters took turns to emphasis the turning point in the current anti-corruption strategy. Debaters from the Federal Poly Mubi supported the motion that the current anti-corruption strategy was working because it provides a new sense of direction from all the previous administration non-institutional approach in fighting corruption. They argued that the current government has made improved attempts in harmonizing institutions with an enabling law which provides clarity of interpretation for the institution to pursue establishment of credible justice and an accountable society from state actors and citizens alike. Opposing with stringent



Enthusiastic participants listening at the #BounceCorruption Debate at Usman Dan Fodio University, Katsina State

arguments that the current anti-corruption was not working were debaters from the University of Madiguri who provided critical points hinged on a perception that the government was running a confused system with disorganized chronicles of excuses portrayed as results of fighting corruption. The debating pair cited that the anti-corruption strategy was flexible and relative in efficiency, citing lawmaker Joshua Dariye has receiving cover from judicial probing shortly after re-aligning with the ruling political party. Adding that anti-corruption strategy document is an adopted document that cannot tackle root causes of corruption in Nigeria while failing to give a coherent analysis of the war against corruption in Nigeria.

The debaters described that without proper resolution against factors in war against corruption as proposed by Professor Chidi Odinkalu of the London Business School, the fight against corruption will be both incommunicable and ineffective.

Taking up the position also for the government were debaters from the Gombe State University who described the effort of government in the fight against corruption as both preventive and corrective. They argued on the motion that the anti-corruption strategy was working with evidence seen in the recovery of loot; escue of kidnapped school girls and lecturers and resolving ammunition insurgency in the country by investigating sponsors of rebel groups.



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The presiding judges included, Mr. Franklin Ubi, Secretary, All-Nigeria Universities Debating Council (Chief Adjudicator); Mohammed Baba Fika, Deputy Superintendent, ICPC Bauchi Zonal Office (Adjudicator) and Bello Adamu Bajoga, Head, Public Affairs Dept. EFCC North East Zonal Office, Gombe State (Adjudicator).

At the end of the debate the team of judge ranked as follows; 1st Position: University of Maiduguri; 2nd Position Gombe state university and Federal Polytechnic Mubi. Also out ranked for their late arrival for participation is Abubakar Tafa Balewa Uni Bauchi.

The Head of Business Administration, Dr. Babangida Musa, in his address said he thanks YIAGA Africa for the initiative and believes in the goals of the project; encouraging the orientation should be extended to young people under the age of 18 years. Also from the Business Administration, Professor M. Musa described as intense and urgent the need to point young people in a direction to avoid sacrificing national development on the altar of greed.

Similarly, YIAGA Africa's public accountability and social justice team has also taken its Bounce Corruption campaign trail to North-west, Nigeria where it was hosted by Umaru Musa Yar'adua University, Katsina state

The South-South and South-East, Tertiary Institutions have also shared their thought about the current administration's anti-corruption strategy via the Bounce Corruption debate where University of Calabar hosted the South-South zone for the debate. On the podium were Students from University of Port Harcourt and University of Benin slugging it out on how effective is the anticorruption strategy of President Muhammadu Buhari's administration.

This gave insight and understanding on anticorruption which is the key objective of the Bounce Corruption campaign. The South-east was not left out as Nnamdi Azikwe University; Awka hosted Federal University of Technology, Owerri, University of Nigeria Nsukka and Abia State University, Uturu to another epic debate session on anticorruption.

PHOTO SPEAKS



Photos from the National Day of Action Presidential Villa for Buhari's assent to Not Too Young To Run Bill



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