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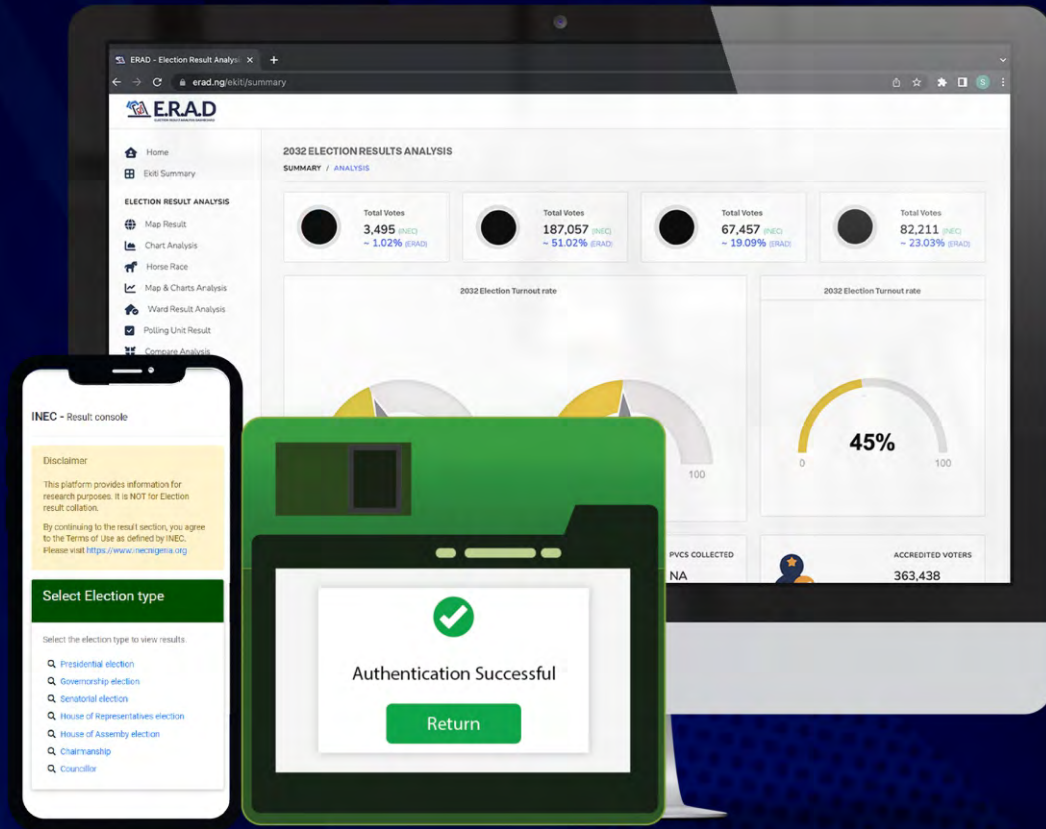
Narratives of Disruptive Impact



Image: National Day of Protest demanding the President's assent to the Electoral Act (Amendment) Bill.

INSIDE:

- ◆ Influencing Electoral and Constitutional Reforms
- ◆ The Power of Unconventional Alliances
- ◆ Reforming the Legislature through Sustained Engagement



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Introduction

The year 2021, like every other year since Yiaga Africa came into existence 16 years ago, was a busy one, filled with activities and projects that aim at strengthening democratic governance, promoting civic participation and protecting human rights.

There has never been a greater need to strengthen democracy in Nigeria than now, especially as there has been a backsliding of democracy in the West African region with coups taking place in Burkina Faso, Guinea and Mali in the last three years. While our recently concluded elections extend our longest unbroken period of democracy, we are not unaware of the need to safeguard and strengthen it. After all, the job of building a democracy is a never-ending process.

In the year under review, we made giant strides towards achieving our vision of a democratic and developed Africa where citizens are involved. Our interventions which cut across our thematic areas of elections, legislative engagement and democratic governance put citizens' participation and involvement at its core.

This is because in doing so, we build the capacity of citizens to

organise, engage and effectively participate in our democracy.

As an organisation, we are committed to documenting, celebrating and reflecting on our achievements, and this is what has inspired us to publish this magazine. It documents the work we did in the year 2021, celebrates the wins we achieved, and importantly, it gives us this opportunity to reflect and see how we can build on them.

Not only that, it tells the stories from the perspectives of the people that we work with: beneficiaries and partners, and how our work has enabled them to achieve their goals. This is a testament to the premium we place on collaboration and community-building.

As you read this magazine, we invite you along on this journey to see how we are strengthening democracy in Nigeria, and more importantly, how we can continue to be catalysts for change and progress together with you.

Enjoy.

Samson Itodo

Executive Director,
Yiaga Africa

Editorial Team

Publisher:

Yiaga AFRICA

Managing Editor:

Mark AMAZA

Deputy Editors:

Moshood ISAH

Chinemerem ONUORAH

Editorial Consultants:

Seye JOSEPH

Blessing OLADUNJOYE

Mayowa ADENIRAN

Creative & Graphics

Israel ADEYEMO

Production Manager:

Olusegun OGUNDARE

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All inquiries should be directed to
feedback@yiaga.org or
+234 808 941 9922

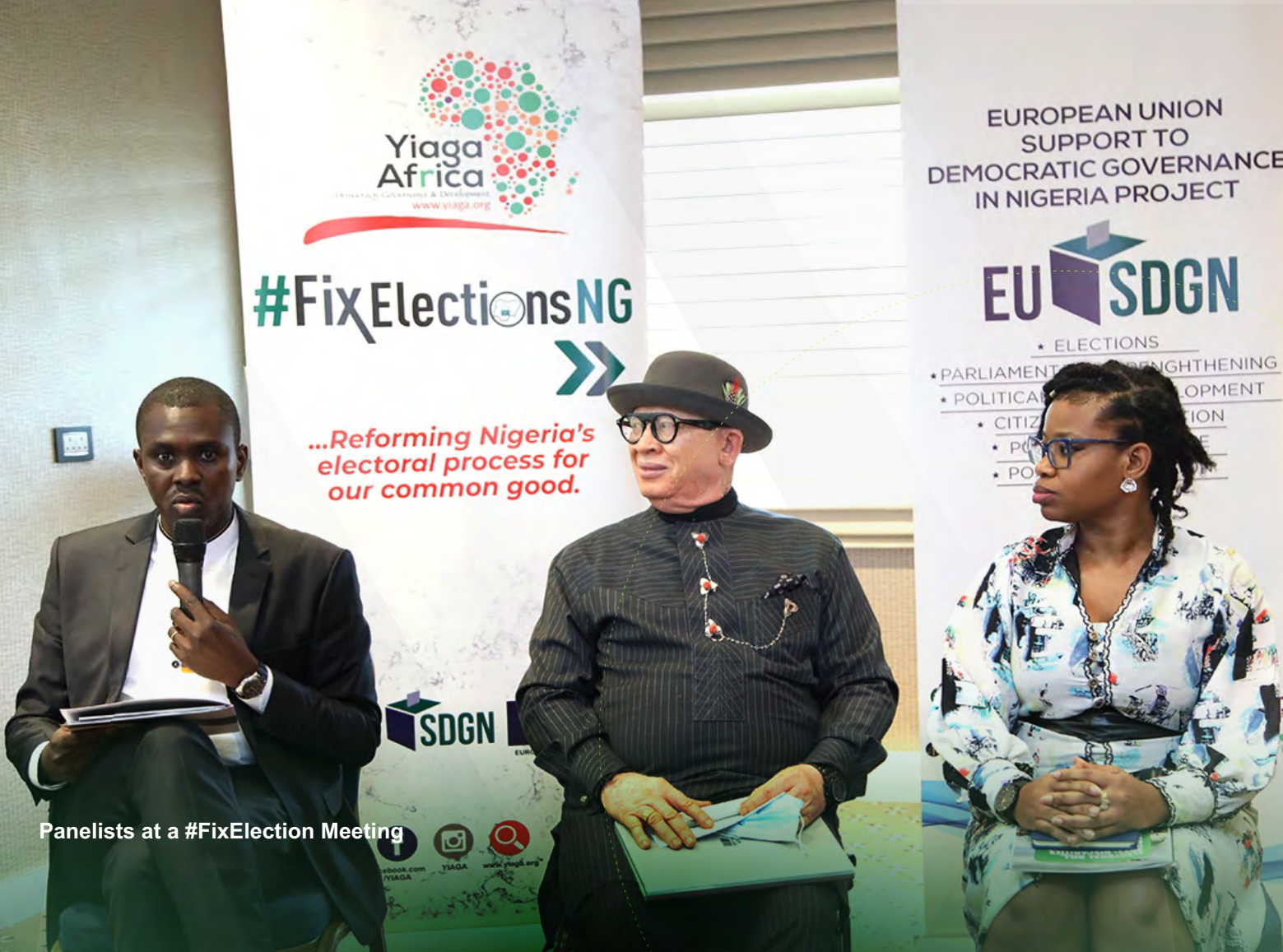


**The future of a nation is only as good as
the kind of leaders they vote for today.**

**With our numbers as young people, we
can decide our future.**



**#Sixty
Percent
ofUS**



Panelists at a #FixElection Meeting

MAKING NIGERIA'S ELECTORAL PROCESS

MORE CREDIBLE AND INCLUSIVE

Eniola Cole and Grace Jerry are key stakeholders driving developmental changes in various spaces of the civil society organisations in the country. Besides being the Executive Director of NESSACTION, a non-profit organisation that focuses

on improving political and economic participation of young people in Nigeria and the diaspora through applied research, Eniola is a political and electoral development expert with over eight years' experience in the democratic and governance

sector, strengthening public and private sector institutions. She has also worked in various capacities with electoral commissions, local and international organisations and civic groups to strengthen democratic development in Africa.

Grace is a disability activist, human rights advocate, musician and beauty queen who was awarded the Miss Wheelchair Nigeria. The Executive Director of Inclusive Friends Association, a Person with Disability (PWD), woman-led non-profit organisation that uses data to address inclusion and participation challenges of over 30 million PWDs in Nigeria through advocacy, training, and research; she has performed in concerts within and outside Nigeria. She is also a Mandela Washington Fellow and was honoured by former US President, Barack Obama in 2015.

For both women, reforming Nigeria's electoral system to make it more transparent, credible and inclusive is something they are both deeply passionate about.

"There has not been adequate provision for all persons living with disability in our electoral processes, and as a result, most of them don't participate in elections," said Grace Jerry.

"It is clear that there is a need to amend various provisions of the

Electoral Act to mandate the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to make provision of assistive devices, prioritising participation of persons with disabilities was a huge achievement."

"Nigeria's electoral system needs to leverage technology to increase its transparency and credibility, and importantly, citizen participation," said Eniola Cole.

As part of ensuring that the voices of all citizens are heard in the electoral reform process, Yiaga Africa convened a series of engagements under its #FixElections project with the support of the European Union Support to Democratic Governance in Nigeria (EU-SDGN). These engagements brought together election stakeholders to discuss how to strengthen the electoral legal framework for better election administration, electoral integrity and citizen participation. These engagements afforded stakeholders such as Eniola and Grace the opportunity to make inputs into the drafting of the bill to amend the Electoral Act.



Grace Jerry

At the Workshop on Electoral Act Amendment, Jerry described her experiences and those of others living with disability in trying to participate in the elections process to put forward proposals that will make it easier for them to fully participate.

"The reason we have been excluded in the electoral process is because there is no data of Persons Living With Disabilities (PWLDs) with INEC, so they did not know where to provide assistive technologies for them. We called for disaggregated data in section 9 during the continuous Continuous Voter Registration exercise and, interestingly, we worked on the CVR portal with INEC to generate all sorts of questions on disability", Grace said.

For Eniola, her organisation was part of a coalition for constitutional and electoral reforms that pushed for specific reforms that are aimed at legalising the use of technology in the electoral legal framework for elections.

"We were able to come up with a 10-point agenda and

**“
There has not been adequate provision for all persons living with disability in our electoral processes, and as a result, most of them don't participate in elections.**

memorandum that was shaped by our participation in the workshop and roundtable and was presented before the Senate Committee on Electoral Matters and we were able to make a concerted effort to ensure that our advocacy did not go into waste”

The participation of other stakeholders at the roundtables, such as officials from the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and lawmakers, meant that participants were able to hold robust discussions on the merits and demerits of proposals submitted, and to increase the likelihood of these submissions forming part of the draft bill.

As part of ensuring that the use of technology is mainstreamed into the Electoral Act, Yiaga Africa also convened a roundtable on electoral technology which

brought together ICT regulatory agencies, ICT policy experts, civil society and professional bodies in addition to INEC officials and lawmakers to forge consensus on the principles that should shape the deployment and sustainability of new and existing electoral technologies in future elections.

The net effect of these engagements produced a final version of the Electoral Act (Amendment) Bill that captured the inputs of diverse stakeholders, and was passed first by the National Assembly on January 25, 2022 and then signed by President Muhammadu Buhari a month later.

“ There were key recommendations we made that formed part of the law. For example, we called for disaggregated data during the Continuous Voter Registration exercise, and that was captured in

section 9. We also called for mandatory provision of assistive technologies and prioritising voting of persons with disabilities, and that was captured in Sections 54 (1) and (2) of the Electoral Act,” said Jerry.

“Some of our proposals we presented at these engagements made it into the Electoral Act: for example, the INEC Voter Enrolment Device (IVED) and Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) machines to be used for registration as well as for the conduct of elections on election days. This is a huge progress in the electoral process in Nigeria,” said Cole.

The implementation of these provisions of the Electoral Act 2022 has brought about greater citizen participation in the electoral process from the off-cycle elections in 2022 and leading up to the 2023 elections.



Citizens casting their votes at an election



“A major gain from the implementation of the Electoral Act is the online publication of electronic voters’ registers which allows voters to make claims and objections. Previously, claims and objections could only be done physically at the ward level, but this time, people can check their registration anywhere in the country. This is really commendable and an area we see as an improvement to the electoral space,” Cole pointed out.

“For us, the inclusion of clauses to ensure increased participation of PLWDs in the electoral process gave us further opportunity to work on the CVR portal with INEC to generate all sorts of questions on disability. Also, INEC deployed braille and tattered ballots that Person Living with Disabilities used to cast their votes in the Ekiti

and Osun governorship elections, as well as the 2023 general elections, thereby increasing participation of PLWDs,” Jerry added.

Reforms are a never-ending process and these two activists have already started identifying areas where they believe the reforms should focus on next as part of consolidating the gains from these Electoral Act.

For Cole, she believes that INEC should go further to deepen the gains they have achieved in the electoral act by publishing accreditation figures. “Yes, we have the INEC Results Viewing post results from the polling unit online, but what is important to result publication is inclusion of the number of accredited voters so everyone can see if there is over voting in a polling unit, it

should not be a shrouded matter anymore”, she urged.

Grace, in her opinion, wants INEC to deploy assistive devices, based on the data that has been generated from the CVR exercise and data for inclusion. “It is important that INEC uses data effectively and polling units where they would be deploying the assistive technologies should be made public. Those are the units where we will be monitoring. There should be improved training on the utilisation of devices for the disability communities”, she advised.

NIGERIA
DECIDES 2023



WATCHING THE
VOTE
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#WATCHINGTHEVOTE DEPLOYMENT PLAN FOR 2023 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION



3014

Polling Unit
Observers



822

Long Term/ Mobile
Observers



774

LGAs

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Yiaga Africa deployed duly trained
and accredited citizen observers to
randomly selected polling units using
the Parallel Vote Tabulation (PVT)
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Enabling Citizen Participation in Constitutional Reforms



A town hall meeting ahead of the Zonal Constitutional Hearings

As an organisation that promotes governance and democracy, the Centre for Social Advocacy in Sokoto saw the constitutional review process being undertaken by the National Assembly as an opportunity to push through constitutional reforms on certain issues that it considers a priority, such as state policing and the electoral process.

However, they had a challenge: how to ensure that their voices were heard and understanding the constitutional review process in order to maximise their participation in it.

“We did not know the process involved to be part of the constitutional review and how to make input,” said Abdulrahman Umar, the Centre’s Director for Monitoring and Evaluation.

This led him to participating in a town hall meeting, convened by Yiaga Africa and civil society partners in Sokoto State in May of 2021, ahead of a zonal hearing on a constitutional review by the state’s National Assembly. “The town hall took us through all the processes and inputs of driving a thorough constitutional review,” said Umar. “We were able to learn how to write different styles of

reviewing the constitution, whom to direct it to and how to raise memos in respect to constitutional review.”

As a result of the capacity they got from the town hall, there was better participation in the zonal hearing with over 30 participants present at the hearing. “The meeting also fully prepared and trained us to respond to questions that we were asked during the zonal hearing after we had presented our memos; so it improved our participation in quality as well,” Umar added.

The town hall, which had 50

participants, was designed to ensure that there was increased participation of citizens, especially women and other vulnerable groups, in the zonal hearing. The



Abdulrahman Umar, Ph.D.

knowledge that Abdulrahman and other participants got at the town hall meeting prepared them to be able to contribute to the review of the constitution by providing them with all the information they needed to be able to make informed contributions to the constitution review process.

The town hall in Sokoto held concurrently with similar town halls with the same objectives in the eleven other cities where the zonal hearings held: Jos, Plateau State; Lokoja, Kogi State; Owerri, Imo State; Enugu, Enugu State; Akure, Ondo State; Ikeja, Lagos State; Asaba, Delta State; Uyo,

Akwa Ibom State; Bauchi, Bauchi State and Yola, Adamawa State. They were held under the #FixElections project with the support of the European Union through the European Union Support to Democratic Governance in Nigeria (EU-SDGN).

Abdulrahman, whose tasks at the centre, include developing plans for project-related capacity-building on monitoring and evaluation as well as using computing tools for the monitoring of these projects, said that a huge number of participants that participated at the Yiaga Africa's town hall meeting did not know what constitution review was all about. The constitution review is an evaluation, and a system of preventing violation of the rights granted by the constitution, assuring its efficacy, stability and preservation.

The meeting was convened by Yiaga Africa for citizens and Civil Society Organisations' partners at the state level to engage the zonal public hearing on constitution review to support democracy in Nigeria and increased women representation and vulnerable group participation in government. According to him, all that they did pertaining to the processes of reviewing the constitution were new to him and

other participants at the town hall meeting that was held in Sokoto.

He pointed out that the town hall meeting took them through all the processes and inputs of driving a thorough constitutional review. "We did not know the process it involves to be part of the constitutional review, how to make input, but during the interactive section, we were able to learn how to write different styles of reviewing the constitution, whom to direct it to and how to raise memos in respect to constitutional review", he said.

The knowledge Abdulrahman and his other colleagues got at the town hall meeting, prepared them to build knowledge capacity in order to contribute to the constitutional review. He added that Yiaga Africa's resource persons at the meeting, trained them with all the necessary information needed to make informed contributions to the constitutional review.

"We were fully trained on how to address those challenges and they responded to all the questions raised by the participants at the meeting."

Over 30 participants, Abdulrahman said, were equipped to make strong input into the constitution. During that time, we wrote to the National Assembly in respect to INEC and the creation of state police through our representatives in the National Assembly. The number of people who made inputs into the constitutional review increased by double, all thanks to the town hall meeting," he said.

The town hall took us through all the processes and inputs of driving a thorough constitutional review.

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Young Nigerians are not just ready to run in the 2023 elections. We are also ready to win, and most importantly, ready to lead. Vote for young people with competence, character, and capacity.
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Panel on Youth Participation in Politics at the Not Too Young To Run Festival

The Power of Unconventional Alliances

Toluwalope (Tolu) David Eyikogbe is a third-year student of Political Science at the University of Lagos but has never registered to vote. Although he had some interest in politics, it was limited to online conversations around politics, as he believed that young people could not make much difference in democracy.

That all changed when he attended the Not Too Young To Run Festival organized by Yiaga Africa and the Not Too Young To

Run Movement in Lagos in partnership with TASCK, a creative agency that curates platforms for creative influencers to use their platforms for good causes.

“It was my first time attending any event hosted by a civil society organization. I was so determined to attend that I skipped classes for it. I sat through the panel discussion on youth participation in politics, and it was a turning point for me,” he said.

“The panel discussion on youth

participation and the importance of voting inspired me to register for my Permanent Voter’s Card (PVC). It also changed my perspective on politics and volunteering, as it was evident I could also have fun while changing the nation.”

After the event, Tolu started mobilising his peers to also register for their PVCs and became a community organizer and field mobiliser. He also became active in his students’ union, recognising that he and other students have an important role to play in shaping leadership outcomes in their immediate environment.

Tolu’s previous status of not being registered to vote, despite being eligible, is not unique. Despite Nigeria being a predominantly young country with over 70 per cent of its population classified as

under 35 and a median age of 18, there are millions of young people who are not registered to vote. With an estimated 4.5-5 million Nigerians turning 18 (the constitutional age of electoral franchise) every year, it means that there are as many as 18-20 million potential 'new voters' from the 2019 general elections to the 2023 general elections. This increase in the level of first-time voters provides an opportunity for young people to determine the next set of leaders for the country through their participation in active citizenship.

However, the large population of young people eligible to vote has not reflected in previous elections: despite youths making up 51.1 percent of a total of 84 million registered voters as of 2019, only 46.3 percent turned out to vote. This creates the need to inspire more youth participation in politics and democracy.

The Festival, organised with the support of the United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office (FCDO), brought together over 200 young people from different local government areas and tertiary institutions in Lagos state, had the theme, "Should We Vote Or Not?" and had important conversations about the importance of young people voting in elections and



Tolulope David Eyikogbe

participating in our democracy.

For Tolu, he was exposed to salient truths that made him change his mind about actively participating in Nigeria's

democracy.

"Prior to the elections, I did not believe that our votes counted. But the panel discussion showed me how my votes counted, and

“ Prior to the elections, I did not believe that our votes counted. But the panel discussion showed me how my votes counted, and that my non-participation was more injurious to our democracy than my participation,



Cynthia Mbamalu and Efemen Ozugha, both of Yiaga Africa, at the Festival

that my non-participation was more injurious to our democracy than my participation,” he said.

Speaking on the choice of entertainment to spur youth political participation, TASCK’s Community Manager, Jennifer Agaldo said that music and pop culture already determines a lot of what young people do, which means it can influence young people to participate in governance and electioneering processes.

Her position was buttressed by Yiaga Africa’s Director of Programmes, Cynthia Mbamalu, “Entertainment is powerful in Nigeria. It has put us on the global map. Many people in the world know a lot of things about Nigeria through our music, movies, and arts. That is what takes us out there and a lot of young people are interested in this conversation when it is led from this space. While entertainment is making us global, it is also needed to help us change political outcomes, especially among the youths, because they make up the numbers.”

The Not Too Young to Run festival was impactful, as it provided a safe

place for artists and influencers to stay within their area of expertise and craft and yet add to the message of what is happening. This resulted in attendees being entertained as well as engaged on the importance of political participation.

“The festival provided a haven for a lot of influencers to learn their voices at the time when the conversation was hitting its peak. It kept the conversation on top of the table. It had young people gather around the subject of voting. What was particularly nice was the same location that was used for the event is the same place that was used for voting



Jennifer Agaldo

registration, so people didn't have to leave one place to do the other”, Jennifer explained.

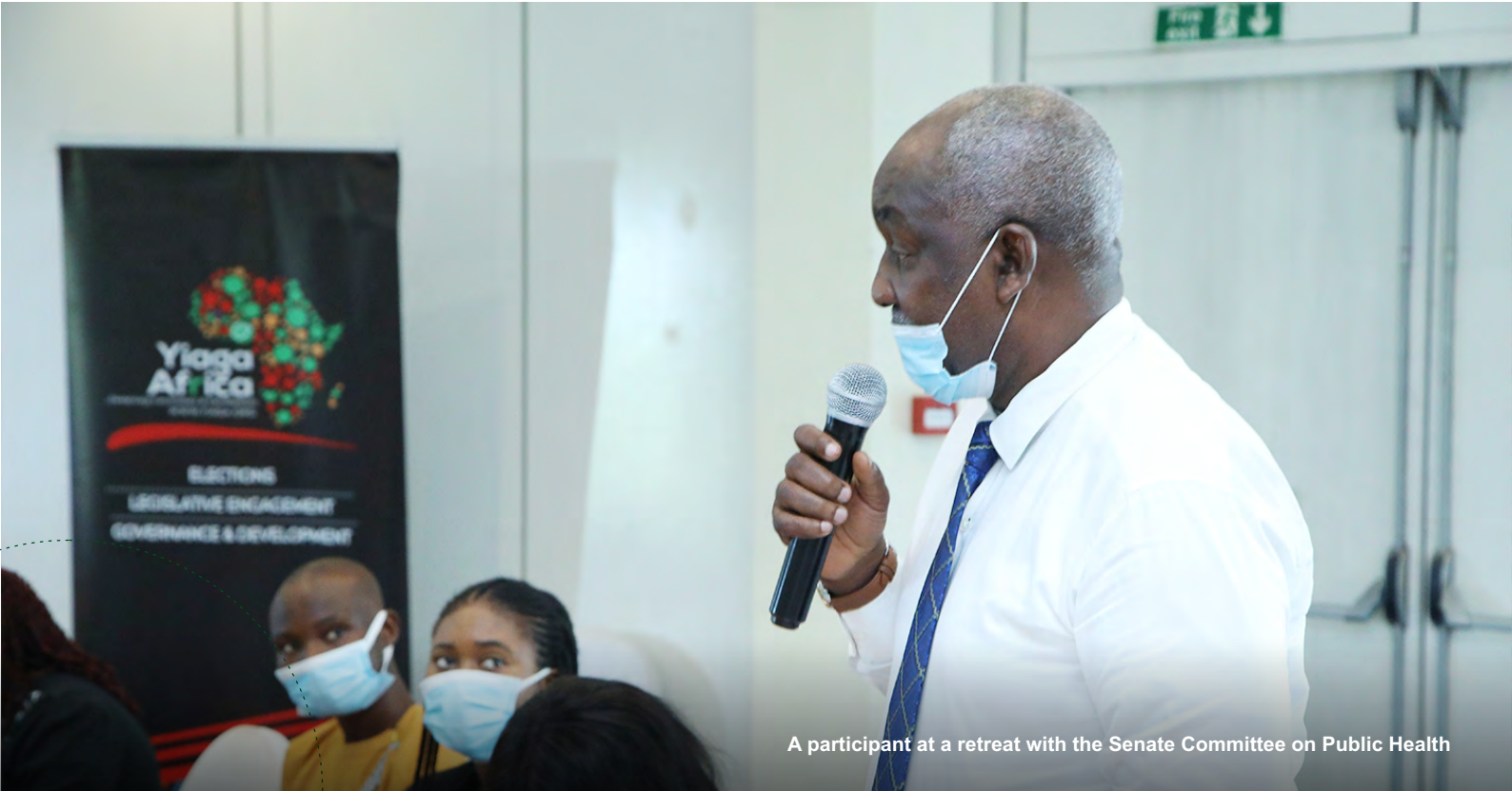
The festival has shown the potential of using pop culture and entertainment to secure the interest of young people in political participation, which should be explored in increasing youth participation in our democracy.

“An action like the festival can be a catalyst for bringing a new set of young people into awareness of the importance of political participation, and to also re-engage people who have had an interest in politics,” opined Jennifer.

Jennifer further stressed that a new strategy must be created to retain an interest in political participation post-election and educate people on the level of government to stimulate critical conversation using music and popular culture activation.

“We need to get to the people who will be 18 by the next election. We need to start engaging secondary schools and students of tertiary institutions. The more we have people who young people listen to for entertainment, the more we will find a way to connect entertainment, popular culture, and democratic participation in the conversation. This will not happen at a time, it’s going to take continuous engagement and that is why we are thankful for the support of Yiaga Africa”, Jennifer urged.

The Not Too Young To Run Festival was part of the TurnUp Democracy project, aimed at empowering citizens with information and tools for civic engagement, thereby enhancing the quality of their participation in democratic processes at all levels.



A participant at a retreat with the Senate Committee on Public Health

Shaping Lawmaking through Public Opinion Mobilisation

Peter Cheman Koti is a radio presenter with Gotel FM in Yola, Adamawa State who seeks to inform his listening audience about trending stories, current affairs and policies that affect his everyday listeners.

Onyimiebi Siasia, based in Yenagoa, the Bayelsa State capital, is also a radio presenter and engages the public through Radio Bayelsa. Both are seasoned broadcasters and are members of Yiaga's Africa Radio Ambassadors Network (RAN), seeking to sensitise and inform members of the public on important things, like bills and policies that could have lasting effects on people's lives.

One of such bills is the National Health Emergency Bill introduced into the Senate to provide the needed legal and administrative

framework for handling outbreaks of infectious and contagious diseases that portend a major threat to public health safety within Nigeria or are likely to be transmitted into the country or outside her borders. The bill also sought to repeal the Quarantine Act, which came into existence in 1926 and was inadequate for the management of infectious disease outbreaks. The bill was supposed to be a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which broke out in 2020 and exposed a glaring deficiency in Nigeria's ability to manage infectious disease outbreaks. There was no legal framework that empowers the Nigerian government to prevent the entry of infectious diseases into the country then and the government was left reeling in the wake of a global, infectious disease that was

not only rapidly spreading across the world, but had also made its way into the country. The bill was quickly, without much consultation and consideration, introduced into the upper chambers for onward progression to the presidency.

However, some provisions of this bill caused an uproar as they were deemed controversial by the public. These include an increase in punishment for persons who default on quarantines and public lockdowns, empowering the president to declare an area as being restricted and an authorised public officer or police officer can disperse a gathering in a restricted area. If the bill had been allowed to go as it was, it would have infringed on the rights of most Nigerians.

As a result of the public uproar, Yiaga Africa began to engage with the National Assembly under its Legislative Advocacy Against Obnoxious Legislations project. The project, which was supported by the Luminare Project, was launched in response to the growing trend of the National



Peter Cheman Koti

Assembly increasingly proposing and enacting obnoxious laws, which have the capacity of undermining democracy and ultimately infringing on citizens' rights.

This engagement included supporting the Senate Committee on Primary Healthcare and Communicable Diseases in organising a public hearing. This public hearing, which brought together legislators and health policymakers including the Minister for Health, also provided an opportunity for citizens to express their concerns and thoughts about the bill. Yiaga Africa also embarked on a public awareness campaign on the bill across the country, leveraging its Radio Ambassadors Network, to sensitise citizens on the bill and its implications, as well as collate citizens' input.

Koti said before the campaign's commencement, he had zero information on the bill and the campaign allowed him to understand the bill and its contents, which enabled him to



As the leading radio station in Adamawa State, we leveraged the platform to reach millions of people throughout the five episodes we aired during broadcast prime time."

properly sensitise his listeners. "I was able to get an expert in health bills, who came to analyse the bill with me and how it is an improvement on current legislation," he said.

"As the leading radio station in Adamawa State, we leveraged the platform to reach millions of people throughout the five episodes we aired during broadcast prime time."

He explained that the conversation had significant feedback from the listeners who called to appreciate the processes of the bill. "People called to appreciate the sessions, knowing that we were just coming out of a significant lockdown caused by



Onyemiebi Siasia

COVID-19. They didn't have in-depth knowledge of COVID-19, but the campaign for the bill has prepared more people on how to address any future outbreak of

diseases"

Like Koti, Siasia's role in the public awareness campaign also gave him an education on infectious disease outbreaks and how the bill is critical to preventing and managing them. "Before I engaged residents on the radio, I had little knowledge about it and it was an eye opener for me when I later got to know what the bill was actually about", he said.

He revealed that a lot of feedback he received indicated that some people didn't believe that such a bill could be a lifesaver for the people. "There were not a lot of encouraging responses from people, who showed disinterest in the bill. But that itself is a reflection of a lack of awareness on the bill," he said. In his opinion, this might make the implementation of the bill difficult after it has become law.

The feedback from the public through the public awareness campaign using RAN, formed a critical part of Yiaga Africa's recommendations on the bill. This helped shape the final version of the bill, which was eventually passed by the Senate in January 2022. The bill will be harmonised with the version that was passed by the House of Representatives in December 2021 before onward transmission to the President for signing.



Participants at the Capacity-Building Workshop for Legislative Media Aides

STRENGTHENING LEGISLATURES

THROUGH IMPROVED REPORTAGE

Austin Adesoro is a special adviser to the Clerk of the National Assembly (NASS) on Media, and a core aspect of his work is maintaining a good relationship between the National Assembly and media professionals as well as ensuring truthful and effective media coverage of members' activities.

To do this effectively, he is aware that the media has to remain neutral and unbiased, stay on top of members' activities as much as possible and in some instances, expose abnormalities and corrupt activities through investigations. As this may not be always favourable to the lawmakers in question, there have been subtle and indirect

restrictions placed on media professionals by lawmakers, obstructing them from performing this very important role.

Often referred to as the fourth estate of the realm, the media has the responsibility of performing the role of watchdog to not only inform citizenry but more importantly, hold the government accountable as it fulfils its mandates to the people. To improve the relationship between legislators and the people they represent, Adesoro admitted that effective media coverage is key and NASS must provide support to the media, to ensure it is able to perform its duties without hindrance.

Journalists are often unable to provide effective coverage of many of the activities of the National Assembly, as there are instances where closed-door meetings are held without the media's presence. Constituency projects are also not effectively reported, thereby hampering the relationship between legislators and the communities they represent. This restriction among others, which prevents the media from performing its duties, is one of the challenges that journalists covering the National Assembly encounter on a regular basis and which Yiaga Africa sought out to address.

To do this, Yiaga Africa moved to engage directly with media aides in the National Assembly such as

Adesoro so they could realise that preventing journalists from doing their job was not only a danger to democracy but creating a gap between lawmakers and the people that elected them into power. Yiaga Africa's Centre for Legislative Engagement collaborated with the Office of the Clerk to the National Assembly, to build the capacity of the National Assembly Press Corps members, Media Aides, and Information Officers, with the aim of strengthening legislative development at National and sub-national levels through effective partnership.

The two-day capacity building meeting, organised with the support of the European Union Support to Democratic Governance in Nigeria (EU-SDGN) Phase 1, addressed the gaps existing between the media and NASS, so that both parties consider each other as partners in progress and national development. The training also

focused on helping to improve the country's democracy by driving citizens' engagement in governance through the media.

Making a major commitment, the Clerk to the National Assembly, Arc. Amos Olatunde Ojo, assured that they will partner the media more effectively going forward. Confirming the fulfilment of Ojo's promise to maintain a good relationship with the media and impact of the capacity building by Yiaga, Adesoro, who partook in the 2-day capacity building, explained that the relationship between both parties has deepened significantly.

He added that the NASS has created avenues to ensure that answers are provided to all questions and requests from the media, which has tremendously improved reportage of their activities.

"We are now more deliberate about making information more available and accessible to the

media whenever they call, and this has improved the relationship between both parties," Adesoro revealed.

Agreeing that there is need for more media reportage of NASS' oversight functions because "the oversight function will bring to bear whatever inadequacies are being made by any government agency." He also said legislators would be required to expand their legislative offices in their constituencies, to serve as contact points for the people and media, thus improving the reportage of the activities of the legislators.

“ We are now more deliberate about making information more available and accessible to the media whenever they call, and this has improved the relationship between both parties.



The Clerk of the National Assembly, Arc Amos Olatunde Ojo



In 2023, we are **TURN'ing UP** Democracy through our participation in the elections



★ **As Voters**

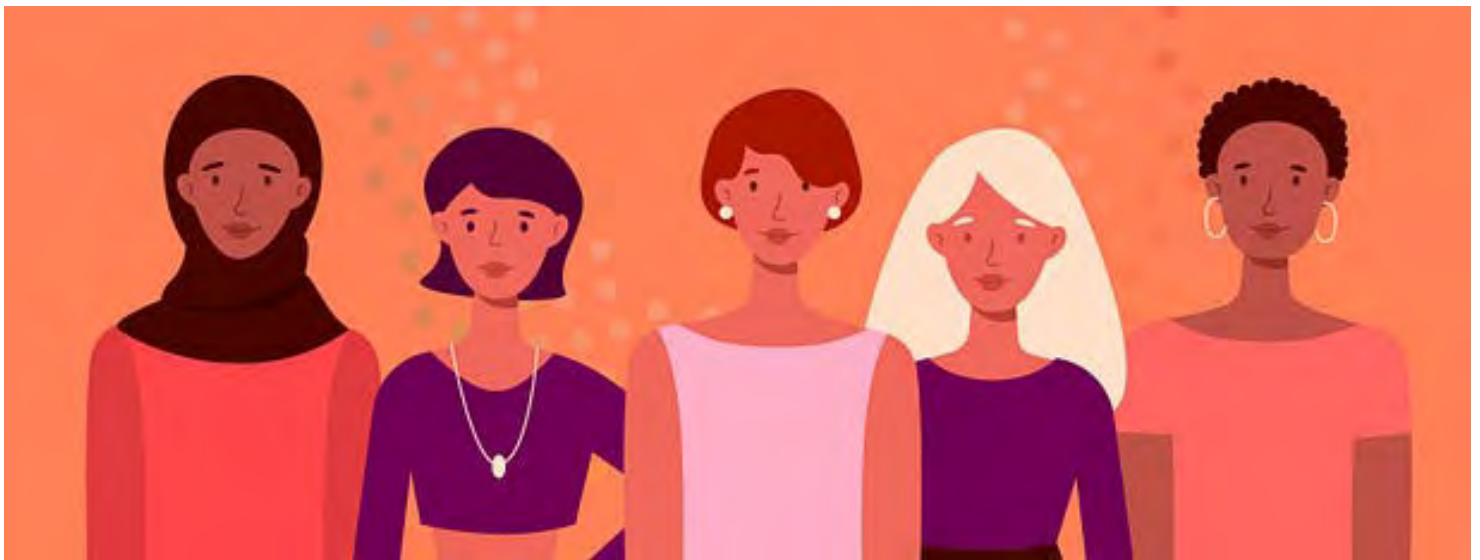


★ **As Mobilizers**



★ **As Candidates**

Securing A Better World for Women and Girls



Charity Anaja is based in Adamawa State where she is the North East Coordinator of Women Trafficking and Child Labour Eradication Foundation (WOTCLEF). As a social worker, she is no stranger to the different forms of violence and abuse girls and women face there, ranging from physical, sexual, emotional and psychological abuse.

In this part of the world, perpetrators of violence against women and girls are often emboldened with a culture of silence and impunity, where there are few or no convictions. Survivors are in some cases overwhelmed with the culture of silence because they are subjected to further stigmatization when they report any form of violence perpetrated against them, and are not certain of

getting justice. Also, one in three women globally experience physical, sexual or intimate-partner violence (IPV); are victims of trafficking or are subject to violent social norms.

These, among many other problems, are what Anaja faces daily in her line of advocacy and the fight is more difficult as the region where she works doesn't see violence meted out against women and girls as a big issue. In fact, she reveals, religious and traditional practices indirectly encourage the violation of women and girls regularly.

In a bid to address these numerous challenges and ensure the rights of women and girls are adequately protected, Anaja as well as other Civil Society Organizations and Community Based

Organizations proposed the domestication of the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Act in Adamawa state. This act, which was formulated to protect people, especially vulnerable people like women and girls, was to help in meeting her goal.

However, the proposition was quickly met with roadblocks, as the Adamawa State House of Assembly initially declined to pass the bill into law, claiming that the provisions are similar to the existing penal code in the state.

Sharing the numerous challenges that herself and Civil Society Actors in Adamawa encountered before the passage of the VAPP Act, Anaja explained, "We had a lot of technical challenges, as the lawmakers felt the existence of the

“ We encountered different challenges during our engagements, but the support through continuous advocacy and training from Yiaga Africa helped us to scale through, and today, we have the VAPP Act in existence.

Penal code is sufficient and a VAPP act would be a duplicate. However, we did a bill analysis, which helped to identify the differences between both laws. We also had the challenge of religious and cultural barriers which is prominent in Northern Nigeria,” Anaja said.

This was instrumental in getting the Adamawa State House of Assembly to pass the bill and it was sent to the Adamawa State Governor for his assent into law. However, the bill began to languish at this point even as there was a dire need for strengthening the legal framework that will protect women and girls from abuse and violence.

To overcome this roadblock, Yiaga Africa, with the support of the European Union-United Nations Spotlight Initiative project, provided multi-faceted support to Anaja and the other CSOs in the state, leading to the signage of the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) bill into law. Yiaga Africa’s support to the campaign included Advocacy Strategy Workshops which brought together Civil Society partners, the media, other key influencers, and champions of women and girls’ rights in the state, to design strategies for the executive assent to the bill.

Commending Yiaga Africa’s efforts, Anaja detailed how Yiaga Africa played a major role in terms

of “series of advocacies, mobilising CSOs and CBOs to form a network of advocates to engage policymakers in the state.

“We encountered different challenges during our engagements, but the support through continuous advocacy and training from Yiaga Africa helped us to scale through, and today, we have the VAPP Act in existence.”

The VAPP Act, which was passed by the Adamawa State House of Assembly in March 2021, was eventually assented to by the Governor, Ahmadu Fintiri, in September 2021. A key provision of the law is that it “prohibits all forms of violence against persons in private and public life”, and “provides maximum protection and effective remedies for victims and punishment of offenders”.

Beyond the passage of the Act, Anaja mentioned that Yiaga Africa, through the Spotlight Initiative Project, is working assiduously to eliminate violence against women and girls in Adamawa by creating awareness on the existence of the VAPP Act and drive adequate implementation and compliance by all stakeholders.

“The Spotlight Initiative project is working with the Sexual Assault and Referral Centre, building and enhancing CBOs capacity, sensitising and educating people on the provisions of the VAPP Act to break the culture of silence and impunity; training responders like the police and community leaders

and members on the provisions of the Act, such that every stakeholder knows their role in ending violence against women



Charity Anaja

and girls. It is no doubt that the Spotlight Initiative Project implemented by Yiaga Africa, is out to ensure that the VAPP Act is implemented to the letter and is ensuring that every individual in Adamawa knows about the law and its provisions,” she added.

Yiaga Africa’s implementation of the Spotlight Project also convened stakeholders working on sexual and gender-based violence to review existing legislation such as the VAPP Act and the Child Rights Act with a view to proposing amendments that will strengthen them. Yiaga Africa also held workshops to build the capacity of selected federal ministries and agencies as well as clerks of National Assembly committees on how to ensure that their budgets were gender-responsive and met the needs of women.



Bounce Corruption Changemakers at a training

How to Fight Corruption

Abdullahi Salihu Ari is a Development worker and Senior Programmes Officer at Sustainable Development Initiative. One of a handful that have been doggedly fighting corruption in his community in Kwali Area Council of the Federal Capital Territory, he has been met with numerous obstacles; from community members who see corruption as a norm, to public office holders who frustrate his efforts in demanding transparency, accountability, and good governance.

Several others like Ari who have begun the fight against corruption in the past, gave up because of the multi-faceted challenges they

encountered while doing so. As a local activist, Ari said one of the biggest challenges he encountered in his efforts to ensure transparency and accountability at the grassroots level was the non-cooperation of the local government with activists, especially with regard to the provision of relevant documents that can be used to scrutinize the government.

It is no secret that corruption has eaten deep into every sector in Nigeria and has had severe negative consequences on the growth and development of the country. Individuals, who are supposed to hold their leaders accountable to ensure corrupt practices are nipped

in the bud, have considered such actions to be the sole responsibilities of anti-graft agencies and in some instances where citizens are fighting corruption, it also fights back.

However, without citizens' direct or indirect involvement, anti-graft agencies might find it difficult to curb corruption in the country, and corrupt practices would hinder good governance. As a solution to this problem, Yiaga Africa, supported by MacArthur Foundation, launched the Bounce Corruption Project, to inspire women and youths to demand accountability and transparency in governance.

“We meet resistance when we make attempts to request documents such as budgets at the local levels so that we can hold the government accountable. Also being a local, you encounter some push backs from other community members who see what the government is doing as the norm,” Ari revealed.

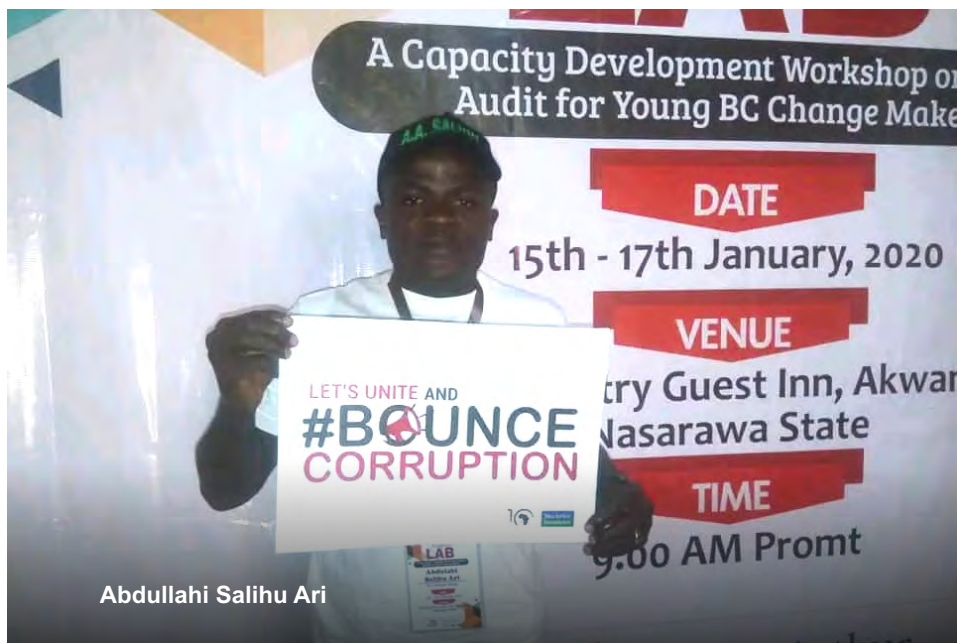
Participating in the Bounce Corruption Project, where his capacity was built on how to demand accountability, Ari said, “during the training in Akwanga, Nasarawa State, my capacity was boosted particularly using social accountability as a vital tool to demand accountability at the local level.”

“Prior to my involvement in this project, I used to deploy the activism approach which barely yielded results. Courtesy of the project, we were taught to be diplomatic, persuasive, result-oriented, and interested in driving impact instead of seeking attention. This has changed my approach with regard to how I

“ Prior to my involvement in this project, I used to deploy the activism approach which barely yielded results.

engage with leaders at the local level,” Ari explained.

As a radio ambassador under the Bounce Corruption Project, Babatunde Okulola, a Development Journalist and Content Creator in Diamond FM, Osun, illustrated how the radio program has built a community of citizens that are informed and empowered to demand transparency and



accountability in governance. Prior to the project, Okulola believed that Nigeria's society is built in a way that citizens have abdicated their roles of ensuring transparency and accountability to a selected few, especially anti-corruption agencies.

Okulola noted that platforms such as Bounce Corruption have helped people to stay updated on corruption as a topic instead of glossing over it as usual and seeing

it as a norm. “As an ambassador, I used the radio as a platform to create a space where the accountability conversation can go ahead, and members of the public see it as their responsibility to demand transparency from their leaders.”

This, according to Okulola, has helped members of the public “to become more aware of corruption,

their role to tackle it and how to sustain a corrupt-free nation.”

Adopting innovative initiatives to promote accountability and stimulate citizens’ interest to join the fight against corruption in Nigeria, the Bounce Corruption project uses three approaches to tackle corruption. The first is to engage changemakers who are local activists that help to ensure transparency and accountability at grassroot level while the second approach is through radio ambassadors, who use radio as a tool to drive conversations on transparency and provide opportunities for citizens to report infractions and suspected cases of corruption. The third approach deployed was to embark on Bounce Corruption debates in tertiary institutions across Nigeria, to engage young Nigerians on how they can effectively tackle corruption by holding their leaders accountable.

Additionally, the university students who participated in the Bounce Corruption debate received support and training to set up Anti-Corruption Clubs in their institutions to strengthen their capacity in speaking against corruption and holding leaders accountable.

PREPARING YOUNG PEOPLE FOR POLITICAL LEADERSHIP



A plenary session at The Convergence 3.0

Mrs. Temitope Wheto is a young political candidate vying to represent the Ikpokia-Idiroko Constituency in the Ogun State House of Assembly. Wheto is a young woman who is faced with double discrimination in political participation; first as a woman and as a youth.

Wheto had thought her intention to serve her people would be a far-lived dream and that her chances of emerging as the candidate for the New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP) was impossible. However, this changed when she participated in The Convergence 3.0, organised by Yiaga Africa under its TurnUp Democracy project supported by the United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO).

The Convergence brought together young political candidates, to discuss strategies that can help them to navigate the numerous challenges within the political space, and to inspire a movement of young political aspirants.

Wheto, who joined politics so that she can drive change in her constituents, became overwhelmed when the financial demands from political supporters became unbearable and other political actors were drawing her back.

“During The Convergence, we were taught about how to engage people and how empowering people is the key thing in politics. When people are empowered with knowledge, they can plan on their own and contribute to the overall development.”

“The challenges I have faced are mostly related to finance. Politics in Nigeria requires spending a lot of money, people demand money

even when you’re just doing consultations and this is demoralising. I also faced the challenge of comprehension among some political stakeholders. I also found out that there is a low percentage of ‘well-educated’ people in politics. As such, being a candidate with a higher level of education and exposure, it was difficult to be on the same page with your plans and aspirations.

“Significantly, I faced gender discrimination, most people don’t want to support women because they do not want a woman to lead them and as such, this was a major challenge for me,” she said.

However, Wheto was able to navigate some of these challenges, through her participation in The Convergence 3.0, leading to her emergence as her party’s flagbearer. “I’ve been able to navigate these challenges by being strategic about the people I work with to ensure we share the same ideology,” she added.

Speaking on how The Convergence was particularly helpful for her, she said, “During The Convergence, we were taught about how to engage people and how empowering people is the key thing in politics. When people are empowered with knowledge, they can plan on their own and contribute to the overall development.

“As such, during my campaigns and engagements, when I talk to people about my plans to focus on

human development, they are able to relate and buy into it. We were taught about how to relate with the media, how to engage with different stakeholders and certain things that are not acceptable in politics,” Wheto recounted and stressed that “there are so many other lessons that I learnt at The Convergence, this will remain with me as I participate in politics.”

She also noted that her campaign to emerge as her party’s candidate was influenced by her participation in The Convergence and she is currently utilising similar



strategies in the build-up to the election. “I am also utilising the lessons learnt there on how to raise funds for campaigns and I’m trying to put them into practice. Generally, The Convergence has been quite helpful,” she added.

Apart from The Convergence, Yiaga Africa through the #RunToWin Project supported by Voice is building the capacity of young political actors on different strategies to ensure they win elections.

Specifically, the #RunToWin project supported about 200 young candidates for legislative and local government offices in Enugu and Lagos States, and in the Federal Capital Territory, through town hall meetings and media visibility.



Imagine your entire community going out to vote on Election Day. You can make that happen. Join **Yiaga Africa's Voting Squad** and mobilize your community to vote through voter education.

Visit the website below to join:

<https://bit.ly/YiagaVotingSquad>





Dominic Joshua

Building Power Through Community Organising

Dominic Joshua is the Program Officer of the Pan African Capital Foundation, which is the corporate social responsibility arm of Pan-African Holdings. The foundation’s mission is to create impact for social good through innovative interventions that are private-sector driven. With a focus on health, education, environment, and economic empowerment, Dominic participated in the 2021 Youth Organizing School (YOS) organised by Yiaga Africa, which aims to build

community organiser. “If I go into a community and act like I know everything, I might not get a good community reception. This is why it is important to empathise with the people in the community and what they are going through, not telling them that I am here to solve all their problems.” he said.

Dominic learned that it is important to live and learn from them on what they need, see first hand, the challenges they face as a community, and that way, the people took ownership of the project, making it easier for him to execute. Dominic believes that political participation is a necessary part of everyone’s daily life and believes that people should start

didn’t participate in the 2023 general elections, whoever won in their community; whatever promises, whatever decisions that those people come up with, will affect everyone, whether they participated or not,” he said.

YOS is Yiaga Africa’s flagship program, targeted at building the capacity of young people in political organising and policy advocacy by equipping the participants with the requisite political and community organising skills. Holding for eight years with the support of the National Endowment for Democracy, it was recently converted into the Community Organizing Institute to reflect its formalisation.

Today, Yiaga Africa has trained 400 community organisers through the Youth Organizing School and the Community Organizing Institute in Nigeria as well as other West African countries. These organisers, like Dominic Joshua, have been impactful in applying their increased capacity for more effective organising and advocacy.

Yiaga Africa has also used its community organising training modules in providing training to members of partner organisations, such as the Lead Generation Initiative, a youth leadership development organisation.

If we do not participate in it, directly or indirectly, the outcome from those who participate in it will definitely affect us all.

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the capacity of young people into becoming more effective organisers and policy advocates.

According to Dominic, YOS was an eye-opener for him, teaching him the basic foundations and key principles he needed to know as a


seeing political participation as a necessary part of their daily lives, just like the family is the smallest unit in society. “If we do not participate in it, directly or indirectly, the outcome from those who participate in it will definitely affect us all. For example, for those who



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