



VOL. 2

THE CONVERGENCE 2.0

Leadership | Power | Politics — Largest Gathering of Young Elected Representatives

July 2019

New Faces of Youth in Nigerian Parliament

Beneficiaries of the Not Too Young To Run Law



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Editor's Note

YIAGA AFRICA'S Innovative Approach to Supporting Young Lawmakers

Oluwafisayo Okare

When YIAGA AFRICA organized a debate for university students last year, under its Youth Affirmative Action project in partnership with Ford Foundation, one of the questions debaters deliberated on was—"Are Nigerian Youths Competent?" Some participants were of the view that only few Nigerian youths are competent for political office while others outrightly opined that young people are not ready for governance. In many ways, the question of whether the youth are competent for political office is wrapped in the garb of a narrative that aims to portray them as incompetent. Nevertheless, the query still begs to be addressed. Competence—the knowledge and ability to lead successfully and efficiently—does not come pre-installed in a human being. Just like leadership, competency is learnt and improved upon.

For those who hold the view that young people do not possess the requisite credentials for running for public office, The Convergence is a counter-narrative that indeed we

have competent young people who ran for office, won and assumed office. With the catchphrase, Power, Capacity and Politics, we organized The Convergence 1.0 in December 2018 to equip young candidates with effective political organizing skills. The terrific event was a platform for inspiration, networking and solidarity amongst young politicians. Over 435 youth candidates drawn from 91 political parties attended *The Convergence 1.0*, Nigeria's largest gathering of youth candidates in the 2019 elections. On the basis of competence and resource building, we equipped young politicians with tools and tips for an effective campaign journey. We did this to help potential leaders succeed and actualize their ambitions in the face of the harsh political landscape of Nigeria, which to say the least, was decidedly not in their favour.

At the conclusion of the 2019 elections, twenty-one persons between the ages of 25 to 30 years old, who YIAGA AFRICA and the Not Too Young To Run movement

supported, first through the Not Too Young To Run Act and then through The Convergence 1.0 three-day training program, won election into their respective state houses of assembly. Without the Not Too Young To Run Act, which YIAGA AFRICA spearheaded and superintended in conjunction with members of the movement, anyone below 30 would not have been able to run for office in Nigeria, talk less of winning. In addition, out of the 991 seats in the state houses of assembly over 200 will be occupied by young elected lawmakers. This is Nigeria's democracy taking shape.

Again, we assembled these newly elected young representatives for the second convergence this year —The Convergence 2.0 with the theme Leadership, Power, Politics. The Convergence 2.0 was designed to celebrate the newly elected legislators and to prepare them for the task ahead. YIAGA AFRICA and the Not Too Young To Run movement recognize Nigeria needs a new leadership paradigm that puts the people first. This leadership model must be driven by the philosophy of results and impact as well as

accountability and transparency. Through 'The Convergence', we are mobilizing and building a new breed of visionary public leaders to sanitize electoral politics, obtain political power through the ballot and provide accountable, responsive and innovative leadership for our common good.

This time, we took out the capacity in the slogan and replaced it with leadership because, as YIAGA AFRICA Programs Manager, Cynthia Mbamalu said during her speech at the opening session of The Convergence 2.0, "For so long we have struggled as a people to answer the leadership question". Effective leadership is one of the key indicators for stronger communities and a civil society; The Convergence 2.0 is about quality and accountable leadership. She further stated in her opening remarks, "it is about working together to set a legislative agenda that is people driven, promotes inclusion and the indices that enable sustainable development. It is about building a strong network of committed young lawmakers who support each other and speak truth to power."

Indeed, the theme of The Convergence 2.0 aptly reflects the desire to appropriately direct the focus and energies of the newly elected legislators to what is actually expected of them—the need to adequately wield political power and authority in addressing the respective needs and desires of the governed; and most importantly, the quest to understand politics as an apparatus of driving good governance. Unarguably, this theme resonates with the ethos and mandate of the Not Too Young to Run movement.

At The Convergence 2.0, we featured experienced experts drawn from the academia, civil society, professional bodies, relevant tiers of government (including His Excellency, Rt. Hon. Yakubu Dogara, Speaker, House of Representatives), political parties and the diplomatic corps (including the US Ambassador to Nigeria, W. Stuart Symington), who gave insightful and inspiring keynote speeches. The highpoint of The Convergence 2.0 was the legislative clinics carefully designed to train newly elected legislators on legislative practice and procedure.

We exposed young parliamentarians to the core meaning and functions of the legislature in the Nigerian society, institution reforms, gender equality and gender mainstreaming, community and grassroots engagement, social media and effective lawmaking, constituency engagement, legislative accountability and probity, economic growth and development, the Nigerian constitution and the young lawmakers' oversight responsibility.

The young legislators also received legislative briefs with proposed legislative actions in key policy areas like health, electoral reforms, inclusion and public accountability. The legislative briefs were prepared by YIAGA AFRICA and members of the Not Too Young To Run strategy team as a legislative agenda for the young legislators in National and state assemblies. At YIAGA AFRICA, we expect The Convergence series will usher a new leadership paradigm that upholds the principles of integrity, inclusion, transparency, accountability and excellence in public office. It is possible and we are going to make it happen.

Enjoy The Convergence 2.0 experience. Happy reading!

"Over 435 youth candidates drawn from 91 political parties attended The Convergence 1.0, Nigeria's largest gathering of youth candidates in the 2019 elections."



(L-R) Samson Itodo, H.E, Rt. Hon. Yakubu Dogara, H.E, Catriona Laing, & Senator Abdul-Aziz Murtala Nyako



Cover Story

New Faces of Youth in Nigerian Parliament

...as young legislators emerge speakers, and principal officers

Moshood Isah

The excitement and fulfillment that followed the emergence of young legislators under the age of 35 as speakers and other principal officers in some state houses of assembly can only be compared to the jubilation that greeted the assent to the age reduction bill by President Muhammadu Buhari about a year ago. While the latter demonstrates the fact that young Nigerians can organize and achieve the mission of youth inclusive governance, the former no doubt shows young people are capable of winning elections and holding leadership positions in the process.

It is no more news that at least 4 young legislators have emerged as speakers of State Houses of Assembly in Oyo, Zamfara, Kwara and Plateau states. The political and media space was first thrown into a frenzy when the news broke out that a 32-year old Adebo Ogundoyin emerged as the Speaker of Oyo State House of assembly. Ogundoyin from Ibarapa East constituency was also a participant at the Convergence

2.0—the largest gathering of young elected legislators organized by YIAGA AFRICA to build their capacity on quality representation. Oyo state also produced two 26-year olds in the persons of Hon. Babalola Samson and Hon. Yusuf Oladeni Adebisi as Deputy Majority Leader and Deputy Chief Whip respectively.

Representing Jos East constituency is 33-year-old Hon. Abok Izam who emerged as speaker of the Plateau State House of Assembly. Hon Abok who is said to be a law student in University of Jos must have transcended his school politics into the Nigerian Political terrain. He was also a participant at The Convergence 1.0 and 2.0.

Even though lawmakers in Zamfara state failed to vote yes to the age reduction bill, it was a massive victory for young people with the emergence of 31-year old Honourable Masiru Magarya as speaker of Zamfara State House of Assembly. This simply sent a huge message that the wave of youth

inclusion in politics is sweeping through the nation without seeking permission from the powers that be. The wave continues with Hon. Saliu Danladi being trusted by his colleagues in Kwara State House of Assembly to steer the ship of lawmaking in the state.

Further significant statistics, which has also demonstrated the competence of young people in leadership positions, is their emergence in other strategic leadership positions in various Houses of Assembly across Nigeria. As a matter of fact, legislators as young as 27-year old Hon. Cephass Dyako-Ashwa and Hon. Salihu Musa Iyimoga have both been entrusted with the principal position of Minority Whip and Deputy Minority Whip in Benue and Nasarawa Houses of assembly respectively.

Similarly, the position of deputy majority leader in Gombe State Assembly is occupied by 28-year old Sadam Bello Sale, while the Chief Whip is a 31-year old Musa Buba as 32-year old Yahaya Muhammed Kaka acts as his deputy. Neighbouring Yobe and Katsina states assembly have also recorded the names of youth legislators in gold, with

a 32 and 34-year-old Minority Leader and Chief Whip respectively. States like Ondo, Niger, Bayelsa and Rivers states also entrusted leadership positions to young people, which is no doubt a sign of a bigger and more impactful role to come in the near future.

Younger principal officers continue to sweep through state assemblies across Nigeria with 28 to 35-year-old legislators being voted in by even older colleagues to hold strategic

leadership positions like Majority and Minority Leaders, Chief Whip and Deputy Chief Whip amongst other positions. This gives young legislators an opportunity to effectively discharge state responsibilities and it will propel them to higher positions in the near future.

The story of these young legislators is even more inspiring considering the fact they had just a few months between the assent of the Not Too

Young To Run constitution amendment into law to prepare for elections. While the age reduction bill became law on 31st May 2018, deadline for party primaries and submission of candidates form was between August and October 2018. This meant that the young candidates had barely five months to navigate the tensed and highly competitive candidate nomination procedure, political campaign processes, recruit poll agents and prepare for the general elections.




 Young Legislators networking at The Convergence



 Guests at The Convergence Dinner



 Not Too Young To Run Bill Signed into Law

Bill Signed into Law

Young Legislators holding Principal Leadership Positions in the State Houses of Assembly

Niger State House of Assembly
Hon. Musa Suleiman Nasko | 30
 Office: Majority Leader
 All Progressives Congress (APC)

Kwara State House of Assembly
Rt. Hon. Yakubu Saliu Danladi | 34
 Office: Speaker
 All Progressives Congress (APC)

Ondo State House of Assembly
Hon. Borokini Simeon Toluwani | 33
 Office: Whip
 All Progressive Congress (APC)
Hon. Akintomide Akinribido | 31
 Office: Deputy Minority Leader
 Zenith Labour Party

Oyo State House of Assembly
Rt. Hon. Adebayo Ogundoyin | 32
 Office: Speaker
 Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)
Hon. Babalola O. Samson | 26
 Office: Deputy Majority Leader
 Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)
Hon. Yusuf Oladeni Adebisi | 26
 Office: Deputy Chief Whip
 Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)

Bayelsa State House of Assembly
Hon. Wilson Ayakpo Ohuyegha | 35
 Office: Minority Leader
 All Progressives Congress (APC)

Zamfara State House of Assembly
Rt. Hon. Nasiru Mu'azu Magarya | 31
 Office: Speaker
 Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)
Hon. Nasir Bello Lawal | 34
 Office: Deputy Majority Leader
 Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)

Katsina State House of Assembly
Hon. Abduljalal Haruna Runka | 34
 Office: Chief Whip
 All Progressives Congress (APC)

Yobe State House of Assembly
Hon. Lawal Sani Inuwa | 32
 Office: Minority Leader
 Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)

Gombe State House of Assembly
Hon. Markus Samuel Wina | 36
 Office: Majority Leader
 All Progressives Congress (APC)
Hon. Sadam Bello Sale | 28
 Office: Deputy Majority Leader
 All Progressives Congress (APC)
Hon. Musa Buba | 31
 Office: Chief Whip
 All Progressives Congress (APC)
Hon. Yahaya Mohammed Kaka | 32
 Office: Deputy Chief Whip
 All Progressives Congress (APC)

Plateau State House of Assembly
Rt. Hon. Abok Nuhu Ayuba | 33
 Office: Speaker
 All Progressives Congress (APC)

Nasarawa State House of Assembly
Hon. Salihu Musa Iyimoga | 27
 Office: Deputy Minority Whip
 Zenith Labour Party

Rivers State House of Assembly
Rt. Hon. Ehie Edison Ogerenye | 34
 Office: Deputy Speaker
 Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)

Benue State House of Assembly
Hon. Cephas Dyako-Ashwa | 27
 Office: Minority Whip
 African Democratic Congress (ADC)





 (L-R) Serah Makka-Ugbabe, Chioma Agwuegbo, Clement Nwankwo, & Desmond Elliot




 Young Elected Parliamentarians at The Convergence 2.0



 Sentell Barnes, Resident Country Director, IRI Nigeri

Younger principal officers continue to sweep through state assemblies across Nigeria with 28 to 35-year-old legislators being voted in by even older colleagues to hold strategic leadership positions like Majority and Minority Leaders, Chief Whip and Deputy Chief Whip amongst other positions.



 Tony Chinedu Nwulu, former Member, House of Representatives, Sponsor, Not Too Young To Run Bill



 A Cross Section of Elected Parliamentarians at The Convergence 2.0



 A Parliamentarian tweeting away at The Convergence 2.0

Remarks

**“We Need Leaders
to Build a Nation;
Serve Others Not
Godfathers”**

— His Excellency, Rt. Hon. Yakubu Dogara
Speaker, House of Representatives

“No one is born a good citizen; no nation is born a democracy. Both are processes that continue to evolve over a lifetime. Young people must be included from birth. A society that cuts itself off from its youth severs its lifeline; it is condemned to bleed to death.”

Our country has never been in short supply of those who tell truth to power but finding those to execute the clarion call of nation building. Since our nation’s return to democratic rule in 1999, the Nigerian Youth has been kept on the fringes of leadership. Late Mr. Kofi Annan, former Secretary General of the United Nations, said: “No one is born a good citizen; no nation is born a democracy. Both are processes that continue to evolve over a lifetime. Young people must be included from birth. A society that cuts itself off from its youth, severs its lifeline; it is condemned to bleed to death.”

It is because of this and many other important factors that spurred the 8th National

Assembly to pass the ‘Not Too Young To Run’ Bill into Law. There was cynicism from certain quarters as to the commitment of lawmakers to the passage of the bill, but as legislators we were never in doubt as to the importance of the bill and how much youthful energy will drive governance in our country. The Not Too Young To Run Law is not so much about the exclusion of any particular class from the political space; rather it is designed to offer a platform for our youth population to build synergy with other segments of society for national development.

I congratulate all of you on your elections, and I should add myself, as a representative of our people, by extension, Nigeria. The importance of your election is situated in the fact that the

Nigerian youth demographic, at an estimated population of 78 million would be the fourth largest country in Africa and 19th in the world if it were a country. But to what use has your sheer numerical strength been put to? It is in light of this that I find very interesting the theme for the conference, which is: Convergence: Leadership, Power and Politics". What this simply means is that you are now leaders—part of the elite some of you loathe so much. It is instructive you begin to come to terms with the remarks that you are now part of ‘*na dem!*’

But what is it about leadership that spurred you to run for office? Is it the lure of power and the mere perks of politics? The price of leadership is steep. Sometimes frightening if you are in it for the wrong reasons. It challenges your character; it tests your patience, and risks your reputation. So, in the end, it is what you choose to do with the leadership that has been conferred on you that will count.

No one should envy you because you are coming on board at a time our beloved country is on its knees having ravaged our national blessings until we are now desperate to find redemption. This is a time like no other time in Nigeria. Do you know that Nigeria is the third most dangerous country in the world to live in after Afghanistan and Syria? Tell me a single extended family in Nigeria that has not suffered the pains of kidnapping, banditry or terrorism. Do you know that life expectancy in Nigeria was estimated by Open Government to be at 53.8 in 2017, which gives Nigeria a world life expectancy ranking of 214 out of 224 countries ranked? Do you know that one out of every three Nigerians go to bed hungry every night? To our shame we have become a bye word



A Cross Section of Participants at The Convergence 2.0



Hon. Yakubu Dogara, Speaker, House of Representatives, Her Excellency, Catriona Liang, British High Commissioner to Nigeria.

among nations who now tell us to our faces that we are now the poverty capital of the world.

Do you know that we have no world-class hospital and no world-class institution of learning? Consequently, medical tourism abroad is the accepted norm with dire consequences on our national economy. So many young people's lifetime ambition nowadays is not to study in the Western world anymore but anywhere except Nigeria. No need to remind us that unemployment is now officially at nearly 30% if not more. Underemployment is graver a problem.

All that I have highlighted so far are not the disease; they are symptoms of the disease. Nigeria's real disease is lack of leadership. I disagree with all those who say our major national disease is financial corruption, rather the real disease has been the absence of true leadership, which in turn breeds moral corruption and wickedness. Get a true leader that solves moral corruption and wickedness, when that happens, you will search for financial corruption to no avail.

Unfortunately, the leadership model we have practiced so far is the kind of leadership that produces sycophants who are expected to serve their political godfathers and not the people. Our so called leaders have

mastered the art of political witchcraft so much so that if you are independent minded you are automatically disqualified and if for any reason you are picked then you have to surrender your soul for them to eat in small bites until you become their worshipper. We need leaders who will lead us to build a nation and serve others not godfathers who demand that we worship and serve them rather than serve the people.

I have no doubt that you are all familiar with the maxim that says, "power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely." If you look at our history, you will find it strewn with strong men that have abused due process, spurn the Rule of Law. Why? Power! My home state of Bauchi is one such place where the people taught an incumbent that arrogance of power is fatal. You can imagine a situation where a Governor will refer to the votes of a whole constituency as insignificant. But in the end, it was the 'insignificant votes' that ended his driving desire to return to office.

History is rich with examples of why some leaders and politicians failed or could not deliver as expected. Never lose sight of the long-term goal of representing your people, state and country as a whole. The demands will be tasking, after all, governance is a convergence of leadership, power and politics.

Remember, you are the beacons of a new Nigeria, and in this regard, you cannot fail.

More power to the Nigerian youth!



An Elected Female Parliamentarian at The Convergence 2.0

Scenes From The Convergence 2.0

In fulfilling its commitment to democracy and good governance, YIAGA AFRICA and the Not Too Young To Run movement held the second edition of its innovative program for young elected parliamentarians upon the conclusion of the 2019 elections with support from the UKAID. The Convergence 2.0, which was held at the prestigious Transcorp Hilton, Maitama, Abuja brought together nearly 300 elected representatives from the states, experienced experts from the academia, civil society and government. The newly elected parliamentarians in attendance were exposed to various topics including: Understanding the Constitutional Powers of the State Legislatures, Maximizing Technology and Social Media for Effective Lawmaking, Oversight and Constituency Engagement, How to Engage with Stakeholders in Marginalized Communities, Legislative Oversight—Principles, Benchmarks and Best Practices, Effective Representation and Constituency Outreach, Youth and Women Participation in Nigeria Politics. The two-day event ended with a dinner, which had in attendance Dr. Joe Abah who gave a powerful epilogue, ace comedian Chuks D General, a live band and a host of others.



Germany's Ambassador to Nigeria, Dr. Bernhard Stephan Schlagheck



Amb. W. Stuart Symington, US Ambassador to Nigeria



Antonette Grant, Senior Programme Manager and Governance Adviser, DFID



A Panel Session at The Convergence 2.0



Adaora Ikenze, Head of Public Policy for West Africa, Facebook



Ezenwa Nwagu, Chairman, Partners for Electoral Reform



Eugenia Abu, Multimedia Strategist Broadcast Executive



Dr Joe Abah, Director-General of the Bureau of Public Service Reforms



Hon. Gaza Jonathan Gbefwi, Member, House of Representatives.



Adaora Onyechere, Broadcaster, Entrepreneur, Activist & Politician



Hamzat Lawal, Founder CODE, Strategy Team Member, Not Too Young To Run Movement (Centre)



A Congratulatory Handshake to Young Elected Lawmakers, Age 25 to 30



(L-R) Jude Udo Ilo, Hon. Nnena Elendu Ukeje, Kingsley Bangwell, Hon. Luke Oniofok & Shamsudeen Yusuf

A photograph of Her Excellency, Catriona Laing, speaking at a microphone. She is wearing a dark blue top and a patterned skirt. The background is a blurred blue wall.

Remarks

“Make Laws to Improve Education, Health, Economy, Women Representation”

—— Her Excellency, Catriona Laing
British High Commissioner to Nigeria



 H.E Rt. Hon. Yakubu Dogara, Speaker, House of Reps. & H.E. Catriona Liang, British High Commissioner to Nigeria congratulating beneficiaries of the Not Too Young To Run Law in 2019 Elections

December 2018, when UKAID supported the original Convergence, there were over 400 candidates. Now, over 200 of you have moved from “Not Too Young To Run” to being “Ready To Run”; now it’s time to contribute. This is about Nigeria’s future; it’s about inclusion, it’s about political participation. It is really about how young people will lead the way and, specifically, how you will lead the way. This is why the UK has been a proud supporter of this movement, and we will continue to support you as long as you are prepared to lead. Your growth as political representatives will determine how much progress is made in all areas of life in Nigeria.

You now have a responsibility to engage in the state and federal legislatures on issues, which affect the people who voted for you. You will make the laws and policies, which will affect education, health, the economy, security, women, PWDs. Remember, somebody championed the law which made it possible for you to run for office! The responsibility is on your shoulders to ensure that integrity, fairness,

inclusion and accountability become the hallmarks of your tenure.

You might have needed support in order to contest the 2019 elections but, come 2023, be prepared to run on your own record of achievements. There will be days when you feel discouraged or you feel things are not changing quickly enough. The challenges facing Nigeria did not materialize overnight, so neither will the solutions. Be determined to be part of the change, however incremental it is.

I also want to encourage you to support each other, particularly the relatively few females among you. Nigeria will not move forward if the space for women’s engagement is not widened. You now hold a special place in Nigeria’s history; but you need to decide whether you are content just being the first “young group of representatives”, or you would rather be the first wave of change that brought a new dimension to Nigerian politics.

This is the beginning of a journey. International partners such as the

UK can only support you, but the responsibility is yours to take Nigeria to the next level.



 An Elected Female Parliamentarian at The Convergence 2.0

A young woman with dark curly hair, wearing glasses and a blue vest over a white long-sleeved shirt, is speaking at a podium. She is looking slightly to her left. The background is a blue banner with white text, including the words "elected representative" and "POWER".

Remarks

2019 Elections: Not Too Young To Run Movement and Successes Recorded

Cynthia Mbamalu
YIAGA Africa Programs Manager

The 2019 general elections was an election of significant numbers:



84 million

Registered
Voters



91

Registered
Political Parties



23,316

candidates
vying for the
1558 elective seats

Of these numbers, our favorite was the percentage of young voters and then young candidates! We had...



41.8%

of young people
run for office this year

...and today, 7th May 2019, 340 days after the signing of the Not Too Young to Run Bill into law, young elected lawmakers will occupy over 200 seats out of the 991 seats in the State Houses of Assembly. Out of this classification, twenty-one persons between the ages of 25 and 30 won elections into their respective State Houses of Assembly. This is our democracy taking shape, because we cannot talk about democracy without inclusion. This is progress made for youth, for Nigeria, and this is hope, which we hold on to. As a young woman, this is also hope I hold on to believing that as I see people of my generation represent me in government, I will also see people who look like me—women, represent us in Government.

Today, it is beyond being young; it is about Leadership, Power and Politics. Leadership—because for so long we have struggled as a people to answer the leadership question. The Convergence 2.0 is about working together to set a legislative agenda that is people driven, that promotes inclusion and the indices that enable sustainable development. It is about building a strong network of committed young lawmakers who support each other and speak truth to power. It is about quality and accountable leadership, providing that alternative that serves as a model for leadership. Power—because we must be reminded that the legislative arm of government is the hub of democracy and you represent the great people of Nigeria where sovereignty lies. Politics—because

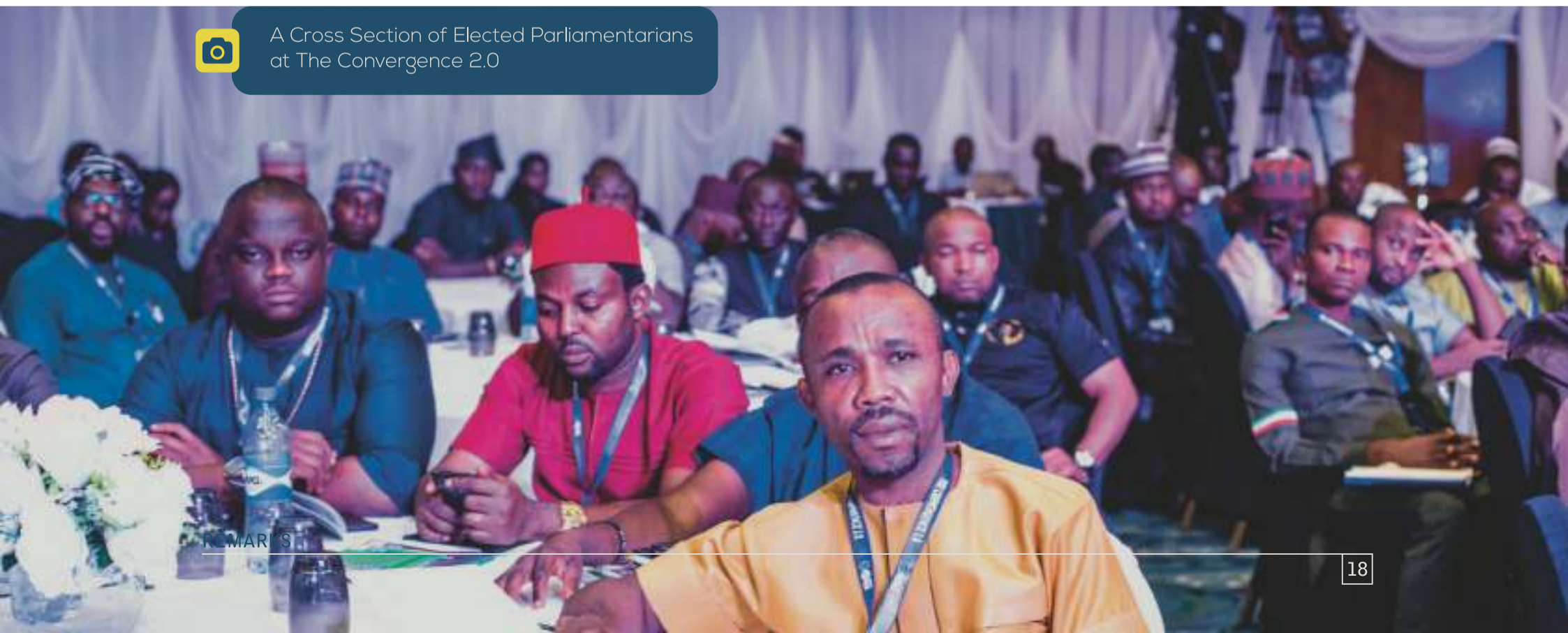
this time we must make our voices count in government and in the political decisions taken.

The Not Too Young to Run movement celebrates every young person who worked hard to see the Not Too Young to Run become law; today we celebrate every young person who contested in the 2019 general elections and more importantly, today we celebrate all our young elected lawmakers.

Leadership is not easy, it is a responsibility that you now have to ensure that in all you do, you are enabling your constituents and Nigerians achieve purpose. Thank you for answering the call; may we remain committed to building a democracy that works for us and building the Nigeria of our dreams.



A Cross Section of Elected Parliamentarians at The Convergence 2.0



Remarks

The Convergence is a Journey

— **Samson Itodo**

Executive Director, YIAGA Africa
& Convener, Not Too Young To Run

Lectrum





(L-R) Hon. Abdulmumin Jibrin, Chioma Agwuegbo, Clement Nwankwo, & Hon. Desmond Elliot during a Panel Session at The Convergence 2.0

The background to The Convergence 2.0 was, first, with the success of 'Not Too Young To Run' movement and the emergence of young elected legislators across Nigeria. Several young people were inspired to actually run for office because the constitution reduced the age for running through the Not Too Young To Run Act. This was the first major challenge to youth participation that YIAGA AFRICA and the Not Too Young To Run movement had to confront. We won that struggle but it did not mean that the struggle was over because there were other issues militating against youth political participation. Most young aspirants were confronted with the herculean task of securing their party nomination.

Whilst a large number of young people expressed interest to run for office, majority of them were unable to purchase the party nomination forms because the cost of forms was very high—a deliberate attempt by the ruling political elites, who are scared that the young people would retire them in the 2019 elections. For those who defied all odds and purchased the forms, they had to

combat stiff opposition from party hegemon and oligarchs hell bent on circumventing processes to impose their 'anointed' candidates. This pervasive conservative ideology in political parties has made most parties hostile to the concept of youth candidacy.

Yet, a lot of young people defied all odds.

They got the tickets even when some state governors hijacked the machinery of parties at the state level and prevailed on the leadership of parties to refrain from selling forms to young people. Despite this obstacle, some youth candidates navigated this hurdle and secured their party nomination. Others secured justice from the courts over their unlawful exclusion and the illegality perpetrated by their political parties. There were instances where political parties intentionally substituted young people who won party primaries. What could have been more cruel and sadistic than this?

It is against this background that YIAGA AFRICA and the Not Too Young To Run hosted The

Convergence 2.0 to celebrate the newly elected young legislators for their courage, resilience and success at the polls. The young legislators were reminded of the difficult journey to electoral success and the need to be accountable to their constituents. The young elected representatives must view politics as an instrument for driving socio-economic and political development because Nigeria needs a new leadership paradigm that puts the people first. This leadership model must be driven by the philosophy of results and impact as well as accountability and transparency.

Through The Convergence, YIAGA AFRICA and Not Too Young To Run Movement is mobilizing a new breed of visionary public leaders to sanitize electoral politics, obtain political power through the ballot and provide accountable, responsive and innovative leadership. This has been a long-term goal and vision. Because what we—and every young Nigerian—did this year, was to lay a foundation for a revolution. For the first time, we are beginning to see a lot of young people getting interested to actually run for office and know this: by 2023, a revolution is actually going to take place.

Whilst a large number of young people expressed interest to run for office, majority of them were unable to purchase the party nomination forms because the cost of forms was very high—a deliberate attempt by the ruling political elites, who are scared that the young people would retire them in the 2019 elections.



 Runcie Chidebe, Strategy Team Member, Not Too Young To Run Movement



 An Elected Parliamentarian at The Convergence 2.0



 An Elected Parliamentarian at The Convergence 2.0

REMARKS



Remarks

“Be Instruments of Change”

—— His Excellency, Ambassador W. Stuart Symington
U.S. Ambassador to Nigeria

I think it is time to change your name. What should the name be now? Not Too Young To Win. Congratulations. If you ran for yourself, your race is over. If your supporters see that you ran this race for them and for all of us, if you can grant justice for all and be inclusive, you will be an instrument for change. And if you don't, people will know that you ran this race, not for them but for you.

You are not here by accident. If not for the Not Too Young To Run movement, all of you might not be in this room. Now the question is, lifted on their shoulders in this moment, how high will you reach? I think the big question is What will you do? Each of you have as your first job, not making rules that will govern your citizens but making a path so that your citizens can move forward and succeed.

The first need is security. I think there is no security in the world that doesn't come from the ground up. Every killer had a mother, brother a neighbor, friend, a child and many still do. They know who these people are and some of them even know why they do what they do. Your opportunity is to crowdsource with words, or to crowdsource with security. Somehow it is central to reach all of these people and together make insecurity stop because security forces alone can never secure any country; they must be lifted up by all of you.

Find ways through a combination of mentoring and advice, using the internet and other tools to reach out to those people who have been outside education and other opportunities, and bring them in. I urge you to disrupt education. In a few years from now every Nigerian

should be able to read because it is hard to ask citizens to read between the lines and know what really matters when they can't read at all.

I am utterly convinced that you have the whole world in your hands. You have a world of opportunity of hope and freedom. The world of prosperity is in your hands. The people who will drive Nigeria is you. But only if you are in it for the long race. This is the single most transformational opportunity that you will ever have.

I urge you to hold yourselves accountable but not just to your family and friends. Above all, don't get caught by your own conscience. I urge you to be accountable to your own conscience and then accountable to the world, because the world is counting on you.



A Cross Section of Elected Parliamentarians at The Convergence 2.0

Opinion

The Role of Civil Society in Consolidating on the Emergence of Young Leaders in Nigeria's Political Space

Olaniyan Sanusi

Some weeks ago, at an event organized for young community organizers by YIAGA AFRICA, a veteran in the development and civil society space talked about events that shaped Nigeria's journey to democratic rule. In his discussion, Mr. Innocent Chukwuma, Ford Foundation's West Africa Director, highlighted how he and his colleagues declined to join politics back in 1999 amid growing calls for them to join different political parties that sprang up at the time.

History has shown us that civil society in Nigeria has constantly maintained a non-partisan stance in the course of carrying out its responsibilities, especially when it pertains to politics/politicians because it is believed that maintaining a neutral stance will protect their integrity and neutrality, and provide a level playing field for all concerned. As valid as this belief is, however, it has sadly restricted the work of civil society organizations and their ability to effectively influence actions of politicians in delivering good



Young Elected Lawmakers at The Convergence

governance to the citizens.

To foster effective legislative performance, civil society organizations will have to work closely with the newly elected young legislators especially the Speakers and those who emerged as principal officers in their respective State Assemblies, majority of whom are first timers.

The election of four State Houses of Assembly speakers under the age of 35 in Kwara, Oyo, Zamfara and Plateau states, respectively, represents a shift in leadership from the old generation. Regardless of how meagre the sum might be, their emergence indicates public trust in the capability of Nigeria's youth to occupy leadership positions in governance.

The clamor for youth representation in the decision-making process of the country climaxed with the passage of the age reduction bill. Now that young leaders have

emerged in the political space, the charge is for them to demonstrate through their actions that young people can provide excellent public leadership and make democracy deliver development to the people. The onus now falls on these young lawmakers to provide quality representation and perform exemplarily well in the next four years, in order to build a platform for increased youth participation in the next electoral cycle. It is imperative for them to get it right, as their performance will be used as a yardstick to measure the impact and effectiveness of youth leadership. This is where the civil society has a major role to play.

A partnership between elected representatives and civil society actors will promote accountability, transparency and popular participation. Civil society actors possess tools and resources that the newly elected legislators require to succeed. As interlocutors between the state and citizens, legislators


could leverage research and reports of civil society groups for their work. CSOs can also facilitate periodic legislator-constituent interaction to galvanize their inputs and feedback on public policies. YIAGA AFRICA is a leading actor in facilitating constituency engagement between legislators and constituents. CSOs can also provide technical support to the young elected representatives through capacity building workshops, legislative drafting, conferences, exchange programs etc.

With the influx of more young people in the political process and emergence of young elected legislators, Nigeria has been presented with an opportunity to shape her political system. The newly elected lawmakers bear the burden to provide the excellent public leadership that Nigeria direly needs. Their success will be contingent on the measure of support they garner from civil society actors. Their failure will reverse the gains of the Not Too Young To Run Act and undermine the advocacy for youth representation in politics in Nigeria.



 Hon. Luke Oniofiok, Speaker, Akwa-Ibom State House of Assembly & House of Reps



 Laz Ude Eze, Strategy Team Member, Not Too Young To Run Movement



Feature

Young Lawmakers Adopt Young Parliamentarians Forum (YPF)

Oluwafisayo Okare

At The Convergence 2.0, the newly elected legislators pledged to deepen participatory democracy and public governance using the Young Parliamentarians Forum as a platform for legislative accountability and civic participation.

The Young Parliamentarians Forum (YPF), established in 2016, is an appendage of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), which has been in existence since 1889. At the heart of its core functions, the IPU is to the legislature what the United Nations is to the executive. It is made of national parliaments from around

the world, and it protects and builds global democracy through political dialogue and concrete action. Nigeria became a member of the IPU when it transitioned into democratic rule, while the Young Parliamentarians' Forum (YPF) was established just about 4 years ago in Nigeria and is now the pacesetter for the forum in Africa.

With collaborative efforts from Westminster Foundation for Democracy in Nigeria, YIAGA AFRICA strategizes in ensuring that the YPF is strengthened to deliver on its mandate. Yetunde Bakare, Senior Program Officer for YIAGA AFRICA's Centre for Legislative Engagement

(CLE), explained during a master class session at The Convergence 2.0, that "there is a need for all young elected parliamentarians to unite under platforms like the YPF because it provides a platform for building strategic capacity to influence critical legislative actions to advance the interests of the people especially young people." The YPF also presents an opportunity for peer learning and cultivating effective legislator-constituent relationship, which is essential for legislative performance considering the huge burden on the newly elected legislators. The establishment of YPF in Nigeria was also necessitated by the dreadful statistics of women representation in politics. It is part of YPF's target goals to

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have more women representatives in office, hence its investment in advocacy, legislative internships and trainings on women's participation in politics. Elsewhere on the African continent, the youngest member of Assembly in Ghana—where YIAGA AFRICA also established a Young Parliamentarians Forum in 2017—is 23 years old and female, which is highly encouraging.

The YPF also promotes the inclusion of other vulnerable groups in governance such as persons living with disability. For instance, the bill for making public buildings accessible to persons on wheelchairs has been passed, but it still needs to be made effective.


On this note, it is part of the Young Parliamentarians Forum's mandate to ensure that laws are well implemented through legislative oversight. The newly elected legislatures have committed themselves to ensure that this done, hence strengthening the added value of youth.

Young parliamentarians under 45 are automatically admitted to be a member of the forum.



 Maryam Laushi, Strategy Team Member, Not Too Young To Run Movement



 The Convergence 2.0, the Largest Gathering of Young Elected Representatives







THE CONVERGENCE 2.0






Nigeria's largest gathering of young elected representatives

LEADERSHIP | POWER | POLITICS

...for democratic renewal

 300 Young elected reps	 1 Roof	 15 Speakers	 1 Mission
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