

PLAC LEGISLATIVE INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME ALUMNI

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Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC)

📍 Plot 451 Gambo Jimeta Crescent, Guzape District, Abuja, Nigeria.

🌐 www.placng.org

✉ info@placng.org

☎ 0809 189 9999

📘 www.facebook.com/placng

🐦 @placng

📷 @placng

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ABOUT THE LEGISLATIVE INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME (LIP)

PLAC's Legislative Internship Programme is an annual programme aimed at improving youth participation and engagement with the governance and legislative process, particularly by seeking to create a better understanding of democratic institutions such as the National Assembly.

The internship programme was instituted in 2013 originally with support from the Department for International Development (DFID) now known as Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO). It ran for 3 years, until 2015. It was reinstated in 2018 with funding support from the European Union (EU) and has continued annually since then. The EU has now supported 7 editions of the programme.

Since its inception in 2013, over 320 young Nigerians have benefited from the programme. The success of the programme is attributed not only to the support from the European Union but also to the enduring collaboration and support from the Nigerian National Assembly, which has been instrumental in facilitating youth participation and civic engagement within the parliamentary framework.

While PLAC has taken charge of recruiting, training, and remunerating the interns, the management of the National Assembly has played a crucial role in assigning interns to legislative committees and providing them with workspace under the guidance of a Committee Clerk, thereby enriching their learning experience and ensuring a meaningful 10 weeks work at the National Assembly.

LIP Alumni

In 2023, PLAC hosted the second Alumni network convening, aimed at uniting past and current interns to cultivate a robust networking platform, monitor interns' progress, and assess the long-term effects of the internship programme. This event took place on December 11, 2023, at the Abuja Continental Hotel in Abuja.

The hybrid event witnessed participation from 31 former interns, comprising 24 attendees in person and 7 joining virtually. Discussions centered on the contributions of the internship to their professional development.



2023 PLAC LIP ALUMNI ARTICLES



Political Leadership, Affirmative Actions, and Nigerian Women: A Tripartite Commentary

Theola Ehinomhen Amiokhaibhor
Communication Assistant, Nigeria INGO Forum

Turn to the closest Nigerian woman and ask her thoughts on becoming a politician in her country. Her response will likely be one of apathy, decrying how distant the promise of political representation feels from the average Nigerian woman's reality.

There are many reasons why Nigeria ranks 125th out of 146 on the 2024 Global Gender Gap Index with low scores in political parity and poor representation of women in parliament, ranking 136th out of 146 on the political empowerment scale.

This essay explores where political leadership, affirmative action, and Nigerian women converge, creating touchpoints for real action.

The Struggle for Affirmative Action

The first time Nigerian women were explicitly considered in the political agenda of a Nigerian government was in the 1985 transition government of the military Head of State, General Ibrahim Babaginda. In 1986, he set up a political bureau to fashion a new political order that would render military intervention unnecessary. After establishing that women were indeed marginalised in the socio-political life of Nigeria, the bureau made the following recommendations.

The full involvement of women in politics is one method of defending women's interests in society. They can participate fully if they are members of the legislative and executive arms of government. For this reason, we recommend the allocation of five percent of the legislative seats to women in all three tiers of government. These five percent seats allocated to women are to be filled by nominations through the political parties...and the formulation of a national policy on women and development.

Seems like a good start, but it was only a recommendation, one that was swiftly rejected by the government. In their words,

Government notes the reasons for the Bureau's recommendation on the representation of women... [they do not however] accept the implications of reverse discrimination embedded in that recommendation. The government believes in the equality of sexes, individuals and groups.

On the surface, this statement purports to champion equality by rejecting 'reverse discrimination.' However, this position is deeply disingenuous, given the system's cultural and institutional biases that have long entrenched discrimination against women in the political sphere. Such a stance is not only pretentious but also harmful.

Another shot at affirmative action was taken with the 2006 National Gender Policy (NGP) which stated a plan to achieve 35% representation of women in governance at the national and state levels. This has so far been another pipe dream. Nigeria has never had a female Governor, President, or even Vice-President since October, the first. The gender policy has since been revised to be the 2021 National Gender Policy, advocating for the gender affirmative action of 50:50 parity in all elective and appointive positions, in line with the global and regional best practices. This was launched in 2022 and as if in jest, current female parliamentary representation following the 2023 General Elections is at an all-time low, with only three women in the 109-member Senate and fourteen women in the 360-member House of Representatives of its 10th National Assembly.

Just in 2020, Honourable Taiwo Oluga presented before the House the Women's Representation in Legislative Houses Bill to establish a legal framework that domesticates the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights of Women in Africa. A protocol that was ratified by Nigeria on 16 December 2004. Among others, the provisions of the bill mandated that at least one candidate from the three senatorial districts of each state would be a woman, at least 35% of the total number of honourable members at the House of Representatives would be women, at least 35% of the total number of candidates at the State Houses of Assembly would be women and that political parties are to ensure that at least 35% of its total candidates presented for the electoral wards area councils of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) are women. It almost goes without saying that the bill did not pass the first reading.

These are only some of the many propositions to increase female participation in Nigerian politics through affirmative action. It is worthy of note that "most of the countries that have achieved significant increases in women's participation have done so through the use of quotas - a form of affirmative action in favour of women."

African countries with high political empowerment rank in the Global Gender Gap Index 2024 owe some of this success to their implementation of affirmative action in their political representation. Mozambique (8th) and South Africa (9th) both operate voluntary party quotas at their parliamentary level, leading to 43% and 45% female representation in their National Assemblies respectively. Rwanda (29th) has legislated quotas for its lower and upper house, and also at the sub-national level, leading to 61% female representation.

Affirmative action works, as a temporary measure to balance the scale. And, if it is any indication, the several global and regional legal instruments signed by Nigeria means it looks good on paper too.

Unfortunately, it would seem that the Nigerian government intends for it to remain that way - only on paper.

The Glass Ceiling

Two years after nine (9) Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) filed a suit against the Nigerian government seeking the implementation of the NGP, particularly the allotment of 35% of political offices to women, the Federal High Court in the FCT finally passed a judgment, ordering its enforcement on 6 April 2022. Since then, female presentation in Nigerian politics has only dwindled.

Women have been made to settle instead, staring at glass ceilings they may never break in their lifetime.

These glass ceilings -

“unseen, yet unbreachable barrier[s] that keep minorities and women from rising to the upper rungs of the corporate ladder, regardless of their qualifications or achievements”.

In the context of political leadership, women qualified for higher positions are placed in less threatening positions that are practically and strategically redundant without any real power.

In the investigation of patriarchal party structures as one of the barriers to female political participation, one of the participants of the research group, a female politician, asserted,

Women are rarely involved in the formation stages of parties. Do the parties then make room for women when they join? Not really. When offices are assigned, one woman will be given the position of a woman leader and she will not be involved in policy-making processes. She is only needed when the issue is about the welfare and mobilization of women during elections.

It is also interesting to note that just after rejecting the recommendations of the Bureau, General Babangida's

government instead created women and development departments in the state ministries of culture and social welfare, and appointed women to other administrative and political positions.

Without a doubt, these 'alternatives' reinforce a system where women's roles in Nigerian politics are simply tokenistic, confined to areas that do not threaten the established power structures.

What Does Real Action Look Like?

In creating the NGP, Nigeria ratified several global and regional legal documents committing to gender parity across all levels of governance and state action. From the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979), the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (1981), the African Union Gender Policy (2009) and its very own National Gender Policy (2021).

What are the consequences of violating those agreements? And what does this mean for Nigeria's standing on the global stage and her ability to contribute to global policies?

What does it mean for a people when its government cannot even keep its word?

Nigeria must move beyond superficial measures and commit to a genuine integration of women at all levels of political leadership. Starting with enforcing gender quotas within the public service and political parties.

Only then can we hope to see a political landscape that truly represents and empowers Nigerian women, paving the way for the real Giant of Africa to emerge.

Word Puzzle



Test your Legislative Knowledge!

A	G	C	H	A	M	B	E	R	P	C	F	U
L	G	R	D	M	E	I	O	S	L	O	N	N
E	E	A	V	A	M	C	O	E	A	N	A	B
G	A	M	V	M	A	A	K	N	C	S	S	O
I	L	L	M	E	N	M	A	A	I	T	K	O
S	S	N	A	N	L	E	S	T	B	I	L	L
L	P	A	L	D	O	R	R	E	N	T	C	I
A	O	Y	L	M	L	A	T	I	I	U	U	G
T	N	O	E	E	P	L	A	U	G	E	T	A
O	S	V	T	N	Z	O	N	E	S	N	A	G
R	O	E	O	T	V	D	E	B	A	T	E	E
G	R	N	H	O	U	S	E	Y	E	A	I	L

- Any alteration made (or proposed to be made) to a bill or clause thereof, by adding, deleting, substituting or omitting.
- A legislature consisting of two separate chambers, each serving as a check on the other's power.
- Draft of a proposed law presented to the legislature for consideration.
- Official hall for the meeting of a legislative body.
- A citizen residing within the district of a legislator.
- Discussion of a matter according to parliamentary rules.
- Elected member of a legislative body.
- Having no association or affiliation with a political party or caucus.
- Associated or affiliated with a single political party or caucus.
- A legislative body; usually the body in a bicameral legislature having the fewer number of members.
- The person (usually a legislator) who presents a bill or resolution for consideration.
- A small ceremonial mallet used by presiding officers to call for attention or to punctuate rulings and proclamations.

The Role Of Law In Advancing Food Security In Nigeria



Abdulwahab Muhammed Yusuf Esq.
Associate, Asia Ahmed & Co

Not until oil was discovered in 1956, Nigeria did not have to grapple with the problem of food security. The country was able to feed itself and export the surplus food items. Nigeria has a population of over 200 million people with an inflation rate standing at about 33.69%, the most populous black nation on earth is feeling the brunt of the rising cost of food items.

Food availability and affordability stability constitute the major pillars of food security. Lack of access to credit facilities, insecurity such as the farmers-herders clashes, Boko haram insurgency etc., the lackadaisical attitude of the government and limited private sector investment threaten food security in Nigeria. Thus, to ensure the availability and affordability of food, there is

“Subject to the provisions of this Constitution, a House of Assembly may make laws for the State concerning the industrial, commercial or agricultural development of the State.”

a need for food policy legislation across the three tiers of government, that will interject legal provisions with the practice of agriculture.

Item 18 of the second schedule (part II) of the concurrent legislative list of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria provides:

To this end, the law has empowered the state Houses of Assemblies to enact laws to foster the growth of agriculture.

In the same vein, section 2(b) of the Fourth Schedule, 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria provides:

2. The functions of the local government council shall include the participation of such council in the Government of a State with respect to the following matters

(b) the development of agriculture and natural resources, other than the exploitation of minerals.

One major cause of the food crisis is the fact that Nigeria’s agriculture is mostly rain-fed and 1 out of every 100 farmers practice irrigation. This could be attributed to the high cost of setting up an irrigation facility and this is where the government can come in.

Fortunately, only Ekiti State of Nigeria has taken advantage of the provisions of the Constitution by enacting The Ekiti State Food Security Law (2021). The law inter alia, mandates the active participation of political and career officeholders (whether elected or appointed) in agriculture. Also known as the ‘Own a Farm Project’ the law aims at ensuring the state attains food sufficiency, increases the state’s internally generated revenue, and makes agriculture a retirement plan for political office holders and career officers.

Pride itself as the state with the largest land mass in Nigeria, Niger state agricultural policy titled ‘Food Security and Agricultural Program of Niger State’ is also worthy of commendation. The Umar Bago-led administration has since its inception in May 2023 embarked on programmes and projects targeted at making food available for the state and ensuring self-

sufficiency in food production. Through this initiative, about 10,000 hectares of land will be cultivated in each of the 25 local governments in the State.

Conclusively, in the writer's opinion, there is a difference between food policy and agricultural policy. The former deals with setting up national and regional standards that guarantee food security while the latter targets expanded food production. For instance, the National Agricultural Technology and Innovation Policy (NATIP) 2022-2027 was a policy formulated to improve the agricultural sector taking into cognizance, the potential impact of technology on the sector. Majorly, what the Federal Government has done through the NATIP is the formulation of agricultural policies. Food security is not supposed to be left in the hands of the Federal Government alone. All 36 States and the Federal Capital Territory must wake up to the task and take the lead in food security advocacy. Already, the Constitution has set the ground for the actualization of this goal. It only takes a serious and courageous Federating unit that forms part of the country to take the bold step.

“Food availability and affordability stability constitute the major pillars of food security. Lack of access to credit facilities, insecurity such as the farmers-herders clashes, Boko Haram insurgency etc., the lackadaisical attitude of the government and limited private sector investment threaten food security in Nigeria.”

Youth Preparedness for Leadership Positions in Nigeria: How Prepared?



Omorilewa Tomilola.

The first question that comes to mind is, “How prepared are we truly?” Let’s embark on an intellectual excursion to find a suitable answer.

Introduction

Nigerian youths have been clamoring for involvement in governance and political leadership at all levels. These agitations are evident on social media platforms like Facebook and at various functions and political gatherings. Many draw parallels to historical figures like Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo, and Tafawa Balewa, who assumed leadership roles in their 30s. The aspiration to join the elders in driving Nigeria to greatness is strong, but the critical question remains: how prepared are we?

Presently, the older class has held on to power in unity, while the youth remain socially, psychologically, and politically divided. Unity and harmony are essential for peaceful coexistence and development, as Kolawole

(1997) noted: “Any attempt to build a nation out of an incongruous combination will always end up in futility.” The visions and dreams of many youths towards a better Nigeria are often unaligned. While some genuinely desire good governance and effective leadership, others are content with the current order, despite its economic and social failings. These individuals, who are satisfied with temporary benefits from corrupt leaders, hinder the progress of the youth movement.

Nigerian youths are not yet harmonized in vision or operations, nor are they united in their struggle for genuine freedom. For better clarity, I have categorized the Nigerian youths into the following groups:

1. The Conscious and the Unconscious
2. The Deep and the Jejune
3. The Ideologues and the Reactionaries
4. The True Advocates and the Saboteurs
5. The Potential Leaders and the Bootlickers

Every youth must reflect on where they belong. Personally, I will remain a true advocate for the conscious ideological order and the true emancipation of Nigerian youths. Despite these challenges, this article will explore the potential and possibilities for Nigerian youths, suggesting effective recommendations to drive our youths and nation towards their desired glory.

Theoretical Postulations

Two theories explain the topic:

1. **System Theory (David Easton):** This theory connects parallel and alternate systems concerning power relations and resource allocation. It reflects Nigeria’s political system, divided into the older (gerontocracy) and younger (youth) classes.
2. **Greed and Grievance Theory (Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler):** Initially used to investigate civil war causes in Sierra Leone, this theory applies to Nigeria, where leaders’ greed leads to social dissatisfaction and potential violence.

Youth Preparedness and Awareness for Leadership: The Burden of Leadership in Nigeria

Leadership should be a shared responsibility between the old and young. A Yoruba proverb says, “Omode gbon, agba gbon lafi ile ife” (Ile-Ife was created through the cooperation of the young and old). Excluding youths from governance leads to national failure. Despite the reluctance of older generations to relinquish power, youths must engage in spiritual, physical, and ideological combat to overcome suppression.

However, Economic challenges hinder youth participation in leadership. When struggling for basic survival, youths cannot focus on governance. Addressing these challenges is crucial for effective youth involvement in leadership.

Challenges of Youth Involvement in Leadership and Governance in Nigeria:

1. **Bad Political Culture Favoring Elders:** Nigeria’s political culture heavily favours elders; this factor hinders the participation and influence of younger generations in politics.
2. **Lack of Mentorship and Role Models:** this presents significant challenges to youth involvement in leadership and governance. Young people often struggle to find guidance and support from experienced leaders, which hampers their ability to develop necessary skills and navigate the complexities of political engagement.
3. **Poor Succession Planning:** The lack of structured plans for leadership transitions means that younger generations are often overlooked or excluded from opportunities to assume key political roles. This perpetuates a cycle where established leaders remain in power without paving the way for new, youthful leadership to emerge.
4. **Corruption:** Corruption often blocks opportunities for young people to enter political roles, as positions are

often filled through nepotism, bribery, or favoritism rather than merit.

5. **Godfatherism:** this poses a major challenge to youth involvement, Youth find it difficult to ascend to positions of power independently, as they are often overshadowed or controlled by established political godfathers.

Recommendations:

1. **Broaden youth orientation in Nigeria:** The Government needs to prioritize expanding access to civic education, mentorship opportunities with established leaders, and creating supportive policies that encourage active youth participation in governance and leadership roles. E.g., PLAC LIP
2. **Promote decent values and culture for radical change:** There is a need to promote decent values and culture for radical change in youth involvement in governance in Nigeria and prioritize initiatives that emphasize integrity, accountability, and ethical leadership among young leaders.
3. **Encourage youth participation in politics and leadership:** through education, mentorship, accessible platforms, supportive policies, and role modeling to empower them as effective agents of change in governance.
4. Resist power alternation among the old cabal and promote youth leadership through campaigns.

Conclusion

It's time to unite against the oppressive old leadership regardless of race, ethnicity, language, gender, or social status. Remember, "It is not in the agenda of the oppressor to discuss the freedom and liberation of the oppressed". This article calls on Nigerian youths to rise and take their rightful place, offering hope that through effective representation, they can deliver a better future for Nigeria.

Youth of Nigeria, arise now and claim your place.

Urgent Need for Peacebuilding through the Social Media



Victor Okechukwu Chimezie
Founder/Lead, Mind Reformers Network

Social media refers to the means of interactions among people in which they create, share, and/or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. Examples of social media platforms include Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), LinkedIn, WhatsApp, Telegram, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat etc. Social media has recently become a very powerful tool to sell a brand, pass information, sell a candidate during elections and do a lot of things both on the positive and on the negative too. Statistics shows that 5.04 billion people which makes up 62.3% use social media daily which is really massive. Users of social media platforms must now intentionally be careful of information being passed across to them and how it gets them to act or react and this is where peacebuilding comes in.

In recent times, loads of hate speech, misinformation (wrong information shared in error), malinformation

(information twisted to cause harm to a person or group of persons), and disinformation (wrong information intentionally disseminated) are found on social media and are instigating violence to drive in an agenda and this is why we must curtail it. Sometimes, this wrong information leads to violence against a person or group based on conviction or affiliation or during elections. Social media is being targeted by fake news propagators due to the huge population of young and agile individuals on social media, many of whom have little or no media literacy skills.

To build peace via social media, individuals must verify and critically analyze every piece of information they see on social media and not take in everything hook, line and sinker. The source of information and the probable reason for the information or the agenda should also be looked at before accepting or sharing such information. We must also stop sharing information based on bias and stereotypes as they are most times made to instigate violence against a person or groups of persons.

Social media organizations must step up their game on stopping intentional fake news and hate speech peddlers from finding it easy to use their medium for their ulterior motives by making sure fact-checking mediums are active and that groups who have intentionally disseminated hate speech and fake news over time are penalized. Government, International organizations, religious and cultural groups and civil society groups must continue to carry out media literacy programs and ensure strict penalties for fake news and hate speech peddlers to safeguard the lives of citizens and also make sure that they are not carriers or propagators of fake news and hate speech. There are lots of benefits from using social media and one huge benefit is that it can be used to build peace and stop the spread of violence and extremism.

Civil Society Organizations' Efforts In Shaping Electoral Reforms In Nigeria



Joseph Udoh
Founder/Team Lead, CitizensVoice and Action Network (CVAN)

Nigeria's electoral process has faced numerous challenges having been marred with issues of corruption, fraud, violence, and irregularities. However, Nigeria's electoral landscape has undergone significant transformations in recent years, with civil society organizations (CSOs) playing a pivotal role in shaping electoral reforms. These organizations have been instrumental in reshaping and improving the Nigerian electoral system thereby promoting transparency, accountability, and democratic governance.

The history of elections in Nigeria has been marked by periods of civil rule, military intervention, and transitions between the two. Since independence in 1960, Nigeria's electoral journey has been complex and turbulent. Nigeria held its first general elections in 1959, leading

to independence from British colonial rule, making the beginning of Nigeria's democratic experiment. However, the first republic was marred by political tensions and unrest, which eventually culminated in a military coup in 1966. After a series of military coups, Nigeria experienced a period of military rule for most of the late 1960s and 1970s. During this time, there were no civilian elections.

In 1979, Nigeria held another general election, marking a return to civilian rule resulting in the second republic where Alhaji Shehu Shagari was elected as the President. Unfortunately, this was short-lived, as another military coup in 1983 led by General Muhammadu Buhari removed the civilian government. After many years of military rule and a transitional period in the 1990s, Nigeria held general elections in 1999, marking a return to democratic rule known as the Fourth Republic.

Nigeria has continued to hold general elections with varying degrees of credibility and challenges. While Nigeria has made progress in improving its electoral processes and democratic institutions, challenges such as poor voter education, electoral violence, malpractice and political corruption continue to be areas of concern that require attention and reforms.

Apparently, civil society organizations (CSOs) in Nigeria have been at the forefront of advocating for electoral reforms to improve Nigeria's electoral process. By working with government officials, political parties, and other stakeholders, CSOs can push for legislative changes that strengthen the electoral system and make it more inclusive and democratic. These organizations, comprising non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community groups, and advocacy bodies, have tirelessly worked to promote electoral integrity, good governance, and democratic values.

One of the key contributions of CSOs has been advocacy and awareness campaigns. They have organized press conferences, rallies, and public events to raise awareness about the need for electoral reforms and the importance of credible elections. These campaigns have helped to sensitize citizens, policymakers, and stakeholders about the imperative of electoral reforms.

CSOs have also engaged in robust lobbying and

engagement with policymakers, including the National Assembly and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). By presenting memoranda, proposals, and position papers, offering recommendations for electoral reform. These efforts have contributed significantly to the review and amendment of electoral laws and policies.

The passage of the Electoral Act in Nigeria is closely intertwined with the involvement and advocacy of CSOs. Before the passage of the 2006 Electoral Act, CSOs in Nigeria advocated for comprehensive electoral reforms to address electoral violence, voter disenfranchisement and vote rigging. They were actively involved in the legislative process, ensuring that the Act reflected the public's aspirations for a more transparent and credible electoral process. Following the passage of the 2006 Act, CSOs continued to engage with lawmakers and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to push for amendments and reforms that would address emerging challenges. Their involvement led to the amendment of the Electoral Act in 2010, 2011 and 2015.

During the 2018 and 2020 amendment process of the National Assembly, CSOs presented comprehensive reports and evidence to the legislature that revealed the extent of flaws within the Electoral Act 2010 as amended. Their mission and efforts to secure the passage and assent of an amendment bill that would reshape Nigeria's electoral landscape were not in vain as the bill to repeal and re-enact the Electoral Act 2010 as amended received presidential assent in February 2022, marking a significant milestone in the fight for free, fair and credible elections.

In addition, CSOs have collaborated with international organizations, such as the European Union, the United Nations, the United Kingdom Agency for International Development (UK-AID), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the African Union, etc., to secure technical support, funding, and expertise. This has enhanced their capacity to advocate for electoral reforms and promote democratic governance.

A coalition of advocacy groups that have contributed significantly to enhancing Nigeria's electoral process is the Nigerian Civil Society Situation Room. The Nigerian

Civil Society Situation Room (NCSSR) is a coalition of civil society organizations in Nigeria that focus on election observation, monitoring, and advocacy for electoral reforms. The platform was established to provide an organized and coordinated response to election-related issues and developments in Nigeria and has played a significant role in promoting a transparent, credible and accountable electoral process in the country. The NCSSR has been instrumental in improving the integrity of Nigeria's electoral process and promoting the importance of free and fair elections in the country. Its advocacy for electoral reforms and improvements is based solely on its findings and recommendations from election observation exercises. The NCSSR collaborates with government agencies, political parties, security agencies, and international organizations to ensure that elections are conducted in a transparent and accountable manner.

Overall, the efforts of Civil Society Organizations in reshaping the electoral process in Nigeria have been instrumental in promoting good governance, accountability, and democracy in the country. Their tireless advocacy and awareness campaigns, grassroots mobilization, lobbying, election observation, and civic engagement programs have contributed significantly to the country's democratic development. As Nigeria continues to consolidate its democracy, the role of CSOs in promoting electoral integrity and good governance remains crucial.

“During the 2018 and 2020 amendment process of the National Assembly, CSOs presented comprehensive reports and evidence to the legislature that revealed the extent of flaws within the Electoral Act 2010 as amended.”

An analysis of the Constitutional Review Process in Nigeria



Uchenna Aja
Programs Officer, Health Systems Consult Limited. (HSCL)

Introduction

Constitutions are the bedrock of any modern democracy. They define the nation's political framework, enshrining fundamental rights and outlining the powers of government. These documents reflect a nation's unique socio-political evolution. To adapt to changing circumstances, nations engage in periodic review and amendment processes. Unlike ordinary legislation, these revisions typically require stricter procedures. This might involve securing a majority vote in parliament, seeking direct public approval through a referendum, or even a combination of both. In some countries, citizens can even propose Constitutional changes directly. These safeguards highlight the critical role of Constitutional Review. It ensures that changes to this foundational document are undertaken thoughtfully and with broad consensus. Therefore, what is Constitution Review and

why is this process so crucial?

Constitution Review refers to an alteration or adjustment to the laws governing a country. In addition, constitutional review is a mechanism to revise or eliminate outdated laws in the Constitution. It ensures that our legal framework is responsive to the demands of the times.

To this end, why then is constitutional Review so crucial in a democracy?

First, it serves to uphold and protect citizen's rights, ensuring that our laws reflect the values and principles of justice and equality; secondly, it provides a platform for citizens to actively participate in the lawmaking process, making their voices heard and influencing policy decisions. By engaging in the constitution review process, we not only legitimize our government but also strengthen the democratic foundation on which our society is built. It is important to note that any adjustment made to the constitution is known as Alteration.

The Nigerian constitution makes provision for it to be amended when there is a need to do so. Section 9 of the 1999 Constitution as amended outlines the procedures for altering its provisions. It grants powers to the National Assembly to alter the Constitution but with stringent requirements to safeguard against haste and arbitrary changes.

Over the years, the Nigerian National Assembly has made five (5) alterations to the 1999 constitution, with the proposed alterations by the current 10th National Assembly becoming the sixth. The 1st, 2nd, & 3rd Alterations were in 2010; the 4th alteration in 2017 and the 5th alteration in 2023. The act of Constitutional Review is not peculiar to Nigeria, as several other countries such as Algeria, Burundi, Chad, Gabon, Belgium, Belarus, and Brazil have at one point amended their Constitutions to address certain challenges and reflect the wishes of the people and prevailing realities in their respective countries.

Processes and Procedures for Constitutional Amendment

In Nigeria, both sections 9 (2) and (3) clearly outline the procedure for amending provisions of the Constitution. The Constitution states certain statutory requirements that must be met before the constitutional amendment can be legitimized. Section 9(2) requires the votes of two-thirds of members of both houses of the National Assembly and approval by a resolution of two-thirds of the State's Houses of Assembly to make amendments to the Constitution, section 9(3) imposes a higher requirement of a four - fifth majority by both chambers of the National Assembly and approval by a resolution of two-thirds of the States Houses of Assembly where the amendments deals with the creation of new states, boundary adjustments, new local government areas, fundamental rights or the mode for altering the Constitution.

The procedures for the amendment of the Constitution are:

- 1. Receiving of Bills:** The first step in the process of constitutional amendment entails the receiving of bill proposals. The Bills can come in the form of an Executive Bill or a Private Member Bill. An Executive Bill originates from the President, the Chief Justice of the Federation, or other Government officials with the approval of the President; while the Private Member Bill comes from a member of either Chambers of the National Assembly on behalf of a citizen, constituents or interest groups.
- 2. First Reading:** After the Rules and Business Committee schedules the Bill in the Order Paper, the Clerk of the House reads out the Long Title of the Bill during the Plenary before submitting it to the President of the Senate or Speaker of the House for further legislative action. This is known as the First Reading.
- 3. Second Reading:** At this stage, the Members debate the general principles of the Constitutional Amendment Bill to determine its relevance and suitability for amendment. The debate is followed by a vote of 'Yah' or 'Nay'. If the majority votes for 'Nay',

the Bill is stepped down. However, if the majority gives a 'Yah' vote, the Presiding Officer forwards the Bill to the Senate or House Committee on Constitutional Review depending on the originating Chamber.

- 4. Committee Stage and Report:** The Committee on Constitutional Review analyzes the Bill to identify potential areas of adjustment and improvement. To achieve this, the Committee identifies various relevant stakeholders who are invited to make inputs through a memorandum on possible amendments and issues. The committee also organizes public hearings and Town Hall Meetings to interface with the citizens on the Bills. The Committee is empowered to adjust the Bills.
- 5. Third Reading:** After the Committee compiles its report, the Committee reverts to the appropriate Chamber during plenary, which then dissolves into the Committee of the Whole to thoroughly examine each clause in the Bill before voting in support or against the specific clause. "A two-thirds majority of all the members of each House is needed for each clause to be deemed as passed except where the proposal borders on the creation of new states, boundary adjustments, new local government areas, fundamental rights and on the mode for altering the Constitution. In such cases, a four-fifth majority is needed" . The voting is usually done electronically and subsequently collated and counted."The Votes are then collated and counted, usually after electronic voting.
- 6. Harmonization of the Bills:** At this stage, both Chambers of the National Assembly will examine their respective Bill proposal to determine if the clauses of the bills are the same. This is so because both Chambers are expected to ensure a harmonization of the bills. Therefore, if there are any identified differences, the Senate and House of Representatives will form a Conference Committee (made up of selected members of the Senate and the House of Representatives) that will deliberate to

harmonize the Bills.

- 7. Concurrence from the State Houses of Assembly:** In line with the provisions of the Constitution, the Bills are sent to the 36 State Houses of Assembly for their concurrence or rejection of the Bills. The Constitution states that Two-thirds of the States Houses of Assembly (i.e. 24 states) must concur with the Bill before its approval. Once the simple majority of Two-Third is met, the National Assembly adopts the Bills and prepares for transmission to the President for assent. The Clerk of the National Assembly will prepare a clean copy of the Bill and attach the Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly and State Houses of Assembly for transmittance to the President.
- 8. Presidential Assent:** The President receives a copy of the Bill and may either accept or reject the Bill. Once the President assents to the Bill, it becomes an Alteration Act. Section 58 of the Constitution empowers the National Assembly to pass the bills through a two-thirds majority if the President declines assent.

Key Issues for the 10th National Assembly

On February 14th, 2024, the President of the Senate announced the composition of a 45-member committee to review and amend the 1999 Nigerian Constitution. Some priority areas of the 10th National Assembly include:

1. Revamping the National Security Architecture (State Police Debate)
2. Reducing the Cost of Governance
3. Revision of the Immunity Clause
4. Strengthening of Traditional Institutions
5. Ensuring the political inclusion of women

The Way Forward

As the 10th National Assembly has embarked on a review of the 1999 Constitution, there is a need for the proposed amendments to reflect the wishes of the citizens. To achieve this, the constitutional review process needs to be:

- 1. Inclusive and Participatory:** The members of the National Assembly Committee on Constitution Review (Senate and House of Representatives) should ensure citizen participation in the process. Citizen engagement and participation provide a forum for decision-makers and stakeholders to understand each other's issues and viewpoints.
- 2. Transparent Process:** The process of the Constitution review needs to be open and transparent with periodic updates for citizens to track their submissions and understand how their inputs are shaping the legislative process and discussions. This will involve the dissemination of progress reports on the review process.
- 3. Creating Effective Communication and Awareness Channels:** There is a need for effective public awareness campaigns utilizing both traditional and social media, alongside community outreach programmes, to educate citizens about the review process, proposed amendments, and the need for the citizens to actively participate in the process.
- 4. Improved Collaboration with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Non-Governmental Organizations:** The National Assembly needs to improve the level of its partnership with CSOs, NGOs, and other interest groups experienced in citizen engagement and democratic consolidation to leverage their expertise in mobilizing and facilitating citizen engagement.

Conclusion

The 10th National Assembly's decision to comprehensively review the 1999 Constitution holds significant promise. This initiative aligns with the long-standing demands of Nigerian citizens who believe Constitutional amendments are crucial to address the nation's democratic challenges. While past attempts have addressed specific aspects, a more extensive review is necessary. To ensure the success of this endeavor, the 10th National Assembly must prioritize an inclusive process that fosters genuine citizen engagement. The ultimate goal should be a revised Constitution that reflects the aspirations and needs of the Nigerian people.

“The Nigerian constitution makes provision for it to be amended when there is a need to do so. Section 9 of the 1999 Constitution as amended outlines the procedures for altering its provisions. It grants powers to the National Assembly to alter the Constitution but with stringent requirements to safeguard against haste and arbitrary changes.”

The Rise of Financial Startups in Nigeria



Muhammad Murnai Kabir
*Accountant I, Finance & Records
Department, Baze University Abuja*

Financial startups, also known as fintech companies, have been at the forefront of transforming the financial industry landscape through their innovative technologies and customer-centric approaches. These startups leverage digital platforms to offer a wide range of financial services, from mobile payment solutions to investment platforms, revolutionizing how individuals and businesses manage their finances.

The rise of financial startups can be attributed to their agility and ability to fill gaps left by traditional financial institutions. By harnessing the power of technology, fintech companies can provide more accessible and convenient financial services to a broader audience. For instance, mobile banking apps and online investment platforms have made it easier for people to access and manage their finances anytime, anywhere, without the

constraints of traditional banking hours or physical branches.

Moreover, financial startups have been instrumental in promoting financial inclusion by reaching underserved populations and offering tailored financial solutions. Through data analytics and artificial intelligence, these startups can assess creditworthiness more accurately and provide personalized services to individuals who may have been overlooked by traditional banks. This personalized approach not only enhances customer experience but also fosters a sense of trust and loyalty among users.

Despite the many benefits financial startups bring, they also face significant challenges that need to be addressed for sustainable growth. Regulatory compliance is a crucial aspect that fintech companies must navigate to ensure consumer protection and maintain the integrity of the financial system. Adhering to regulatory requirements while innovating and expanding their services poses a delicate balancing act for these startups. Additionally, cybersecurity threats pose a significant risk to financial startups due to the sensitive nature of the data they handle.

Protecting customer information and financial transactions from cyberattacks is paramount to maintaining trust and credibility in the digital financial space. Implementing robust cybersecurity measures and staying abreast of evolving threats is essential for the long-term success and sustainability of financial startups.

In conclusion, financial startups play a pivotal role in driving innovation, enhancing financial inclusion, and promoting competition in the financial services sector. As these startups continue to disrupt the industry and expand their offerings, it is imperative for them to prioritize regulatory compliance, cybersecurity, and customer trust to navigate the complex financial landscape successfully. By striking a balance between innovation and risk management, financial startups can continue to thrive and shape the future of finance.

Understanding MTEF Legislation and Its Impact on Nigeria's Economic Growth



Sunday C. Olubiyi

Imagine an engineer trying to build a skyscraper without a blueprint. That's how chaotic economic planning can be without a structured financial framework. This is where the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) comes into play, acting as the crucial blueprint for Nigeria's economic planning. During my internship with the House Committee on National Planning and Economic Development at the National Assembly, facilitated by the Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC), I gained valuable insights into the MTEF and its significant role in fostering sustainable economic growth in Nigeria.

The Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) is a three-year planning tool that helps the government manage its finances. It outlines how much money the government expects to earn (revenue) and how it plans to spend it (expenditure) over the next three years. The

main goal is to ensure that the government spends money wisely, supporting the country's economic goals and avoiding excessive debt.

MTEF In Nigeria Consists Of Four Main Components

1

Macroeconomic Framework: Projections for the overall economy, such as expected growth rates (GDP), inflation, and other economic indicators over the next three years.

2

Fiscal Strategy Paper (FSP): This document outlines the government's fiscal policy, including targets for revenue, expenditure, and debt. It serves as a roadmap for managing the country's finances.

3

Expenditure Framework: Specifies how much money will be allocated to different health, education, and infrastructure sectors. It ensures that government spending aligns with national priorities.

4

Revenue Framework: Details the expected sources of government revenue, including taxes, oil revenues, and foreign aid. It ensures that the government's spending plans are based on realistic income projections.

How the MTEF Legislation Works in Nigeria

The MTEF is mandated by the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2007. The process of creating and implementing the MTEF involves several key steps:

- **Preparation:** The Ministry of Finance prepares the MTEF, consulting with various stakeholders, including government ministries, departments, agencies (MDAs), the private sector, and civil society.
- **Approval:** The draft MTEF is submitted to the Federal Executive Council (FEC) for approval. Once

approved, it is forwarded to the National Assembly.

- **Legislative Review:** The National Assembly reviews the MTEF, making amendments if necessary, and ultimately approves it. This ensures that the MTEF aligns with national priorities and has broad support.
- **Implementation:** Once approved, the MTEF guides the annual budget preparation. The budget must align with the spending and revenue targets set out in the MTEF.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** The implementation of the MTEF is regularly monitored to ensure that spending is on track and that the government is meeting its economic goals.

The Impact Of MTEF On Nigeria's Economic Growth

The implementation of MTEF legislation in Nigeria has had several significant impacts on the country's economic growth which includes:

1. Improved Budget Planning and Execution
2. Enhanced Fiscal Discipline
3. Increased Transparency and Accountability
4. Better Resource Allocation
5. Long-Term Economic Planning

Challenges And Recommendations

While the MTEF legislation has had a positive impact on Nigeria's economic growth, there are still several challenges:

Implementation Challenges: One of the main challenges is the implementation of the MTEF. While the framework provides clear guidelines for spending, there are often delays in the preparation and approval of the MTEF. This can result in delays in the preparation and approval of the annual budget.

The government should streamline the MTEF preparation and approval process by setting clear timelines for the preparation and approval of the MTEF and ensuring that all stakeholders are involved in the process.

Capacity Constraints: Many government ministries, departments, and agencies lack the capacity to effectively prepare and implement the MTEF. This can result in poor planning and execution of government spending.

The government should invest in building the capacity of government ministries, departments, and agencies by providing training and technical assistance to government officials and ensuring they have the resources to effectively prepare and implement the MTEF.

Political Interference: Politicians may try to influence spending decisions to benefit their constituencies rather than the country as a whole. This can result in poor resource allocation and undermine the effectiveness of the MTEF.

The government should ensure that the MTEF process is transparent and that all stakeholders have a say in allocating resources. This can help reduce political interference and ensure that spending decisions are based on the country's economic goals and priorities.

Conclusion

The Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) legislation is a critical tool for promoting economic growth in Nigeria. By providing a clear framework for government spending, the MTEF helps improve budget planning and execution, enhance fiscal discipline, increase transparency and accountability, and ensure better resource allocation. However, challenges such as implementation delays, capacity constraints, and political interference must be addressed to realize the MTEF's benefits fully. My experience as a PLAC intern with the House Committee on National Planning and Economic Development gave me valuable insights into the MTEF's importance for Nigeria's economic planning, deepening my appreciation for its role in achieving sustainable economic growth.

PLAC 2023 LIP WORD SEARCH

Find the ten hidden words associated with the PLAC 2023 legislative internship program. It includes names of people, organisations, activities, and terms that were commonly used during the internship.

A	Z	G	F	B	M	Q	T	C	O	B	A	G
N	D	R	A	C	R	D	A	P	T	I	F	H
D	S	V	S	L	S	L	O	O	C	L	X	V
R	R	Z	O	G	P	Q	O	Z	X	L	E	R
E	E	O	P	C	E	H	C	S	D	D	U	L
W	Y	R	T	Y	A	I	O	P	A	R	R	F
L	A	M	L	K	K	C	B	F	S	A	I	G
A	R	G	O	J	E	K	Y	A	M	F	K	L
M	P	R	Q	A	R	U	W	D	M	T	N	Z
E	U	R	O	P	E	A	N	U	N	I	O	N
R	O	E	O	T	V	D	E	B	A	N	E	A
G	R	N	H	S	Q	A	B	Y	E	G	I	L

- ADVOCACY
- ANDREW
- BILL DRAFTING
- EUROPEAN UNION
- KAHOOT
- KOR
- MR SPEAKER
- NKIRU
- PLAC
- PRAYERS

The rise and fall of the Nigerian Economy



Ajayi Samuel
*Researcher & Policy Officer, Agora Policy
Lead Trainer, Nigeria AI Literacy Project*

It was past 6 pm or 7 pm, and I was tightly strapped to my mum's back. A heavy rain had just flooded the only bridge out of the street, but we needed to get home. She carefully tested each step to ensure we didn't slip into a mass of water. A few years after Nigeria's return to democracy, that bridge was rebuilt and the street tarred. If there was a story that described how policies and development can make a valuable infrastructure available for the masses.

The honeymoon rise

I remember days like this because they tell a story about Nigeria's economic rise through the eyes of a boy born in Ondo to a civil servant Mum and a teacher Dad. Salaries were irregular and the standard of living was poor. The story of Nigeria's economic rise in the early 2000s is often

seen from a pure numbers perspective but many like me have stories to tell about our lives.

We watched as the Telecoms liberalization policy happened and phone lines became something accessible to the common man. An interesting thing happened when my mum took delivery of her Samsung R225, we stopped making wooden phone replicas and we actively started using real phones. NITEL, a state-owned monopoly, dominated the telecoms industry, with approximately 700,000 lines nationwide since its creation in 1985. Until the sector's deregulation in 2001, which led to more than 185 million Nigerian phone users by 2021.

The Average GDP growth per year between 2005 and 2013 averaged 6% after having hit a record high of 15% in the year 2002. These were the years of serious economic impact on the lives of the people. It was during this period of consistent growth that my family bought their first coloured television, acquired two cars, and bought the land that was eventually developed into a house. The optimism in the air was palpable too, it was not uncommon to have students brag about their ability to use the internet. Uncles and Aunties in foreign countries regularly inquired about Nigeria, They moved back home to start businesses and start again, it seemed that the good days were here to stay.

The Nigerian growth that had been driven by reforms in several key sectors, the oil boom, and the return to democracy had lifted several people out of poverty and many were on the way to middle-class status. Nigeria's economic growth had a profound effect on me since we went from walking to owning a family house and two cars.

The famous decline

The story of Nigeria's economic fall from grace is what I describe as the hubris of inevitability— there comes a time when things are going pretty well in a country relative to where it was before and genuine concerns are turned into a battering ram by a range of interests who argue that what was done was rather inevitable. The populace

trusts them with political leadership and things often go from bad to worse or good to bad. Let me borrow a leaf from the famous English writer GK Chesterson, famous for the Maxim “Chesterson’s Fence”, which is simply paraphrased as this “Do not remove a fence until you know why it was put up in the first place.”

My amendment would be to say “Do not evict a political party from power based on their success being inevitable unless you can demonstrably show why what they are doing was inevitable” This may have done us some good as the winds of political change blew across the nation in 2014. I will not shy away from the fact that livelihoods are a direct result of political actions or inactions. I was a student with a keen interest in politics at that time, the debates were often heated and passionate but there existed a strain of the hubris of inevitability in many who were advocating for the removal of the incumbent government. This in itself may have been the first step towards Nigeria’s economic fall.

A new government came to power and a series of catastrophic decisions sent the Nigerian economy into a tailspin, followed by a series of recessions. A raft of bad ideas followed as Bryan Caplan rightfully noted in his famous article Idea trap, it is in times of great dissatisfaction that people are more likely to try out terrible ideas as he rightfully notes; “A society can get stuck in an “idea trap,” where bad ideas lead to bad policy, bad policy leads to bad growth, and bad growth cements bad ideas.”

If there was a word that described Nigeria’s economic fall the actions that led to it and how each action from then has only seemed to make matters worse. Nigeria lost immense value and inflation started taking a toll, many people could no longer afford the necessities. The COVID-19 pandemic sowed a blow and the scenes of people besieging food warehouses went viral on social media. Walking through the streets, it was now a regular occurrence to encounter people begging for food. Even in the times of growth, this was not a regular occurrence.

It was clear that the years of growth were gone and

as I settled into my adult life, it would be marred by intense economic hardship. Many colleagues that we went to school together struggled to find useful jobs as companies closed shop one after the other. A typical example is the exit of ShopRite from Nigeria and GAME recently.

The Exodus

When times are tough, people take to the exit with urgency—Many friends start whispering about relocation to other countries. I have now become accustomed to the loss of another kind, losing friends and long-term acquaintances to the distancing hand of japa as it’s commonly called creates a sense of loss that’s akin to death as some will never see me again till they are called to their creator. I have been urged many times by friends and family to head for the door, the consensus is that those who live here are those whose hope has been abandoned in a twist to Dante Alighieri’s famous words.

To close this article, I will refer to the story I Shared in the beginning about being strapped to my Mum’s back while she tried to navigate a flooded bridge. Last month Nigeria experienced severe floods in several parts of the country. The feeling feels familiar as if we have come full circle and lost time.

The question arises, does it seem like the Nigerian economy will rise again? The optimistic answer will be yes but if we are to learn a lesson from history, the expected answer will be no. People hardly make great choices even when things are bad.

“Do not evict a political party from power based on their success being inevitable unless you can demonstrably show why what they are doing was inevitable”

The Problem with State Houses of Assembly: Lack of Autonomy or Lack of Accountability?



Eunice Maravi Bwala
Legal Practitioner & Writer

The Constitution of Nigeria provides for every state to have a House of Assembly. Why? I believe it is not only to ensure better representation of the people but also to drive faster state development. State legislators are expected to promote the dividends of democracy, carry out their functions in the state governments, and come up with policies and legislations peculiar to their people and address their peculiar problems. I believe that is the reason the Constitution made provision for a concurrent list to accommodate state legislation with respect to items such as education, electricity, health, industrial and commercial development of the state .

It is therefore very curious to see that not only are very few states taking strides in development and advancement, but most of those developments are

mainly attributed to the executive of those states. Very few states are evolving in terms of comprehensive legislation that effectively addresses their state's uniqueness. There have been very few progressive laws that have been churned out by state legislatures. It may be a bold and far-fetched speculation but it is nevertheless my opinion that the state legislature has the least impact and that governance at state levels is usually a one-man show run by the governors.

The blatant ineffectiveness of the State Houses of Assembly begs the question of what exactly is limiting the State Legislators from legislating and churning out good policies, proper representation, and performance of oversight on the executive. Part of the answer to this question might be the lack of attention and accountability from the people, opposition parties and other stakeholders. The spotlight seems to be completely on the Federal Legislators, leaving State Legislators to perpetrate nothingness in the darkness of their near obscurity. There are virtually no referendums made, very few town hall meetings, little to no public hearings, and access to State Legislators is limited. In fact, while one could mention three to four Federal legislators, it would not be surprising that one can barely mention two State Legislators or even the Speaker of one's state House of Assembly.

The other answer might be that the concept of checks and balances in running a democracy might be a farce in State governments. It would seem that for most States of the Federation, what is run is a monarchy led by the governors with subservient Legislators who only approve the budget as presented and on occasion, after much persuasion through many years, copy the laws of the legislature of the other little monarchies or Federal government. Ayibakuro observed that '...the state legislature has become an appendage of the governor, unable to fulfil its strategic role in the process of democratic governance' The incident of the Rivers State House of Assembly is unfortunately the top we see a cancer that has deeply eaten into state legislatures across the country.

It is high time that the tides change and the

narrative turns for the better. Whether it is a demand for accountability, financial autonomy of the State Legislature, freedom from the tyranny of the executive, etc., there is a need to have an active and useful Legislature that is not just good only on paper. Maybe, a few recalls, increased media attention, and more public interest in the activities of the State Legislature might just make it come back sputtering to life. Until the State Legislature is resurrected, democracy at the State level will continue to be a bold-faced lie while taxpayers continue to enable the state Legislature's slumber.

Redefining the Crown: The kano example and the need to constitutionalize traditional institutions



Mustapha Abdurra'uf Tukur
Civil Engineer, Mota-Engil Nigeria

Reminiscent of the days after the conquest of Kano by the Fulani dynasty led by the flagbearer of Usman Bn Fodio, Malam Sulaiman in Kano, the subsequent trouble during the reign of his successor

Malam Ibrahim Dabo who his the patriarch of the ruling family till date in Kano. The struggles and battles he fought earned him the name 'cigari' (the conqueror) after unifying Kano again. The succeeding family feud of his descendants the 'Yusufawa' and the 'Tukurawa' goes down as the 'yakin basasa' (civil war) in Kano. Kano has seen it all.

The recent Cold War of Influence between the Bayeros and Sunusi has exposed our abuse of power and hasty utilization of mechanisms to settle political scores. History repeats, itself throwing the emirate into a quagmire of uncertainty and creating avoidable tensions in an otherwise peaceful state.

This tension is fueled by the high reverence of the locals for an institution they feel is the custodian of their religion, tradition, and identity side by side with a government bent on subduing any perceived pressure group or individual. A neutral observer knows better than to take sides in a quarrel that has been repeatedly the case from time immemorial including the Sokoto caliphate itself in the reign of Ibrahim Dasuki, in Kano during the reign of Sir Muhammad Sunusi who had issues with his distant cousin and bosom friend, the Sardauna of Sokoto, Mustapha Jokolo and his issues during Chief Obasanjo's democratic regime, and the balkanization and almost impeachment of Ado Bayero during the era of Abubakar Rimi. These traditional institutions are constantly drawn into the dirty waters of politics after the continuous evolution of power in the country. This poses a problem that should be solved to the greater advantage, especially with the strain of maintaining them on the nation's treasury.

Several suggestions by experts and analysts abound, but my humble opinion entails a reconsidered and realigned vigor for state policing and Local government autonomy to at least include a role for these traditional institutions to fully utilize the goodwill they have with the masses they lead and their structure which is quite closer and less bureaucratic. We should consider revising and upgrading their roles in the indirect system employed by colonial masters while ensuring adequate systems of checks and balancing, a role in the security architecture and arbitration especially in familiar and communal disputes,

as well as in customary and Shariah courts, thereby providing and localizing the judiciary to fulfill the different needs of the citizens.

Other possible areas could include taxation and revenue generation, giving role to optimize culture and to rejuvenate tourism. The Traditional institutions should also be an important stakeholder in civic engagement and aggregating opinions while interpreting policies to the populace, especially in oversight functions and public hearings.

As we watch with keen interest how the issue in Kano is amicably and peacefully resolved, the intrigues of power at play and the ripple impact on other emirates the big question this dilemma poses is how can the seemingly inevitable presence of the crown be optimized for the nations' citizenry?

“The recent Cold War of Influence between the Bayeros and Sunusi has exposed our abuse of power and hasty utilization of mechanisms to settle political scores. History repeats, itself throwing the emirate into a quagmire of uncertainty and creating avoidable tensions in an otherwise peaceful state.”

Beyond Promises: Legislative Action To End Violence Against Women And Girls In Nigeria



Sanni Aminat Olajumoke
*Extern, Lateef Fagbemi SAN & Co.
Legal Consultant, Centre for Socio-legal
Studies (CSLS)*

UNDERSTANDING GBV/VAWG

Gender-based violence can be defined as violence that affects an individual. It includes a variety of damaging acts directed at a person irrespective of their gender. Although Gender-based violence can affect any gender it has been statistically proven that women and young girls seem to be majorly targeted . The United Nations defines violence against women and girls as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women or girl, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life”

Globally it is estimated that that over 736 million women (one in three) have been subjected to physical and or sexual intimate partner violence, non-partner sexual violence, or both at least once in their life (30 per cent of women aged 15 and older) .

VAWG IN NIGERIA

Nigeria is well-acquainted with the practices of violence against women and girls (VAWG), and the statistics clearly illustrate the current situation. According to the Nigerian National Population Commission, 19% of Nigerian women have suffered gender-based violence at the hands of their current husbands, 14% have faced physical assault, and 5% have been subjected to sexual abuse . About 58% of women aged 15 – 49 in 2021, still believe in their culture, that a husband is justified in beating his wife if she refuses him sex. Prior studies in Nigeria further revealed that the prevalence of violence against women and girls varies widely: emotional and mental violence ranges from 31% to 61%, sex-related violence from 20% to 31%, and physical violence from 7% to 31% . Notably, regional research indicates that VAWG prevalence is 42% in the north, 29% in the southwest, a striking 78.8% in the southeast, and 41% in the south-south region .

Additionally, the Nigeria Statistical Report for 2021, highlights other forms of violence. In 2021, 8.2% of females aged 0-14 had undergone circumcision. The percentage of females aged 26-35 who were trafficked showed a continuous increase from 2019 to 2021 rising from 76.38% in 2019 to 87.86% in 2020 and reaching 91.08% in 2021. Females trafficked for forced labor also saw a significant change, with 19.30% in 2019, a sharp increase to 64.87% in 2020, and a slight decrease to 59.93% in 2021. All victims trafficked for prostitution in 2019 were females (100%), the number decreased slightly to 97.82% in 2020 and then increased again to 99.72% in 2021. Also, it was discovered that Nigeria has the highest number of child brides in Africa, with over 23 million girls and women married as minors. It should be

noted that a vast majority of these child brides come from impoverished and rural communities and are often seen as a poverty alleviation scheme for their parents and guardians . The (2015) UNICEF Release of the findings of the Nigeria violence against children survey places the numbers at 67.6% of girls are forcibly married before the age of eighteen in the North-West of Nigeria, while in the North-East, this figure stands at 56.6%.

EXISTING LAWS & THEIR LOOPS

It would be fallacious to say that Nigeria as a whole hasn't responded to issues of Violence against women and girls. The Federal Government has pursuant to the provisions enshrined in Section 12 of the 1999 Constitution ratified several treaties through the National Assembly including the Child Rights Act of 2003, which protects girls until age 18 from marriages, eliminates forced labor and child marriages, and ensures health services for pregnant women; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), ratified in June 1985; the Maputo Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, ratified December 16, 2004; the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act, passed in 2015, The Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act, 2015 passed in 2015, etc. were also enacted with the same objective of ending VAWG.

Inclusively, looking at the 10th Assembly has also shown that some members are interested in tackling some VAWG issues with the proposal of bills such as one at the Senate that seeks to amend the Police Act to Provide for a Special Anti-Rape Unit (SB 54) as well as, an Internet Child Pornography Protection Bill (HB 332) that is currently at House of Representatives.

However, it is important to point out that Nigeria operates a three-tier system of government. A consequence of this structure is that laws ratified at the federal government level must also be domesticated at the state government level to be fully enforceable in that particular state. For example, the Violence Against Persons Act has yet to be

passed in Kano State, and although Taraba State has passed their law, it has not been assented. Similarly, in the case of the Child Rights Act, Gombe State has not passed the law, and Adamawa and Bauchi States who have passed theirs, haven't gotten it assented. The effect of this, is firstly, the unenforceability of those laws in those regions, and secondly, the exploitation of this glaring loop by perpetrators and their lawyers.

Another significant issue is the enforcement of these laws. Although a good number of northern and all eastern states have domesticated both the VAPP and the Child Rights Act. Most child marriages/ child brides still come from the north and most physical violence/intimate violence cases still come from the east. The reason for this can be traced to the shortcomings and gaps in the model principal law. What mechanisms are established in the Child Rights Act to ensure adherence to its provisions? Which monitoring and enforcement agencies are designated in the VAPP? What budget allocation is provided to these agencies? Are there provisions for victims and witnesses? Who oversees these agencies to ensure they are functioning effectively? Furthermore, what is the status of GBV immediate response centers? Do they exist everywhere? Are there specialized courts or tribunals dedicated to addressing violence against women issues? Are these courts everywhere or in only selected places? Are police stations and other security agencies aware of their role in protecting victims and escalating the issue?

THE WAY FORWARD

As depressing as the situation sounds, the silver lining is that there is no better moment than now to change the narrative, and what better way to do so than through the legislative arm of government? Because the legislature is the government's lawmaking arm, it is only natural that the path to abolishing Violence against women and girls should be paved by its decisions and actions.

The first step would be creating effective legislation; it has been established that so many violence protection laws enacted by the National Assembly possess numerous loopholes and gaps that can be exploited by both perpetrators and their legal representatives. So therefore, the onus falls on legislators to pass or ratify airtight legislation to serve as a foundation for protecting victims, prosecuting perpetrators, and preventing violence.

Additionally, these legislations must possess strong enforcement mechanisms; the enforcement of legislation has always been a standing issue and it can be resolved when adequate attention is paid by legislators during the drafting stage of a bill on how the aims and objectives of the bill can be realized.

At the same time, creating a monitoring and reporting committee that truly monitors the activities of the designated GBV/VAWG unit would be a superb way of ensuring accountability and imputing checks.

Ultimately, the effectiveness of legislative efforts to end VAWG rests on their will. Legislators must demonstrate a genuine commitment to addressing VAWG by prioritizing it on the manifestos, and agenda. They also need to allocate sufficient resources to support VAWG-related initiatives. This includes advocating for budget allocations that ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of VAWG programs and services. These programs and services could include free education for young girls and a gender violence sensitization seminar for men and young boys. Legislators should also engage with their constituents to raise awareness about VAWG and garner public support for legislative measures. They could also go the extra mile of championing VAWG eradication in their constituents. This author recommends legislators build a broad-based coalition of support from NGOs, civil societies, development partners, and the general public to create a conducive environment for performing all these activities.

Death Of Consequences: A Society's Death Knell



Oredola Massoud

Public Policy Analyst, Habeeb Oredola Associates

Newton's third law of motion states that "for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction", an immutable law of physics that holds true till date. Beyond physics, this law applies to abstract phenomena as well for nothing exists in a vacuum. Anything that does not conform to this law is an aberration from which nothing but chaos emanates. The nucleus of our existence is our thought, which births our actions. Besides "having weight and occupying space", it is our action that proves that we matter, and exist, for better or for worse. Our speeches too are actions, after all, "speaking" is a verb. There is no action which did not originate from the realm of thought. Even a sneeze which is considered an involuntary action is but a subconscious response to stimuli which has been programmed in our DNA.

The importance of actions having reactions is deeper than we can imagine. By consensus, the very act of thinking is very necessary for the successful protection,

promotion and propagation of self through time. Our continued existence in a positive manner is dependent upon our ability to think clearly i.e. rationally. However, the very process of thinking is dependent on analyzing actions and reactions in our minds, drawing from our memories, knowledge and experiences we can analyse or simulate which course of action to take or avoid, knowing that certain actions beget certain consequences. The consequences are constant in accordance with the nature of the action. Even a stone would obey the law of gravity in our thoughts, if it does not, one can only hope to be sane enough to realize that something is amiss. It is this factor being constant that enables us to think. If the result of every act in our thought process were a variable factor, being random and unpredictable, the act of thinking would be a high impossible task or worse, unnecessary. This is to further buttress the importance of consequences.

To expand outward from the individual, and why not, after all, man is by nature a social animal. The very basis of human relationships is the principle of reciprocity, treat others as you expect to be treated, that is if you treat people well they gravitate towards you and if you treat them otherwise, they flee. It is the same way one would react if the roles were reversed. This is in tandem with Newton's third law of motion.

Nigerians all, are proud to complain. We whine and rant and rave about the uncountable problems of the country. One of the most potent unifying factors for us Nigerians is our criticisms of the government. In the bank, market, bus, train, school, mosque, church, pension offices, hospital, embassies, nothing brings us closer than when different individuals from all walks of life are complaining about one thing or the other. Our collective suffering becomes the common denominator. We are united by pain. We are also united by hope, the hope that 'one day, e go better'.

We are very much aware of our problems; the solutions are not oblivious to us either. So many books, articles, lectures, retreats, symposiums, workshops, and conferences have tried in one way or the other to address the problems of the country, and yet, here we are. 11-point agenda, 8-point agenda,

3-point agenda, however you try to stratify the issues, it matters not. We are trapped in a very vicious cycle, no way in, no way out. The never-ending battle with the hydra. It has gotten so bad that our fellow compatriots have begun to abandon ship, and who can blame them? The reason so much gravitas is attached to consequences is not minute by any means. Any society where actions do not have consequences soon finds itself dancing at the edge of the precipice. The peculiar thing about such a state of affairs is that once the door has been opened a little, in a short time, it is thrown ajar and subsequently blown off its hinges. Actions without consequences incentivizes the perpetrator to repeat such actions and prompts others into attempt.

For want of space, I will not list all the issues that plague this country. I mentioned the vicious cycle earlier, yes. Did corruption give rise to insecurity or insecurity give rise to corruption? Was it the need to be secure financially and otherwise that made man corrupt or was it the fact that there was corruption that man began to be insecure? Name all the problems of our country and upon deeper reflection you would find that they are all connected with each being a causal factor of one and a causal effect of another. It is the chicken and the egg, which comes first?

I am strongly of the opinion that the genesis of all these problems that plague us now was the moment that actions stopped having appropriate and equivalent consequences. It all went downhill the moment accountability was sacrificed on the altar of bias. Law is what holds the society together, it is what keeps the society from reverting to the Hobbesian state. Law guides the universe, law is existence. There is no phenomenon in this universe which is not guided by laws. However, while scientific laws are absolute, Human laws are not. Human laws are just spoken words or text (sound and ink on paper). Without the "or else" conditional phrase that follows, along with someone or something to enforce the "or else" consequence, the laws are meaningless. Do not do this! Or else, what? Or else, nothing. Why then will one not do the deed one was warned not to commit? Even in our holy books, despite the possession of free will by man, he is frequently threatened and reminded of eternal damnation should his acts not conform to the laws of the creator. If the Almighty does not joke with the principle of actions having consequences, why should

we, mere mortals trivialize same?

In May 2017, some officers of the Nigerian Navy attacked a police station in Calabar and reportedly killed 3 police officers. Reading about this incident in the news left me dejected and angry for days. I couldn't fathom it. That was the height of the dysfunction of a state for me. I realized then, how broken the system was. That two security agencies would turn their arms on each other was the lowest a state could sink. It was tantamount to an antivirus fighting an antibiotic in a human system. That two mechanisms meant to serve as security would go into self-destruct mode with impunity tells the story of a society where actions have no consequences. Remembering and writing about this saddens me all over again. Back then, in my disturbed state, I thought long and hard about this incident and came to the conclusion that the perpetrators knew they would suffer no consequence for their acts, hence the brazen display of aggression. I know not of what later became of the case.

Lo and behold! March 9, 2023, a very similar ugly incident happened again when about 15 Naval rating officers attacked a police facility in Delta state. The mastermind was arrested and released to the Naval police. That's the last we have heard of it for now, no update on whether he has been charged to court. In the Judiciary lies our salvation. It is the organ of government capable of righting all the wrongs of our society. Functioning optimally, everything else would align, order would be restored and chaos kept at bay. The judiciary is not just the last hope of the common man, it is the first hope of a society. The judiciary has the constitutional power to ensure that people are held accountable for their actions. This serves as a deterrent that keeps others in check. When a constituent can sue a contractor for shoddy execution or non-execution of a project; when a student can sue a lecturer for victimization; when a road user can sue a government official for intimidation and reckless driving; when a citizen can sue the police for violation of human rights; when the financial crimes commission can sue a person for fraudulent enrichment; when the widows of the police officers killed in Calabar can sue the Nigerian Navy; when justice becomes the consequence of actions, then would the society be on the right trajectory. The bells would toll to announce the society's coronation, not its imminent demise.





Josephine Emeghohena
*Office Assistant, Senate Committee on
Diaspora and NGOs Paralegal, Dorothy
Njemanze Foundation*



Bukola Idowu
Legal Practitioner, O.R. Adisa & Con

My name is Josephine Emeghohena from Edo State. My journey after the internship was quite unique. The PLAC program provided me with a unique opportunity not just to learn and network but to develop my career. Before PLAC I never thought of working at the National Assembly or doing so much around Policy but just after the internship program I experienced a significant transformation in my political and leadership journey. The program opened doors to new opportunities, including continued engagement with a Senate Committee at the National Assembly, a paralegal role at the Dorothy Njemanze Foundation. The experiences and knowledge I got from the internship program was also instrumental in my selection for the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) training for young leaders in Nigeria.

I would say the internship program is indeed a platform that opens young Nigerians to various opportunities that will advance their career. The internship programme has helped me to redefine my values and vision, develop essential character traits like diligence and dedication, and build a valuable network of over 30 young Nigerians from across the country.

Thanks to PLAC-EU SDGN for this opportunity.

My experience at Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC) Internship programme was the beginning of a transformative journey in my life.

The opportunity to attend plenary sessions, public hearings and observing live debates have given me a better understanding of law-making processes and procedures as well as enriched my knowledge of parliamentary processes.

A key aspect of the internship program was the bi-weekly sessions, which significantly enhanced my learning. We received training in bill drafting, constitutional reforms, and civil society's role in legislation. These sessions provided valuable knowledge and further inspired me to enroll for a master's program in Legislative Drafting at National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS)

Working with a Committee at the National Assembly also helped me deepen my understanding of legislative work and reinforced my commitment to public service. I am particularly grateful to the Clerk of the Senate Committee on Judiciary, Human Rights and Legal matters, Hajia Fatima Jiddum, for her guidance and support, and to the staff of the committee for their assistance. I extend my heartfelt thanks to PLAC and the European Union for this incredible opportunity. I now have a profound appreciation for democracy and a solid foundation for future endeavors in public service and policymaking.



Mustapha Abdurra'uf Tukur
Civil Engineer, Mota-Engil Nigeria

I hold the view that only citizens equipped with an understanding of the democratic process can effectively engage and contribute to the entrenchment and enhancement of democratic practices. However, beyond my passion for politics and my background in same with special interest in legislature, I found the PLAC legislative internship programme as an opportunity to understand the intricacies and the internal workings of the legislature.

My experience was truly exhilarating, liberating and has equipped me with the requisite knowledge to relate with the lawmaking institution. I am better equipped to understand, scrutinize and contribute in legislative discourses knowledgeably making me a better citizen. I have also gotten the opportunity of creating lifelong friendships and alliances. It is my hope that the experience we gathered comes in handy when the onus of legislative politicking falls on our shoulders, a dream that inspired my application

Gratitude to PLAC and the European Union, to my referee and to God almighty.



Umar Salman Adeyemi
Senior Special Assistant on Education and Civil Society Matters to Rep. Bamidele Salam, MHR, Ede North/Ede South/Egbedore/Ejigbo Federal Constituency, Osun State

I first learned about the Legislative Internship Programme from the Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre in 2020, after completing my National Youth Service. I applied that year with little experience and wasn't surprised by the outcome. I continued to apply for the next three years and finally succeeded in 2023, marking the true beginning of my journey. I was deployed to the House of Representatives Committee on Basic Education Services.

In addition to the invaluable experience of engaging with Nigeria's foremost legislative body for a duration of three months—an extraordinary opportunity provided by the internship program—I was fortunate to connect with a diverse network of fellow interns from every state across the nation. This remarkable group of emerging leaders enabled me to gain deeper insights into Nigeria's history, culture, and traditions, as well as the prevailing political landscape from the perspective of the youth.

After completing the Internship Programme, I was appointed as the Senior Special Assistant on Education

and Civil Society Matters by Rep. Bamidele Salam, representing my constituency in Osun State. The PLAC Legislative Internship Programme played a crucial role in validating this appointment. In this role, I oversee educational projects and policy initiatives aligned with the lawmaker's goals in education, youth development, and civic engagement, while also conducting legislative research and producing supporting policy documents.

Looking ahead, I aim to advance my career in policy development, youth advocacy, and public service reform, focusing on digital governance and data-driven solutions. I aspire to get elected into recognized parliament in Nigeria and Africa to help create effective laws and policies that address social inequalities, promote quality education, and ensure efficient service delivery. In conclusion, I want to thank the PLAC and the EU for this wonderful, lifetime opportunity



I was privileged to be one of the PLAC Legislative Internship Programme 2023 and it was a life-changing experience. During the internship, I learnt so much about legislative affairs and about legislation.

I was posted to the House of Representatives Committee on Health Services where I learnt so much from working with the Clerk. I was part of some of the day to day activities in the committee, attended parliamentary sittings and was part of the committee retreat for the year where I got to meet the various institutions under the committee. This opened my eyes to how things work and how policies are made towards the health and safety of Nigeria. I also learnt more from the biweekly sessions on bills, nation building, leadership and development which is very useful for me today. At our MLA, I joined my colleagues in the South East Region to draft a bill on disability rights as well as a motion on federal character for the South East region.

Going forward, I have now learnt that decisions made by policy makers, legislators and executives have a strong effect and binding on the people and one who would make a great positive change needs to collaborate with them and since then I now relate once in a while with my representatives from my hometown and from my place of residence. It has also opened my eyes to know that governance is key to sustainable change and I'm looking forward to building myself to being in the corridors of power in the future. I'm grateful to the Policy and Legal Advocacy Center and to the European Union for this rare privilege.



By Eunice Maravi Bwala
Legal Practitioner & Writer



JOSEPH ESHIET UDOH
Founder/Team Lead, Citizens Voice and Action Network (CVAN)

Participating in PLAC's Legislative Internship Program, 2023 was easily the highlight of the year, 2023 for me. Right from the welcome and orientation, meeting with other interns, to my deployment to the House Committee on Justice, through the weeks of attending bi-weekly sessions, attending plenary sessions, participating in the podcasts and right up to the peak of participating in the Model Legislative Assembly, the internship was an exhilarating, thrilling and rewarding experience.

I encountered the complexities of the legislative process, gaining insight into a legislator's responsibilities and the legislature's role in democratic governance. I appreciated the threefold nature of legislative duties: lawmaking, oversight, and representation, and learned about the National Assembly's operations. Most importantly, I was reminded of citizens' power to demand accountability and advocate for a stronger legislature. This unique experience has ignited my passion for civic advocacy and meaningful impact in policy and governance.

As a young Nigerian, I've always had the passionate for governance and democracy, and hope for an opportunity to gain first-hand practical knowledge and experience in policy formulation and legislative decision-making process. My aspiration became a reality thanks to PLAC/EU legislative internship program where I spent 10 incredible weeks immersed in the country's legislative process at the National Assembly. My journey began with a mixed feeling of excitement and a hint of uncertainty. I was deployed to House of Representatives Committee on Defence, where I worked closely with policymakers and other public servants, gaining firsthand insight into the intricacies of lawmaking. I contributed to legislative and policy research, attended committee meetings, observed plenary sessions, public hearings and even had the chance to draft bills and motions.

During the internship, I was trained on bills and motion drafting, and budget formulation processes. I witnessed firsthand how effective advocacy and citizens engagement can shape policy decisions and improve governance. I saw how non-profit organizations like PLAC were able to influence legislative policy outcomes and promote democratic governance.

The experience not only deepened my understanding

of Nigeria's legislative landscape but also exposed me to the critical role non-profit organizations play in driving social change and development. I am better equipped with knowledge, skills, and a refined passion for citizen engagement and democratic participation. I am able to efficiently engage in advocacy initiatives, inspiring other citizens on ways of engaging their representatives to ensure accountable representation and inclusive governance.

The internship also provided a platform for networking and building relationships with like-minded individuals. We shared ideas, debated, and learned from each other's perspectives. These connections will undoubtedly shape my future endeavors. After the internship, I was inspired to take action and make a meaningful impact in my community. The internship experience not only instilled in me a sense of purpose, but renewed my desire to create a platform that would empower citizens to become active participants in the democratic process and demand better governance. I realized that citizens needed a collective voice to hold leaders accountable and drive positive change.

This led me to found a youth network – **Citizens Voice and Action Network (CIVAN)** – with a mission to amplify citizen voices, promote civic engagement, and drive social change. CIVAN aims to mobilize citizens, conduct advocacy campaigns, and collaborate with policymakers (at the subnational level) to pass legislation that benefits marginalized groups and communities, and promote good governance.

The PLAC/EU internship was a turning point in my life. The program is more than just an opportunity - it's a catalyst for change. The program's impact extends far beyond my personal growth, it empowers young Nigerians like me to become active contributors to our nation's development. It showed me the power of collective action and inspired me to create a platform that is making a real difference in the lives of citizens. I am proud to say that CIVAN is a testament to the impact of the internship and the potential that lies within each of us to create positive change.

I am grateful for this experience and look forward to continuing my journey as a champion of democratic governance.

“My aspiration became a reality thanks to PLAC/EU legislative internship program where I spent 10 incredible weeks immersed in the country's legislative process at the National Assembly.”



Saudatu Ukasha Galadima, LLB
Legal Practitioner

Year 2023 will always be a special year in my heart as it afforded me the opportunity to join the Legislative Internship Programme (LIP) organized by Policy and Legal Advocacy Center (PLAC).

Prior to the LIP 2023, I have been on a professional hiatus due to motherhood. But the Programme changed my perspective on being a working-class mother who could conquer it all.

This rare opportunity was the beginning of a career shift from core legal profession to parliamentary assistant/ aide. I have had a first-hand experience of the legislative processes and what it entails at my committee level. I have learned quite a lot in terms of research on relevant subjects, bills and motions concerning the committee and agencies under their purview.

At the end of the internship programme, the Committee retained my services as an Ad-hoc staff during which I served as Committee Secretary during a retreat held for the members of the Committee in Lagos. I am also engaged in research in line with the mandate of the Committee.

Special appreciation to the PLAC for the platform and also the PLAC team for putting us through bi-weekly training which prepared us well for any given assignment in our future endeavours.



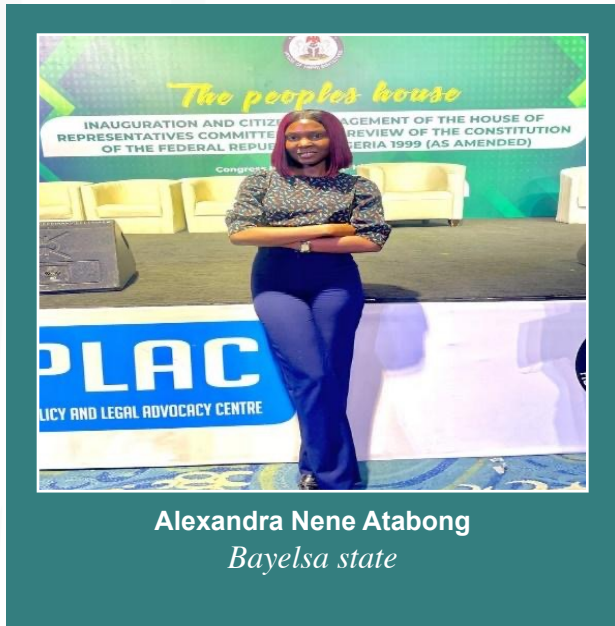
Abdulwahab Muhammad Yusuf
Associate, Asia Ahmed & Co

In the words of Denis Waitley, “success is almost totally dependent upon drive and persistence. The extra energy required to make another effort or try another approach is the secret of winning”. After my first trial in 2022, I made a second attempt in 2023 and I was shortlisted to represent Kogi state in the 2023 PLAC

LIP. Having the opportunity to participate in the PLAC LIP 2023 was undoubtedly one of the best things that has happened to me in recent times. Finding myself in the National Assembly was cerebral and it made me special. From the plenary sessions in the red and green chambers to the committee assignments and bi-weekly meetings, the 10 weeks long internship was packed with knowledge and enlightenment.

PLAC LIP provoked my interest in Legislative studies. Immediately after my internship with PLAC, I applied for and was selected for an Internship in Legislative Drafting at the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS). The knowledge I have acquired from PLAC serves as a beacon of success and I was able to triumph. I look forward to carving a niche for myself as a first-rate and in-demand draftsman with a particular flare for excellence, using my skills and expertise to find solutions to the highly complex legislative landscape in Nigeria.

I sincerely wish to donate my thankfulness to the European Union for supporting the PLAC LIP.



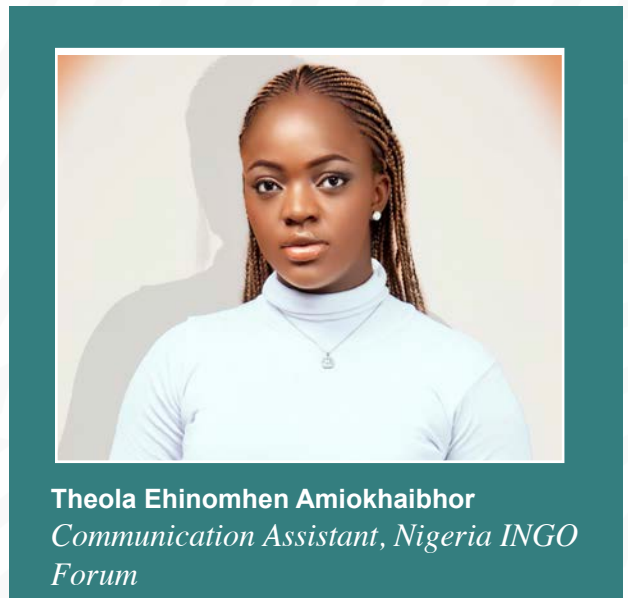
Alexandra Nene Atabong
Bayelsa state

The Legislative Internship Program (LIP) 2023 has significantly impacted my career significantly. It improved my understanding about issues relating to legislative work such as lawmaking, bill monitoring, budget management, legislative drafting, constitutional analysis, and the influence of civil society organizations. Gaining knowledge in these areas is vital for any engaged Nigerian youth dedicated to fostering societal transformation.

I have witnessed activities such as the inauguration of the 10th Assembly House Committee on the Constitutional Review. This experience sparked my interest in tracking the drafting of bills, such as the **“Bill for an Act to Amend the Court of Appeal Act to Increase the Number of Judicial Officers in the Court of Appeal”** and the **“Bill for an Act on the Increment of Wages of Judicial Officers,”** which was assented to by the President of Nigeria.

I look forward to the 10th Assembly Constitution review process, which addresses significant issues such as increasing the inclusion of women in politics, state policing and local government autonomy etc. My participation in 2023 PLAC

Legislative Internship Programme has deepened my interest in good governance and policy-making, and I am immensely grateful to the European Union (EU) and PLAC for this opportunity.



Theola Ehinomhen Amiokhaibhor
Communication Assistant, Nigeria INGO Forum

I got into the Legislative Internship programme at the Policy and Legal Advocacy Center (PLAC) with no knowledge about Nigeria’s legislative process. I consumed all I knew about Nigeria’s politics from the propaganda-driven media. But little did I know how much more there was to learn and how significantly it would shape my understanding and career path.

Because of the intensive training provided by PLAC and the first-hand legislative experience gathered during my internship at the Senate Committee on Appropriations at the National Assembly, I gained a profound appreciation for the complexities of governance and the power of informed advocacy in driving societal change.

I have since channelled this newfound knowledge and passion into my work in social impact communications, leading to career growth and better clarity in the direction I want it to go. I am also inspired to continue pursuing a career in development communications, policy, and advocacy, with a commitment to contributing to meaningful legislative reforms in Nigeria.

PLAC is where it all started for me, and I am grateful. Thank you, PLAC. Thank you, EU-SDGN.

Alumni Update





Salihu Yero

Co- Founder/Chief Operating Officer, Alliance for Care, Civic-Engagement, Environmental Safeguard and Sustainability (ACCESS) Initiative Africa. Research Program Officer, Taimaka Project.

PLAC Legislative Internship came in handy in the formative stage of ACCESS Initiative, a CSO I co-founded in Gombe. ACCESS stands for Alliance for Care, Civic-Engagement, Environmental Safety and Sustainability. The Internship experience made me add gears to lay a stronger foundation for this great movement whose target audience are youth, women and children. Globally, this fraction of the population are oftenly excluded in enjoying certain rights which are supposed to be inalienable.

The main mission is to empower and uplift the most vulnerable members of the community. Earlier this year, we conducted projects that will help instill leadership and democratic values in young children, youth and women through workshops, seminars and mentorship sessions. We also equipped our beneficiaries with skills needed to succeed in their personal and professional lives. Our main thrust is on inclusivity and diversity where we created an avenue for women to report Sexual Exploitation and Abuse through partnership with the

Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC).

Through our Public Speaking Course, participants were able to express their ideas and use their voices in advocating for change. We also urged women to step into leadership roles they once thought were unattainable. On Legislative Advocacy, we are working on reviving and building the capacity of the Children Parliament in my state and advocating for the domestication of Child Rights Act. PLAC served as a stepping stone towards achieving my goals to be able to make a difference in the lives of others and witness their growth.



MOHAMMED KABIRU SULEIMAN,
Youth Focal Point, Niger State Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative's -YouthGovTracka Project.

Since completing my legislative internship with the Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC) at Senate Committee on Science, Technology and Innovation, where I gained extensive knowledge and experience of legislative practices and processes, I have continued to engage actively in policy, advocacy, governance, and legislation. I was appointed the Niger State Youth Focal Point for the Brain Builders Youth

Development Initiative's YouthGovTracka project.

<https://youthgovtracka.org/state/NG>

www.youthgovtracka.org

In this role, I advocate for women, PWD's and youth-centric policies and promote the inclusion of youth, women, and persons with disabilities in governance. Fostering a culture of accountability, ensuring that citizens are informed, engaged, and actively contributing to the shaping of policies and decisions.

Through targeted advocacy campaigns, regional town hall and stakeholders meetings, and strategic engagements with policymakers, I have successfully mobilized young people to engage in the policymaking process, ensuring that their voices are heard and their concerns addressed, through the use various tools contained in the office of citizens accountability toolkit such as Freedom of Information Act, Citizens charters, Public hearings, Community townhall meetings etc and increase civic participation through the menu of commitments.

Some notable achievements include-

- Leading the Niger State YouthGovTracka team to the North Central Regional Town Hall Meeting, in Ilorin Kwara State, presenting the Office of the Citizens Accountability Toolkit and Menu of Possible Commitments to the attendees.
- Creating an Increased awareness on how to hold elected leaders accountable using the office of the citizens accountability toolkit.
- Engaged with the speaker Niger State House of Assembly, Chairman House Committee on Youth, Gender and People with disabilities to identify areas that needs improvement in Niger State Youth Development Plan.

- Securing commitments of stakeholders for increased budgetary allocations to youth, women and PWD's related expenditures and their inclusion in the governance.

<https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2024/02/22/north-central-youths-pledge-commitment-to-make-political-office-holders-to-be-more-accountable-to-electorate>

<https://www.vanguardngr.com/2024/02/how-democracy-can-work-effectively-in-nigeria-youths/>



About PLAC

Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC) is a non-governmental organization committed to strengthening democratic governance and citizens' participation in Nigeria. PLAC works to enhance citizens' engagement with state institutions, and to promote transparency and accountability in policy and decision-making process.

The main focus of PLAC's intervention in the democratic governance process is on building the capacity of the legislature and reforming the electoral process. Since its establishment, PLAC has grown into a leading institution with capacity to deliver cutting-edge research, policy analysis and advocacy. PLAC receives funding support from donors and other philanthropic sources.

*Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC) Plot 451 Gambo
Jimeta Crescent, Guzape District, Abuja, Nigeria.*

Website: www.placng.org

Email: info@placng.org

Phone: 0809 189 9999



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