

“In the face of simmering social tensions and political strife, Nigeria needs committed leaders to channel the energy and aspirations of its youth away from violent extremism and toward civic empowerment. Politicians and civil society activists should work together in promoting youth participation in all aspects of life, including within the family, local communities, and at the state level. Youth services, diverse educational programs, economic opportunities, and civic platforms can all foster a sense of ownership, responsibility, and patriotism among young Nigerians.



To achieve this goal, the Nigerian government needs to implement effective and efficient planning processes. Elected officials must strive to position youth as vital social stakeholders in order to decrease their vulnerability and exclusion. Civil society organizations have an equally important role to play, by facilitating direct engagement with youth through capacity building, civic education, and other empowerment initiatives. Only through a nationwide partnership involving the state, civil society, and the private sector

can Nigeria succeed in helping its young men and women to realize their enormous potential as agents of economic development and democratic change. ”

—Abdulrazaq Alkali, June 26, 2013



Strengthening Youth Participation in Nigeria

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The views expressed in this presentation represent the opinions and analysis of the speaker and do not necessarily reflect those of the National Endowment for Democracy or its staff.

Presentation Overview

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- III. Barriers to Effective Youth Participation
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Youth peer educators, YOSPIS civic education project

I. Introduction: Youth Participation from a Global to a Nigerian Perspective

- ⌘ Today, more than half of the world's population is below 25
- ⌘ 2006–2011: Nigeria's population increased by 20%, of which youth constitute 43%
- ⌘ Nigeria defines youth as between age 18 and 35



“Enough is Enough” Youth Protesters in Abuja (March 16, 2010)

National Population Commission on Nigeria (NPC, 2011)
Population Reference Bureau
National Youth Policy 2009

Introduction: Youth Participation from a Global to a Nigerian perspective

- ⌘ The topic of youth is attracting more attention in the media, community debates, political speeches, religious discussions, and development agendas.
- ⌘ Nevertheless, structures, approaches and the political will to involve youth in decision making processes is often lacking.
- ⌘ Young people require social, economic, and political support to realize their full potential.



Youth leading a peaceful protest against a fuel subsidy removal (January 2012)

Introduction: Benefits of Youth Engagement in Decision-Making Processes

- ⌘ Presents an opportunity for appreciating democracy, fostering responsibility, and creating a sense of ownership
- ⌘ Generates fresh ideas and potential for innovation
- ⌘ Reduces youth vulnerability to radical and militant ideologies
- ⌘ Leads to better informed decision-making
- ⌘ Strengthens commitment to understanding of human rights
- ⌘ Builds community capacity and ensures inclusion
- ⌘ Encourages continued political participation as youth enter adulthood

Introduction: Youth Participation from a Global to a Nigerian Perspective

- ⌘ Youth participation was first emphasized in Agenda 21 after the 1992 Rio Earth Summit.
- ⌘ Agenda 21 is a commitment to sustainable development (CSD) with youth and children among the nine major areas.
- ⌘ Emphasized youth participation as a fundamental human right.



Sensitization seminar on youth and development challenges in Nigeria organized by YOSPIS 2012

II. Government Efforts to Promote Youth Development in Nigeria

- ⌘ 1973: Introduced a National Youth Service Corps (NYSC)
- ⌘ Established a citizenship and leadership training center
- ⌘ 2006: Created a Ministry of Youth and Development
- ⌘ 2008: Generated a National Youth Development Index

Other recent initiatives include:

- ⌘ Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (YOUWIN)
- ⌘ National Youth Talent Hunt Exhibition
- ⌘ Sustenance of Youth Parliament
- ⌘ Increase in youth-empowerment programs at state level

NYSC members participating in “passing out” parade



Civil Society Efforts to Promote Youth Development in Nigeria

Youth Society for the Prevention of Infectious Diseases & Social Vices (YOSPIS):

- ⌘ Established in 1997 and based in Kano City
- ⌘ Focus areas: Human rights, civic education, governance, improved access to health services and education

Activities:

- ⌘ Civic education training
- ⌘ Internship program
- ⌘ National youth platform
- ⌘ Sensitization seminars
- ⌘ Media campaigns
- ⌘ Peer-to-peer networking
- ⌘ Peace building
- ⌘ IEC Materials development



Interactive session with youth peer educators

Civil Society Efforts to Promote Youth Development in Nigeria

YOSPIS Impact:

- ⌘ Trained over 3,000 future civic educators
- ⌘ Facilitated month-long internships for 125 youth



- ⌘ Established youth networks in nine states
- ⌘ Reached millions of youth through media campaigns
- ⌘ Engaged youth in tracking public expenditure at state level

III. Barriers to Effective Youth Participation in Nigeria

Despite all the policies, frameworks, and civil society efforts, Nigeria's youth sector faces a myriad challenges:

- ‡ Widespread joblessness
- ‡ Extreme alienation from mainstream society
- ‡ Lack of appropriate role models
- ‡ Negative influence of armed militancy
- ‡ Excessive political manipulation
- ‡ Poor education
- ‡ Involvement in cult activities
- ‡ Ethno-Religious conflicts
- ‡ Drug and substance abuse

Barriers to Effective Youth Participation in Nigeria: Summary of Youth Development Index (2008)

*Scores range from 0 to 1, with 1 being the highest

National Youth Development Index (0.34)	
Education	0.30
Employment	0.27
Participation	0.29
Media Influence	0.45
Security	0.29
Self Development	0.31
Social Behavior	0.38
Personal Identity	0.37
National Identity	0.38

Barriers to Effective Youth Participation in Nigeria

A combination of factors has prevented youth from having a voice in Nigeria's social, economic, civic, and political spheres, including:

- ⌘ Behavioral pattern of political elites and community leaders
- ⌘ Insecurity and large-scale violence against citizens and state institutions
- ⌘ Widespread corruption: Nigeria is ranked 139 out of 176 countries
- ⌘ Lack of analysis of public expenditure to assess whether the proportion spent meets the needs of youth
- ⌘ Deprivation

Barriers to Effective Youth Participation in Nigeria

68 Million Unemployed Youth Nationwide



Unemployed youth attending an aptitude test in Abuja for INEC job vacancies. 800,000 applications were received for 1,500 vacancies. (April 27, 2010)

Barriers to Effective Youth Participation: Gender Discrimination in Nigeria

Young women continue to face challenges in:

- ⌘ Achieving equal political participation
- ⌘ Ensuring economic security
- ⌘ Making informed decisions free from coercion
- ⌘ Guaranteeing equal access to resources and education
- ⌘ Generating opportunities for leadership development



Female youth participating in the national protest against fuel subsidy removal in Kano (January 2012)

Barriers to Effective Youth Participation: Extreme Poverty in Nigeria

- ⌘ Nigeria's poverty rate is 69%
- ⌘ One-third of the population survive on less than \$1 USD a day
- ⌘ This includes an army of youth in urban areas who struggle to make a living by selling small items such as chewing gum, bottled water, belts, etc.



National Bureau of Statistics, 2010
Zakaria 2006

IV. Recommendations for Government

- ⌘ Increase funding for youth sector with a focus on education, community-based programs, and entrepreneurship opportunities
- ⌘ Win the battle against youth unemployment to empower young people to overcome their current insecurity
- ⌘ Work toward positioning youth as stakeholders in Nigeria's future
- ⌘ Enhance youth participation in formal political structures at local, state, and national levels by allowing them to occupy official positions



YOSPIS trained peer educators 2013

Recommendations for Civil Society and Development Partners

- ⌘ Provide youth with opportunities for community participation
- ⌘ Engage youth in political education and awareness
- ⌘ Encourage capacity building
- ⌘ Involve youth in peace building efforts



YOSPIS trained youth peace motivators (2012)

Recommendations for Civil Society and Development Partners

☞ Support youth internship programs to give young people the opportunity to connect with relevant institutions and gain skills to advocate for themselves



Youth interns with Dave Peterson and Oge Okoye (2009)

Recommendations for Civil Society and Development Partners

- & Build authentic youth leadership opportunities
- & Help youth to gain skills and improve their problem-solving capabilities



Young woman trained by YOSPIS assessing the impact of the 2012 budget analysis report on women in Kano

Recommendations for Civil Society and Development Partners

↳ Raise awareness about the rights of young people through civic education and media



Young people celebrating the impact of U.S. democracy program support

Recommendations for Civil Society and Development Partners

& Budget tracking work should be used to promote youth involvement in designing, planning, and evaluating policies, programs, and service delivery frameworks



YOSPIS-trained youth leaders
analyzing 2012 Kano state budget
at the American Corner in Kano

V. Conclusion

- & Nigeria needs to institutionalize opportunities for youth involvement in decision making
- & Youth provide opportunities for economic growth, development, peace, and stability



Town hall meeting on post-2011 election violence with youth representatives, policy makers, and security agencies. Organized by YOSPIS, with support from NED

Thank you!