

H.E. PETER

RYAN: Weaving Cultural Threads Between Ireland and Nigeria

P17



FEEDING THE FUTURE: How the Nasiru Haladu Danu Foundation Is Investing in Nigeria's Young Generation

P43



TUNJI DISU: A New Police Chief and the Agenda for Reform

P30



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Editorial

WHAT REALLY MATTERS NOW, NIGERIA?

In a nation constantly negotiating its future, this March edition of OurNigeria Magazine arrives at a moment that demands both reflection and resolve.

Across our pages, one question echoes with urgency: what truly matters to Nigeria right now?

From the corridors of power to the quiet struggles of everyday citizens, the stories in this edition confront a country at a crossroads—caught between political calculation and the pressing realities of governance.

Our cover story interrogates Nigeria's electoral trajectory, examining the ongoing debates around electoral reforms, institutional trust, and the uneasy balance between technology and transparency. At a time when confidence in democratic processes remains fragile, the question is no longer whether reform is needed—but whether there is sufficient political will to see it through.

Equally compelling is our security feature on the Northeast, where a resurgence of insurgent and bandit attacks threatens a region still recovering from years of conflict. It is a sobering reminder that

peace, once assumed, must be constantly protected—and that national security cannot be treated as a seasonal concern.

But this edition is not defined by crisis alone.

In “Feeding the Future,” we spotlight the Nasiru Haladu Danu Foundation's forward-thinking investments in young Nigerians—demonstrating how philanthropy, when strategically deployed, can shape not just lives but the future of a nation.

Our arts and culture pages continue to affirm the role of creativity as both mirror and messenger. With the launch of Brush Strokes, and features on emerging voices and established practitioners, we explore how art is increasingly becoming a space for civic engagement, identity, and national conversation.

We also celebrate excellence and legacy—from literary contributions and theatrical innovation to the rising global influence of Nigerians in sports and creative industries.

What binds these stories together is a single thread: the future is being contested in the present.

Whether in governance, security, culture, or youth development, the choices made today will define the Nigeria of tomorrow.

At OurNigeria Magazine, we remain committed to telling these stories with clarity, courage, and purpose—not just to inform, but to provoke thought and inspire action.

Because in the end, a nation is not only shaped by its leaders—but by the conversations it is willing to have.

- Om'Oba Jerry Adesewo
Editor-in-Chief
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Contents

6 For the Record

8 Cover Story
Electoral Act 2026: Technology, and the Battle for Public Confidence

12 Economy
Debt, Development and Future Generations:

15 Youth
Nigerian Youth and Democratic Governance

17 The Diplomat
H.E. Peter Ryan: Weaving Cultural Threads Between Ireland and Nigeria

20 Under The Neem Tree

23 Northeast

24 ART
Demas Nwoko and the Architecture of Cultural Memory

27 The Legislator

Hon. Alex Mascot Ikwechegh: One Man Asking the Right Questions

30 Policing

Tunji Disu

32 TECHNOLOGY
Strengthening Democracy in the Digital Age:

36 Opinion
Young Nigerians Reflect on Democracy and the Road to 2027

39 Humanitarian
FEEDING THE FUTURE

42 Trafficking

Stolen Futures

42 Aviation
Nigeria's Aviation Rebound:

42 Aviation
Nigeria's Aviation Rebound:

47 OurNigeria Girl

Poet Hassy: Poetry, Peace and the Power of Voice

49 Entertainment
Michael B. Jordan Wins 2026 Oscar for Best Actor

50 Sport
Bam Adebayo and the Nigerian Legacy in Global Basketball



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Zambia Bets on Copper Boom

Africa | Economy

Zambia is seeking international investors to expand copper production to 3 million metric tons per year by 2031, more than triple current output. The strategy aims to position the country as a key supplier of metals used in electric vehicles and renewable energy systems. As the world moves toward electrification, copper-rich countries hope to convert resource wealth into long-term economic growth.



Nigeria's Education Funding Debate

Nigeria | Education

Nigeria's federal education budget has expanded in recent years, with trillions of naira allocated to universities, colleges, and education agencies. Yet education still accounts for roughly 6% of total government spending, far below the UNESCO recommendation of about 15%. Critics argue that while funding has increased, the structure of spending leaves limited room for transformative reforms in infrastructure and innovation.



The Critical Minerals Race

Global | Climate & Geopolitics

The transition to electric vehicles and clean energy has triggered a global scramble for lithium, cobalt, copper, and rare-earth minerals. Demand for lithium alone is expected to more than double by 2030 as EV adoption accelerates. Governments and companies are racing to secure supply chains, turning mineral-rich regions, especially in Africa, into strategic geopolitical hubs.



Rare Earth Alliances Expand

Americas | Industry

The United States and Chile have launched talks to cooperate on rare-earth minerals and lithium supply chains. The partnership aims to reduce reliance on China for critical materials used in semiconductors, electric vehicles, and defense technologies. New investment and mineral recycling projects are being considered as countries seek more resilient supply networks.



AI Chips Shortage Disrupts Tech Markets

Global | Technology

Explosive demand for artificial intelligence has created the most severe memory-chip shortage in decades. High-bandwidth memory and DRAM used in AI data centers are now in short supply, pushing up prices and forcing electronics manufacturers to cut production. Analysts expect smartphone shipments to fall by nearly 13% and PC shipments by over 11% in 2026 due to the shortage. The race to control advanced



Oil Shock Returns to Global Markets

Middle East | Energy

Conflict in the Middle East has disrupted oil flows through the Strait of Hormuz, removing around 10 million barrels per day from global supply. Brent crude prices have surged past \$100 per barrel, raising fears of a global inflation shock. Analysts warn that prolonged disruption could trigger stagflation, combining slow economic growth with rising prices across global markets.

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Electoral Act 2026: Technology, and the Battle for Public Confidence

By Jerry Adesewo & Matthew Eloyi

As Nigeria inches toward another general election, its democracy finds itself at a familiar but increasingly consequential crossroads. The passage of the Electoral Act 2026, particularly the National Assembly's decision to reject mandatory electronic transmission of results, has reignited long-simmering debates about trust, transparency, and the real meaning of voter choice. For millions of Nigerians already fatigued by disputed elections and post-poll litigations, the question is no longer abstract: does the system still work for the voter, or merely around the voter?

Democracy, after all, is sustained not only by laws and institutions, but also by belief. When belief falters, participation thins, cynicism grows, and the ballot loses its moral force.

A Decision with Democratic Weight

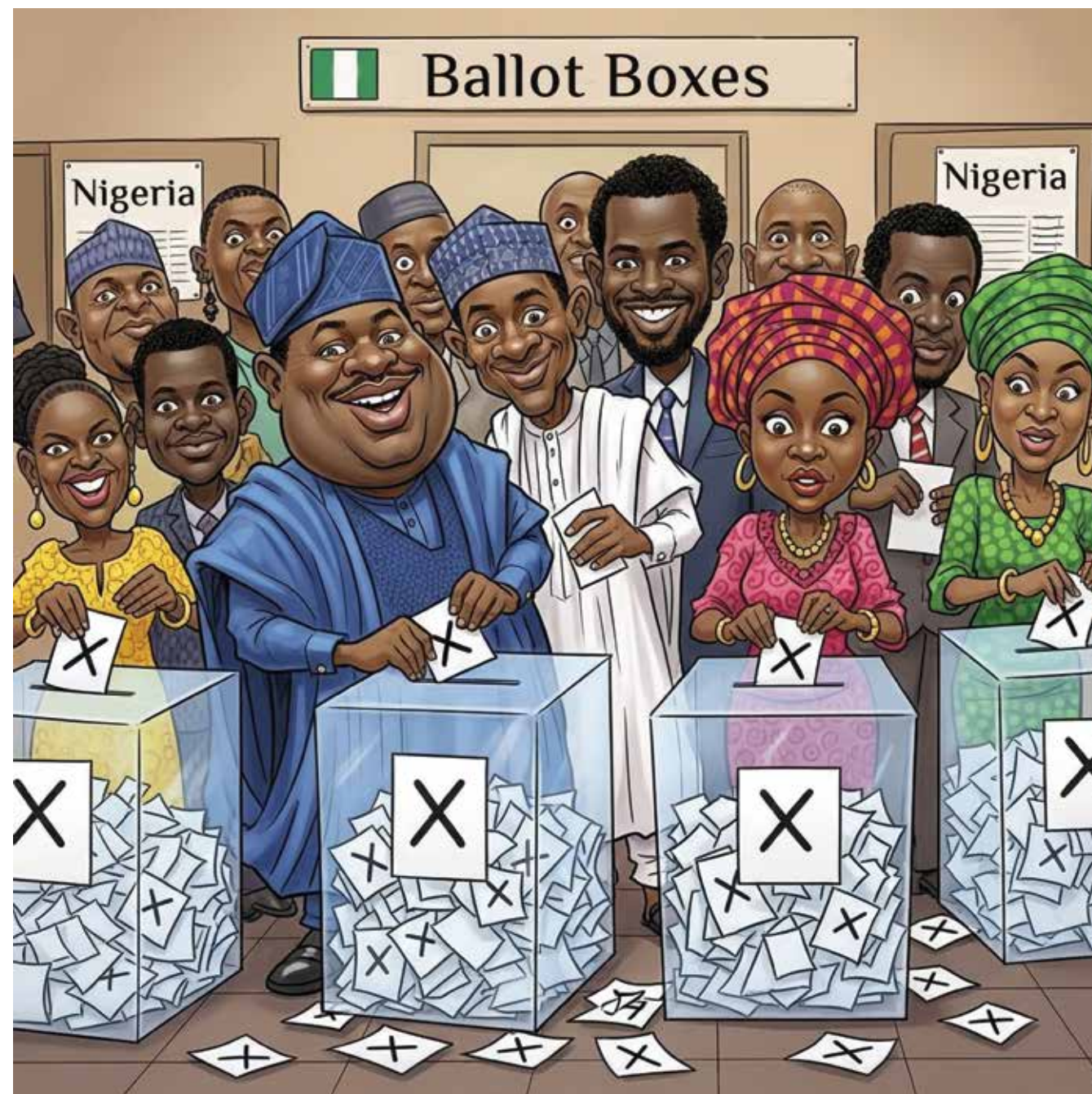
The Senate's rejection of an amendment to Clause 60(3) of the Electoral Act—an amendment that would have made electronic transmission of polling unit results mandatory—was not a routine legislative adjustment. It was a defining political signal. At the heart of the proposal was a simple democratic logic: once votes are counted and announced at polling units, those results should be transmitted electronically and published in real time, creating an immutable public record.

Instead, lawmakers retained language allowing results to be transmitted “in a manner as prescribed by the Commission,” preserving discretion for the Independent National Electoral Commission. Supporters argue this flexibility reflects Nigeria's infrastructural realities. Critics see it as a dangerous ambiguity—one that keeps open the most contested space in Nigerian elections: the journey of results from polling units to collation centres.

In a democracy burdened by history, ambiguity is rarely neutral.

After public outcry and criticisms, the Senate rescinded its earlier decision, in which it rejected the mandatory

electronic transmission of election



results from polling units to the INEC's Result Viewing Portal (IREV) after vote counting.

The lawmakers consequently re-amended the Electoral Act to accommodate the electronic transmission of results. However, the provision comes with a caveat that, in the event of internet failure, Form EC8A will serve as the primary means of result collation.

Despite the change, the amendment does not make electronic transmission mandatory. Instead, it allows results to be transmitted electronically while providing an alternative in cases of network failure.

Choice without Confidence?

For the Nigerian voter, choice is meaningful only when it is protected. Elections are undermined less at the point of voting than during collation, where delays, manual handling, and opaque procedures invite suspicion. Mandatory electronic transmission was seen by many reform advocates as a way to narrow these grey zones.

Across the world, digital result reporting has become a guardrail against tampering. It does not eliminate fraud, but it raises the cost of manipulation and lowers the tolerance for secrecy. In Nigeria's context—where courts are inundated with election petitions and public trust remains fragile—such guardrails are not cosmetic. They are structural.

By stepping back from a firm legal mandate, the Senate has placed extraordinary weight on institutional goodwill. And goodwill, history teaches, is an unreliable substitute for enforceable safeguards.

The Technology Question: Promise and Peril

Yet technology itself is no silver bullet. This is where the intervention of cybersecurity expert Dr. Charles Awuzie adds crucial depth to the debate. In a detailed technical response, Awuzie warns that electronic transmission, if poorly secured, can itself become a vulnerability.

According to him, INEC has already reported millions of

cyberattacks, including Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attempts. “That tells us one thing,” Awuzie notes, “election infrastructure is a geopolitical target.”

He outlines four major risks:

- DDoS attacks designed to shut down the IReV portal and induce panic.
- Compromised polling unit devices prior to transmission.
- Insider abuse of access credentials.
- Interception or manipulation of data in transit.

For Awuzie, the answer is not to abandon electronic transmission, but to engineer it properly. He advocates multi-layer DDoS protection, elastic cloud scaling, end-to-end encryption, cryptographic signing of results at polling units, hardware-bound device authentication, immutable audit logs, and independent pre-election security testing.

His warning is unequivocal: “Security and data sovereignty are not optional. They are the foundation of legitimacy.” He strongly cautions against proposals that INEC rely on foreign satellite internet solutions such as Starlink, arguing that they violate Nigeria's data sovereignty laws and expose national elections to external control.

When Systems Fail: The Paper Fallback Dilemma

Awuzie's analysis also confronts an uncomfortable truth: no system is failproof. If electronic transmission fails and the process reverts to paper, then chain-of-custody becomes everything.

In such scenarios, he proposes strict safeguards:

- Immediate public posting of results at polling units.
- Tamper-evident, serialized

envelopes that clearly reveal interference.

- Signed reconciliation between manual and digital records.
- Mandatory discrepancy reporting that triggers automatic audits.

“The fallback process must be as secure as the primary system,” he insists. “Otherwise, that becomes the manipulation point.”

This observation cuts to the heart of the Senate debate. Flexibility without rigor does not create resilience; it merely relocates risk.



Network Reality and the Case for Offline Elections

Nigeria’s connectivity gaps are real. Large swathes of rural communities operate with limited or no reliable internet. Awuzie argues for offline-first election technology—devices that can securely capture and cryptographically sign results without network access, syncing only when connectivity is restored.

His critique of existing infrastructure is blunt: he expresses “zero faith” in the current BVAS devices, noting that similar hardware is commercially available online. For him, future election technology must be purpose-built, sovereign, and resilient—designed

for Nigeria’s realities, not imported assumptions.

He points to Kenya’s recent reforms, which introduced blockchain-style mirror systems that publish tamper-evident result hashes publicly. Such systems enhance auditability and legal defensibility without exposing sensitive data.

The Senate’s Defence: A Voice of Realism

In defence of the Senate’s position, Hon. Sadiq Jiktat, the Director-General, APC Support Groups Council, and vocal supporter of the Electoral Act 2026, offers a counter-narrative grounded in pragmatism.

“For me,” Jiktat argues, “the priority was not to reject transparency, but to prevent the law from mandating a process that could collapse under Nigeria’s uneven infrastructure.” He insists that discretion does not mean secrecy. Rather, it allows INEC

to deploy electronic transmission where conditions permit, while avoiding systemic failure in areas plagued by insecurity or network blackouts.

Jiktat points to the success of BVAS in voter accreditation as evidence that the legislature is not anti-technology. “But elections are not experiments,” he says. “You cannot write rigidity into law where flexibility may save the process.”

He further contends that a failed nationwide electronic transmission on election night could itself trigger unrest. “The Senate chose stability,” he concludes, “not because they fear transparency, but because we must protect the integrity of the entire process, not

just one stage of it.”

Trust as a Design Choice

Both arguments converge on a single truth: trust ‘must be engineered’. Technology can reduce fraud, but transparency is what protects democracy.

For Awuzie, this means publishing system architecture, opening platforms to independent security audits, providing real-time transparency metrics, and clearly explaining how discrepancies are resolved. “If citizens understand how truth is produced,” he argues, “they are more likely to defend it.”

For Jiktat, it means ensuring that INEC’s expanded discretion is matched by unprecedented openness. Without that openness, flexibility risks being perceived as license—and perception, in electoral politics, can be as damaging as fact.

Early Signals: The FCT Test

The February 21 Area Council elections in the Federal Capital Territory offered more than a routine off-cycle poll; they functioned as an early stress test for the amended electoral framework. For observers across Nigeria, the exercise provided a real-world glimpse into how discretion around electronic transmission might play out under live electoral conditions.

Operationally, the election avoided the kind of nationwide disruption that reform skeptics often warn about. Accreditation using the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System proceeded largely without incident, and polling units opened in most councils within expected timeframes. Yet beneath this surface stability lay subtler signals that analysts and political actors are already parsing carefully.

First, turnout levels remained modest by historical FCT



Professor Joash Amupitan
INEC Chairman

standards. While off-cycle local elections typically draw lower participation, civil society monitors reported that voter enthusiasm appeared muted even in traditionally competitive wards. Interviews conducted by election observers suggested that lingering uncertainty about result transmission — and memories of disputed national polls — may have contributed to voter apathy. In electoral psychology, perception often precedes behaviour; when trust is tentative, mobilisation suffers.

Second, the result-upload timeline became an unexpected focal point. Although the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) ultimately uploaded most polling unit results, the pace varied noticeably across area councils. In locations with stronger network coverage, uploads appeared relatively prompt. In others, delays stretched into hours, creating information gaps that quickly filled with speculation on social media and partisan channels.

Importantly, none of these delays were officially linked to manipulation. However, the episode demonstrated a core reality

of modern elections: transparency is judged in real time. Even routine technical lag can acquire political meaning when public confidence is already fragile. The amended law’s flexibility — intended as a safeguard against infrastructural failure — was thus interpreted by some stakeholders as a potential grey zone, even when no malpractice was established.

Third, the paper fallback mechanism quietly returned to relevance. In several polling units where connectivity was weak, officials relied primarily on the physical Form EC8A before subsequent uploads. While procedurally permissible, this re-emphasised the very chain-of-custody concerns that electronic transmission reforms were designed to minimise. Election monitors noted that future contests could see intensified scrutiny of how and when manual results are reconciled with digital records.

Security analysts also treated the FCT exercise as a low-intensity cyber rehearsal. No major publicly confirmed cyber incident occurred, but the election provided an opportunity to observe system resilience, traffic patterns, and public communication responsiveness. Experts argue that lessons from this “quiet cycle” may prove more valuable than those from crisis elections, precisely because small inefficiencies are easier to diagnose before nationwide pressure mounts.

What ultimately emerged from the FCT polls was neither alarm nor reassurance, but something more nuanced: a picture of a system that is functioning procedurally while still negotiating public

belief. Institutions delivered a technically acceptable election, yet the emotional confidence dividend remained limited.

For policymakers looking toward 2027, the implication is clear. The debate is no longer only about whether technology works, but whether citizens can see — quickly, clearly, and consistently — that it works. The FCT test suggests that Nigeria’s hybrid model is viable in principle, but still operating within a narrow trust margin. Strengthening that margin may

determine whether future elections feel merely administered, or genuinely believed.

Security and data sovereignty are not optional. They are the foundation of legitimacy.

Looking Toward 2027

The Electoral Act 2026 is neither a full retreat nor a decisive leap forward. A

recalibration places enormous responsibility on institutions and political actors.

Three paths now lie ahead. The hybrid system could work smoothly, guided by clarity and transparency. On the other hand, uneven application could deepen partisan suspicion and legal conflict. Alternatively, sustained engagement could still refine the process before 2027, transforming controversy into consensus.

Ultimately, democracy is not validated by clauses alone, but by belief. When Nigerian voters watch results emerge—on screens, noticeboards, or collation sheets—their verdict will be emotional as much as procedural.

At this crossroads, Nigeria must decide whether discretion will be disciplined by transparency, or whether ambiguity will continue to erode trust. The answer will shape not just the next election, but also the future meaning of choice itself.

Debt, Development and Future Generations: Are We Borrowing Responsibly?

By Ameh Abraham

Nigeria's borrowing is often justified as a vital tool for today's growth. Still, what will it cost tomorrow? Experts warn that rising debt, if not matched by productive investment and development, risks saddling future generations with high costs. This piece analyzes the debt-growth and future cost nexus, drawing on expert debates and recent commentary to map a path toward intergenerational fairness and prudent public finance.

Debt is not a distant abstraction. It lives in the daily lives of Nigerian households, in the price of food, in the cost of borrowing, and in the ability of the government to fund schools, hospitals, and, in 2026, climate resilience. This reality is underscored by the latest figures from the National Bureau of Statistics, which put Nigeria's total public debt stock at a formidable ₦152.39 trillion as of mid-2025. The critical question, then, is not merely the size of this debt, but what it is buying for today's citizens and what it leaves for tomorrow's children.

Yet as several authoritative voices argue, the critical question is not whether a country should borrow, but what borrowing buys for today's citizens and what it leaves for tomorrow's children. Are we borrowing for durable development, or are we borrowing to fill a growing fiscal gap that future generations will have to repay heavily?



Central Bank of Nigeria, Abuja

The conversation about debt, development, and future generations has moved from mere economic debate to a public imperative. Articles and opinion pieces warning that “future generations will inherit debts without development” (a persistent theme across major Nigerian outlets and international analyses) underline a simple truth: intergenerational fairness is a litmus test for responsible governance. If borrowing simply finances current consumption or unproductive projects, the burden

is not only fiscal, it is moral.

Two strands of the debate seem especially resonant for Nigeria today: the quality of what we spend debt finance on, and the long-run implications of debt service for growth, social programs, and climate resilience. A rising debt profile is frequently framed as a failure of spending discipline and governance, rather than as a necessary tool for development. Critics warn that when debt service crowds out essential investments, such as

education, health, infrastructure, and climate adaptation, the economy stagnates and vulnerability compounds for the next generation.

The core question is, are we borrowing responsibly? Several scholars and policy commentators point to three dimensions: (1) the uses of borrowed funds, (2) the sustainability of the debt path, and (3) the distributional implications for future generations.

Central Debates

Productive investment versus consumption: Debt that funds high-return, growth-enhancing projects, like energy

infrastructure, reliable electrification, transit, and climate resilience, can bolster future incomes and reduce vulnerability. Debt used for recurrent spending or low-return ventures tends to crowd out essential services and distort future budgets. The distinction matters because it determines whether debt acts as an accelerator of development or a drag on it. A recent example of this positive potential is the Bank of Industry's record ₦636 billion disbursement in 2025. By channeling funds to over 7,000 enterprises, it not

only supported the creation of 1.6 million jobs but also directly financed productive capacity in agro-processing, manufacturing, and infrastructure. This stands in contrast to debt used to service recurrent expenditure, which offers no such long-term return. Debt sustainability and intergenerational fairness: The ‘passing the buck’ critique finds its sharpest expression in Nigeria's debt service figures. While the government has made significant strides in reducing the debt service-to-revenue ratio from a crippling 97% to around 50%, the 2025 budget still allocates a staggering ₦15.81 trillion, some 45% of projected revenue, to servicing existing loans. The concern is that this leaves future taxpayers with the bill for today's borrowings, while simultaneously starving the present of the investments needed to build a more prosperous future.

A closer look at the policy terrain

Debt quality, governance, and transparency: The debate consistently returns to governance quality. Do transparent processes approve debt? Is there robust impact budgeting showing how borrowed funds translate into measurable development outcomes? Are there independent checks on how debt is spent? The accessibility and credibility of debt management information are repeatedly flagged as preconditions for intergenerational fairness. Debt as a tool for climate adaptation: When debt supports climate-resilient infrastructure, flood defense, drainage systems, drought-proofed agriculture, or green energy projects, it can be a strategic investment for the future.

future generations will inherit debts without development

The challenge is ensuring projects are well designed, costed, and delivered on time, with robust oversight and measurable climate and development returns.

Debt composition and refinancing risk: The mix of debt instruments matters. A heavy reliance on short-term or volatile funding can create rollover risks that threaten fiscal stability just as needs for long-term investment rise. Prudent debt management, balancing concessional lending, domestic savings mobilization, and transparent terms, helps preserve fiscal space for future spending on education, health, and climate resilience.

The Nigeria-specific lens

The call for transparent, outcome-focused budgeting is not just rhetoric. With domestic debt accounting for nearly 53% of the total stock, the risk of ‘crowding out’ private investment is real. Furthermore, while the IMF projects a healthy decline in Nigeria's debt-to-GDP ratio to 35% by 2026, achieving this requires the very discipline of linking every naira borrowed to ‘clearly defined development metrics’ and ‘climate-smart investment decisions

Nigerian commentators warn that debt relief or debt acceptance without corresponding reforms can erode confidence and push future generations into more austere fiscal paths. At the same time, several analyses recognize that borrowing can support transformative outcomes if paired with:

- Transparent, outcome-focused budgeting that ties debt to clearly defined

development metrics (education outcomes, health access, electricity reliability, climate resilience measures).

- Strengthened domestic revenue mobilization to reduce the need for foreign debt and insulate the economy from external shocks.
- Independent debt management and procurement oversight to minimize waste, corruption, and inefficiency.
- Climate-smart investment decisions that fund adaptation and resilience, aligning debt-financed projects with long-term social and economic gains.

Key takeaways

- Debt is only sustainable if it finances real, measurable development and if future generations are not asked to repay with diminished public goods.
- Intergenerational fairness requires explicit, auditable links between borrowed funds and long-run social and climate resilience outcomes.
- Transparent debt management and climate-smart investments are not optional; they are the price of credible, inclusive growth.

What a responsible borrowing regime could look like

- Strengthen debt governance and fiscal rules: Clear, transparent borrowing limits that prioritize development returns and climate resilience. Public dashboards tracking debt

stock, service costs, and project outcomes should be standard practice, with quarterly reporting to Parliament and to citizens.

- Prioritize high-impact, climate-resilient investments: Borrow for projects with robust, demonstrable benefits—electric power reliability, transport connectivity, water and sanitation, and adaptation infrastructure. Build-in independent evaluations and post-

A rising debt profile is frequently framed as a failure of spending discipline and governance, rather than as a necessary tool for development

implementation reviews to ensure value-for-money.

- Enhance revenue mobilization and efficiency: Move beyond narrow tax bases to broaden the revenue envelope while closing leakages and improving compliance. Better revenue collection frees fiscal space for social programs and climate resilience without unsustainable debt growth.
- Improve debt composition and risk management: Strive for a balanced mix of concessional, quasi-

concessional, and domestic borrowing, with liabilities that align with long-term revenue streams and growth prospects. Strengthen debt-service relief readiness for exogenous shocks while preserving essential investment capacity.

- Embed intergenerational safeguards in policy design: Require generational impact assessments for large borrowing plans, evaluating how today's decisions affect education, health, and environmental outcomes for the next generation. Create independent institutions or strengthen existing ones to oversee these safeguards.
- Promote accountability and public participation: Civil-society groups, journalists, and the public should have real-time access to debt frameworks, procurement details, and project progress. Public scrutiny should translate into better governance, not just rhetoric.

The core question on the responsible nature of our borrowing resonates far beyond economists' offices. It touches the daily lives of families who worry about the cost of living, students who fear upskilling costs, and communities exposed to climate risks who need durable protections. There is a major argument that debt, in itself, is not evil; what matters is whether debt finances the future we want, one where future generation inherit not a mountain of debt but a foundation for sustainable development, healthy lives, and climate resilience.

Nigerian Youth and Democratic Governance in the Wake of the Amended Electoral Act

By Comrade Philip O. Ikodor

Youth as Critical Stakeholder in Democratic Governance

Nigeria's democratic journey has been shaped by struggle, sacrifice, resilience, and hope. At the heart of this journey lies the quest for credible elections; an essential pillar of democratic governance. In recent times, the controversy surrounding Real-Time Electronic Transmission of Results has reignited intense national debate, particularly among Nigerian youth, who represent both the largest demographic bloc and the most vibrant force within the country's political landscape.



The amendment of the Electoral Act, especially its provisions regarding electronic transmission of election results, has generated divergent interpretations and concerns. While technological integration into the electoral process is widely viewed as a progressive step toward transparency, perceived ambiguities within the amended law have raised fears that the gains recorded in recent elections could be compromised. For many young Nigerians, the question is simple yet profound: Will our votes truly count?

Nigeria's youth are not merely participants in democracy; they are its future custodians. With a median age of approximately 18

credibility of the process may come into question. The provision allowing the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to resort to manual processes in areas with poor network

coverage, though operationally practical in certain contexts, creates anxiety among the youth. There is apprehension that such discretion could be exploited, potentially undermining electoral integrity.

The result of this perception, whether real or imagined, can be profound. Voter Apathy may step in when young people begin to doubt the efficacy of their

participation, democracy itself suffers.

Implications for Democratic Governance

The consequences of a flawed or controversial electoral process extend beyond ballot papers and polling units. They strike at the core of democratic governance.

1. Institutional Trust:

A transparent electoral system builds public trust in democratic institutions. Conversely, ambiguity or perceived manipulation erodes confidence not only in the electoral

years, the country's democratic sustainability depends heavily on youth engagement, trust, and participation. The #EndSARS movement and increased voter registration ahead of recent elections demonstrated a renewed political consciousness among young citizens. They have shown willingness to engage constructively in shaping national discourse.

However, when legal frameworks governing elections appear uncertain or discretionary; particularly regarding real-time electronic transmission, the



Comrade Philip O. Ikodor

body but in governance structures as a whole. When citizens question the legitimacy of leadership, policy implementation becomes strained and national cohesion weakened.

2. Economic Impact:

Political stability and credible governance are critical determinants of economic growth. Investors, both domestic and foreign prioritize predictability and rule-based systems. Electoral controversies can create uncertainty, deter investment, and slow economic expansion. For Nigerian youth already grappling with unemployment and underemployment, such economic stagnation compounds existing frustrations.

3. Security Concerns:

History demonstrates that political disillusionment can fuel unrest. A generation that feels excluded or unheard may become susceptible to radicalization or protest-driven instability. While Nigerian youth have consistently shown resilience and patriotism, sustained frustration without credible avenues for participation could create an environment conducive to insecurity.

4. Everyday Socio-Political Impact:

Beyond macro-level implications, flawed electoral processes affect daily life. Young Nigerians,

many of whom are navigating educational challenges, economic hardship, and social uncertainty, may feel further disconnected from governance. Democracy then becomes abstract rather than practical—distant rather than participatory.

The Way Forward in Strengthening Electoral Integrity

Addressing these concerns requires deliberate, transparent, and inclusive action from lawmakers and policymakers. Electoral reforms must reflect not only technological advancement but also public confidence. First, there must be clear and unambiguous provisions supporting real-time electronic transmission of results wherever technologically feasible. Where limitations exist, contingency measures must be transparently defined, monitored, and insulated from abuse.

Second, investment in digital infrastructure is imperative. Expanding network coverage, strengthening cybersecurity systems, and enhancing INEC's technological capacity would reduce reliance on manual processes and bolster confidence in electronic systems.

Third, independent oversight and civic engagement should be encouraged. Youth-led monitoring initiatives, civil society partnerships, and transparent communication from electoral authorities can bridge trust gaps.

Finally, sustained civic education is crucial. Young Nigerians must be informed not only about their voting rights but also about electoral procedures and safeguards. Knowledge empowers participation and reduces misinformation.

The Role of Leadership and the 2027 Outlook

The recent signing of the Electoral Amendment Bill into law by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has sparked divergent reactions across the youth constituency. Some see it as a consolidation of democratic reform; others view it as insufficiently clear on key issues. The true impact of these amendments will ultimately be tested in forthcoming off-cycle elections and, more significantly, in the 2027 general elections. The responsibility now lies not solely with lawmakers but with all democratic actors; political parties, civil society, the judiciary, media institutions, and citizens themselves to safeguard the integrity of the process. Leaders must remember that public office is a mandate of service, not privilege. Governance must align with the aspirations of the people, particularly the youth whose future is most directly affected.

Conclusion

Nigerian youth remain resolute in their demand for a credible, transparent, and inclusive electoral system. Their engagement signals hope, not hostility; reform, not rebellion. Democracy thrives when citizens believe their participation matters.

To sustain Nigeria's democratic progress, electoral laws must inspire confidence, institutions must act impartially, and leaders must prioritize national interest over partisan advantage. By doing so, Nigeria can reinforce democratic governance, strengthen political stability, and restore the faith of its young population in a hopeful and prosperous future.

The moment calls for listening, dialogue, and decisive action because democracy, at its core, is a covenant between the people and those elected to serve them.

H.E. Peter Ryan: Weaving Cultural Threads Between Ireland and Nigeria

By Jerry Adesewo

Since his arrival in Abuja in 2023 as Ireland's Ambassador to the Federal Republic of Nigeria, His Excellency Mr. Peter Ryan has been quietly forging one of the most culturally engaged diplomatic tenures Nigeria has seen in recent memory. More than trade deals and traditional state visits, Ryan's mission has been about people, bridges and shared stories—using cultural, educational, and creative diplomacy to strengthen bonds that go beyond politics and economics, and into the realms of identity, heritage, and collaboration.

A Diplomat with a Cultural Compass

Ambassador Ryan's journey to the Nigerian capital reflects Ireland's growing recognition that diplomacy in the 21st century cannot be limited to treaties alone. At its best, diplomacy is cultural conversation—a give-and-take of ideas, values, and creative expression that creates mutual respect and understanding. From his base at the Irish Embassy in Abuja, Ryan has championed initiatives that showcase this belief. He has actively worked to spotlight Nigerian creativity and connect it with Irish cultural platforms; and equally to bring Irish culture into Nigerian consciousness. This emphasis reveals a nuanced understanding of how culture can serve as a soft power engine, deepening bonds between nations in ways that formal agreements often miss.

Literature, Arts, and Shared Stories

One of the most resonant examples

of Ryan's cultural diplomacy is his engagement with the literary and creative arts scene. He supported the joint Irish–Nigerian poetry project that celebrated the works of Nobel Laureate, Professor Wole Soyinka, and the Late Professor Chinua Achebe, bringing together poets from both nations in a symbolic literary exchange. This project not only honoured these towering African literary figures but also reaffirmed the shared value both Ireland and Nigeria place on language, narrative, and cultural heritage. More importantly, the project empowered dozens of Nigerian writers, culminating in publication of books.

In 2023, the Ireland Embassy, under his leadership collaborated with the Abuja International Theatre Festival and Awards (ABITFA), to stage Masterclasses in playwriting and storytelling, as well as hosting the closing event of the festival, a storytelling session that introduces the popular Irish Siasma storytelling culture to Nigeria, and Nigerians. The participation of the Ireland Embassy, at the Lagos Arts and Book Festival (LABAF) in 2025, was a revelation, and an excellent integration of the Irish Community to the art scene in Lagos.

On the other hand, in February 2024, Ryan brought the celebrated Irish storyteller, Niall de Burca, on a tour of Abuja and Lagos; and only recently, on January 31, another Irish musician and violonist, Adam Costa, performed in Abuja to the excitement of the art and diplomatic community in Abuja. This is in addition to

the annual cultural and literary events celebrating two of Ireland's greatest literary ambassadors, James Joyce and JB Weates.

Education and Exchange: Building Future Bridges

Education has emerged as another central pillar of Peter Ryan's cultural engagement strategy in Nigeria. In late 2024, he visited the African School of Economics (ASE) in Abuja, where he

**At its best,
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discussed deepening academic collaborations, potential faculty and student exchanges, and partnerships that would link Nigerian scholars with Irish and European institutions. His message was clear: education is both empowerment and bridge-building.

At ASE, Ryan emphasised that education is foundational to freedom and development, reinforcing Ireland's long-standing commitment to academic cooperation and capacity building. By advocating for global partnerships, the Ambassador has positioned Ireland not just as a European partner, but also as a global collaborator ready to invest in Nigerian talent and intellectual exchange.

Diaspora Engagement: Connecting People Across Continents

Understanding the vibrancy of the

**More importantly,
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publication of books**

Nigerian diaspora in Ireland, Ryan has leveraged these connections as cultural and diplomatic assets. Speaking at the Nigeria Diaspora Investment Summit, he underlined the importance of Nigerians abroad in strengthening economic and cultural ties, and encouraged them to forge bridges back home. His engagement with diaspora communities is strategic: it acknowledges the dual identity many Nigerians live daily, and uses that shared identity to promote cross-border cooperation in business, arts, and innovation. In these interactions, cultural diplomacy becomes personal diplomacy—connecting people's stories across continents.

Agriculture, Development, and Cultural Exchange

While not purely cultural in the artistic sense, Ryan's work in promoting collaboration between Nigeria and Ireland in sectors like livestock development also carries cultural significance. When he discussed sustainable grazing systems, agricultural research, and cooperative models with Nigerian officials, he brought Irish rural traditions into conversation with Nigeria's own agricultural heritage—a merging of cultural identity and economic cooperation.

Such initiatives underscore a broader worldview: culture is not confined to museums or books, but lives in fields, traditions, and everyday interactions. By valuing these connections, Ryan's diplomacy acknowledges the cultural wealth inherent in national practices.



Championing Sustainable and Community-Driven Projects

Beyond arts and education, Ambassador Ryan has extended Ireland's support to community-centred initiatives such as environmental remediation programmes, reflecting a cultural diplomacy that encompasses shared responsibility for the planet and human well-being. His visit to the Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP) in Port Harcourt highlighted Ireland's willingness to partner in sustainable development efforts that uplift communities.

These engagements signal that cultural diplomacy under Ryan is not superficial or symbolic—it is grounded in empathy, practical cooperation, and long-term partnership.

The Person Behind the Title

Who is Peter Ryan beyond the ceremonial robe and diplomatic protocols? Accounts of his engagements depict a diplomat with a keen interest in people's stories. He listens as much as he speaks, seeks collaboration as

much as he convenes, and values long-term engagement over short-term headlines.

His career reflects the ethos of Ireland's foreign policy in Nigeria: one rooted in shared humanity, respect for cultural expression, and belief in the power of education and community. Instead of imposing narratives, Ryan seeks common ground, whether in classrooms, literary circles, agricultural conversations or community initiatives. Even in supporting initiatives, he never insists on the 'hows'.

Cultural Diplomacy with a Lasting Imprint

Cultural diplomacy is often the quietly powerful cousin of mainstream foreign relations. It thrives not in grand declarations but in shared experiences — poetry readings, educational exchanges, cultural festivals, scholarly collaborations, diaspora networks, and even environmental partnerships.

Under H.E. Peter Ryan's

stewardship, Ireland's presence in Nigeria has transcended the predictable corridors of embassy politics. It has ventured into the spaces where cultures breathe, where young minds aspire, and where communities find connection across borders.

In an era when diplomacy can feel transactional, Ryan's tenure offers a refreshing narrative: nations do not merely interact through treaties, but through empathy, shared histories, cultural exchange, and mutual respect. His imprint on Nigeria-Ireland relations thus far suggests that the story of two countries is not just in what they say to each other, but in what they create together.

As Ireland and Nigeria continue to engage on cultural, educational, and developmental fronts, the legacy of Ambassador Peter Ryan's approach may well be judged not only in programmes launched or partnerships signed—but in the human connections he has nurtured along the way.



Lt Gen Wahid Shuaibu: Turning the Tide Against Boko Haram and Bandits in Nigeria

By Mohammed Sani Abubakar
HND, B.Ed, M.Ed, M.A, DProf, PhD, CAS

The issue of security in Nigeria has become one of the longest-running tests of the state's strength in West Africa. The Boko Haram insurgency in the northeast and violent banditry in the northwest and north-central have over a decade put a strain on national stability, displacing millions of people, and disrupting economic life. Such crises have changed the dynamics of the governing principles, humanitarian aid, and citizens' confidence in the state institution.

By the end of 2025, when Lt. Gen. Wahid Shuaibu became Chief of Army Staff, there was a lot of hope. He inherited an Army that had been involved in counter-insurgency and internal security operations, which had to face off adversaries who were both adaptable and decentralised in their command structure and always changed tactics. The Nigerian military did not just have the role of destroying armed groups, but also stabilising communities that were long exposed to violence cycles.

During his tenure, the Nigerian Army followed a revised strategy that involved increased operations, intelligence-led planning, and reinforcement of civil-military relationships. Although the issue of insecurity is still a hard challenge, the administration of Lt Gen Shuaibu has been linked to quantifiable operational benefits and restored faith in the strategic course of the Army

Operational Successes

Among the first indicators of Lt General Shuaibu's leadership was the expansion of offensive operations of the Nigerian Army in January 2026, according to Operation Desert Sanity III. The campaign was based on insurgent enclaves in the states of Borno and Yobe and was aimed at disrupting logistics pathways, breaking down hideouts and neutralising high-value militant targets. The operation was based on the principles of previous operations like Operation Hadin Kai that had aimed at weakening the influence of Boko Haram in the territory.

Military briefs for the first quarter of 2026 recorded very positive results. Official sources say that about 567 suspected terrorists were killed, and 2225 civilians were evacuated in the regions where the insurgents had taken control previously. The operations also resulted in the seizure of weapons, ammunition and communication equipment, undermining the capacity of militant operations. Other reported cases of



LT GEN W SHAIBU NAM GSS DSO (LR) FTAM psc fdc(+) fndu(USA) CM FCM FCMH NAOOCM NAPH MSS MA MNIM
CHIEF OF ARMY STAFF

military actions by international media highlighted how the Army continued to pressure extremist groups. These actions were more than just numerical indicators that had broader tactical refinement. Close coordination of the ground forces, as well as the air elements, allowed more accurate targeting of positions held by insurgents. The patrol schemes were reconfigured

to restrict the militant movements, and surveillance facilities became more effective in detecting them in forested and border areas.

In February 2026, in the northwest, activities were strengthened in Zamfara and Katsina states. Clearance operations were implemented by troops against the armed bands of bandits related to kidnapping, cattle raids and village raids. Field reports and defence reports reported the destruction of some bandit camps and the liberation of hostages.

Despite the different security conditions in different parts of the country, these operations left a stronger impression that the Army was taking back the initiative in theatres which had been characterised in the past with cyclical violence. Nevertheless, these isolated Boko Haram attack incidents remind policymakers that there is more work to be done.

Counter-Insurgency Strategies

The philosophy of command by Lt Gen Shuaibu emphasised the need to pursue military pressure but expanded stabilisation efforts. His style demonstrates that he understands modern insurgencies are maintained not only by guns, but also by domestic complaints, economic interests, and information relations. One of his key pillars has been the intelligence-led operations. The Army has put a greater focus on reconnaissance, human intelligence networks and multi-agency integration of data. Through better early warning systems, forces would be able to predict attacks, sabotage, recruitment, and intercept supply chains

Also, coordination across defence sectors has been a major priority. The Nigerian Air Force, police units, and intelligence services, counter-terrorist and counter-banditry units have become more cooperative in fighting insurgency. This combined model facilitates more consistent

reactions to threats that cut across jurisdictional lines. This multi-agency approach was supported by the government's reaction to the insecurity, such as extending the forces, recruiting, and selection campaigns.

On the other hand, there has been strong cooperation between the military and civilians, especially with community-based security actors. In the northeast, there have been partnerships with the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) to increase insurgency awareness. Local intelligence provided by CJTF has aided in targeted operations across the country (Wikipedia contributors, 2025c).

The Army added non-kinetic efforts to its combat activities. The medical outreach programmes, reconstruction of destroyed infrastructure, and security of farming populations were presented as the key to restoring normalcy in conflict-ridden regions.

Professional conduct and discipline were also a constant theme for Lt Gen Wahid Shuaibu. The rules of engagement and respect for civilian rights were strengthened by training and commanding orders. These interventions are core in maintaining the trust of the populace and ensuring that security operations do not raise more grievances.

Although the operation of counter-insurgency is complex and time-consuming by its nature, this combination of operational stress and societal interaction was a disciplined transition towards overall security management.

Impact on the Security Landscape

To assess the impact of Lt Gen Wahid Shuaibu's leadership, there is a need to have a balanced view. The security context in Nigeria is not strong, and the insurgent groups and crime syndicates are still threatening. However, as time went by, since the beginning of 2026, some progressive changes have been observed in some of the most critical spheres.

Persistent offensive initiatives diminished rebel influence in rural areas in sections of the northeast. Local officials said there was better humanitarian access and slow returns of displaced people. In some districts, markets and transport routes also began operating, a favourable indication of slow progress towards stabilisation. These findings are consistent with the policy recommendations of decades-old interconnections between security

in place as soon as he took office. He also championed a renewed attention program on military welfare to boost the morale of those who risk their lives to protect the nation.

Nevertheless, we still have to struggle. Difficult terrain, porous borders, and socio-economic vulnerabilities remain the favourable areas that are used by armed groups. The issue of banditry, which is usually associated with poverty and

enhanced its operational focus. Nevertheless, conflicts of this kind are seldom straightforward.

Lt Gen Wahid Shuaibu's leadership has accelerated the pace of operations. It has transformed the way the mission is determined. His command philosophy, through a combination of unrelenting military pressure, more effective intelligence coordination, better community involvement, and a more resolute focus on professionalism, understands the importance of legitimacy in the same regard as combat success.

The restoration of public trust is used as a measure of security, not only based on the results of battlefields but also on the restoration of people's trust. However, trust can

be a fickle, fleeting thing. It should be strengthened with good governance, delivering economic opportunity, and a plausible justice system.

Even in these facts, the leadership of Lt Gen Wahid Shuaibu provides an apparent lesson. With long-term conflicts, sometimes the only way to change things is by swift, systematic advance. This gradual momentum could eventually ensure that sustainable stability is achieved in the conflict that Nigeria is currently battling insurgency and bandits.

ineffective governance, cannot be solved by military means only.

However, despite these limitations, Lt Gen Wahid Shuaibu's leadership has changed focus from being reactive to being co-ordinately proactive.

Conclusion

The tenure of Lt. Gen. Wahid Shuaibu, as a leader of the military, throws more light on what can and cannot be done to solve the complex security problems in Nigeria. The number of operational results the Army has attained under his command, the number of insurgents neutralised, camps dismantled, and civilians saved, indicates that the Army has recovered its initiative and

operations and civilian recovery.

In parts of the northwest, increased counter-banditry efforts have been linked to reported decreases in mass kidnappings and village raids in districts of choice. Despite the continued violence, according to analysts, the disruption of bandit logistics and camps made the operational planning of armed groups complicated. Noticeably, his leadership and operational ethos has conformed to the overall security concerns of the federal government. The focus of this administration on regaining stability as an antecedent to economic recovery was put into practical use by heightened campaigns and reform efforts put



Northeast Under Renewed Siege as Insurgent and Bandit Attacks Threaten Fragile Peace

By Auwal Ahmad Umar

Across Nigeria's Northeast, the fragile calm that followed years of insurgency is once again under strain. In farming communities across Borno, Yobe and Bauchi states, residents who only recently began rebuilding homes destroyed by conflict are again fleeing gunfire. What many hoped would mark the beginning of recovery now appears threatened by a troubling resurgence of violence.

For people who endured more than a decade of insurgency, the renewed attacks have revived painful memories and deepened fears that peace remains dangerously fragile.

"People thought the attacks had reduced," said Bukar Madu, a farmer from northern Borno who recently fled his village after gunmen stormed the area. "When the shooting started, everyone ran into the bush. Families left their houses without carrying anything."

A Region Still Healing From War

Since insurgency erupted more than a decade ago, thousands have died and millions have been



displaced. Although sustained military operations reclaimed many territories, armed groups adapted their tactics—now relying on hit-and-run raids and ambushes rather than occupation.

Borno remains the epicentre. Its vast forests and porous borders allow groups to strike unexpectedly, often at night when security is limited. Beyond immediate trauma, such attacks disrupt agriculture, the backbone of rural economies. "When farmers are afraid to go to their land, the harvest will suffer," Madu said.

Neighbouring Yobe has recorded fewer large-scale attacks, but insecurity remains an undercurrent. Residents report sightings of armed groups near forests. Traders now avoid night travel. "Nobody wants to be on the road if something happens," Madu added.

In Bauchi, armed bandits increasingly target rural communities, raiding villages for livestock and food. "We heard gunshots and people started shouting," said Musa Aliyu, a farmer displaced by one such raid.

The ripple effects now reach Gombe, where communities receive displaced families. Volunteer Haruna Yakubu said many arrived with nothing. "They left their homes suddenly and could not take anything with them."

For a region still recovering from years of conflict, the renewed violence is a stark reminder that peace in the Northeast remains fragile—and far from secure.

Demas Nwoko and the Architecture of Cultural Memory

By Rowland Goyit

Nation-building is often discussed in the language of politics, economics, and governance. Yet nations are remembered less through policy documents than through the environments people inhabit daily. Streets, buildings, theatres, and public monuments quietly construct collective memory. They tell citizens who they are, where they come from, and what values endure.

In contemporary Nigeria, however, a subtle cultural paradox confronts us. Our cities are expanding rapidly, skylines rising with impressive speed, yet many urban spaces feel curiously detached from Nigerian identity. From Lagos to Abuja, glass towers and standardized estates increasingly dominate the landscape, projecting modernity while revealing little about the civilization they stand within.

This condition goes beyond architecture. It reflects a deeper cultural dislocation. When public environments carry no visual memory of a people, nationhood risks becoming administrative rather than emotional. Cities begin to look interchangeable, belonging everywhere and nowhere at once.

The built environment functions as a civic archive. Every structure records an era's priorities and imagination. When indigenous aesthetics, histories, and artistic traditions disappear from public design, society gradually loses an important mirror through which it understands itself.

This challenge is not new. At the moment of Nigeria's independence,

a generation of artists recognized that political freedom required cultural definition. Among the most visionary figures of that era was artist, designer, and architect Demas Nwoko, whose lifelong work demonstrates how art can operate as civic infrastructure rather than mere decoration.

Emerging in the late 1950s at the Nigerian College of Arts, Science and Technology in Zaria, Nwoko became part of the influential Zaria Art Society; later known as the Zaria Rebels. Alongside contemporaries such as Uche Okeke, Bruce Onobrakpeya, and Yusuf Grillo, the group questioned colonial art education that positioned European aesthetics as universal standards. Their response was the philosophy of Natural Synthesis, an intellectual and artistic framework advocating the fusion of modern techniques with indigenous African knowledge systems.

Natural Synthesis proposed a radical but

simple idea:



Pa Demas Nwoko

modern Nigerian art should evolve from Nigerian cultural foundations rather than imitate external models. For Nwoko, this philosophy extended beyond style into worldview. Though Igbo by origin, he drew inspiration across Nigeria's cultural geography, studying Nok terracotta traditions, classical Ife sculpture, vernacular architecture, theatre performance, and everyday social life.

His paintings translated these influences into modern visual language. Works addressing ordinary Nigerians and contemporary political realities demonstrated that art could engage society critically while remaining culturally grounded. Colour, proportion, and form in his compositions echoed traditional sculptural sensibilities while speaking to modern experiences. Art, in this sense, became a reflective surface through which a newly independent nation

could

examine itself.

Yet Nwoko understood something many artists overlook: culture does not live only in galleries. It lives in shared space.

His involvement with the Mbari Club in Ibadan during the 1960s placed him within one of postcolonial Africa's most important interdisciplinary creative communities, where writers, dramatists, musicians, and visual artists collectively reimagined Nigerian cultural expression.

Theatre design became central to his practice, leading him to experiment with stage environments rooted in indigenous spatial traditions rather than inherited colonial formats.

Our cities are expanding rapidly, skylines rising with impressive speed, yet many urban spaces feel curiously detached from Nigerian identity

This interdisciplinary thinking eventually pushed Nwoko toward architecture; an unusual transition at the time, particularly without formal architectural certification. For him, however, architecture represented the ultimate artistic medium because it directly shaped how communities live and interact.

In 1960, the year of Nigeria's independence, Nwoko won a national competition to design the Arts and Crafts Pavilion for independence celebrations in Lagos. The symbolism was

profound: a young artist helping define how a new nation visually presented itself to the world.

His later architectural works would deepen this vision. The Dominican Chapel in Ibadan stands today as one of the most remarkable examples of culturally responsive modern architecture in Nigeria. Drawing inspiration from both Catholic liturgical traditions and the monumental forms of Sahelian mosque architecture, Nwoko created a sacred space that feels simultaneously modern and indigenous. Carefully filtered natural light, handcrafted structural elements and textured surfaces transform the building into an experiential artwork rather than a conventional structure.

Architecture and sculpture merge seamlessly within the chapel, demonstrating Nwoko's conviction that buildings should communicate spiritual and cultural meaning. The structure appears less constructed than grown into an organic extension of environment and belief.

Perhaps his most ambitious experiment remains the New Culture Studio in Ibadan, a project begun in the late 1960s as both personal studio and cultural laboratory. At a moment when imported construction methods dominated Nigerian urban development, Nwoko deliberately returned to indigenous building intelligence, particularly laterite earth construction adapted through innovative techniques.

His decision challenged prevailing assumptions about progress. Rather than abandon traditional materials, he refined them. The result was architecture responsive to climate, economically accessible, environmentally sustainable, and culturally resonant. Long before sustainability became a global

architectural slogan, Nwoko demonstrated that local knowledge already contained sophisticated ecological solutions.

Across additional projects, including the Benin Cultural Centre and public artworks integrated into universities and airport spaces—he consistently embedded Nigerian narratives within civic environments. Art was placed not at the margins of society but within its everyday movement.

More than six decades after independence, Nwoko's ideas return with renewed urgency.

Nigeria now stands at another historical threshold defined by rapid urbanization. Demographic projections suggest unprecedented urban growth across African cities within the coming decades. The question facing planners, policymakers, and cultural practitioners is therefore not simply how fast cities grow, but what cultural identity those cities will embody.

Nwoko's legacy offers three enduring lessons.

First, innovation does not require cultural erasure. Indigenous materials and building knowledge remain powerful resources for sustainable development. Structures designed for Nigeria's climate and social patterns can reduce environmental strain while restoring a sense of place often missing in contemporary urban design.

Second, public space must recover civic imagination. Buildings should

function as gathering points, storytelling platforms, and cultural anchors. When architecture integrates artistic expression, communities experience development not as displacement but as continuity.



international institutions increasingly celebrate culturally grounded innovation. Nwoko's recognition with the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement at the 2023 Venice Architecture Biennale affirms that authenticity, not imitation, ultimately commands global respect.

The lesson extends beyond architecture.

Art remains one of the most powerful instruments through which societies interpret themselves. It records memory, critiques power, and imagines futures before policy can articulate them. When integrated into civic life, art becomes infrastructure that shapes perception as profoundly as roads or institutions.

Nigeria's future cities will inevitably be modern. The real question is whether they will also be culturally intelligent.

Demas Nwoko's work reminds us that modernization and tradition are

not opposing forces. If properly synthesized, they form the foundation of a confident civilization that is capable of innovation without forgetting its origins.

In that synthesis lies the enduring function of art as Nigeria's civic mirror: reflecting who we have been, revealing who we are becoming, and guiding how we choose to build the nation still unfolding before us.

Third, development must remain accountable to community life. Nwoko repeatedly emphasized that creative practice gains meaning through service to society. Today, many projects are conceived through external models or commercial priorities detached from local cultural realities. Reintroducing cultural consultation into urban planning could fundamentally reshape how Nigerian cities evolve.

There is an irony worth noting. While some creators pursue global validation through imitation,

Hon. Alex Mascot Ikwechegh: **One Man Asking the Right Questions**

By Jerry Adesewo

In every generation of Nigeria's democratic journey, a few legislators emerge not merely as representatives of their constituencies, but as symbols of a deeper national aspiration—the desire for leadership that blends courage, accountability, and an unshakeable belief in the promise of the Nigerian state. Among the contemporary figures, attracting such attention is Alex Mascot Ikwechegh, the member representing Aba North/Aba South Federal Constituency in the House of Representatives.

For many observers in recent weeks, Ikwechegh's name moved from the routine rhythms of parliamentary business into the centre of national debate after his pointed interrogation during a budget defence session exposed troubling questions about the disbursement of ₦1.15 trillion in approved capital funds.

The exchange reverberated far beyond the committee room. Within days, a cabinet reshuffle followed, thrusting the lawmaker into the national spotlight as a legislator willing to ask uncomfortable questions in defence of public accountability.

Yet the story of Ikwechegh is larger than a single parliamentary moment. It is, in many ways, a reflection of the enduring Nigerian spirit—resilient, ambitious, and deeply invested in the possibility of national renewal.

Roots of Ambition
Born Alex Ifeanyi Mascot Ikwechegh in Igbere, Bende Local Government Area of Abia State, his journey into public life began early. Educated at Constitution Crescent Primary School and later at the historic Hope Waddell Training Institution, he eventually earned a degree in Business Management from the University of Calabar. From the outset, his career blended





entrepreneurship with public service. Before entering national politics, Ikwechegh served as Chairman of Aba North Local Government, becoming one of the youngest individuals to hold such an office in Nigeria.

The early exposure to grassroots governance would shape his understanding of the relationship between federal policy and local realities — a theme that continues to define his legislative interventions.

Beyond politics, he built the GrossField Group, a business

enterprise spanning construction, real estate, and energy-related sectors.

This private-sector experience has often informed his legislative rhetoric: governance, he insists, must deliver measurable economic outcomes.

The Aba Mandate

To understand Ikwechegh's political energy, one must understand Aba. Aba is not just a constituency; it is one of Nigeria's most dynamic commercial ecosystems. Known for its vibrant markets, industrial clusters, and entrepreneurial culture, the city represents the ingenuity and restless ambition of Nigerian enterprise.

Representing Aba therefore carries symbolic weight. Constituents expect their representative to embody the same relentless drive that defines the city itself.

Ikwechegh has often framed his political mission through that lens — insisting that federal governance must translate into visible infrastructure, functioning institutions, and economic opportunity for the people whose daily hustle powers Nigeria's informal economy.

Accountability as a Legislative Tool

The moment that recently catapulted Ikwechegh into national conversation came during a National Assembly budget defence hearing when he questioned the Ministry of Finance over the status of N1.15 trillion in approved capital project funding that had not yet been disbursed. His line of questioning reflected a core

principle of legislative oversight: appropriations approved by parliament must ultimately reach the projects and communities they were intended to serve.

For many Nigerians watching the exchange, the scene carried a powerful message — that democracy functions best when lawmakers exercise their constitutional responsibility without fear or favour.

Whether the eventual administrative decisions that followed were directly linked to the interrogation or not, the episode reinforced the visibility of legislative scrutiny in Nigeria's governance system.

The Spirit of Philanthropy

Outside the chambers of parliament, Ikwechegh has cultivated a reputation as a philanthropist.

Through the Alex Ikwechegh Foundation, he has supported educational initiatives, relief programmes, and community projects aimed at assisting vulnerable Nigerians.

Philanthropy has long been intertwined with political legitimacy in Nigeria, particularly in regions where communities often expect their leaders to serve as both policymakers and benefactors. In this context, Ikwechegh's initiatives reflect a broader tradition of civic responsibility deeply embedded in Nigerian social culture.

A Man of Contrasts

Like many public figures, Ikwechegh's political journey has not been without controversy. A widely publicised incident involving a dispute with a ride-hailing driver in 2024 drew criticism and prompted an apology from the lawmaker. Such moments serve as reminders

that political leadership exists under constant public scrutiny. Yet they also illustrate an enduring reality of Nigerian politics: public figures often evolve through the intense pressures of visibility, criticism, and accountability.

Before entering national politics, Ikwechegh served as Chairman of Aba North Local Government, becoming one of the youngest individuals to hold such an office in Nigeria.

In democratic systems, leadership is rarely defined by perfection. It is shaped by resilience — the ability to confront public judgment while continuing to serve.

The Nigerian Spirit

To speak of the "Nigerian spirit" is to evoke a unique national character: bold in ambition, resilient in adversity, and unafraid of contestation. In many ways, Ikwechegh's trajectory reflects these qualities.

From becoming a young local government chairman to building a business enterprise and eventually entering the National Assembly, his story mirrors the restless upward mobility that defines much of Nigeria's political class.

More importantly, his willingness to challenge executive officials during legislative proceedings — regardless of political consequences — embodies a principle central to democratic governance: the legislature must remain a vigilant

guardian of public resources.

The Future of Legislative Leadership

Nigeria's democracy continues to evolve. The National Assembly increasingly faces expectations not merely to pass laws but to assert institutional independence and enforce accountability across government.

Legislators like Ikwechegh represent a generation navigating that evolving mandate.

Their challenge is not only to represent local constituencies but also to strengthen the credibility of parliament itself — ensuring that the institution remains a genuine arena for national oversight, debate, and reform.

A Symbol Beyond Politics

Ultimately, the significance of Hon. Alex Mascot Ikwechegh may lie less in the headlines surrounding his recent interventions and more in what he represents. He represents a constituency that thrives on enterprise.

He represents a generation determined to shape Nigeria's governance landscape.

And he represents the enduring belief that public office, when exercised with courage and conviction, can still serve the national good.

In a country where cynicism often shadows politics, figures who project that spirit — flawed, determined, and unmistakably Nigerian — continue to remind citizens that democracy remains a work in progress.

Moreover, sometimes, progress begins with one lawmaker asking the question everyone else is afraid to ask.

Tunji Disu: A New Police Chief and the Agenda for Reform

When Tunji Disu assumed office as Nigeria's new Inspector-General of Police in February 2026, he stepped into one of the most difficult leadership roles in the country's public sector. The office of the Nigeria Police Force carries enormous responsibility—maintaining law and order across Africa's most populous nation, facing complex security threats ranging from banditry and kidnapping to cybercrime and urban violence.

Appointed by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Disu became the 23rd Inspector-General of Police, succeeding Kayode Egbetokun. His appointment has generated both expectation and scrutiny, not simply because of his professional record but because Nigerians increasingly demand deep reforms within the police institution.

The question before him is simple yet daunting: Can Tunji Disu redefine policing in Nigeria?

A Career Built Inside the Force

Born on April 13, 1966, in Lagos Island, Disu represents the classic career police officer who rose through the ranks rather than emerging from political patronage. He joined the Nigeria Police Force in 1992 as a cadet Assistant Superintendent of Police and has since served in multiple operational and investigative roles across the country.

His early postings as Divisional Police Officer in towns across Ogun, Ondo and Rivers States exposed him to grassroots policing—handling community

disputes, criminal investigations and local security challenges. Over time, Disu moved into more strategic assignments. He served as commander of the Lagos Rapid Response Squad, head of the Intelligence Response Team, Commissioner of Police in Rivers State and later in the Federal Capital Territory before his elevation to the nation's top policing office.

In these roles he built a reputation as an operational officer—one comfortable with intelligence work and crisis response. During the 2020 #EndSARS protests, his leadership of the Rapid Response Squad reportedly

emphasised a people-centred approach to policing, an experience that now shapes expectations of his leadership.

Yet leadership at the national level demands more than operational competence. It demands vision.

The Office He Now Holds

The Inspector-General of Police is the highest-ranking officer

of the Nigeria Police Force and is responsible for directing the



IGP Tunji Disu

operations of the entire police system nationwide. The Force itself is enormous. With roughly 370,000 personnel spread across 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory, it is one of the largest police organisations in Africa. But size has never guaranteed effectiveness.

Nigeria's policing system faces longstanding problems:

insufficient manpower relative to population, poor equipment, weak investigative capacity, low public trust and political interference. These are the structural realities that Disu must confront.

Restoring Public Trust

Perhaps the most urgent task before the new IGP is rebuilding trust between citizens and the police.

For decades, the Nigeria Police Force has struggled with a reputation for corruption, brutality and impunity. The #EndSARS protests of 2020 were the most visible eruption of public anger against police misconduct.

If Disu is to succeed, he must move beyond rhetoric and implement practical reforms such as: strengthening internal disciplinary mechanisms, improving officer training and professionalism, expanding community policing initiatives, increasing transparency in police operations.

Public confidence in policing cannot be restored through public relations campaigns alone. It must be earned through consistent accountability.

Technology and Modern Crime

Nigeria's crime landscape is rapidly evolving. Cybercrime, digital fraud, organised kidnapping networks and cross-border trafficking require investigative capabilities far beyond traditional policing methods.

Disu's experience in intelligence and specialised investigative units could position him to modernise the Force's technological capacity. This means investing in: digital

forensic laboratories, advanced crime data systems, surveillance and intelligence analysis platforms, and specialised cybercrime units. Fact is, modern crime demands modern policing.

The State Police Debate

Perhaps the most consequential issue facing the new police chief is the debate over state policing. Nigeria currently operates a centralised national police system, meaning the federal government controls all policing authority. While this structure was designed to preserve national unity, critics argue that it has become increasingly inefficient for a country of more than 200 million people.

Security experts have long argued that decentralising policing—allowing individual states to establish their own police services—could improve responsiveness and local accountability.

Disu himself has previously acknowledged the importance of reforming Nigeria's policing structure and strengthening local security architecture. This much he reiterated upon his assumption of office, with the inauguration of an 8-man committee to look into the proposal.

If he truly wishes to leave a lasting legacy, he must play a constructive role in advancing the national conversation around state police. This would involve working with the National Assembly, state governments, the Police Service Commission, and civil society organisations, to design a system that balances local control with national security safeguards.

The Leadership Test

Leadership of the Nigeria Police Force has historically been a

difficult assignment. Many previous Inspectors-General have entered office with reform agendas only to encounter the complex realities of politics, institutional resistance and resource limitations.

Yet every generation produces leaders whose tenure marks turning points.

Tunji Disu now faces that opportunity. His experience—from grassroots policing to intelligence operations—suggests he understands both the strengths and weaknesses of the institution he now leads.

But history will judge him not by the offices he held before becoming IGP, but by the reforms he implements now.

Hence, If Tunji Disu is to succeed where many before him struggled, his leadership must focus on five priorities:

1. Rebuilding public trust through accountability and transparency.
2. Professionalising the Force through training and welfare reforms.
3. Modernising policing technology to tackle emerging crimes.
4. Strengthening community policing across Nigeria's diverse regions.
5. Advancing the debate on state policing as part of long-term security reform.

Nigeria's security challenges are vast, but so too is the opportunity for transformation. For Tunji Disu, the badge of Inspector-General is not merely a promotion, it is a test of leadership—and perhaps the last opportunity in a generation to redefine policing in Nigeria.

Strengthening Democracy in the Digital Age: A Democratic Upward Approach for INEC

By Professor Ojo Emmanuel Ademola

The recent signing of the new Electoral Act by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu marks a pivotal moment in Nigeria's democratic journey. It offers not only a refreshed legal framework but also a renewed opportunity for the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to reposition itself as a forward-looking institution capable of stewarding elections in an increasingly digital world. As Nigeria continues to evolve politically, socially, and technologically, the imperative before INEC is clear: to adopt a democratic upward—or “upping”—approach that elevates transparency, participation, and institutional resilience. This approach must be rooted in innovation, grounded in public trust, and responsive to the realities of the Digital Age.

Building a Digital-First Electoral Infrastructure

The first pillar of a democratic upward approach lies in the deliberate construction of a digital-first electoral infrastructure. The new Electoral Act provides a legal foundation for modernising electoral processes, but the real transformation will come from how INEC operationalises these provisions. A digital-first orientation requires systems that are secure, transparent, and citizen-centred. This begins with strengthening digital voter registration platforms to ensure that identity verification is seamless, accurate, and resistant to manipulation. Real-time

synchronisation of voter data across national and subnational databases will reduce duplication, enhance credibility, and streamline pre-election logistics.

Equally important is the continued enhancement of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS). BVAS has already demonstrated its potential to reduce fraud and improve the integrity of accreditation, but its reliability must be fortified through rigorous device testing, improved offline-first capabilities, and stronger cybersecurity protocols. In addition, the expansion of electronic transmission of results—where legally permitted—should be pursued with a commitment to redundancy, auditability, and transparency. A digital-first infrastructure, when properly implemented, reduces human error, limits opportunities for interference, and accelerates the collation process, thereby strengthening public confidence in electoral outcomes.

Institutionalising Transparency as a Core Operating Principle

Transparency remains the currency of trust in any democracy. For INEC, transparency must not be episodic or reactive; it must be institutionalised as a core operating principle. A democratic upward approach demands that the Commission consistently demonstrates openness in its processes, decisions, and

communications. One effective strategy is the publication of pre-election readiness dashboards that provide real-time updates on logistics

deployment, staff training, device distribution, and voter education efforts. Such dashboards, accessible to the public, political parties, and civil society, would demystify the Commission's operations and reduce the space for speculation or misinformation.

During elections, INEC's digital communication channels should serve as authoritative sources of timely updates. Verified platforms must be used to provide clear information on accreditation progress, technical incidents, and procedural

clarifications. After elections, the Commission should release comprehensive technical reports that

detail what worked, what failed, and what improvements will be implemented. This culture of transparency not only strengthens credibility but also encourages civic oversight and reinforces the legitimacy of the electoral process.

Deepening Digital Civic Education and Voter Engagement

No electoral reform can succeed without an informed and engaged citizenry. In the Digital Age, civic education must evolve beyond traditional methods to embrace innovative, accessible, and multilingual digital tools. INEC has the opportunity to lead a new era of voter enlightenment by deploying AI-assisted educational platforms that explain the provisions of the new Electoral Act, outline voting procedures, and clarify citizens' rights and responsibilities. These tools can be adapted into short-form content—animations, infographics, voice notes, and interactive modules—that resonate with Nigeria's diverse population, including young voters who consume information primarily through digital channels.

Partnerships with civil society

organisations, faith-based institutions, and community networks will amplify the reach of these educational efforts. By equipping citizens with accurate information, INEC can reduce the prevalence of invalid votes, counter misinformation, and foster a more participatory democratic culture. Digital civic education is not merely an add-on; it is a strategic necessity for strengthening electoral integrity in a rapidly evolving information ecosystem.

This begins with strengthening digital voter registration platforms to ensure that identity verification is seamless, accurate, and resistant to manipulation.

Strengthening Cybersecurity and Digital Resilience

As elections become more digitised, the threat landscape becomes more complex. Cybersecurity is no longer a technical afterthought; it is a central pillar of electoral integrity. INEC must therefore invest in robust cybersecurity frameworks that protect its digital assets, safeguard voter data, and ensure the resilience of its technological systems. Independent cybersecurity audits should be conducted ahead of major elections to identify vulnerabilities and recommend mitigation strategies. A dedicated Election Cyber Command Centre, operating around the clock, would enable real-time monitoring of threats, rapid incident response, and coordinated communication with security agencies.

Training is equally essential. INEC staff—both permanent and ad-hoc—must be equipped with the knowledge and skills to recognise phishing attempts, handle sensitive data securely, and

manage digital devices responsibly. A secure electoral system is not built solely on technology; it is built on people who understand how to protect that technology. By prioritising cybersecurity, INEC reinforces the integrity of the electoral process and strengthens public trust in digital innovations.

Expanding Stakeholder Collaboration and Co-Creation

Democracy thrives when institutions work with the people, not above them. A democratic upward approach requires INEC to deepen its engagement with stakeholders across the political and civic spectrum. Regular digital town halls with political parties, civil society organisations, youth groups, and persons with disabilities will foster dialogue, address concerns, and build shared ownership of the electoral process. These engagements should not be perfunctory; they should be structured, inclusive, and solution-oriented.

The establishment of a multi-stakeholder advisory council on digital elections would further institutionalise collaboration. Such a council could provide insights on emerging technologies, advise on best practices, and serve as a bridge between INEC and the broader democratic community. Additionally, the release of open electoral data—within legal and ethical boundaries—would enable independent analysis, support academic research, and enhance transparency. Collaboration is not a sign of institutional weakness; it is a hallmark of democratic maturity.

Professionalising the Election Workforce for the Digital Age

Human capacity remains the backbone of any electoral system. As INEC embraces digital transformation, it must also

professionalise its workforce to meet the demands of the Digital Age. This begins with the introduction of digital literacy certification for all staff involved in election administration. Simulation-based training modules can prepare personnel for real-world scenarios involving BVAS operation, result transmission, and incident management. Such training reduces operational errors, enhances consistency, and promotes professionalism.

The establishment of a National

After elections, the Commission should release comprehensive technical reports that detail what worked, what failed, and what improvements will be implemented.

Electoral Training Institute, equipped with digital learning resources and research capabilities, would institutionalise capacity building and ensure continuous improvement. A well-trained workforce is essential for delivering credible elections and sustaining public confidence in the Commission's competence.

Institutionalising Post-Election Learning and Innovation

A democratic upward approach is not static; it is iterative. INEC must therefore institutionalise a culture of post-election learning and innovation. Comprehensive post-election reviews, involving all stakeholders, should be conducted to assess performance,

identify gaps, and recommend improvements. Lessons-learned reports should be published and used to inform future reforms. The Commission should also explore emerging technologies—such as blockchain-based audit trails—in controlled environments to evaluate their potential for enhancing transparency and security.

Innovation must be pursued responsibly, with careful consideration of legal frameworks, ethical implications, and societal readiness. By embracing continuous learning, INEC positions itself as a dynamic institution that can adapt to the evolving demands of democratic governance.

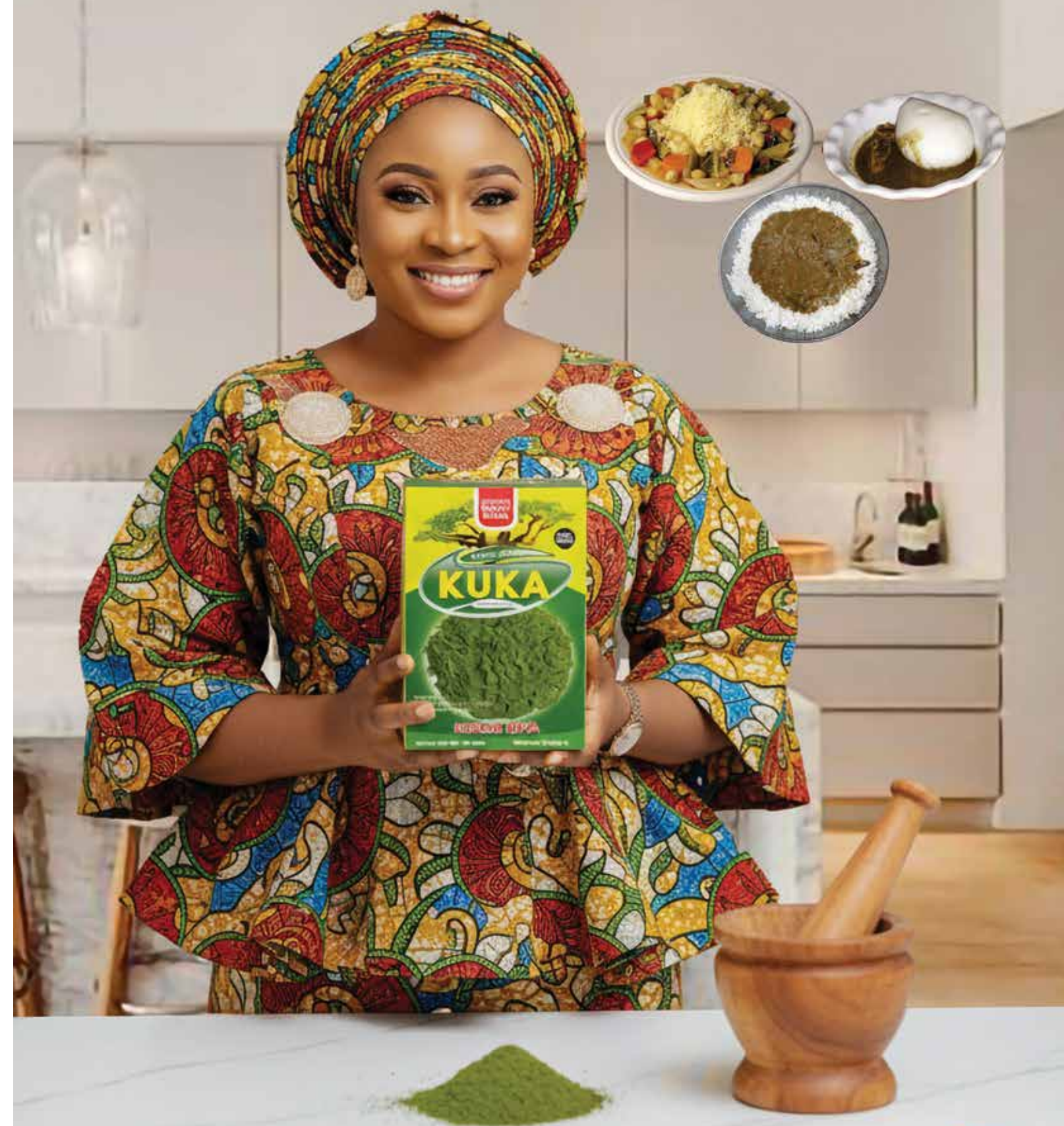
Nigeria stands at a crossroads where democratic aspirations intersect with technological possibilities. The new Electoral Act provides a legal foundation, but the real work lies in how INEC interprets and implements it. A democratic upward approach—anchored in digital innovation, transparency, civic engagement, cybersecurity, collaboration, professionalisation, and continuous learning—offers a pathway to strengthening democracy in the Digital Age. The future of Nigeria's electoral integrity depends not only on laws but on leadership, vision, and the courage to embrace transformation.

Professor Ojo Emmanuel Ademola is the first African Professor of Cybersecurity and Information Technology Management, Global Education Advocate, Chartered Manager, UK Digital Journalist, Strategic Advisor & Prophetic Mobiliser for National Transformation, and General Evangelist of CAC Nigeria and Overseas

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Votes, Voices and Doubts: Young Nigerians Reflect on Democracy and the Road to 2027

By Matthew Eloyi

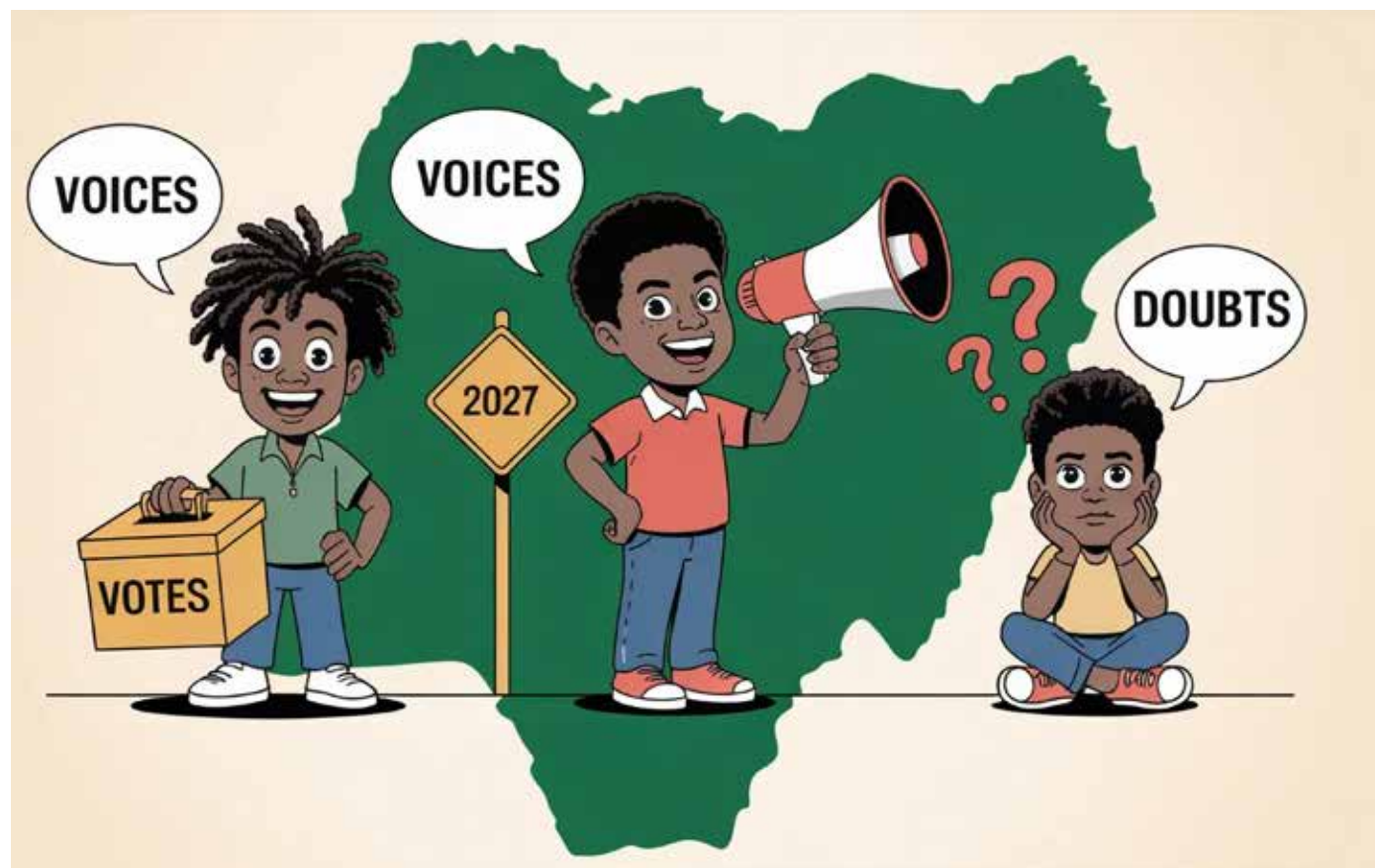
On election mornings in Nigeria, the atmosphere around polling units often carries a mix of tension and hope. Voters arrive early, some determined to cast their ballots before the crowds swell, others curious to witness the process unfold. In recent years, young Nigerians have increasingly formed the largest share of those conversations about politics - on the streets, in classrooms, and across social media platforms. Yet behind the online debates and campaign hashtags lies a deeper question many young citizens are asking: *Does the vote still have the power to bring real change?*

As the country slowly begins to look toward the 2027 general elections, reflections from a cross-section of Nigerian youths reveal a wide spectrum of views about democracy, electoral integrity, and civic participation. Some remain optimistic that the ballot remains the most effective tool for change. Others say their experiences have left them doubtful about the credibility of the system. Together, their voices tell the story of a generation still searching for confidence in the electoral process.

For **Titus Nyafa**, a public affairs commentator and youth advocate from Benue State, the answer remains clear: participation is essential if democracy is to thrive. Nyafa believes the act of voting is one of the most direct ways citizens can influence governance and shape policy direction in Nigeria. According to him, the health of

any democratic system depends largely on how actively citizens engage in it. Even though challenges exist within Nigeria's electoral process, he maintains that withdrawing from participation

logistical challenges and delays in some polling units. Issues surrounding the transmission of results created frustration and raised concerns among voters about the transparency of the



would only weaken democratic institutions further. Nyafa recalls that during the 2023 general elections, there was a remarkable level of enthusiasm among voters, especially young people who felt energised about participating in the process. However, he also observed that the excitement was tempered by

process.

Despite those setbacks, Nyafa says he remains committed to voting in future elections. Rather than discourage him, the experience reinforced his belief that Nigerians must stay engaged and continue to demand improvements to the system. For him, democracy is

strengthened not by perfection but by consistent participation and accountability.

Former students' union leader **Emmanuel Bur** shares a similar belief in the power of the ballot. Bur says his confidence in the voting process comes from the understanding that elections provide an opportunity for citizens to elect competent leaders capable of transforming the country.

Reflecting on the 2023 elections, he said the outcome demonstrated

the power of the electorate. In several parts of the country, political parties that had previously been considered less dominant managed to secure seats in different levels of government. For Bur, that development showed that political change is possible when voters actively participate in elections. He also points to

the persistence of vote buying as evidence that votes still matter. According to him, if ballots carried no significance, politicians would not go to such lengths to influence them. At the same time, Bur acknowledges that many young Nigerians remain hesitant about participating in elections. He attributes the gap between online

political activism and physical turnout to voter apathy rooted in distrust of the electoral process. Allegations of irregularities and systemic manipulation, he says, have created doubts in the minds of many young voters about whether their votes truly count. For **Otsonu Echo Wisdom**, a journalist and community mobilizer based in Abuja, his experience during the 2023 elections offered a different perspective on the electoral process because he served as a Presiding Officer.

Wisdom recalls that the experience was both challenging and revealing. One of the most pressing issues he encountered was the difficulty in transmitting results electronically from polling units due to poor internet connectivity. The delays created tension among voters who expected results to be uploaded immediately after counting. Another issue he highlighted was the welfare of ad-hoc election staff. According to him, many of the temporary officials recruited to assist during elections received stipends that were not only low but also delayed. In some cases, workers had not been paid long after the election period had ended.

Wisdom believes such conditions could discourage young Nigerians from volunteering to assist in future elections. Nevertheless, he says confidence in the system can still be restored if electoral authorities implement credible reforms, ensure fair elections, and improve communication with the public.

For **Echono Ochoche**, his involvement in the 2023 elections also came through service as an ad-hoc election official. However, the experience left him with lingering doubts about the credibility of the system.

He explained that observing the

electoral process closely raised concerns about the relationship between what occurred at polling units and what was eventually reported in official results. Because of that experience, he says he has decided not to serve as an ad-hoc staff member again in future elections.

Instead, he plans to participate simply as a voter. For Ochoche, casting a vote remains important, but he believes the electoral system must become truly independent if it is to earn the trust of the public. Another voice in the conversation is **Engr. Chinedum Elekwachi**, who serves as the Ebonyi State Secretary of the ADC Membership Revalidation, Mobilization and Registration Committee.

Elekwachi believes that the vote still has the potential to bring meaningful change in Nigeria, but he stresses that such change cannot come from individual participation alone. According to him, transformation requires large numbers of citizens who share the same vision for progress to participate collectively in the electoral process.

Reflecting on the 2023 elections, he described the outcome as disappointing and below expectations. Elekwachi alleged that votes were suppressed in some areas and that irregularities affected the credibility of the results. He also recalled incidents in which electoral materials were allegedly seized during violent disruptions. Despite these challenges, he says he remains committed to participating in future elections because he believes citizens have a responsibility to defend their votes and resist anti-democratic practices.

Elekwachi also believes the gap between online activism and physical participation may partly be explained by logistical issues.

Many young Nigerians, he said, live outside the states where they originally registered to vote, making it difficult to travel home during elections. For this reason, he advocates reforms such as diaspora voting or electronic voting systems that would allow citizens to vote regardless of location.

For **Sule Samuel Ondoma**, a sociology graduate from Benue State University who now works as a freelancer, his views about the electoral process were shaped by his experience serving as an ad-hoc staff member during an election in Abuja while he was a member of the National Youth Service Corps. According to Ondoma, he witnessed situations where the results recorded at his polling unit appeared different from figures that later emerged on official platforms. That experience left him questioning whether votes truly determine electoral outcomes. During the 2023 elections, Ondoma also observed widespread vote buying in his home community. He described scenes where money was discreetly handed to voters while they waited in line to cast their ballots.

For him, such practices undermine the credibility of elections and discourage many people who genuinely wish to see positive change. He believes that unless transparency improves and vote buying is addressed, many voters will continue to feel that elections are merely procedural rather than transformative.

Media consultant **Onoja Benedict Paul**, who works in development journalism and documentary production in Kaduna State, shares a similar skepticism about the effectiveness of voting in Nigeria's current electoral environment.

According to him, his experience during the 2023 elections reinforced his belief that the outcome of elections is often

influenced by factors beyond the votes cast by citizens. Paul recalled arriving early at his polling unit near the Kaduna South Local Government Secretariat to ensure he participated in the voting process. After casting his ballot, he remained at the polling unit to observe the counting of votes. Although the votes were counted in his presence, he said the results were not uploaded electronically as many voters had expected. That failure, he argues, created opportunities for manipulation later in the process. Because of this, Paul says he may not be motivated to vote again in 2027 unless electoral authorities make electronic transmission of results mandatory from polling units. Another perspective comes from **Adoyi Alfredo**, who describes himself as a politically conscious young Nigerian struggling with growing disillusionment about the electoral system.

Alfredo says he finds it difficult to believe that a single vote can influence political outcomes in Nigeria. In his view, systemic corruption and entrenched political interests often determine who ultimately assumes power. He recalls approaching the 2023 elections with genuine hope that participation could bring change. However, events that followed the election cycle left him feeling disconnected from the outcome and uncertain about the value of voting.

For Alfredo, social media has become a safer space for political expression than the polling unit. Online platforms allow young Nigerians to voice their frustrations and organise politically without the risks and uncertainties associated with physical participation in elections. Still, he says meaningful reforms, such as transparent digital result transmission and genuine independence for electoral

authorities, could restore his confidence in the process. Not all respondents share such pessimism. A civil servant who chose to remain anonymous expressed a more optimistic view about the power of the electorate.

He points to local elections in the Federal Capital Territory where opposition candidates were able to secure victories as evidence that voter turnout can influence political outcomes. According to him, the success of those candidates demonstrates that when voters mobilise and monitor the counting of ballots at polling units, they can protect the integrity of the electoral process. He also believes the electoral reforms introduced in recent years, including technological innovations in the voting process, could strengthen public confidence if properly implemented.

As Nigeria gradually approaches the next general elections, the voices of these young Nigerians reveal the complex relationship between citizens and the democratic system they inhabit. Some remain hopeful that participation will gradually improve governance and accountability. Others continue to question whether the system truly reflects the will of the people.

What unites them, however, is a shared desire for transparency, fairness, and credibility in the electoral process. Whether through improved technology, stronger enforcement of electoral laws, or greater institutional independence, many believe meaningful reforms are necessary if public trust is to be restored.

Until then, Nigerian youths will continue to debate the power of the ballot - online, in communities, and eventually at polling units, where the promise of democracy will once again be tested.

FEEDING THE FUTURE: How the Nasiru Haladu Danu Foundation Is Investing in Nigeria's Young Generation

By Jerry Adesewo

In many conversations about philanthropy in Nigeria, charity is often associated with immediate relief—food donations, hospital visits, or emergency interventions. Yet a new wave of social impact initiatives is beginning to redefine charity as an investment in the future.

At the centre of that shift is the Nasiru Haladu Danu (NHD) Foundation, whose growing portfolio of programmes reflects a philosophy that charity must not merely alleviate hardship but prepare young people for the world they will inherit.

That

philosophy is best captured in the emerging theme of its work: feeding the future—a concept that goes beyond food and speaks to nourishment of the mind, skills, and opportunities of the next generation.

Charity as an Investment in Youth

The foundation was established with a broad mandate to empower communities through education, healthcare, and sustainable development initiatives aimed at strengthening human capacity and improving lives.

Within that framework, young



people have increasingly become the central focus of its work. Rather than treating youth support as an occasional charitable activity, the foundation has begun designing programmes that place young Nigerians at the core of its long-term social investment strategy.

This approach reflects a simple but powerful belief: Nigeria's greatest resource is its youth population.



Fighting Hunger Where It Hurts Most: The Campus Feeding Initiative.

One of the most visible examples of the foundation's youth-focused initiatives is its daily feeding programme for university students.

At the Federal University Dutse in Jigawa State, the foundation launched an initiative that provided meals for hundreds of students every day during the Ramadan period, ensuring that many undergraduates facing financial hardship could focus on their studies without worrying about food.

The programme is based on a simple reality: hunger undermines

learning.

For students from economically disadvantaged families, the cost of feeding can quietly become a barrier to academic success. By addressing that need directly, the programme transforms charity into an investment in educational performance.

Education as the Core Investment

Perhaps the most striking

demonstration of the NHD Foundation's long-term commitment to youth development is its scholarship programme.

The foundation secured admission for ten students drawn from different wards of Dutse to study Meteorology at the Muhammadu Buhari College of Science and Technology in Katsina State.

The initiative went beyond simply facilitating admission. For the entire three-year duration of their programme, the foundation fully covered: Tuition fees, Academic expenses and other educational needs required for the students' studies.

At the completion of the programme, all ten students graduated with strong academic results, marking the success of the initiative, which is soon to be extended to other parts of northern Nigeria.

In a further step to ensure that the investment translated into employment opportunities, the foundation also shared a recruitment link with the Jigawa State Government, enabling the graduates to pursue career opportunities related to their field of study.

The programme reflects a broader philosophy: education is the most sustainable form of empowerment. Supporting Orphans and Vulnerable Children.

Beyond university students, the foundation has also focused on vulnerable children at the early stages of their education.

The NHD Foundation currently sponsors 50 orphans and vulnerable children studying at Alhuda Islamiyya School in Kudai, Dutse, Jigawa State.

The sponsorship covers: School fees, School uniforms, Learning materials, and other educational expenses associated with their studies.

For many of these children, the support represents the difference between attending school and being left behind by the education system.

The programme reflects the foundation's recognition that the future begins not only in universities but also in classrooms where children first learn to read, write, and imagine possibilities. Empowerment Beyond Aid.

The foundation's programmes also extend to economic empowerment initiatives designed to help young Nigerians become self-reliant. In Daura Emirate, the foundation partnered with community stakeholders to empower individuals with tools and equipment to start small businesses.

Beneficiaries received practical items such as: sewing machines, grinding machines, poultry farming equipment, POS machines and retail tools.

These resources allow recipients—many of them young entrepreneurs—to create sustainable livelihoods. The programme reflects a key principle of the foundation's philosophy: empowerment must go beyond charity.

Creativity as a Pathway for Young Nigerians.

The foundation has also invested in Nigeria's growing creative economy.

Recognising the potential of music, digital production, and media as employment opportunities for young people, the NHD Foundation has supported emerging Northern Nigerian artists with equipment such as: laptops, mobile recording studios, and financial support for creative production. By doing so, the initiative transforms artistic talent into economic opportunity, helping young creatives build sustainable careers in the entertainment and digital media sectors.

Partnerships for Youth Development

Another distinctive feature of the foundation's work is its commitment to collaboration. Through partnerships with



community organisations and youth networks, the foundation has expanded the reach of its empowerment programmes. One notable collaboration with the Murya Daya (One Voice) collective brought together entertainers, youth advocates, and community leaders to distribute empowerment resources to vulnerable young Nigerians.

The initiative demonstrated how philanthropy can intersect with culture and public engagement to inspire and support young people. Health, Education, and the Future Workforce

The foundation's work also extends into healthcare. Through medical outreach programmes in Jigawa State, thousands of residents have received free medical services, addressing critical healthcare gaps in underserved communities. While these initiatives serve entire communities, they also contribute to youth development by creating healthier families and environments where young people can thrive.

Healthy communities, after all,

produce stronger learners and future leaders.

Feeding the Future

The phrase "feeding the future" captures both the symbolism and strategy of the NHD Foundation's work.

On one level, it refers to literal nourishment—feeding students who might otherwise struggle to complete their education.

On another level, it refers to nurturing ambition, creativity, and resilience among young Nigerians.

In a country where youth unemployment and educational challenges remain pressing national issues, such initiatives represent a powerful form of social investment.

They demonstrate that philanthropy can serve not only as compassion but also as foresight.

The Man Behind the Mission

At the heart of the NHD Foundation's work is Nasiru Haladu Danu, whose vision of philanthropy reflects a deep belief in investing in people.

Through the foundation, his commitment to education, youth empowerment, and community development has evolved into a structured platform capable of reaching hundreds of beneficiaries across northern Nigeria. By supporting students, empowering entrepreneurs, and nurturing vulnerable children, the NHD Foundation continues to translate personal success into collective opportunity. In doing so, it embodies a powerful idea: that the most enduring legacy anyone can build is not wealth—but the future of others.

Stolen Futures: Inside the Dark Web of Child Trafficking in Plateau State

By Comfort Pius

A Mother's Vigil, A Child Gone Missing

At dawn in a quiet settlement on the outskirts of Jos, a mother waits by the roadside, clutching a faded photograph. It is the last image she has of her daughter taken three years ago before a "relative" promised to take the girl to the city for school and a better life. The child never returned.

Her story mirrors the silent pain of many families across Plateau State, where children are quietly disappearing lured by promises of education, employment, or care only to vanish into a hidden world of exploitation.

Behind these disappearances lies a complex and deeply entrenched network of child trafficking, thriving on poverty, displacement, weak enforcement, and community silence.

A Growing but Underreported Crisis

Plateau State has increasingly emerged as both a source and transit point for child trafficking in North-Central Nigeria. Children, some barely of school age, are trafficked to urban centres and other states, where they are forced into domestic servitude, street hawking, begging rings, or hazardous labour.

Human rights advocates warn that the scale of the problem is far larger than official figures suggest, as many cases are never formally reported.

"Most parents do not even realise their children have been trafficked," a child-protection officer in Jos said. "They believe

the child is in school or learning a trade, until years pass with no contact."

How Traffickers Operate

Traffickers rarely present themselves as strangers. More often, they operate as relatives or family friends, trusted neighbours, fake recruiters or intermediaries, and individuals posing as benefactors.

They target struggling households, particularly in rural or conflict-affected communities, offering to "help" by taking children away. Once removed from their communities, the children are isolated, exploited, and denied education and family life.

In many cases, victims are moved repeatedly across state lines, making tracking and rescue extremely difficult.

Poverty, Conflict, and Vulnerability

Economic hardship remains the strongest driver of child trafficking in Plateau State. Families affected by unemployment, food insecurity, or displacement resulting from communal violence are more vulnerable to traffickers' deceptive promises.

Children living in informal settlements or displacement camps are particularly at risk, often lacking documentation, structured schooling, or effective protection systems.

"When survival becomes the priority, safeguards collapse," a social worker explained. "That is where traffickers find opportunity."

Prominent Voices Raise the Alarm

Concern over the worsening



situation has drawn the attention of influential figures within and beyond Plateau State.

Former House Committee on Human Rights Chair, Beni Lar, has repeatedly called for stronger enforcement of child-protection laws, warning that weak punishment emboldens traffickers and their collaborators.

Similarly, Jos-born humanitarian and former anti-trafficking chief, Imaan Sulaiman-Ibrahim, has highlighted structural gaps that allow trafficking networks to flourish, stressing the need for

coordinated national and sub-national action.

Within Plateau State, one of the most vocal advocates is Olivia Dazem, Chairperson of the Plateau State Gender and Equal Opportunities Commission. She has warned that despite awareness campaigns, child trafficking persists due to greed, ignorance, and poor community vigilance.

"Children are not commodities to be exchanged," Dazem has said at stakeholder engagements. "They are the collective responsibility of society, and anyone who aids their exploitation will face the law."

Under her leadership, the commission has worked with security agencies to rescue trafficked children and pursue suspects, while pushing for the enforcement of child-rights and anti-violence laws already domesticated in the state.

Mothers Speak: A Call for Justice and Deterrence

Beyond officials and advocates, parents across Plateau State are raising their voices, demanding decisive action.

Mrs. Lengkat Tanimu, a mother of two girls in Jos, said the continued trafficking of children was frightening and unacceptable.

"As a mother, it is painful to imagine that a child can be taken away and her future destroyed," she said. "Government must stop treating child trafficking lightly. Traffickers should be seriously

punished so it will serve as a deterrent to others."

She argued that weak penalties encourage repeat offences and undermine public confidence in the justice system.

"When offenders are arrested and nothing happens, it sends the wrong message," Tanimu added. "If people see real punishment, parents will be more willing to report cases, and children will be safer."

Her concerns reflect a growing public demand for visible justice and accountability.

Weak Enforcement, Few Convictions

Despite existing legal frameworks, enforcement remains a major challenge. Arrests are sporadic, prosecutions slow, and convictions rare.

Activists cite poor funding of enforcement agencies, limited investigative capacity, reluctance to report relatives, and out-of-court settlements or intimidation.

In several cases, families withdraw complaints under pressure or inducement, allowing traffickers to return to business.

The Human Cost

For trafficked children, the damage is often lifelong. Many suffer disrupted education, physical and emotional abuse, and deep psychological trauma. Even after rescue, reintegration is difficult.

A teenage boy rescued from forced labour outside Plateau told investigators he worked for years without pay. "They said if I tried to escape, I would be arrested," he recalled.

Recommendations: Turning Outrage into Action

Ending child trafficking in Plateau State requires urgent, coordinated,

and sustained action.

- Strengthen community surveillance through traditional and religious leaders.
- Enforce existing laws with firm prosecution and convictions.
- Expand grassroots awareness in rural and vulnerable communities.
- Support at-risk families through economic empowerment and social protection.
- Improve inter-agency collaboration among security agencies, NGOs, and transport unions.
- Prioritise rehabilitation, education, and psychosocial support for rescued children.
- Regulate child movement through strict transport verification.
- Sustain media advocacy to demand accountability.

Protecting children, advocates insist, is not optional it is a moral and legal duty.

A Future Worth Protecting

Child trafficking is not an abstract crime. It is happening in homes, motor parks, and communities across Plateau State.

Until poverty is addressed, laws enforced, and communities fully engaged, traffickers will continue to steal childhoods and futures.

For the mother still waiting by the roadside, hope remains fragile. But with sustained action and collective resolve, Plateau State can reclaim its children and restore futures that were nearly lost.

Nigeria's Aviation Rebound: Investment, Connectivity and the Reform Push Under Keyamo

By Jerry Adesewo & Patience Bitrus

Nigeria's aviation sector is gradually entering a new phase of reform and strategic expansion, driven by deliberate policy direction and renewed investor engagement. In recent months, the Federal Ministry of Aviation and Aerospace Development has pursued a mix of diplomatic aviation agreements, infrastructure upgrades and investment mobilization designed to reposition Nigeria as a regional aviation hub.

At the center of this push is the Minister of Aviation and Aerospace Development, Festus Keyamo, whose ministry has adopted an approach that combines international partnerships with structural reforms aimed at improving airline capacity and expanding connectivity.

From the launch of a historic direct flight between Nigeria and Brazil to plans for an aircraft acquisition investment summit, these developments are beginning to reshape perceptions of Nigeria's aviation sector and signal a deliberate attempt to address longstanding structural challenges.

A Strategic Reset in Nigeria's Aviation Policy

Nigeria's aviation sector has long been recognized as one of Africa's most promising yet underperforming markets. With a population exceeding 200 million and an expanding middle class,

the country possesses enormous passenger traffic potential. Yet for decades, domestic airlines have struggled with limited aircraft fleets, financing constraints, infrastructure gaps and inconsistent policy frameworks.

Since assuming office in August 2023, Keyamo has attempted to reposition the ministry as both a regulator and a strategic facilitator for industry growth. The ministry is responsible for aviation policy, airport development and the oversight of aviation agencies across the country.

The emerging policy direction focuses on three major pillars:

- Expanding international connectivity
- Unlocking aircraft financing for Nigerian airlines
- Attracting investment into aviation infrastructure



Recent developments suggest that these goals are gradually translating into concrete outcomes.

Nigeria-Brazil Direct Flight: A Historic Aviation Milestone

One of the most symbolic achievements of the ministry's reform agenda is the launch of a direct air route between Nigeria

The agreement was followed by the inaugural flight operated by Nigerian carrier Air Peace from São Paulo to Lagos, marking the first direct air link between Nigeria and South America by a Nigerian airline.

The new route significantly reduces travel time between both countries

to roughly seven hours and eliminates the need for passengers to transit through Europe or the Middle East.

Beyond passenger convenience, the route carries wider economic and diplomatic implications.

Nigeria and Brazil share deep historical, cultural and commercial ties, particularly with the Yoruba diaspora community in Brazil. The direct flight is expected to boost tourism, trade, cultural exchanges and business mobility between Africa's largest economy and Latin

America's biggest market.

and Brazil.

In August 2025, Nigeria and Brazil signed a Bilateral Air Service Agreement (BASA), paving the way for direct flights between the two countries.

For Nigeria's aviation industry, the route also signals a strategic shift: positioning Nigerian airlines as intercontinental connectors rather than merely domestic carriers.

Aircraft Acquisition: The Next Frontier

While international routes expand Nigeria's aviation reach, the ability of domestic airlines to sustain such growth ultimately depends on fleet capacity.

Aircraft acquisition remains one of the most persistent challenges facing Nigerian carriers. High financing costs, currency volatility and the perceived risk profile of the Nigerian aviation market have historically limited airlines' access to global leasing markets.

To address this challenge, the Federal Government has announced plans to host the Nigeria Aircraft Acquisition and Investment Summit. The summit will bring together aircraft manufacturers, global leasing companies, financial institutions, airline operators and policymakers to explore financing solutions for Nigerian carriers.

The summit, scheduled to hold in Lagos, is expected to serve as a platform for connecting Nigerian airlines with international lessors and investors interested in the country's aviation market.

Industry analysts believe that improving access to aircraft financing could dramatically change the trajectory of Nigeria's aviation sector.

Most Nigerian airlines operate relatively small fleets compared with their counterparts in other emerging markets. This limits route expansion, increases operational pressures and contributes to frequent flight disruptions during peak travel periods.

If the summit succeeds in creating viable financing pathways, it could

unlock fleet expansion across domestic carriers and improve the reliability of air travel in Nigeria.

Positioning Nigeria as West Africa's Aviation Hub

Beyond aircraft acquisition, the Ministry of Aviation is also exploring a broader transformation of the country's airport ecosystem.

A key element of this strategy is the concept of the "aerotropolis"—an airport-centered urban development model that integrates aviation infrastructure with logistics, commerce and industrial zones.

The goal is to transform major Nigerian airports into economic hubs capable of attracting investment and stimulating regional economic activity.

Under this model, airports become more than passenger terminals; they evolve into integrated economic corridors that support cargo logistics, manufacturing, tourism and trade.

If implemented successfully, this approach could help Nigeria compete with emerging aviation hubs such as Addis Ababa, Nairobi and Kigali.

Infrastructure Expansion and New International Gateways

The ministry has also supported efforts to expand Nigeria's international aviation gateways.

In November 2025, the Federal Government approved full international status for Victor Attah International Airport in Uyo, enabling it to process international flights and connect Akwa Ibom State directly to global destinations.

The upgrade is expected to boost tourism, trade and business activity in the South-South region while reducing pressure on Lagos and Abuja airports.

Such developments align with the broader strategy of decentralizing international air traffic across multiple Nigerian cities.

Rebuilding Investor Confidence

For decades, one of the biggest obstacles to aviation growth in Nigeria has been investor confidence.

Global aircraft lessors and financiers have historically viewed the Nigerian market as high risk due to policy inconsistency, regulatory challenges and currency restrictions.

Recognizing this challenge, the aviation ministry has intensified engagement with international aviation stakeholders, including financiers, leasing companies and aircraft manufacturers.

By presenting Nigeria as a viable and reforming aviation market, the government hopes to restore confidence and attract long-term investment into the sector.

The Leadership Factor

Reform in the aviation sector often hinges on political will and leadership continuity.

Keyamo, a lawyer and former human rights activist appointed aviation minister in August 2023, has positioned himself as a reform-minded figure seeking to rebuild trust between government and industry stakeholders.

His approach has emphasized diplomacy, international partnerships and investor engagement—an approach

reflected in initiatives such as the Brazil aviation agreement and the aircraft acquisition summit.

Whether these initiatives ultimately transform the sector will depend on consistent implementation and sustained policy stability.

A Sector Poised for Takeoff

Nigeria's aviation industry stands at a critical moment.

The launch of the Nigeria–Brazil direct flight represents a significant expansion of the country's international aviation footprint. The planned aircraft acquisition summit could unlock new financing pathways for domestic airlines. Meanwhile, infrastructure upgrades and airport development strategies are gradually reshaping the aviation landscape.

Together, these developments suggest that Nigeria's aviation sector is undergoing a strategic recalibration.

The success of this transformation will depend on whether the current reform momentum can translate into lasting institutional improvements. If sustained, the policies emerging from the Ministry of Aviation could position Nigeria not only as West Africa's largest aviation market, but as one of the continent's most influential air transport hubs.

For now, the industry appears to be moving from stagnation toward renewal—one policy, one partnership and one runway at a time.

Poet Hassy: Poetry, Peace and the Power of Voice

By Jerry Adesewo

In Nigeria's vibrant spoken-word and creative advocacy space, Hassana Shehu Magaji, popularly known by her artistic name Hassy, is steadily emerging as one of the country's most compelling young voices. A poet, TEDx speaker, peace advocate, and public health professional, Hassy represents a generation of Nigerian women using creativity not merely for artistic expression, but as a powerful instrument for dialogue, unity, and national reflection.

For Hassy, poetry is far more than performance. It is a bridge—connecting art with advocacy, emotion with empathy, and creativity with nation-building. Through carefully crafted verses, she explores themes of peace, identity, and resilience, reminding audiences that words can heal wounds, inspire courage, and rebuild bridges in a society often divided by misunderstanding.

Behind the applause and recognition, however, is a deeply reflective young woman who believes that the most meaningful art comes from honesty and purpose.

"Beyond the stage lights," she says, "I am a daughter of faith, resilience, and rhythm—someone who feels deeply and turns pain

into poetry instead of silence."

From Quiet Beginnings to Public Voice

Hassy's journey into poetry began



quietly. Before the recognition and national appearances, she was simply a young woman who believed words had the power to bring meaning to life's experiences. Like many artists, her creative journey grew from introspection and the gradual realization that her voice deserved space.

The turning point, she explains, came when she accepted that believing in herself was not optional but necessary.

"It did not happen overnight," she reflects. "It unfolded through patience, disappointment, and growth. In that process, I discovered that believing in myself is the greatest favor I owe myself."

That realization became the foundation of her artistic identity. Rather than waiting for validation, she chose to grow into the voice she once wished someone else would give her.

Today, that voice resonates across multiple platforms, blending poetry with advocacy and civic engagement.

A Poet Shaped by Purpose

Born Hassana Shehu Magaji, Hassy has developed a distinctive reputation as a "military poet," a creative voice closely connected to Nigeria's security and civic communities. Her poetry often reflects the

human stories behind national service, offering emotional insight into the lives and sacrifices of soldiers who defend the country's peace.

Her background as a Public Health graduate also shapes her perspective. Hassy sees poetry not only as an art form but also as a tool for community awareness, social responsibility, and empowerment.

"Informed communities are empowered communities," she says. "When people understand their health, their rights, and their responsibilities, they become active participants in building a better society."

Through this lens, her work addresses issues such as peacebuilding, youth empowerment, gender equity, and national unity, positioning poetry as a platform for civic dialogue.

Overcoming Creative Barriers

Like many young creatives in Nigeria, Hassy's journey has not been without challenges. One of her biggest obstacles has been navigating spaces where artistic expression—especially spoken-word poetry—is sometimes undervalued.

The challenge can be even more pronounced for young women attempting to assert themselves in public cultural spaces.

“One of my toughest challenges has been navigating spaces where creativity is undervalued, especially as a young Nigerian woman,” she says.

Her response was to invest in herself and remain authentic.

“I honed my craft and stopped shrinking to make others comfortable. Growth came when I chose courage over doubt.” There were moments of uncertainty, nights when she wondered if the path she had chosen was worth it. What kept her going, she says, was a sense of purpose larger than personal success.

“I realized my voice is not just for me. It is for every girl watching silently, wondering if she too can rise.”

Creativity Meets Collaboration

Hassy's work has also intersected with Nigeria's entertainment and cultural sectors. One notable collaboration involved actress Rahama Sadau and the Arewa

International Film Festival Committee, where she contributed to a spoken-word promotional project endorsed by the Federal Ministry of Art, Culture, and Creative Economy.

Her artistic journey has also taken her to platforms such as the Bauchi Young Creatives Forum Anniversary, the Purple Women's Forum, and the Bauchi State 46th Anniversary celebrations, where she used poetry to celebrate culture, identity, and civic responsibility.

Through these collaborations, she continues to demonstrate that art can transcend barriers and inspire conversations that shape society. Redefining Impact Despite growing recognition, Hassy measures success differently from many performers.

For her, impact is not defined by the size of an audience or the scale of applause.

“Impact is the message that says, ‘Your words changed me,’” she says.

Often, the most meaningful feedback comes from young girls who tell her that hearing her poetry gave them confidence to express themselves.

“That,” she says, “is the real impact.”

The Nigerian Woman Today

When asked what it means to be a young Nigerian woman today, Hassy speaks with quiet conviction.

“Being a young Nigerian woman means carrying strength and softness at the same time,” she explains. “It means navigating challenges with grace while dreaming boldly in a society that

sometimes tells you to dream smaller.”

Among the many challenges Nigerian girls face today, she believes the most important resource they need is voice.

“When a girl has a voice, she can demand opportunity. When she has a voice, she can call for protection. Voice is power.”

Inspired by Strength

Hassy credits much of her inspiration to her mother, whose determination to pursue education and personal growth despite family responsibilities left a lasting impression.

“She showed me that a woman is stronger than she imagines,” she says.

She also draws inspiration from global and Nigerian female leaders such as Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, as well as everyday Nigerian women—entrepreneurs, mothers, and creators—who continue to break barriers in their own spaces.

A Voice Still Rising

For all her achievements, Hassy's journey is only beginning. Her work continues to evolve at the intersection of art, advocacy, and youth empowerment, placing her among a new generation of creatives shaping conversations about peace, identity, and national unity.

In a country where many young women are searching for platforms to express themselves, voices like hers offer a powerful reminder: sometimes the most meaningful leadership begins with the courage to speak.

For Hassana Shehu Magaji—Poet Hassy—that voice is still rising.

Michael B. Jordan Wins 2026 Oscar for Best Actor

By Patience Bitrus



Forest Whitaker
Best Actor, OSCAR, 2006



Micheal B. Jordan
Best Actor, OSCAR, 2026



Chiwetel Ejiofor
Best Actor, OSCAR Nominee 2014

The 2026 Academy Awards produced a defining moment in contemporary cinema as American actor Michael B. Jordan claimed the Oscar for Best Actor for his riveting performance in the film *Sinners*. The win places Jordan among the elite performers recognized by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and marks another milestone in a career that has steadily grown from promising beginnings to global prominence.

Directed by Ryan Coogler, *Sinners* emerged as one of the most talked-about films of the awards season. The supernatural thriller, set in 1930s Mississippi, blends blues music, racial history and elements of horror in a story that explores segregation, power and survival. Jordan delivers a complex dual performance as twin brothers who establish a blues club while confronting both supernatural forces and the harsh realities of racial oppression. The film attracted widespread acclaim and made history with a record-breaking 16 Oscar nominations, underlining its cultural and artistic impact.

Jordan's Oscar triumph represents the culmination of nearly two decades of work in Hollywood. Born in California in 1987, he first gained attention on television with

roles in *The Wire* and *Friday Night Lights*. His breakthrough came with Coogler's 2013 film *Fruitvale Station*, where his portrayal of Oscar Grant earned critical praise. He later became a global star through blockbuster roles in *Creed* and Marvel's *Black Panther*, where his performance as the complex antagonist Erik Killmonger earned widespread acclaim. Over the years, Jordan has expanded his influence beyond acting, taking on roles as a producer and director, further cementing his reputation as one of the most versatile figures of his generation.

Looking at the broader history of the Best Actor category, the United States remains the most dominant country in the award's nearly century-long history. American actors have won the majority of the awards, reflecting the central role of Hollywood in the global film industry. In the last two decades alone, actors from the United States have claimed more wins than any other nation, with the United Kingdom emerging as the closest competitor thanks to stars such as Anthony Hopkins, Gary Oldman and Eddie Redmayne. This pattern illustrates the continued influence of the Anglo-American film tradition within the Academy's voting body.

African and African-descended

actors have also made important contributions to the history of the Best Actor category. The most historic breakthrough came in 1964 when Sidney Poitier won the Oscar for *Lilies of the Field*, becoming the first Black actor to win Best Actor and opening doors for generations of performers.

In more recent decades, actors of African heritage have continued to make their mark. Forest Whitaker, for example, won the Best Actor Oscar for his portrayal of Ugandan dictator Idi Amin in *The Last King of Scotland* (2006). Meanwhile, Chiwetel Ejiofor, a British actor of Nigerian descent, earned a Best Actor nomination for his powerful role in *12 Years a Slave*, demonstrating the increasing visibility of African talent on the global stage.

Michael B. Jordan's victory therefore sits within a broader narrative of expanding representation and evolving storytelling in Hollywood. His performance in *Sinners* not only captured the imagination of audiences but also reinforced the Academy's recognition of bold, culturally resonant performances. As the curtain falls on the 2026 Oscars, Jordan's name joins the distinguished roll call of actors whose work has defined the art of cinematic performance.

Bam Adebayo and the Nigerian Legacy in Global Basketball

Sport Desk

When Bam Adebayo erupted for a historic scoring performance that stunned the basketball world, it was more than just another night in the National Basketball Association. It was a moment that reminded the world of the growing global influence of athletes with Nigerian heritage.

On that unforgettable night with the Miami Heat, Adebayo delivered one of the most remarkable individual displays in modern basketball, scoring an astonishing 83 points in a single game. The

feat placed him among the most elite scoring performances in NBA history, trailing only the legendary 100-point game by Wilt Chamberlain and surpassing the famous

81-point performance by Kobe Bryant**.

For a player widely celebrated for his defense, versatility, and leadership rather than scoring explosions, the performance shocked analysts and electrified fans.

Yet the story of Bam

Adebayo extends far beyond a single record-breaking game.

A Nigerian Name on the Global Stage

Though born in the United States, Adebayo's heritage traces to Nigeria. His surname—Adebayo—is a Yoruba name meaning “the crown meets joy.”

Like many athletes in the NBA today, he belongs to a growing generation of players with Nigerian roots whose influence now spans the global basketball landscape.

Nigeria has quietly become one of the most powerful talent pipelines in the sport. Dozens of players with Nigerian ancestry have appeared in the NBA over the past two decades, shaping the league with their athleticism, discipline, and competitive drive.

Nigeria's Expanding Basketball Dynasty

Adebayo stands in a remarkable lineage of global stars with Nigerian heritage.

At the foundation of that legacy is Hakeem Olajuwon, widely regarded as one of the greatest centers in basketball history and a two-time NBA

champion with the Houston Rockets.

Another towering figure is Giannis Antetokounmpo, the two-time MVP of the Milwaukee Bucks. Although he represents Greece internationally, Antetokounmpo is the son of Nigerian immigrants and proudly acknowledges his Yoruba heritage.

modest circumstances before rising through high school basketball, excelling at the University of Kentucky, and eventually becoming one of the most important players in Miami Heat history.

Standing at 6'9", Adebayo is known as one of the most versatile big men in the NBA—capable of defending multiple positions, rebounding with authority, and initiating offense as a playmaker.

The 83-point explosion, however, revealed a new dimension to his game: scoring dominance capable of rewriting basketball history.

A Symbol Beyond Statistics

In the end, Bam Adebayo's record-breaking performance is about more than numbers.

It is about identity.

It is about the journey of a young athlete carrying a Nigerian name onto one of the world's biggest sporting stages.

And as Nigeria's growing lineage of basketball stars continues to redefine global sport—from Olajuwon to Antetokounmpo and beyond—Adebayo's historic night stands as another powerful reminder:

The Nigerian imprint on world basketball is not fading.

It is only growing stronger.



The Nigerian footprint continues through several other stars across the league, including Victor Oladipo, OG Anunoby, Josh Okogie, Precious Achiuwa, and Al-Farouq Aminu—all of whom have helped expand the Nigerian influence across the NBA.

Together they represent a remarkable diaspora phenomenon: a country whose cultural and athletic DNA continues to shape global basketball.

From Humble Beginnings to NBA Stardom

Adebayo's rise mirrors the classic sports narrative of resilience and determination.

Raised by a single mother in North Carolina, he grew up in



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