



FMYD
FEDERAL MINISTRY OF
YOUTH DEVELOPMENT



Nigerian Youth Dream Charter



POLICY INNOVATION CENTRE



GS-25

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POLICY INNOVATION CENTRE





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THEME
New Voices & New Approaches
for Accelerating an Inclusive Society

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Glossary of Key Terms

AI	Artificial Intelligence
AU	African Union
BSc	Bachelor of Science
CBT	Computer-Based Test
EFCC	Economic and Financial Crimes Commission
FCT	Federal Capital Territory
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HND	Higher National Diploma
ICPC	Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IDP / IDPs	Internally Displaced Person(s)
IKJ	Ikeja
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
IT	Information Technology
KII	Key Informant Interview
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics
NCC	Nigerian Communications Commission
NEET	Not in Employment, Education, or Training
NEMA	National Emergency Management Agency
NEMIS	National Education Management Information System
NYCN	National Youth Council of Nigeria
NYSC	National Youth Service Corps
PWD / PWDs	Person(s) with Disabilities
Q1	First Quarter
Q2	Second Quarter
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
U.S.	United States
UN	United Nations
UN DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USITA	United States International Trade Administration





Forward

The Nigerian Youth Dream Charter is a different kind of document. It was not commissioned by government and handed down to young people. It was developed by Nigerian youth themselves through direct engagement across six states, drawing on the experiences and testimonies of twenty young Nigerians from diverse backgrounds, and informed by a rigorous review of national and international evidence. The result is a Charter rooted in lived experience and shaped by the voices of young Nigerians themselves.

I have read this document with attention and humility. The picture it presents is not always comfortable for those of us in government. It highlights a persistent gap between the policies we make and the realities young Nigerians continue to navigate: labour markets where connections can sometimes matter more than competence; programmes whose implementation does not always match their promise; and opportunities that do not always reach those who need them most. These are not abstract policy concerns. They are realities that affect the lives and aspirations of millions of young Nigerians.

The Federal Ministry of Youth Development exists to help close that gap. Our mandate is not simply to speak for Nigerian youth, but to create the conditions in which they can speak for themselves, participate meaningfully, access opportunities, and thrive. This Charter is, in that sense, both an assessment of the gaps that remain and a practical roadmap for addressing them.

I am particularly struck by the Charter's insistence on measurability. Each demand is paired with a defined indicator of success. That emphasis on measurable outcomes is important. Nigerian youth are not asking only for promises; they are asking for commitments backed by timelines, accountability and demonstrable results. That is a standard I welcome, and one to which the Ministry must remain responsive.

I wish to express my appreciation to the Policy Innovation Centre for the rigour and care that went into supporting the development of this Charter, and in particular to Dr Osasuyi Dirisu for her strategic oversight and commitment to an evidence-based, youth-led process. I also acknowledge with gratitude

the role of the National Youth Council of Nigeria in providing an institutional platform for this work, as well as the valuable support of the Federal Ministry's liaison officers, Ms Kehinde Awujoola and Ms Stella Ukeje, in facilitating the policy review process.

Above all, I thank the twenty young Nigerians who shared their experiences, perspectives and aspirations with honesty and courage. Their voices are at the heart of this document. Their vision of a Nigeria that is fair, accountable, safe and alive with opportunity is a vision worth working towards.

The responsibility now is to translate the aspirations expressed in this Charter into action. The Federal Ministry of Youth Development commits to engaging seriously and substantively with its demands and recommendations, and to strengthening the partnership between young Nigerians and the institutions established to serve them. Nigerian youth continue to invest in this country through their labour, creativity, enterprise and enduring faith in its potential. Our institutions must, in turn, continue to invest in their capacity, opportunities and future.



Ayodele Olawande
Ayodele Olawande
Honourable Minister

7th August 2026

Acknowledgements

The Young Nigerians who Shared their Stories: This Charter is built on the testimonies of 20 young Nigerians who participated in the background research that underpins this work. Drawn from Adamawa, Benue, Edo, Ebonyi, Lagos, and Kaduna — rural and urban communities, young women and men, persons with disabilities, and youth from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds — they spoke their truth with candour about the realities of their lives and conviction about the futures they are determined to build. This document quotes them throughout as evidence. Every core demand in this Charter traces back, directly or indirectly, to what they said. Although their names are withheld to protect their privacy, their contributions are the Charter's most important source of authority.

To every young Nigerian who shared their story, frustration, and vision in the course of this work: this Charter is your document. Its purpose is to make your demands visible, and hold those in power accountable for meeting them.

The Charter's Lead Authors: Four young Nigerians (two male and two female) led the drafting of this Charter: Adanna Omeje, Prince Dirisu, Aminat Sanni, and Gideon Ekong. These youths' participation was not ceremonial; they brought their knowledge, lived experiences, and vision for Nigeria's future into every aspect of the Charter's development. This document belongs, first and foremost, to them and to the generation they represent.

National Youth Council of Nigeria: The representatives of the National Youth Council of Nigeria (NYCN) helped co-create this Charter, providing an institutional platform without which conceptualizing this Charter would not have been possible. Their openness to a youth-led policy process, their recognition of the need to include the voices of all Nigerian youth, and their support for a formal, evidence-based Charter that moves beyond consultation toward commitment reflect the kind of institutional leadership this document calls on all of Nigeria to demonstrate.

Federal Ministry of Youth and Development: The FMYD acknowledges, with gratitude, the support of Ms Kehinde Awujoola and Ms Stella Ukeje of the Federal Ministry of Youth and Development. Their support ensured that the Charter's young authors had access to the institutional context essential to grounding this work in Nigeria's existing governance architecture.

Policy Innovation Center: We extend our deep appreciation to the research team at the Policy Innovation Center, whose innovation, flexibility, and boundless patience made the data gathering possible. The management of the Policy Innovation Center (PIC) provided the institutional home, resources, and enabling environment that brought this Charter from concept to reality. Their commitment to research that fosters inclusion and bridges social disparities, as well as evidence-based policy development, is the foundation on which this Charter stands.



Dr. Maryam Ismaila Keshinro,
Permanent Secretary,
Federal Ministry of Youth Development
7th September 2026

GENDER SUMMIT 2025 YOUTH PANEL



01

***CONTEXT AND
PURPOSE***



Section 1: A Declaration by Nigerian Youth

Section Purpose



This introductory section defines the purpose and context of the Charter, clarifies its intended audience, and outlines the motivations underpinning its development. It serves as the guiding foundation for the principles and commitments presented throughout the document.

We are Nigeria's youth and we constitute Nigeria's majority.

We are the traders and farmers, the graduates and skilled workers, the entrepreneurs and caregivers who sustain families and communities across 36 states and the FCT. The United Nations projects that Nigeria's youth population will double by 2050, placing immense and growing pressure on every system of opportunity, infrastructure, and public service in this country (UN DESA, 2022). Nigerian youth are not a peripheral concern of national policy; we are its central demographic reality. The critical question for national planning is whether Nigeria is prepared to invest in its youth population. The evidence gathered in developing this Charter suggests that, to date, that investment has fallen far short of what is required.

Nigerian youth have grown up in a country of considerable and documented potential, one whose institutional performance has not kept pace with its demographic and economic possibilities. Labour markets reward connection over competence. Programs announced in the name of youth repeatedly fail to reach those who need them most. The systematic exclusion of ordinary youth from institutions that claim to serve them; documented in national and international research, and confirmed directly by the young women and men whose testimonies form the foundation of this Charter, represents a structural deficit in Nigeria's social contract with its youth.

Yet Nigerian youth have not disengaged.

Despite pervasive structural barriers, Nigerian youth continue to aspire, to work, to innovate, and to contribute; often under conditions that demand exceptional resilience. As one respondent in our primary research observed:

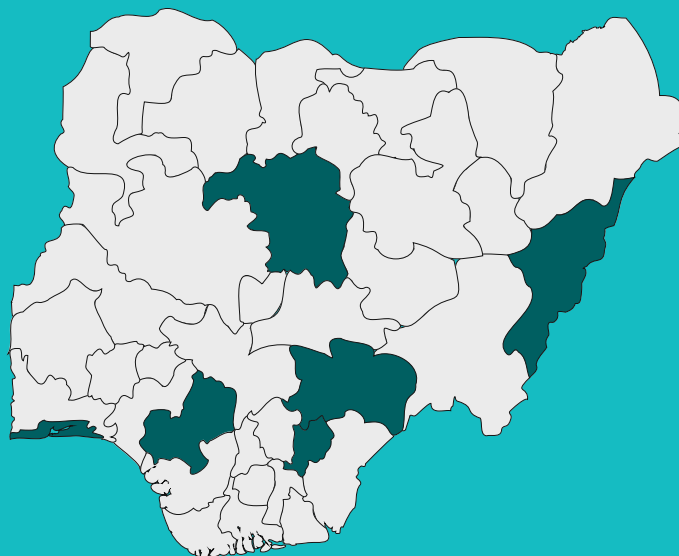


Here you still have a fertile ground, a fertile society, where whatever you do, there are solutions.

Male, 34, Urban Area, Benue

This Charter reflects that conviction. It is grounded in the understanding that Nigeria's development cannot succeed without the full, equitable, and structured inclusion of its youth in every dimension of national life.

This Charter was developed through direct engagement with Nigerian youth across six states: **Adamawa, Benue, Edo, Ebonyi, Lagos, and Kaduna**, spanning rural and urban communities, involving young men and women, persons with disabilities, and youth from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds. Their voices, substantiated by a comprehensive review of national and international literature, constitute the evidence for every commitment articulated here. In essence, this is a document drawn from the lived realities of Nigerian youth.



States covered

Adamawa, Benue, Edo, Ebonyi, Lagos, Kaduna, 6 states, chosen to represent all 6 geopolitical regions of Nigeria

The Nigerian Youth Dream Charter is addressed to: the Federal Government of Nigeria and all its agencies; state and local governments across all 36 states and the FCT; the National Assembly; Nigeria's private sector and employers; civil society organisations and faith communities; international development partners; and every Nigerian citizen with a stake in this country's future.

Its mandate is to translate the documented aspirations and concrete demands of Nigeria's youth into measurable policy commitments, and to establish the accountability structures through which those commitments will be tracked and enforced. This Charter is intended as a social contract, grounded in evidence, anchored in rights, and binding in expectation.

Section 2: Nigeria's Youth in Context

Section Purpose



The purpose of this section is to outline the demographics, population distribution, and socioeconomic realities of Nigerian youths. By looking at empirical data, we can understand who young Nigerians are and where they live, including the dynamics between rural and urban populations. This section also highlights the core economic, educational, and social challenges youth face, highlighting how gender, geographical distribution, and physical ability intersect to shape their opportunities as documented.

Situation Statement

Nigeria is an overwhelmingly young nation with an estimated total population of 237 million people of which 70% are young people aged 19-35 United Nations Population Fund (2025). The lack of sufficient economic opportunities has turned this potential demographic advantage into a survival crisis. This has forced millions of young people to leave struggling rural communities and migrate to already overcrowded urban centres, where they face extreme high costs of living and intense competition for scarce resources.

This migration feeds directly into a precarious economic landscape where the vast majority of active young workers find themselves trapped in the informal sector just to get by, without formal contracts, stability, or social safety nets. Young women are disproportionately pushed into the lowest-earning informal jobs, while Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) face near-total exclusion from schools and workplaces due to systemic neglect:



Most people believe that because somebody is disabled as a youth, they cannot achieve anything, they cannot do anything. At least give them a chance, let them show what they are worth.

Female, Urban PWD, Edo

Rather than chasing extraordinary wealth, the aspiration of most young Nigerians is simple, dignified self-sufficiency; the basic ability to feed their families and run a secure small business. However, this modest dream is often made difficult to impossible by a system where access to opportunities relies heavily on personal connections:



...to feel the government is aware that there is a citizen [sic]. That opportunities are presented by merit, by your ability to present something, by the fact that you have something to offer not just that they are giving you something because of who you know

Male, 28, Urban, Kaduna South

This exclusion is why a formal, youth-led Dream Charter is a national necessity.

Youth Vision



We, the youth of Nigeria, envision a nation where our massive population is celebrated as our greatest asset and the driving force of our national progress. We foresee a society where a young person's gender, geographic region, or physical ability no longer limits their chances of getting an education or earning a living. In this future, we see a country built on merit, where opportunities are open to all and young citizens can build stable, independent lives through their own skills and hard work.

Success looks like



- * Government-enabled open-access, and digitized recruitment portals.
- * 5% of new public sector employments are filled by Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) and IDP's.
- * Reasonable accommodations for PWD's including accessibility upgrades of public transport systems and all public buildings.

Core Demands



1. Government must invest in rural educational and economic infrastructure to close regional gaps and provide young people with equal opportunities in their home communities, reducing the pressure of forced migration to urban centres.
2. Government shall create basic social safety nets and micro-funding support specifically designed for youth in the informal sector, helping them protect their small businesses and achieve stable, self-sufficient livelihoods.
3. Government must enforce policies that protect the rights of young women and Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in schools and workplaces, ensuring they have equal access to education, fair recruitment, and physically accessible environments.
4. Government shall transition all public recruitment and youth development programs to transparent, merit-based, public accessed digital platforms to ensure every young Nigerian has a fair chance based on their actual ability and qualifications, rather than personal connections.

Section 3: Core Principles of the Charter

Section Purpose



This Charter is grounded on eight foundational principles. Collectively, they define the values underpinning all our demands, the rights we, as Nigerian youth, are entitled to claim, and our expectations of government and all duty-bearers. Each commitment is presented below with a diagnosis of the current situation, a statement of our collective vision, specific and actionable demands addressed to federal and state governments, and measurable indicators by which progress will be tracked.

01 Dignity

Situational Statement

Nigerian youth exist in a society whose formal systems; employment, education, and social protection routinely fail to recognise their worth as citizens and rights-holders. The structural exclusion documented throughout national and international research is not incidental; it reflects a persistent gap between Nigeria's constitutional commitments and the daily experience of millions of young people. Programs designed in the name of youth consistently fail to reach those who need them most, and labour markets reward connection over competence. This pattern of systemic exclusion represents a breach of the fundamental principle enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights" (UN General Assembly, 1948) Art 1. Nigeria's own National Youth Policy positions youth as citizens and rights-holders deserving of this protection (FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA 2019.), yet the distance between that stated commitment and lived reality remains wide.

This deficit is compounded by an institutional culture that treats youth as passive recipients of government beneficence rather than as active agents whose participation in public life is a constitutional right. The result is a generation that is asked to bear the costs of Nigeria's structural challenges while being denied meaningful involvement in the decisions that shape them.

Dignity, as understood in this Charter, is not simply the absence of humiliation. It is the active, institutionalised recognition of young Nigerians as persons of inherent worth reflected in the design of programs, the conduct of public officials, and the distribution of national resources. It is a birthright, not a reward for achievement.

Youth Vision



We, the youth of Nigeria, envision a country in which every young person regardless of where they were born, how much their family earns, or what opportunities they have been denied is treated as a person of inherent worth. We envision institutions and leaders that affirm our dignity through their actions, not merely their words; social and economic systems that recognise our humanity before our utility; and a Nigeria where no young person is made to feel ashamed of their circumstances or invisible to their government. Dignity, for us, is not an aspiration it is a right, and we refuse to negotiate it.

Success looks like



- * The proportion of federal youth-facing programs with documented, functional youth co-design processes reaches at least 60% within five years, verified by an independent annual audit.
- * An independent oversight mechanism for youth program delivery is operational in all 36 states and the FCT within three years, with results published publicly and accessible without charge.
- * Building on the National Baseline Youth Survey Report and tracking done via the Commonwealth Global Youth Development Index, a national youth inclusion index that tracks access to economic opportunity, public services, and civic participation, **(disaggregated by gender, geography, and disability status)** is published annually by the National Bureau of Statistics.

Core Demands



- 01.** The Federal Government shall align all youth-facing policies and programs with an explicit, enforceable commitment to the dignity and rights of youth as established in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Nigeria's own National Youth Policy.
- 02.** State governments shall establish independent youth grievance mechanisms through which young people can report violations of their rights and dignity, with mandatory government response timelines.
- 03.** The Federal and state governments must end the practice of designing youth programs without meaningful youth involvement, replacing tokenistic consultation with structured, binding co-creation processes.
- 04.** Federal ministries and agencies shall publish annual reports on how public programs are reaching youth in the most underserved communities, **with data disaggregated by gender, disability status, and geography.**
- 05.** The National Assembly shall review and strengthen existing legislation to close gaps between Nigeria's constitutional dignity protections and the conditions faced by youth in education, employment, and public service delivery.

02 Equity and Inclusion

Situational Statement

Social inclusion has been defined as “the process of improving the terms on which individuals and groups take part in society, i.e improving the ability, opportunity, and dignity of those disadvantaged on the basis of their identity” (World Bank. (2013), n.d.). By this measure, Nigeria has much further to travel. Exclusion in Nigeria is not evenly distributed. Geography, gender, disability status, and ethnicity shape the quality of opportunity available to young Nigerians in ways that are well-documented and deeply entrenched. Nigeria’s 2022 Multidimensional Poverty Index confirms that exclusion varies sharply by geography, with rural youth facing disproportionate levels of deprivation relative to their urban peers (National Bureau of Statistics, 2022).

The structural barriers facing young women, persons with disabilities, and young people from minority and rural communities are not individual but rather a product of systemic design choices in the allocation of education resources, in the targeting of government programs, and in the physical inaccessibility of public institutions that have never been adequately reversed. These disparities are inconsistent with the commitments of SDG Goal 10 on reduced inequalities (United Nations 2015) which Nigeria has endorsed.

Until equity is treated not as a supplementary concern but as an organising principle of youth policy, i.e with ring-fenced resources, disaggregated data, and accountability mechanisms, the gap between formal commitments and lived experience will persist.



Youth Vision



We, the youth of Nigeria, envision a country where the circumstances of one's birth does not determine the ceiling of one's aspirations. We envision education systems, labour markets, and public institutions that actively dismantle barriers of gender, geography, disability, and ethnicity, not merely by promising equal treatment, but by investing in the structural changes that make equality real. We envision a Nigeria where a young woman in a rural community in Ebonyi has the same access to skills, credit, and opportunity as a young man in Lagos; where a person with a disability is not turned away from a government building or a job interview; and where minority identity is a source of cultural pride, not grounds for exclusion.

Success looks like



- * The rural-urban gap in multidimensional poverty among youth; as measured by the NBS Multidimensional Poverty Index, narrows by at least 20 percentage points within ten years.
- * The proportion of federal youth-facing programs that meet minimum disability inclusion standards reaches 80% within five years, verified by an independent accessibility audit.
- * Gender-disaggregated access data for education, employment, and social protection programs is published annually for all 36 states and the FCT.

Core Demands



- 01.** To bridge the major implementation gap resulting from structural fragmentation across separate ministries - Youth Development, Women Affairs, and Humanitarian Affairs - that makes it difficult to track interconnected, youth-specific data points, the Federal Government must adopt a single, harmonized National Youth Equity Plan with time-bound, measurable targets for reducing geographic, gender, and disability-based disparities in access to education, employment, and public services, consistent with SDG Goal 10 (United Nations, 2015).
- 02.** State governments must set aside a defined and dedicated minimum percentage of youth-targeted program funds specifically for rural and underserved communities, with transparent disbursement records published quarterly.
- 03.** The Federal Government must **enforce** existing PWD youth inclusion legislation across all public institutions and publicly funded programs, with independent compliance audits and penalties for non-compliance.
- 04.** Gender-responsive budgeting must be applied to **all** youth-facing federal and state programs, with annual gender audits published and acted upon within 90 days of release.
- 05.** Federal and state governments must collect and publicly publish data disaggregated by gender, disability status, ethnicity, and geographic location across all youth programs, making this information the basis for annual policy reviews.

03 Merit and Fairness

Situational Statement

For too many young Nigerians, access to jobs, government programs, and public opportunity is determined not by what they know or can do, but by who they know, which community they belong to, or whether they can afford to pay for access. Afrobarometer's Round 9 survey in Nigeria finds that 80% of Nigerians believe corruption worsened in the preceding year, and that key public institutions including: the police, parliament, and the presidency, are widely perceived as corrupt, fuelling deep dissatisfaction and a breakdown in public trust (Afrobarometer, 2022). Research on recruitment dynamics in the Nigerian public sector documents that political patronage, ethnic affiliation, and personal connections systematically displace merit as the basis for accessing employment and public programs (Bassey, et al 2021)

For young people who lack connections and cannot pay facilitation fees, this system is experienced not as bureaucratic inconvenience but as a fundamental denial of fairness. The accumulation of these daily exclusions; across scholarship programs, public service recruitment, business registration, and contract allocation compounds into a structural barrier that neither hard work nor ability can reliably overcome.

A functioning social contract requires that effort and ability be rewarded. When they are not, i.e., when the system is visibly and consistently rigged, the result is not only injustice to individuals, but the erosion of civic trust and the misallocation of national talent on a scale that no economy can afford. A level playing field is not a luxury. It is the foundation of a functioning society.

Youth Vision



We, the youth of Nigeria, envision a country where effort and ability are the currency of opportunity. We envision recruitment processes (in the public sector and, where government can shape incentives, in the private sector too) that are open, transparent, and based on verifiable criteria. We envision a Nigeria where a young graduate from a modest background can compete on equal terms with a well-connected peer; where government scholarships and program awards are allocated through processes that withstand public scrutiny; and where anti-corruption institutions have the resources, independence, and political backing to hold violators accountable.

Core Demands



- 01.** All federal and state government recruitment into public service must be conducted through transparent, competency-based processes, with selection results published publicly and a complaints channel managed by an independent body.
- 02.** The Federal Government must strengthen the independence and resourcing of anti-corruption institutions including the EFCC and ICPC, with explicit mandates covering youth program fraud and the monetisation of public opportunity.
- 03.** Federal and state scholarship, grant, and program allocation systems must publish selection criteria, total applicant numbers, and full award lists as a condition of continued public funding.
- 04.** The Federal Government must introduce and enforce a whistle-blower protection framework specifically covering youth who report corruption or discriminatory exclusion in government programs.
- 05.** Federal and state governments must commission independent annual audits of all youth-facing programs, with findings published and a government response tabled within 90 days.

Success looks like



- * Nationally representative survey data (Afrobarometer or equivalent) shows a measurable increase in the proportion of Nigerian youth who believe public recruitment processes are fair, tracked every two years.
- * 100% of federal government youth program awards are published in a publicly accessible database (with selection criteria visible) within three years.
- * The number of substantiated whistle-blower cases related to youth program corruption that result in prosecution rises year-on-year from baseline.

04 Accountability and Transparency

Situational Statement

Nigeria has a documented history of policy commitments to youth that are made but not kept. Programs are announced, budgets are allocated, and beneficiaries are named. However, independent verification of whether funds reach their destinations and produce their stated results is rarely available. This accountability deficit is experienced by young Nigerians as a pattern of institutional betrayal, eroding the civic trust on which any functional relationship between citizens and government depends.

The governance frameworks embedded in SDG Goal 16 on peace, justice, and strong institutions call for transparent, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels (**United Nations, 2015**). The AU's Agenda 2063 similarly calls for institutions at all levels of government to be “developmental, democratic, and accountable” (African Union 2015, n.d.). Nigeria has committed to both frameworks. Nigeria's National Youth Policy commits to youth development as a cross-sectoral national priority (Federal Republic of Nigeria 2019); that commitment should be matched by transparent, independently verifiable implementation.

The absence of accountability is not passive. Every public fund that disappears without trace, every program that claims beneficiaries it did not reach, and every annual report that goes unpublished is a deliberate choice to place impunity above obligation.

Youth Vision



We, the youth of Nigeria, envision a government that keeps its word. We envision a public administration where every naira designated for youth development is tracked, publicly reported, and accounted for; where beneficiary lists are not invented after-the-fact, where distribution records are accessible to citizens, and where failure to deliver triggers consequences rather than silence. We envision oversight institutions that have both the power and the will to hold governments accountable on youth matters, and youth-led monitoring structures that provide an independent check on the claims of those in power.

Core Demands



- 01.** The Federal Government must establish a single, harmonized, publicly accessible youth program monitoring portal through which all youth-facing federal expenditure, beneficiary data, and outcome reports are published on a quarterly basis.
- 02.** The Office of the Auditor-General of the Federation shall be mandated and resourced to conduct annual performance audits of federal youth programs, with findings tabled before the National Assembly and published online within 60 days.
- 03.** State governments shall establish functional youth grievance and feedback mechanisms; separate from general public complaints systems, through which young people can report non-delivery of promised services without fear of reprisal.
- 04.** The National Assembly shall hold annual public hearings specifically on youth program delivery, with ministers and agency heads required to account for performance against published targets.
- 05.** Civil society and registered youth organisations must be granted formal observer status in the monitoring and evaluation of all publicly funded youth programs above a defined expenditure threshold.

Success looks like



- * All 36 states and the FCT publish annual youth program expenditure and outcome reports (verified by an independent auditor) within four years of Charter adoption.
- * A functional, publicly accessible federal youth program monitoring portal that is updated at least quarterly and made operational within three years.
- * Youth satisfaction with government accountability on youth matters, measured through a nationally representative survey, shows a statistically significant improvement within five years.

05 Participation and Self-Determination

Situational Statement

Young Nigerians are routinely excluded from the decisions that shape their lives. Despite constitutional provisions and policy commitments that position youth as active agents of national development, the dominant experience of Nigerian youth in relation to government is one of passivity. They are told what programs exist, told when to register, and told what they have received, but are rarely consulted on what they need, rarely involved in how programs are designed, and rarely empowered to evaluate whether interventions work.

The African Youth Charter, adopted by the African Union in 2006, commits member states to promoting youth participation at all levels of governance and decision-making (African Union, 2006). Nigeria's National Youth Policy reinforces this framing, presenting youth not merely as program recipients but as "citizens, rights-holders, and potential drivers of national transformation" (Federal Republic of Nigeria 2019). SDG Goal 16 calls for inclusive and participatory governance (United Nations 2015). Yet the institutionalised mechanisms through which young Nigerians can meaningfully shape national policy remain weak, fragmented, or captured by political interests.

Participation that is ceremonial, in which youth are invited to events but excluded from deliberations, and consulted after decisions are made rather than before, is not participation. The structural conditions for genuine self-determination, including binding roles, real mandates, and protected space for youth voices in every institution that governs their lives, are what is needed.



Youth Vision



We, the youth of Nigeria, envision a democracy that takes us seriously. We envision meaningful, institutionalised roles for youth in the design, implementation, and evaluation of every policy that shapes our lives, not ceremonial participation at events, but structural inclusion in processes where decisions are actually made. We envision youth councils with genuine mandates and budgets, legislative frameworks that reserve space for youth voices, and a culture of governance that operates on the principle: nothing about us, without us.

Success looks like



- * The proportion of federal ministries with documented, functional youth consultation mechanisms rises from a verified baseline to 100% within five years.
- * Youth representation in elected legislative bodies at federal and state level; tracked by gender and geography, is published and updated after each electoral cycle.
- * Within 3 years of adoption of this charter, a nationally representative survey shows a measurable increase in the proportion of Nigerian youth who believe their voices influence government decisions on matters affecting them, tracked every three years.

Core Demands



- 01.** The Federal Government, in partnership with the already established NYCN, will work to ensure that the NYCN has a well-defined and up-to-date mandate, dedicated, fully functioning secretariat, and transparent operating budget, with members selected through a transparent process that ensures representation across all six geopolitical regions, genders, and backgrounds.
- 02.** State governments must work with the state-level NYCN to ensure functional state-level youth participation structures with direct reporting lines to state executive decision-making bodies and published terms of reference.
- 03.** The National Assembly must review the Electoral Act and relevant legislation to lower barriers to youth candidacy and political participation, including through reforms addressing age, financial, and administrative requirements.
- 04.** All federal ministries must include formal, documented youth consultation stages in the development of any new policy or program affecting young people, with published records of how youth input was considered and acted upon.
- 05.** NYCN must have up-to-date registration with the Corporate Affairs Commission and must be granted representation on sector-specific advisory committees across health, education, employment, and security.

06 Safety and Freedom from Fear

Situational Statement

Physical insecurity is one of the most severe constraints on the lives and futures of Nigerian youth. The inability to move freely, trade safely, attend school without risk, or participate in civic life without fear of violence is the lived condition of millions of young Nigerians across multiple regions and conflict contexts. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights asserts that, “Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person” (UN General Assembly, 1948). This right is systematically violated in Nigeria’s security landscape.

Afrobarometer found that almost three-quarters of Nigerians (73%) describe most or all police officers as corrupt, and more than half of those who had police encounters reported being asked for bribes, patterns that profoundly erode youth-state relations and civic trust (Afrobarometer, 2023). Research consistently demonstrates that physical insecurity including: kidnapping, banditry, and political violence, directly constrains livelihoods, economic mobility, and civic participation across Nigeria, with young people disproportionately bearing its costs (Duntoye, 2023; Ewetan, 2014). The deliberate recruitment of youth into armed conflict and electoral violence compounds this crisis, transforming victims into perpetrators and foreclosing futures that might otherwise have been productive.

Young Nigerians cannot aspire, invest, or participate in public life when they cannot be confident of returning home safely. Security is not a precondition for development; it is the foundation on which every other commitment in this Charter depends.

Youth Vision



We, the youth of Nigeria, envision a country where we can move freely; to markets, to schools, to places of worship, to political meetings, without fear. We envision security institutions that protect communities rather than prey on them; a political culture that refuses to weaponise young people; and a Nigeria where no young person is forced to choose between safety and participation in public life. We envision communities in which the peace that makes development possible is sustained by the state, not bargained for by individuals or sold by armed actors.

Core Demands



- 01.** The Federal Government must commit to and fund a comprehensive security sector reform process that includes specific, measurable accountability mechanisms for police misconduct (including bribery, brutality, and extortion) that disproportionately targets young people.
- 02.** All state and local governments must establish community security committees, with formal youth representation, **and maintain a database of all their members who must be registered with the government.** These committees will be tasked with identifying local security priorities, monitoring the conduct of police and security forces and working with them to maintain peace and security within their communities.
- 03.** The Federal Government must introduce and enforce legislation that criminalises the recruitment of youth into armed militias, political thuggery, and electoral violence, with mandatory prosecution of those who finance or organise such recruitment.
- 04.** The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) **and all its state counterparts** must develop and implement dedicated youth displacement and recovery programs for young people affected by armed conflict, banditry, and communal violence.
- 05.** The Federal Government must resource and operationalise a **comprehensive, integrated national database tracking** insecurity incidents affecting youth, including kidnapping, forced displacement, and gender-based violence, as the evidentiary foundation for targeted policy responses.

Success looks like



- * The proportion of Nigerians, specifically youth, who report being asked for a bribe during a police encounter decreases significantly, as measured by a nationally representative survey, within five years.
- * The number of documented cases of youth recruitment into political violence and armed groups, tracked by NEMA and civil society monitors, declines year-on-year from a verified baseline.
- * School attendance rates in conflict-affected states, **disaggregated by gender**, show measurable improvement as insecurity indicators decline, tracked through the National Education Management Information System (NEMIS).

07 Economic Justice

Situational Statement

The macroeconomic conditions facing Nigerian youth make aspiration difficult and sustainability nearly impossible for most. The International Labour Organization reports that 20% of young people globally were not in employment, education, or training as of 2023 (ILO, 2024). In Nigeria, the structural conditions are more severe: over 92% of employed youth are in informal arrangements, with little security, capital, or protection (National Bureau of Statistics, 2024b). These are not temporary disruptions or individual misfortunes; they are the product of sustained policy choices that have left young Nigerians exposed to price instability, without access to affordable credit, and dependent on economic infrastructure that is unreliable.

This structural condition demands more than entrepreneurship promotion. It demands stable prices, accessible financing, reliable infrastructure, fair labour markets, and economic policies co-created in partnership with the people they affect, in line with SDG Goal 8 on decent work and economic growth (United Nations 2015). As one respondent in the primary research that informed this Charter observed:



*Here you still have a fertile ground, a fertile society.....
where whatever you do, there are solutions.*

Male, 34, Urban Area, Benue

That aspiration, expressed in the face of extraordinary structural adversity, captures both the resilience of Nigerian youth and the scale of what is being wasted when systems fail to support it.



Youth Vision



We, the youth of Nigeria, envision an economy that works for us, not one we are forced to survive despite. We envision stable prices, accessible financing, and infrastructure that functions; labour markets in which hard work and skill produce sustainable livelihoods; and social protection systems that cushion the shocks that are inevitable in any economy. We envision an end to the era of youth economic policy that consists of entrepreneurship seminars and palliative cash transfers, and the beginning of structural investment in the conditions that allow young Nigerians to build, employ, save, and thrive across generations.

Success looks like



- * The proportion of employed Nigerian youth in informal arrangements; currently over 92% (National Bureau of Statistics, 2024b), decreases by at least 15 percentage points within ten years, tracked by the National Labour Force Survey.
- * The proportion of youth-owned or youth-led small enterprises with access to formal credit increases by at least 5% each year from a verified baseline, measured annually by the NBS.
- * Nigeria's youth NEET rate (proportion not in employment, education, or training) is measured and published annually and declines by at least 50% within five years.

Core Demands



- 01.** The Federal Government must develop and implement a Youth Economic Inclusion Strategy, **co-designed with youth organisations**, that addresses access to credit, vocational skills, formal employment, and social protection, with sector-specific targets and published timelines.
- 02.** The Central Bank of Nigeria must establish a dedicated youth credit instrument with collateral requirements in keeping with federal and state-level minimum wage, single-digit interest rates and interest rate caps, and formal monitoring of access disaggregated by gender, geography, and sector.
- 03.** The Federal and state governments must expand and properly resource social protection mechanisms including: public employment schemes and skills-linked income support, specifically targeting youth who are not in employment, education, or training.
- 04.** The Federal Government must address the structural conditions that drive informality (including unreliable power supply, high operating costs, and poor transport infrastructure) as a precondition for sustainable youth employment, in line with SDG Goal 8 (United Nations 2015).
- 05.** Economic policies with significant potential impact on the cost of living, including fuel pricing, exchange rate management, and food import regulation, must be subject to mandatory youth impact assessments before implementation and provisions made in advance of implantation to cushion shocks for Nigerian youth.

08 Intergenerational Responsibility

Situational Statement

Nigeria's natural resources, democratic institutions, public infrastructure, and environmental heritage are held in trust across generations, yet policy decisions consistently prioritise short-term interests over long-term sustainability. The extraction of public resources without reinvestment in systems that future generations will inherit, the accumulation of public debt without commensurate productive investment, and the degradation of environmental assets without accountability all represent a failure of intergenerational responsibility that falls most heavily on those who are young today and on Nigerians who are yet to be born.

The AU's Agenda 2063, a 50-year continental framework that places youth at the centre of Africa's transformation, makes explicit that "the youth of Africa shall be socially, economically and politically empowered" as a condition of sustainable development (African Union 2015, n.d.). The United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development equally rests on the principle of meeting present needs without compromising the wellbeing of future generations (United Nations 2015). Nigeria has signed both frameworks. We simply ask, that they be honoured.

Intergenerational responsibility is not an abstract philosophical principle. It is a practical test applied to every budget, every infrastructure decision, and every natural resource transaction: are we leaving this country better or worse than we found it? The evidence of the past several decades, reflected in depleted public institutions, ageing infrastructure, and mounting debt, demands an honest answer.

Youth Vision



We, the youth of Nigeria, envision a country whose leaders govern with their descendants' futures in mind, not only their next election cycle. We envision fiscal and environmental policies designed to build durable prosperity rather than consume it; public institutions maintained for the long term; and a democratic culture that treats the inheritance of future Nigerians as a genuine constraint on present decisions. We envision a Nigeria that is not merely surviving its demographic transition but investing deliberately in the generation that will define its outcome.

Core Demands



- 01.** The Federal Government, with the support of the private sector (and in particular, foreign private investors profiting in Nigeria) must establish a statutory National Youth Future Fund. This fund shall be funded by a defined share of the national budget and private donations, dedicated to long-term investments in education, infrastructure, and climate resilience, and managed under independent oversight with formal youth representation on the governance board.
- 02.** All major federal legislation and budget decisions must be subject to an intergenerational impact assessment, evaluating effects on youth and future generations, tabled before the National Assembly as part of the formal legislative record.
- 03.** Nigeria's National Climate Resilience Strategy, consistent with Nigeria's Paris Agreement commitments and containing explicit measures to protect the livelihoods and environments of rural and climate-vulnerable youth communities (**especially young women, PWDs and IDPs**) **must** be implemented as designed.
- 04.** Nigeria's public debt management framework must include an intergenerational equity lens, with the Debt Management Office required to publish an annual assessment of the distribution of public debt obligations across generations. Rather than utilizing debt to plug budgetary shortfalls and recurrent expenditures, borrowing for capital accumulation must be invested into infrastructure to satisfy intergenerational equity.
- 05.** The Federal and state governments must prioritise the maintenance and upgrade of existing public infrastructure - schools, health facilities, roads, electricity and water systems - before committing to new capital projects, as a commitment to preserving inherited assets for future generations.

Success looks like



- * Any National Youth Future Fund established henceforth, must have annual reports on investment decisions and governance published publicly and readily available on demand at no cost.
- * Within four years of Charter adoption, all federal budget proposals are accompanied by a published intergenerational impact statement.
- * Nigeria's performance on internationally recognised climate vulnerability and resilience indices shows measurable improvement within ten years, with rural and marginalized youth-specific indicators tracked and published annually

02

***THEMATIC
PILLARS***



Section 4: Education, Skills, and School-to-Work Transitions

Section Purpose



This section affirms education, skills development, and fair transition into work as core rights of Nigerian youth. It addresses the gap between schooling and employability, the unequal access to practical and digital skills, and the barriers that prevent young people from moving from education into decent, dignified, and productive work.

Situation Statement

Education remains one of the strongest aspirations of Nigerian youth, as shown in the World Development Bank Report (2023). For many young people and their families, schooling is still seen as a pathway to dignity, social mobility, employment, and national contribution. Yet the promise of education is weakening. A 2024 National Bureau of Statistics' Labour Force Survey shows a widening disconnect between educational attainment and labour-market opportunities. The Survey also revealed that many graduates face unemployment, underemployment, or precarious work, while skills systems are often poorly aligned with the realities of the economy, with unemployment among persons with post-secondary education at 9.0% in Q1 2024, and in Q2 2024, informal employment stood at 93.0% (NBS, 2024). The problem is not that Nigerian youth lack ambition; it is that the education system too often fails to convert aspiration into opportunity:



People wey dey graduate now... most of them, dem be bike man. Most of them, dem dey farm because nothing [sic] to show about. No work.

Female Youth, Urban, Edo

Youth still view formal education as important but insufficient. Certificates still carry social value, but many youth believe the curriculum is outdated and disconnected from the world of work:



curriculum that is failing us... everybody wants to blame the government and nobody wants to look inward

Male, 28, Urban, Kaduna South

These experiences show that the education system is not adequately serving youth aspirations when graduates leave school without practical skills, career guidance, job placement support, or clear pathways into decent work:



I'm a graduate, but I don't have a job because I've tried getting a job. It's been so difficult.

Female, 32, Urban PWD, Ebonyi

The school-to-work pipeline breaks down at several points. Students are not consistently exposed to career counselling, workplace learning, internships, entrepreneurship support, technical training, or labour-market information before graduation:



The policy I will make... anybody that is graduating, let there be job opportunity [sic] for that person. At least let's start from there.

Female, 32, Urban, PWD, Ebonyi

While initiatives such as the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) provide temporary transition, it does not guarantee long-term employment. Youth report repeated job applications without feedback, limited access to opportunities unless they have connections, and visible discrimination in recruitment:



People that are merited to have this opportunity will not be given... it should be on merit.

Male, 28, Urban, Lagos (IKJ)

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programmes can help bridge the gap between schooling and work by giving young people practical, income-generating skills that are more directly connected to available livelihood opportunities. This is especially important because many young people now see practical and technical skills as more reliable pathways to work than certificates alone:



There are so many things I would love to put hands into ...AI courses, web design courses and maybe some programming languages. If government could make it easy for them to access, even if there is need for them to pay, it should not be as much as a private sector will give it out to them.

Female, 34, Urban, Lagos (Surulere)

In addition, youth reported persistent discrimination against Higher National Diploma (HND) holders compared with bachelor's degree holders, which they described as an unfair penalty against technical and polytechnic education:



There's this discrimination that comes with this qualification and the BSc holder... it's really costing a lot of things. There are so many people who have been impacted by this.

Female, 32, Urban PWD, Ebonyi

Youth Vision



We, the youth of Nigeria, envision an education and skills-enabling ecosystem where every young person, regardless of gender, disability, location, class, or qualification pathway, can learn, build relevant skills, and transition into decent work with dignity. We envision schools, universities, polytechnics, technical colleges, apprenticeship systems, and digital learning platforms that prepare us not only to pass examinations, but to solve problems, create value, earn sustainable livelihoods, and contribute to national development. We envision a Nigeria where education is not a dead end, where skills are respected, where informal learning is respected and recognized, and where every young person has equal access to opportunities regardless of connection, geographical area or academic qualification.

Success looks like



- * Regular public monitoring/reporting on rates of youth employment, underemployment, internship placement, apprenticeship completion, and graduate job placement across states, disaggregated by gender, disability status, rural/urban location, and qualification type.
- * In line with UNESCO/SDG 4.4 target, by 2030, at least 50% of youth should have completed an accredited digital skills, apprenticeship, TVET, or entrepreneurship programme, with annual reporting disaggregated by state, gender, disability status, income level, and rural/urban location, and evidence of public-private partnerships to ensure certification, post-training support, and job placements.
- * Recruitment, salary placement, promotion, and professional progression should be based on competence, role requirements, certification standards, and demonstrated ability.

Core Demands



Government should:

- 01.** Reform curricula at secondary, tertiary, technical, and vocational levels to reflect labour-market realities, technological advancements, entrepreneurship pathways, civic responsibility, and practical problem-solving.
- 02.** Establish more structured youth transition programmes, similar to NYSC, in every state to guide young people from school into work and expand access to opportunities. These programmes should provide career guidance, internships, apprenticeships, graduate placement services, employer partnerships, mentorship, and practical exposure to entrepreneurship and public service.
- 03.** Expand and properly fund TVET programmes as a respected and mainstream pathway, not a second-class option. TVET programmes must be affordable, high-quality, industry-linked, gender-inclusive, disability-inclusive, and connected to real jobs, enterprise support, tools, certification, and markets.
- 04.** Create an enabling environment and provide the necessary infrastructure for youth to access jobs, acquire relevant skills, and participate fully in the digital economy. This should include subsidised training in artificial intelligence, coding, web design, data skills, digital marketing, green skills, creative technology, and online enterprise, supported by reliable electricity, affordable internet, community learning hubs, safe digital spaces, and pathways into employment and entrepreneurship.
- 05.** Recognize and strengthen informal and community-based learning pathways. Apprenticeships, religious and community skill programmes, self-taught digital learning, artisanal training, and workplace-based learning should be supported through certification, quality assurance, grants, equipment, mentorship, and links to markets.
- 06.** End discrimination between HND and BSc qualifications in public and private employment. Recruitment, salary placement, promotion, and professional progression should be based on competence, role requirements, certification standards, and demonstrated ability.

Section 5: Employment, Livelihoods, and Economic Security

Section Purpose



This section highlights the economic challenges facing Nigerian youth, including unemployment, limited opportunities, weak systems, and barriers to entrepreneurship. It emphasizes the need for fair access to opportunities and an enabling environment where young people can contribute to national development.

Situational Statement

Nearly every Nigerian youth can relate to the term 'Unemployment'. To attain the desired life expected, youth often emphasise the need for opportunities through which they can earn their living. Sadly, this is often not the case as unemployment is significantly more predominant with the younger population than the older population (National Bureau of Statistics, 2024b)

The disheartening fact remains the gap between educational attainment and employment opportunities as many tertiary and post-secondary graduates attest to having no job. Beyond having no job at all, some graduates end up with menial jobs (mostly in the informal sector) which have no connection with their course of study, hence making it discouraging for them to further their education:



People wey dey graduate now, all of them, dem be bike man. Most of them dey farm because nothing to show about. No work, from my own experience.

Female, Urban, Edo

This reveals not just the immediate impact of unemployment, but its secondary effect on the future of young Nigerians, where little or no experience, coupled with an unwillingness to pursue advanced education (compounded by a lack of finance) leaves the entire nation in a dilemma of poor governance when these youths eventually take up leadership positions in society.

Unlike the merit-based system practiced in developed nations, Nigerians who apply for formal jobs, especially in the public sector, often face barriers because substantial unofficial payments are required to be accepted. Beyond that, the recruitment processes are often influenced by officials who have already predetermined their preferred candidates.



The country is about who you know and not what you can actually offer. So, that has actually given rise to the frustration that the citizens and the youth particularly have had to face over time.

Male, 32, Rural PWD, Benue (Guma)

Sadly, a trickle-down effect is already being experienced, as youths now have their aspirations, dream jobs and access to a well-paying job shaped by the support of a friend, family member, or network with less reliance on their intellectual capacity and the role it plays in the whole process. When cronyism and nepotism are prioritized over merit, formal institutional channels are reduced to words on paper (Gjinovci & Gjinovci, 2026).

These findings clearly demonstrate the urgent need for the government to be accountable by making transparent merit-based selection accessible and open for all.

Conversely, entrepreneurship plays a dominant role in Nigeria's economy, particularly within the informal sector. A significant number of Nigerians picture a 'good life' as having a business without depending on the government to earn a living. While this highlights their creative desires and independence, entrepreneurship is not without its hurdles. Inadequate access to finance and grants has led to the failure of some businesses:



Before you get access to grants or loans for your business, it's a difficult thing in Nigeria... you might access a loan, and you wake up the next morning, and there's a policy out there that all what [sic] you have laboured for will just crumble overnight

Male, 34, Urban PWD, Adamawa (Yola)

In addition to this, when the government fails to keep its promises to support growing businesses, citizens perceive this as a betrayal of trust:



In 2021, I was part of the EndSARS state delegates and we got trained and... the government used microphone on national television to announce that [they] were going to be giving grants of 1.5 million. We were told to generate business proposals... I was in that position — will I tell you I was not given what I was given? So, it's not fair.

Female, 29, Rural, Ebonyi (Ohaozara)

This continuous cycle contributes to the dearth of local startups and increased dependence on foreign industries despite having skillful youth who can advance the economy.

Beyond access to finance, insecurity is also a threat to the growth of infant industries. Business owners and traders often express their fear of engaging in trips due to cases of armed robbery and kidnapping.



"I'm afraid of kidnapping on the road. The money that I want to use for business, I use it to pay ransom. Even with it, it will not even be enough.

Male, 25, Urban, Lagos (Kosofe)

In addition to these challenges, inadequate infrastructure remains a major barrier for young Nigerians striving to thrive. Poor electricity supply, limited digital access, and weak transportation systems increase the difficulties faced by entrepreneurs and job seekers, limiting productivity and economic opportunities.



If I am the president of this country, one of the things I'll make stable, number one is light. Like you have no idea what power can be able to address. There are so many things that power can be able to address.

Male, 28, Urban, Kaduna South

Nigeria's economy is largely influenced by the informal sector and transitioning entrepreneurs into the formal sector will require accountability and a stable, secure system. While participation in the formal sector provides no guarantee of economic stability, entrepreneurs will only take this decision when the government fulfills its end of the bargain.



Youth Vision



For this reason, we, the youth of Nigeria envision a future where meritocracy is institutionalised, and an enabling environment is established that guarantees equal access to opportunities, rewards competence and fosters dignity and inclusive economic participation for all.

Success looks like



- * Number of funded youth enterprises that remains viable after 3 years.
- * Percentage of public sector recruitment exercises with publicly disclosed results and demographic data to ensure transparent and merit-based selection.
- * Extent to which gender mainstreaming is integrated into government policies and programmes and adopted across at least 35% of the private sector.
- * Number of monitored infrastructure projects delivered within agreed timelines and quality standards.

Core Demands



Government should:

- 01.** Establish a youth financing programme where the government serves solely as the funding provider, while the management, operations, and implementation are handled independently to ensure transparency, accountability, and effective support for young entrepreneurs through access to affordable credit, mentorship, and business development services.
- 02.** Publish publicly accessible recruitment results for public sector positions, including relevant demographic information such as state of origin and other diversity indicators, to promote transparency, monitor fairness in recruitment processes, and prevent favouritism, nepotism, or undue preference for specific groups.
- 03.** Ensure gender mainstreaming is systematically integrated into all government policies and programmes and mandated across the private sector, with compliance monitored by independent oversight bodies.
- 04.** Establish a 'people-selected' oversight committee to engage relevant ministries and monitor the delivery of critical infrastructure needed to create a business-friendly environment.

Section 6: Governance, Accountability, and Civic Participation

Purpose of this Section



This section sets out the governance reforms young Nigerians demand in order to rebuild trust between youth and public institutions. It affirms that youth participation must move beyond campaign mobilisation, voting, token consultation, and symbolic appointments. Public institutions must become transparent, accountable, merit-based, and responsive to the lived realities of young people.

Situational Statement

Overwhelmingly, evidence from the literature and our interviews with Nigerian youth show that Nigerian youth have a deep-seated distrust for the government, borne out of personal experiences and observation of current affairs in the country:



It makes me feel very, very sad because we used to see online... in other countries how their government puts things in place for the youth... but here in our case, it's not like that here. It's just by somebody that knows somebody. I feel so bad about it.

Male, 28, Urban, Lagos (Ikeja)

Nigerian youth do not distrust government because they are indifferent to public life. They distrust government because many public systems appear distant, hijacked, and unresponsive (Afrobarometer, 2025; Afrobarometer Dispatch, 2023; Afrobarometer Dispatch et al., 2023). Youth described government institutions at all levels as serving the interests of the elite while ordinary citizens struggle to access basic opportunities:



The country... is there to serve the purpose of enriching the rich and why the poor gets poorer.

Male, 32, Rural PWD, Benue (Guma)

Another, speaking about the Federal Ministry of Youth and Development, said,



I've never seen anything that that ministry has done for its youth.

Male, 34, Urban PWD, Adamawa (Yola)

These voices reflect a deeper crisis of institutional legitimacy. For many young people, corruption is not an abstract governance problem. It determines who gets a job, grant, loan, scholarship, training slot, or business support. Respondents repeatedly described cronyism as a serious barrier to equal access to opportunities for Nigerian youth:



Before you get a soft loan in this country, you must know somebody who knows somebody. Before you get grants in this country, you must know somebody who knows somebody. So, to me, there is no fairness.

Male, 34, Urban PWD, Adamawa (Yola)

Another described how youth programme “slots” are sold before ordinary youth get to hear about them; turning rights into favours, excluding poor and rural youth, and destroying faith in merit:



The government give to the wrong person. The wrong person wants to sell every opportunity so they call it slots... by the time they sell the opportunity in the name of slots... it's not all of us that can apply, and because of the conditions attached to it, some will even threaten your life.

Male, 34, Urban, Benue (Makurdi)

Youth also reject the narrow idea that civic participation begins and ends with voting. They want direct involvement in policy design, programme delivery, monitoring of resources and opportunities, and accountability from those who serve them Cahill & Dadvand (2018). The evidence highlights that youth participation has too often been hijacked and distorted by political thuggery, broken promises, and post-election abandonment:



Our key politicians are only interested in using the youths as thugs.

Male, 35, Rural, Ebonyi (Ivo)

It is clear that Nigerian youths are very much awake to their rights and are demanding to be heard, represented, protected, and trusted as co-creators of public decision-making.

Youth Vision



We, the youth of Nigeria, envision an education and skills-enabling ecosystem where every young person, regardless of gender, disability, location, class, or qualification pathway, can learn, build relevant skills, and transition into decent work with dignity. We envision schools, universities, polytechnics, technical colleges, apprenticeship systems, and digital learning platforms that prepare us not only to pass examinations, but to solve problems, create value, earn sustainable livelihoods, and contribute to national development. We envision a Nigeria where education is not a dead end, where skills are respected, where informal learning is respected and recognized, and where every young person has equal access to opportunities regardless of connection, geographical area or academic qualification.

Success looks like



- * A minimum 20% increase in youth-focused programmes and documented implementation updates, compared to our current baseline.
- * Transparent youth representation as evidenced by at least 30% youth representation including documented participation of young women, rural youth, persons with disabilities, and marginalised youth groups in all government appointments.
- * Institutionalization of tracking systems to monitor incidents of youth programmes hijacking, slot-selling, unpaid benefits, political exclusion, or corruption investigated and resolved.
- * 50% reduction of reported cases of youth programme hijacking, slot-selling, unpaid benefits, political exclusion, or corruption investigated and resolved, including public reporting of sanctions, refunds, or corrective action within 3 years of institutionalization of the tracking system.

Core Demands



- 01.** Established youth councils must be transparent and include minimum 35% of young women, rural youth, persons with disabilities, IDP youth, and youth from under-resourced communities.
- 02.** Government must publish all youth-focused programme information, including budgets, eligibility criteria, selection processes, beneficiary lists, disbursement records, implementation timelines, and evaluation reports. This information must be available online and through accessible offline channels at community and local government levels.
- 03.** Government shall end the hijack and sale of youth programme slots by introducing open, merit-based digitally supported as well as offline application systems, independent verification, community validation, and clear appeal mechanisms for excluded applicants.
- 04.** Government must involve youth representatives in the design, budgeting, monitoring, and evaluation of all youth-related policies and programmes. Youth participation must begin before policies are approved, not after decisions have already been made.
- 05.** Government shall create safe, accessible, and independent grievance channels where young people can report corruption, nepotism, sexual harassment, discrimination, unpaid stipends, failed programme delivery, and exclusion from public opportunities.
- 06.** We call on government, security agencies, electoral bodies, and political parties to end the weaponisation of youth in electoral violence, thuggery, and political intimidation. Political actors who recruit, arm, or exploit young people for violence must be investigated and prosecuted.

Section 7: Gender Equality, Inclusion, and Social Justice

Purpose of this Section



This section examines how structural inequalities shape access to opportunities and participation across political, economic, and social spaces in Nigeria. It highlights how exclusion based on gender, age, disability, ethnicity, and geography is reinforced through social norms and institutional practices, and how these patterns limit equitable representation, reinforce marginalisation, and weaken inclusive development outcomes.

Situation Statement

Inequality frequently takes the form of social norms, cultural practices, and gendered responsibilities that are normalised within society.

As stated by the United Nations, inclusion goes beyond recognising diverse backgrounds and identities; it also involves ensuring that all individuals can achieve their full potential and participate actively in economic, social, cultural, and political life (UN World Social Report, 2020). This is often not the case, as women, girls, and marginalized groups face several barriers that impede their contribution to the society (UN Women, n.d.). Evidence shows that youth participation in political leadership and decision-making remains low (IPU Parline, 2026). Positions are either held by older women or are not held at all {quote}. This not only constrains women's involvement in decision-making that affects their communities but tends to lead to apathy for engaging in future leadership positions.

These patterns further extend into the organisations and workplaces, thereby reinforcing deeply rooted inequalities. Recruitment decisions are often based on perception rather than skills, which weakens merit-based principles:



I worked somewhere. I really broke my back for the job. I couldn't get the position I was rightfully supposed to get. One reason cited is that I was too young compared to the other person that is a man. Two, that I'm a lady and I'll be intimidated. And the toxicity that came made me feel threatened on the basis of 'I'm a lady'.

Female, 29, Rural, Ebonyi (Ohaozara)

While women and girls bear the brunt of inequality, persons with disabilities and other marginalized groups often face exclusion and discrimination. People report often being denied access to opportunities on the basis of ethnicity, despite being qualified:



I am an Idoma person. We are a minority... I've been denied several opportunities because I am not one of the majority. In Nigeria as a whole, I've been denied a lot of opportunities as youth because... they say we are North, but because I don't speak the Hausa, Fulani, and I am not a Muslim, I've been denied several slots at the national level.

Male, 34, Urban, Benue (Makurdi)

This clearly reflects unequal access and underrepresentation of certain groups Ibrahim Yaro (2014). Repeated exclusion will only deepen political disengagement and resentment among those affected. Young people in rural communities frequently express concerns about being neglected especially when allocations due to their state never get to them. While data reveals that unemployment tends to be higher in urban areas, rural areas are not well-resourced Employment opportunities in these areas are often informal, seasonal, and low paying (National Bureau of Statistics, 2024b):



They are forgetting all these rural areas. There is nothing coming in for youth in this area that we are... when the government... come, they will know what we are passing through. They will know how to help us.

Female, 30, Rural, Lagos (Alimosho)

On the flip side, PWDs are often perceived as incapable despite having the skills and competencies required to perform effectively. A bottom-up approach to policy and decision-making positions grassroots communities as drivers in decisions that affect them. Therefore, excluding certain groups from such engagement creates a critical gap that constrains efforts to address the root causes of problems in society.

Youth Vision



Nigerian Youth envision a future where social justice is reflected through fair treatment, shared benefits, and the full participation of all groups.

Success looks like



- * An adopted human-centred approach that ensures at least 50% of government-youth engagements are conducted through digital platforms and structured youth forums annually.
- * An established parliamentary programme with youth council input formally reflected in at least 40% of youth-related parliamentary decisions annually.
- * By 2028, all public sector institutions must meet mandatory representation targets for youth, persons with disabilities, and other marginalised groups in employment, with measurable progress benchmarks tracked and reported annually.
- * Social norms and inclusion modules integrated into all national school curricula.

Core Demands



- 01.** Employ a youth-centred participatory approach that prioritizes inclusive and alternative forms of engagement over conventional participation channels, such as digital engagement mechanisms, youth forums, and town hall meetings.
- 02.** Establish parliamentary engagement programmes that bring together the National Youth Council of Nigeria and other relevant youth stakeholder groups, ensuring balanced representation of majority and minority youth voices in structured youth-related discussions.
- 03.** Mandate an employment quota in public institutions for youth, marginalised groups and PWDs and enforce gender mainstreaming in practice.
- 04.** Update school curricula integrating social norms sensitisation across all levels of education to promote inclusive attitudes and challenge harmful societal norms from an early age.

Section 8: Poverty, Cost of Living, and Economic Justice

Purpose of this Section



This section highlights the impact of structural poverty, inflation, subsidy removal, and economic instability on Nigerian youth. It articulates youth demands for social protection, living-wage policies, and economic reforms that ensure dignity, opportunity, and resilience for all young people.

Situational Statement

Nigerian youth experience poverty not merely as a lack of income, but as a multidimensional phenomenon shaping daily survival, future planning, and mental well-being (UNDP, 2024; World Bank Group, 2024). Inflation, rising food and housing costs, and the removal of fuel and utility subsidies have intensified financial precarity. Youth across rural and urban areas describe everyday realities marked by constrained consumption, insecure shelter, and transport challenges:



The inflation rate is going geometrically, while salary and every other thing in the country is just going arithmetically. So the chances of survival in this country is just by God's grace.

Male, 28, Urban, Lagos (Ikeja)

Youth report abandoning aspirations of formal employment or long-term careers, focusing instead on immediate income generation. The unsupportive and unstable policy environment has directly increased operational costs for small businesses, limiting entrepreneurship and self-employment viability:



A lot of us are no longer waiting for the job of our dream [sic]. We are waiting for the job to feed us.

Female, 34, Urban, Lagos (Surulere)



Before you get access to grants or loans for your business, it's a difficult thing in Nigeria... and you wake up the next morning, and there's a policy out there that all what you have laboured for will just crumble overnight.

Male, 34, Urban PWD, Adamawa (Yola)

Housing insecurity and transport poverty further compound challenges. High rents in urban centres like Lagos and Abuja consume a disproportionate share of youth income, while unsafe or costly transport reduces access to education, work, and markets. Young people describe a daily calculus of survival where they are faced with the rising cost of everything around them:



As a growing child, the bag of water was 50 Naira. Currently... the bag of water is 600, 500, 800, 700, 1,000, depending on where you are buying it. A good... pack of biscuits right now, a pack, just one pack of biscuits is 500, 400.

Female, 29, Rural, Ebonyi (Ohaozara)

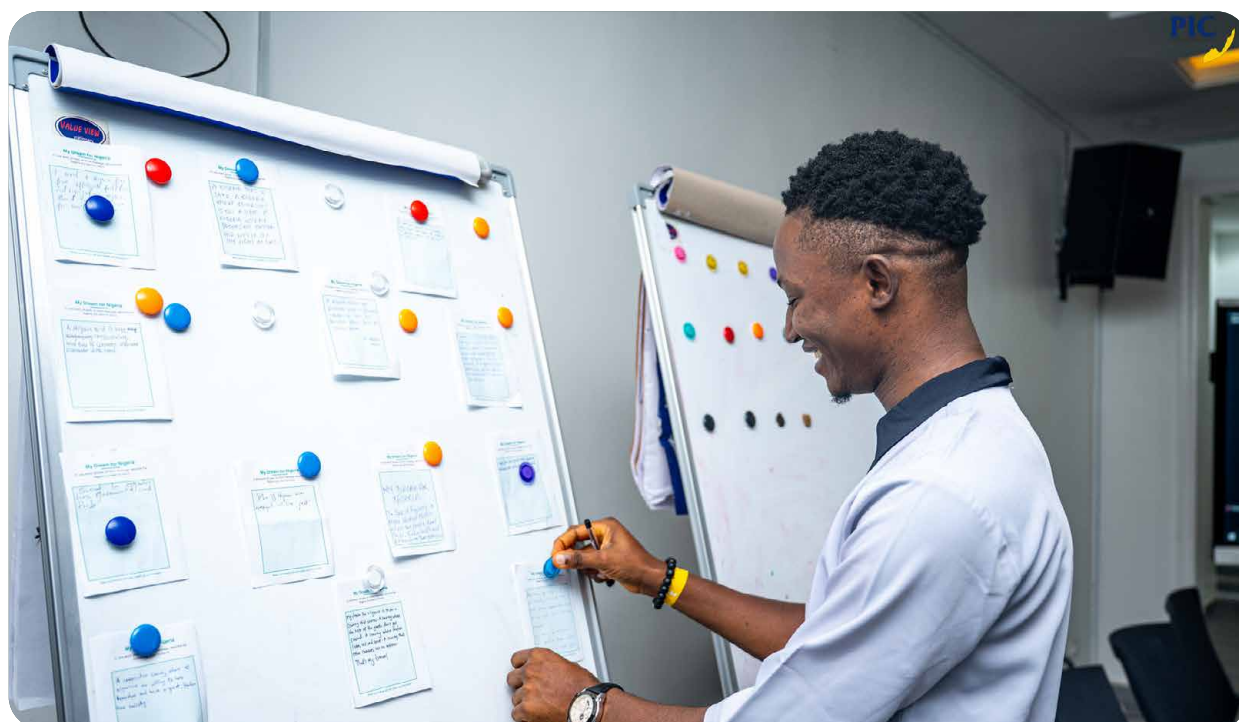
All these factors have a cumulative effect on the economic security and dignity of Nigerian youth. Rising inflation, subsidy removal, stagnant wages, and limited job opportunities are shrinking purchasing power and deepening financial instability:



The inflation rate is going geometrically, while salary and every other thing in the country is just going arithmetically. So the chances of survival in this country is just by God's grace.

Male, 28, Urban, Lagos (Ikeja)

Youth therefore call for social protection, living wages, and economic reforms that ensure fairness, opportunity, and long-term stability.



Youth Vision



We, the youth of Nigeria, envision an economy where basic needs are guaranteed, economic shocks do not destroy livelihoods, and opportunity is not dependent on wealth, connections, or geography. We envision social protection systems that safeguard young people from extreme poverty, ensure access to nutritious food, affordable housing, reliable transport, and provide opportunities to save, invest, and plan for the future. We envision a Nigeria where economic justice is real and inclusive, empowering youth to pursue dignity, innovation, and sustainable livelihoods.

Success looks like



- * Increased percentage of youth benefiting from economic incentives, subsidies, or housing support, disaggregated by gender, disability, and rural/urban location.
- * Year-on-year changes in affordability indices for key essentials (food, transport, utilities) relative to youth income.
- * Number of youth enterprises receiving grants or loans with documented merit-based, transparent selection and monitoring of post-funding outcomes.

Core Demands



- 01.** Government shall ensure sustainability in the design of targeted social protection schemes for youth prioritising rural youth, persons with disabilities, and low-income communities and ensuring that such schemes are immune to transitions in power.
- 02.** Government must integrate specialised economic instruments that are tailored to buffering periods of fluctuations in essential food and services prices.
- 03.** Government shall ensure youth access to affordable and safe transport, linking rural communities to education, markets, and economic centres.
- 04.** Government should develop a bottom-up approach, working with communities to implement sustainability models to ensure continuity of economic initiatives such as startup grants, microcredit and business support beyond transition of power ensuring that entrepreneurship is a viable, not survival-only, pathway.
- 05.** The government must enact macroeconomic and fiscal policies that safeguard youth purchasing power, protect small businesses from sudden policy shocks, and promote equitable economic opportunity.

Section 9: Safety, Security, and Peace

Purpose of this Section



This section addresses the multi-layered insecurity confronting Nigerian youth, including kidnapping, insurgency, political thuggery, and unsafe workplaces, and sets out youth demands for an enabling environment that ensures safety, mobility, and peace. It affirms youth rights to protection, justice, and participation in local peacebuilding efforts.

Situation Statement

Insecurity constrains Nigerian youth across multiple dimensions of life. Kidnapping, violent attacks, insurgency, and communal conflict disrupt livelihoods, restrict mobility, and hinder access to education and markets. One youth in Lagos described:



I'm afraid of kidnapping on the road. The money that I want to use for business, I use to pay ransom. Even with it, it will not even be enough.

Male, 25, Urban, Lagos (Kosofe)

In the Northeast and North Central regions, displacement due to insurgency and violence has removed youth from schools, farms, and businesses. A respondent from Ebonyi explained:



There are a lot of people that are out of their farms now because of the whole security, they can't go back to their farms.

Male, 28, Urban, Kaduna South

Youth highlight that insecurity is not only environmental but also political. Political actors have weaponised young people, using them as thugs during elections and conflicts, only to abandon them afterwards. One youth observed:



Our leaders should refrain from buying arms for the youths because that's another thing that is killing us today. After giving them guns, they may use it to injure you, thereby leaving the entire society at their mercy.

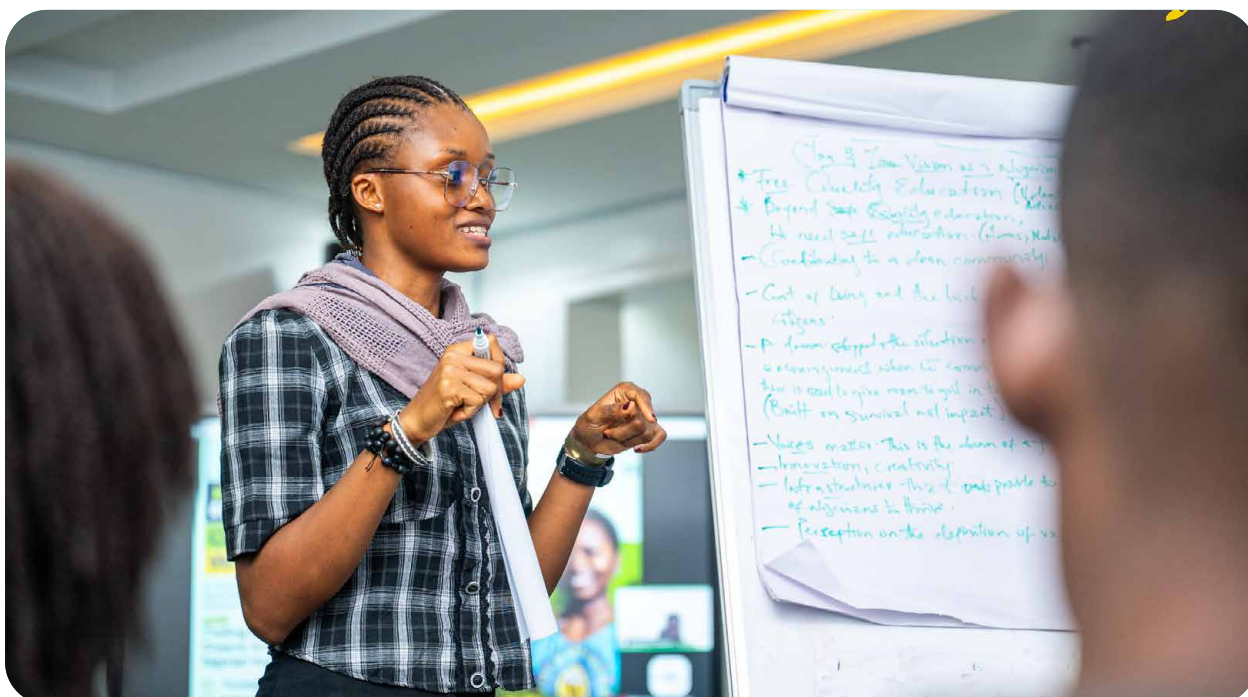
Male, 35, Rural, Ebonyi (Ivo)

Also, for many young people, ambition is increasingly shaped by calculations of safety rather than opportunity. The ability to plan for the future, pursue education or enterprise, organize collectively, or even move freely is now contingent on personal security. Insecurity does not simply slow progress; it constrains choices, shrinks horizons, and, in extreme cases, erases possibility altogether. As one young woman from rural Ebonyi reflects, the threat of violence transforms aspiration into risk:



Insecurity, regardless of how much I want to push, if there's insurgency and I get killed, I die with my vision, I die with everything.

Female, 29, Rural, Ebonyi (Ohaozara)



Youth Vision



We, the youth of Nigeria, envision a country where all young people can live, learn, work, and move freely without fear. We envision safe schools, secure streets, protected workplaces, and accessible transport. We envision a Nigeria where youth are partners in peacebuilding and governance, rather than tools for political violence. Security institutions operate transparently, uphold the rule of law, and protect citizens equitably, while communities are empowered to participate in conflict prevention, mediation, and reconciliation.

Core Demands



- 01.** Government shall guarantee youth safety through effective law enforcement, rapid response to kidnapping and violence, and community policing strategies.
- 02.** Government must end the weaponisation of youth for political purposes, investigate violations, and prosecute officials or actors who recruit, arm, or exploit young people in violence.
- 03.** Government shall provide displaced youth with secure access to education, vocational training, and livelihood support, including temporary housing, food, and psychosocial care.
- 04.** Government must support community-led peacebuilding and early-warning mechanisms, engaging youth as active mediators, monitors, and educators in conflict-prone areas.
- 05.** Employers and institutions shall create safe workplaces with gender-sensitive policies, grievance procedures, and protections against harassment, intimidation, and unsafe conditions.

Success looks like



- * Increased number and proportion of youth reporting safe access to schools, workplaces, and markets, disaggregated by gender, disability, and location.
- * Reduced incidents of youth involvement in political thuggery, recruitment into armed groups, or electoral violence.
- * Increased number of displaced youth accessing secure housing, education, vocational training, and psychosocial support services.
- * Implementation of community-based peace committees or youth-led early warning mechanisms, with documented youth participation and outcomes in conflict prevention.

Section 10: Digital Access and Technological Opportunity

Section Purpose



This section establishes digital access, digital skills, and technological participation as rights of Nigerian youth. It demands public investment in affordable connectivity, reliable electricity, inclusive digital learning, and fair access to the digital economy so that technology becomes a pathway to opportunity, not another source of exclusion.

Situational Statement

Digital access is no longer a luxury for Nigerian youth; it is now tied to education, work, entrepreneurship, public information, civic participation, and survival. Evidence from NCC (2025) shows that Nigeria had over 164 million active internet subscriptions in the first quarter of 2024, with Lagos, Ogun, and Kano recording the highest numbers of active internet subscribers. Yet, subscription numbers do not mean equal digital opportunity. Access differs sharply by location, income, gender, disability, device quality, data affordability, and electricity supply. Evidence from UNICEF and the World Bank shows that access to devices, electricity, connectivity, language support, and digital confidence remains socially and spatially unequal. Despite the prevalent use of mobile phones and social media, both among rural and urban youth, meaningful digital participation remains (World Bank Group, 2023). Youth describe social media as a main channel for learning about government programmes, jobs, grants and opportunities:



Most times once we see maybe like an ad whether it's real or it's not real, most people just... so far as it's for empowerment, it's to bring them out of the current situation... most youth apply for them, whether it's even a fake link or not. So through social media we're able to gain access to whatever it is that government... to support our dreams.

Female, Urban, PWD, Edo

Electricity poverty is the strongest barrier:



If I see light, I see light, what? Six hours, seven hours of light. If it's even plenty, by mistake, ten hours. The major thing that's holding the economy right now, small-scale businesses, and they thrive by the fact that electricity is made available.

Male, ~28, Urban, Kaduna South

This reflects a wider national problem, highlighted in a 2026 World Bank report indicating that around 40% of Nigerians still lack access to electricity, with rural access even lower than urban (World Bank Group, 2026) . Without reliable power, young people cannot consistently learn online, run digital businesses, charge devices, use tools, or compete in the digital economy.

The digital economy can create new pathways for youth employment and entrepreneurship through online businesses, graphic design, programming, virtual assistance, and digital marketing, as well as e-commerce, creative production, civic technology and remote work. Nigeria's ICT sector already contributes significantly to the economy, with The U.S. International Trade Administration's Nigeria Digital Economy Guide reporting ICT contribution of about 20% to real GDP growth in Q2 2024 (USITA, 2025). Youth are already using technology to market businesses, source goods, learn online, cover events, and reduce transport costs:



Most youths are obsessed with their gadgets... if there's a way... a youth can make use of his device for the betterment of his life, it will be okay and it will also develop the country.

Female, 22, Urban, Adamawa (Yola)

However, these opportunities will remain unequal unless the government deliberately expands infrastructure, affordability, skills, and trust.

Youth Vision



We, the youth of Nigeria, envision a country where every young person, regardless of region, gender, disability, income, or rural-urban location, can access affordable internet, reliable electricity, digital devices, and relevant technology skills. We envision a Nigeria where access to technology is optimised to enable us learn, work, innovate, build businesses, strengthen public accountability, engage in civic and democratic processes through digital platforms, and solve community problems. We envision a digital economy where technology is accessible to every youth, regardless of connection, geographical area or academic qualification but open to all young Nigerians with talent, creativity, and determination.

Core Demands



Government must:

- 01.** Recognize affordable internet access, reliable electricity, and digital skills as essential rights for youth participation in modern society. Digital inclusion must be treated as a public service fundamental to quality education, work, governance, and dignity (touch up).
- 02.** Invest in universal, affordable, and reliable infrastructure across all states, with priority for rural, underserved, conflict-affected, and under resourced communities. Public investment must bridge the urban-rural digital divide and expand last-mile connectivity.
- 03.** Address electricity poverty as a foundation for digital participation. We call for access to regular power for all youth, with alternative energy solutions for underserved communities, and emphasis on renewable energy solutions, in line with global energy standards and practices.
- 04.** Embed subsidised and inclusive digital skills training for young people into all programmes and initiatives, while ensuring continuity across political transitions. Training should cover artificial intelligence, coding, web design, data analysis, cybersecurity, digital marketing, e-commerce, creative technology, civic technology, and digital financial literacy, with particular attention to inclusion of young women, rural youth, and persons with disabilities.
- 05.** Create an enabling digital economy for youth entrepreneurs and workers. This includes equitable access to start-up grants, innovation funds, digital workspaces, mentorship, equipment, online market access, consumer protection, with considerations and accommodations that enable small digital businesses to thrive.
- 06.** Leverage technology to strengthen transparency in government processes and encourage youth civic participation. Public budgets, youth programme opportunities, beneficiary lists, application timelines, selection criteria, and implementation reports should be accessible through digital platforms, while government should also establish and utilise community cyber cafés, CBT centres, and IT hubs to ensure youth without personal internet access or devices can still access information, apply for opportunities, and participate in public programmes.

Success would look like



- * Regular tracking and reporting on rates of youth's access to internet, data affordability, device access, and reliable electricity disaggregated across states by gender, disability status, income level, and rural/urban location.
- * In line with UNESCO/SDG 4.4 target, by 2030, minimum 50% of youth should have completed an accredited digital skills programme, disaggregated by state and inclusion category, with follow-up data on employment, entrepreneurship, freelance income, or business growth.
- * Transparency in publication and access to digital information on eligibility, timelines, selection criteria, beneficiaries, budgets, complaints, and implementation status for youth related digital initiatives and programmes.

Section 11: Mental Health, Hope, and Well-being

Purpose of this Section



The purpose of this section is to frame the mental health and psychological well-being of Nigerian youth as a critical socioeconomic and structural challenge that should be addressed. It explores how persistent socioeconomic strain including unemployment, inflation, and lack of opportunities triggers a “hope deficit” and mental health crisis amongst young Nigerians. Furthermore, this section aims to identify the current deficits in public mental health infrastructure, academic environments, and societal support networks, to establish why protecting the psychological well-being of the youth is crucial for restoring their agency, resilience, and willingness to contribute to national development.

Situation Statement

Evidence from the literature review shows young people having high aspirations and strong agency, but face closed or exclusionary opportunity structure (such as unemployment, poverty, and accessibility barriers), leading to extreme psychological frustration, helplessness, and a loss of faith in the future (Policy Innovation Centre, 2026). The mental health crisis among Nigerian youth is directly linked to the difficult economic and social conditions that affects a young person’s peace of mind, self-worth, and drive.

In some scenarios, academic investments and hard work fail to yield productive employment. Subsequently young people into are prolonged economic dependency on struggling family units, which fosters psychological distress. A young graduate respondent stated,



“I’m a graduate, but I don’t have a job because I’ve tried getting a job. It’s been so difficult...”

Female, 32, Urban PWD, Ebonyi

In the Northeast and North Central regions, displacement due to insurgency and violence has removed youth from schools, farms, and businesses. A respondent from Ebonyi explained:

Under these conditions, the inability to afford basic daily necessities transforms into sources of persistent trauma, eroding self-worth, and survival-driven depression. Currently mental health services are underfunded, expensive, and concentrated in a few urban psychiatric hospitals. Consequently, young people rely almost entirely on informal support systems like family networks, peers, and religious institutions. These informal systems lack professional clinical training and frequently worsen the crisis by spiritualizing mental health struggles or dismissing them as personal weaknesses. Lastly, combined with the lack of awareness and limitations of informal networks, most youth carry their emotional and mental burdens in isolation.

Individual coping mechanisms, such as withdrawing indoors or depending on peer survival networks. However, this type of survival-driven resilience is not sustainable and must be strengthened by shifting the weight from the individual to state-led institutional support. To protect youth well-being and restore civic trust, the government must take direct action by creating a supportive, stable environment that addresses the economic roots of distress while making professional mental healthcare accessible at the community level.

Without structural support, many young people are left to manage severe anxiety and depression on their own, often facing social stigma that treats mental health struggles as personal or spiritual failures. Due to a lack of youth-friendly counseling centers and affordable mental healthcare, many are forced to adopt isolated coping mechanisms. A respondent had this to say about the pressure,



Adulthood is after my life.

Female, 29, Rural, Ebonyi (Ohaozara)

This widespread emotional strain shows that mental well-being must be addressed as a core part of national youth development rather than an afterthought.



Youth Vision



We, the youth of Nigeria, envision a society that treats our mental health and emotional well-being as a fundamental human right. We foresee a compassionate country where seeking psychological support is completely normalized, free from social stigma, and backed by accessible, affordable, and youth-friendly counseling services in every local community. In this future, our well-being will no longer be quashed by and tied to the constant anxiety of basic survival.

Core Demands



- 01.** Government must integrate dedicated mental health counseling services into primary healthcare centers across all 774 local government areas, ensuring they are staffed with trained professionals and remain free, confidential, and youth-friendly.
- 02.** Government shall launch nationwide educational campaigns to combat social stigma and spread awareness through the state ministries of health and education, integrating basic mental health and emotional well-being education into secondary and tertiary school curriculums.
- 03.** Government shall launch and maintain a free, confidential, and 24/7 national mental health hotline available in multiple local languages to provide immediate psychological first aid and counseling referrals for youth in crisis.

03

***IMPLEMENTATION
FRAMEWORK***



Section 12: Accountability and Youth Participation

Purpose of this Section



This section translates the Charter's demands into a concrete implementation framework; detailing who is responsible for what, how progress will be measured, and how youth will remain at the centre of oversight.

Situation Statement

For decades, Nigerian youth have heard promises of inclusion, empowerment, and opportunity. Yet many of these commitments have failed to translate into meaningful change because implementation has often been weak, fragmented, and difficult to track. As a result, trust in public institutions has gradually declined, leaving many young people feeling excluded from decisions that directly affect their lives. We believe that the success of this Charter depends not only on the commitments made, but on the systems put in place to ensure that those commitments are fulfilled. Accountability must therefore be at the heart of youth development. Government institutions at both federal and state levels must move beyond declarations and demonstrate measurable progress towards the aspirations outlined in this Charter.

Key oversight mechanisms – Independent Youth Accountability Committee and Multi-Stakeholder Monitoring Platform – will serve as watchdogs which will largely focus on reviewing implementations, tracking delivery against targets and verifying reported progress while monitoring whether institutions are meeting their commitments.

When asked for recommendations, one of the respondents stated,



Youth inclusivity, inclusion is top on the list...

Female, 29, Rural, Ebonyi (Ohaozara)

From design and implementation to monitoring and evaluation, youth and marginalised groups should have a meaningful seat at the table. To support this, representative youth councils should be established at national, state, and local levels to provide structured channels for engagement and feedback. Particular attention should be given to ensuring the inclusion of young women, persons with disabilities, rural youth, and other historically underrepresented groups. Civil society organisations should support public awareness, evidence generation, and citizen accountability efforts. The private sector should contribute through investment, job creation, mentorship, and skills development opportunities. Development partners should provide technical support, facilitate learning, and strengthen systems that promote transparency and effective implementation.

Youth Vision



We envision a future where young people are not passive recipients of government programmes but active partners in shaping national development. Accountability, transparency, and meaningful participation are therefore not optional principles; they are essential conditions for building trust, strengthening institutions, and ensuring that no young person is left behind.

Success looks like



- * Increased percentage of youth benefiting from economic incentives, subsidies, or housing support, disaggregated by gender, disability, and rural/urban location.
- * Year-on-year changes in affordability indices for key essentials (food, transport, utilities) relative to youth income.
- * Number of youth enterprises receiving grants or loans with documented merit-based, transparent selection and monitoring of post-funding outcomes.

Core Demands



- 01.** Within the first year of adoption, federal and state governments should publish clear implementation plans outlining how youth-related demands will be achieved, the institutions responsible for delivery, the resources allocated, and the timelines for completion. These plans should be publicly accessible and updated regularly to allow citizens to monitor progress.
- 02.** Within two years, government ministries, departments, and agencies should have a unified and active reporting system that provides regular updates on youth programmes, expenditures, and outcomes. Progress reports should be published annually and made available in formats that are accessible to young people across the country.
- 03.** Within three years, an independent review of the Charter's implementation should be conducted to assess progress, identify gaps, and recommend corrective actions. The findings should be publicly released and used to strengthen future implementation efforts. Young people must not only be consulted when policies are being developed; they must be actively involved throughout the entire process.
- 04.** Every five years, a national review process led by the youth council should be undertaken to assess emerging priorities, evaluate progress, and update commitments where necessary. Such a process will ensure that the Charter remains relevant to the realities, aspirations, and challenges facing future generations of Nigerian youth.

04

***CONCLUSION &
CALL TO ACTION***

Section 13: Our Nigerian, Our Future: A Call to Action



This Charter was not written from a place of despair, but of hope. Nigerian youth have demonstrated, generation after generation - under conditions that demand exceptional resilience - that they believe in this country. We have not resigned ourselves to fate. The drafting of this Charter is an ongoing act of faith in Nigeria's potential, placed here, formally and finally, on the record.

To the Government of Nigeria:

The time for announcements without delivery has passed. The evidence assembled in this Charter documents a structural failure of the social contract with Nigerian youth. We are not asking for charity. We are demanding what is ours by right: dignified opportunity, merit-based access, transparent governance, personal safety, and meaningful participation in decisions that shape their lives. Every commitment in this Charter is accompanied by a measurable indicator of success. There is no ambiguity about what implementation requires, or how it will be assessed.

To the private sector:

You operate within Nigerian communities and depend on Nigerian human capital. This Charter asks you to invest in that capital, through equitable hiring, fair wages, youth mentorship, and

partnerships that extend opportunity beyond the well-connected few. A Nigeria in which youth thrive is a Nigeria in which your enterprises can grow.

To civil society and international development partners:

Help us hold government to account. Track the indicators. Amplify youth voices. Resource the implementation. Your credibility in this work will be measured by your willingness to maintain pressure when political attention moves elsewhere.

To Nigerian youth everywhere:

We commit to remaining active participants, not passive signatories, in the implementation of this Charter. We commit to holding our own organisations accountable, to mentoring those coming behind us, and to exercising our

democratic rights in every space where decisions are made.

The vision we hold is concrete. Within ten to twenty years, a young Nigerian in the farthest reaches of any local government, should be able to access quality education, find dignified work, live free from violence, and trust that public institutions serve them, not because of who they know, but because their country has chosen to honour its most fundamental obligation to its citizens.

If this Charter is implemented, Nigeria will have invested in its greatest asset - a young, dynamic population with the energy and ambition to lead this country's transformation into the generation that finally fulfilled its promise. If it is not, the cost will be paid in continued brain drain, the departure of the talented, deepening poverty and inequality, fractured civic trust, and in the quiet extinguishing of a generation's faith that change is possible.

*Nothing about us,
without us. The work
does not end with this
document. It begins
here.*



NIGERIAN YOUTH DREAM CHARTER **CO-CREATION** **WORKSHOP**



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GS-26 YOUTH CONFERENCE



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