

Youth Power: Shaping Nigeria's Political Future



The West African country of Nigeria has a young population that is commonly known to play a significant role in shaping political outcomes. In the 2023 General Elections, youth marked a historic moment in the nation's political landscape, with an unprecedented participation that accounted for over a third of the registered voters in the country [1]. The active involvement of youth during and after the election established a compelling need to address their demands for a more inclusive and responsive administration that would act upon the issues important to and affecting the younger.

Following two recessions in the last eight years, the younger and fast-growing population cares deeply about education, job opportunities, and good governance, stemming from the 2020 #EndSARS anti-police brutality protests. But the success of youth participation in the electoral process is intricately tied to supportive policy and legal structures as well, such as the National Youth Policy [2] and the 2018 Not-Too-Young-To-Run Bill which aims to enable an environment for young individuals to engage in politics by lowering the age qualification for the Presidency to 35 years, and the House of Representatives and the State House of Assembly to 25 years[3].

The influential role of civil society organizations and non-governmental entities in mobilizing young populations was also profound. Notable organizations such as the Peace Education and Practice Network (PEPNET), Building Blocks for Peace Foundation (BBFORPEACE), YIAGA Africa, YMonitor, Youth Hub Africa, Centre for Peace Advocacy and Sustainable Development (CEPASD), and the Ladies Empowerment Goals and Support Initiative (LEGASI) actively worked to build and strengthen the capacities of young people, contributing significantly to the prevention of electoral violence[4].

In another instance, YIAGA Africa, in collaboration with other international organizations such as UNDP and the European Union, as well as private sector companies, successfully galvanized youth to participate in elections [5] by building and sustaining the capacities of the youth sector. As such, fostering stronger collaborations between the government and these organizations, is recommended to develop sustained initiatives to engage and empower the youth, which will contribute to a more vibrant and representative democracy [6].

Innovative approaches leveraging digital platforms were pivotal in engaging the youth demographic during the 2023 elections.

The 2023 General Elections in Nigeria witnessed a historic surge in youth participation, reflecting a pressing demand for a more inclusive administration. Legislative reforms and civil society mobilization have amplified youth voices, while innovative digital strategies reshape political engagement and post-election governance.



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Social media campaigns, online voter education, and virtual town hall meetings emerged as effective tools for mobilization. To demand accountability for elections, youth helped successfully document the voting process by posting continuous updates on social media [7]. As youth took a lead role in shaping the political narrative during the 2023 elections, challenging established political parties and creating a competitive electoral landscape was possible through the impact of technology-driven initiatives, including partnerships with tech companies.

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These lessons should encourage the emerging administration to consider the aspirations and concerns raised by youth during the electioneering process. Establishing channels for ongoing dialogue and incorporating youth perspectives into governance will be crucial for building a responsive administration[8].

[1] <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2023/2/13/how-nigerian-youths-are-galvanising-for-the-presidential-vote>
[2] <https://www.prb.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Nigeria-National-Youth-Policy-2019-2023.pdf>
[3] <https://www.idea.int/news/not-too-young-run-and-historic-wins-nigerias-2023-elections-samson-itodo>
<https://yiaga.org/publications/youth-candidacy-in-nigerias-2023-election/>
[4] <https://kujenga-amani.ssrc.org/2023/02/24/nigerian-youths-participation-in-the-2023-elections-defying-the-odds-and-forging-ahead/>
[5] <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/5050/nigeria-election-2023-youth-exclusion-organising/>
[6] <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2022/11/2023-yiaga-africa-not-too-young-to-run-movement-to-build-capacity-of-young-political-candidates/>
[7] <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/nigerias-youth-take-centre-stage-in-the-2023-polls>
[8] <https://www.csis.org/analysis/identity-insecurity-and-institutions-2023-nigerian-elections>

#CASTINGTOMORROW

The way young people engaged the media, especially on X (formerly known as Twitter) and other social media platforms after the election, demonstrates the extent of the impact youth activism exerts over the electoral arena. The transformative role of youth-led initiatives in the judiciary system contributes to the strengthening peace, justice, and strong institutions in Nigeria. These also advocate for transparency,

accountability, and fairness within the legal system, further consolidating the democratic gains achieved during the elections^[9].

Nigeria's 2023 General Elections showcased the immense potential of youth participation in the electoral process and in influencing post-election governance and justice systems. By fortifying policy frameworks, enhancing collaboration between the

government and civil society, embracing innovative technologies, and recognizing the ongoing impact of youth activism, Nigeria can harness this momentum to build a more inclusive, responsive, and dynamic political landscape that addresses the aspirations of its diverse youth population. After all, Nigeria's significant young population is here to stay and is projected to keep participating with full force in present and future political and civic matters.

