

DEMOCRACY & GOVERNANCE DIGEST

*Where Policy
Meets the People*



DEMOCRACY AT THE CROSSROADS: **Africa's New Awakening**

**Steering the Ship
of Legislative
Excellence:**

**Prof. Abubakar O.
Sulaiman's
Transformative
Leadership at NILDS**

**West Africa's
Coup Crisis**
What ECOWAS
Must Do Next

**Electoral Reforms
in Africa**
Lessons from Ghana,
Kenya & Nigeria

**Nigerian Birth
Tourism**
The Quest for
Foreign Citizenship

**Understanding
Governance
Terminology**
Foundations for
Constitutional
Reform



THE **About** **Digest**

Democracy and Governance Digest is a publication of the Department of Democracy and Governance, National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS). The Digest provides in-depth analysis, policy reflections, and expert perspectives on key trends in democratic governance across Nigeria and the African continent.

It aims to serve as a credible platform for lawmakers, scholars, civil society actors, and the public to engage with ideas that shape legislation, institutional accountability, political reform, and democratic resilience. Each edition focuses on thematic issues ranging from electoral reform, civic participation, institutional capacity, security, inclusion, and parliamentary development.

Through thoughtful commentary, policy briefs, interviews, and field-based narratives, the Democracy and Governance Digest contributes to ongoing conversations on how democratic institutions can be strengthened to deliver sustainable development and equity.

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EDITORIAL NOTE

AT THE EDGE OF RENEWAL

Democracy is not self-sustaining. It must be nurtured, defended, and, when necessary, reinvented.

This edition of Democracy and Governance Digest, themed “Democracy at the Crossroads: Africa's New Awakening,” is a response to both the turbulence and tenacity we observe across the continent. From the corridors of parliaments to the energy of the streets, Africa is engaged in a fierce contest, not just for power, but for purpose. The rise in military coups, the resilience of civic movements, and the persistent call for credible elections emphasise the urgency of our time.

In this issue, we uncover what it truly means to defend democracy in the 21st century. We look at Nigeria's National Assembly as a case study in institutional accountability and explore how reforms, oversight, and citizen engagement are shaping governance in real terms.

We are particularly proud to spotlight the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS) and its growing role in building democratic capacity across Africa through research, training, and collaboration.



This Digest is more than a publication; it is a platform. A space where ideas meet action, where thought fuels reform, and where the democratic project finds its voice.

Let us move forward, not blindly, but boldly. Democracy is at a crossroads—but we can choose the path of awakening.

— Christopher Ngara, PhD

*Editor-in-Chief
Democracy and Governance Digest*

DEMOCRACY AT THE CROSSROADS: AFRICA'S NEW AWAKENING

By: Etimbuk E. Obot, PhD

Across Africa, the democratic tide is meeting new waves—some surging with hope, others swelling with uncertainty. In the past five years alone, the continent has witnessed a spate of military takeovers in Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Gabon, rekindling old anxieties about the fragility of civilian rule. Yet, in almost the same breath, there's a groundswell of civic activism, youth mobilisation, and institutional reform efforts breathing new life into Africa's political landscape.

The result is a paradoxical moment: a continent where democratic regression and renewal are unfolding side by side.

Military juntas have cited corruption, insecurity, and constitutional manipulation as justifications for their interventions. In some cases, these arguments have resonated with segments of the population frustrated by stagnant governance. But history warns that soldiers in politics rarely deliver the participatory governance they promise. The AU and ECOWAS continue to stand firm on zero-tolerance policies for unconstitutional changes of government, yet their enforcement mechanisms are increasingly tested.

Away from the barracks, Africa's streets, campuses, and digital spaces tell a different story. From #EndSARS in Nigeria to pro-democracy protests in Sudan, young Africans are claiming political agency like never before. Social media has become both a rallying ground and a watchdog, with citizen journalists challenging state narratives in real time.

At the legislative and judicial levels, reform-minded leaders are working to strengthen governance structures. Continental bodies such as the Pan-African Parliament are pushing for more legislative oversight, while national judiciaries are experimenting with greater transparency and efficiency. These reforms are critical; without them, democracy risks being little more than a slogan.

However, it is important to know that a choice is now before us. Africa's democratic future rests on three pillars: strong institutions, engaged citizens, and accountable leadership. Weakness in any of these areas will keep creating openings for authoritarian relapse. Strengthening electoral commissions, protecting judicial independence, and empowering civil society are not abstract ideals; they are survival strategies for democracy on the continent.



Democracy in Africa is not dying; it is being contested. And that contest will define the next generation."

The crossroads is clear: Africa can either allow coups and complacency to reverse decades of democratic gains or harness its civic energy to deepen the culture of constitutional governance. The choice belongs to Africans, and the time is now.

Dr. Etimbuk E. Obot is a Nigerian communication scholar and researcher at the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS), National Assembly, Abuja.





STEERING THE SHIP OF LEGISLATIVE EXCELLENCE

PROF. ABUBAKAR O. SULAIMAN'S TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP AT NILDS

Under the steady and visionary leadership of Prof. Abubakar O. Sulaiman, the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS) has cemented its position as Nigeria's foremost legislative think-tank and a continental hub for democratic capacity building.



Since assuming office, the Director-General has combined intellectual rigour with strategic foresight, delivering reforms and initiatives that have strengthened legislative processes, deepened public engagement, and expanded NILDS' footprint across Africa.

Building Capacity, Strengthening Institutions

Prof. Sulaiman has championed high-impact training for legislators, aides, and state assemblies, ensuring that Nigeria's law-making process is informed by global best practices and backed by robust research. From the post-2023 induction for new lawmakers to specialised workshops on budget analysis, oversight, and legislative drafting, NILDS under his watch has become the go-to institution for building institutional strength.





Expanding NILDS' Continental Influence

Recognising that democratic progress in Nigeria is linked to developments across Africa, the DG has actively advanced parliamentary diplomacy. NILDS has hosted and trained lawmakers from Malawi, engaged ECOWAS on regional integration, and contributed to critical dialogues on the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). These efforts have positioned the Institute as a trusted partner in shaping legislative norms and promoting governance reforms beyond Nigeria's borders.

Driving Democratic Outreach and Civic Engagement

Prof. Sulaiman's tenure has also been marked by a commitment to bridging the gap between parliament and the people. Through initiatives like the Legislative Internship Programme, the National Quiz Competition, and the Legislative Mentorship Initiative, NILDS has nurtured the next generation of civic-minded leaders. Collaborations with universities and policy bodies have further expanded access to knowledge and research, ensuring that democratic education is both inclusive and impactful.

Championing Gender Inclusion and Electoral Integrity

In partnership with UN-Women and other stakeholders, NILDS has advanced campaigns for women's political participation, gender inclusion, and electoral reform. Policy dialogues under the DG's leadership have tackled pressing issues, from election security to institutional reforms, providing lawmakers and policymakers with actionable roadmaps for strengthening Nigeria's democracy.

WEST AFRICA'S COUP CRISIS

WHAT ECOWAS MUST DO NEXT

- By Paul Terlunum Bemgba, PhD

West Africa is experiencing a political relapse. Since 2020, military coups in Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso, and Niger have shaken democratic foundations and exposed deep vulnerabilities in the region's security and governance systems. While the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was created to uphold democratic order and regional stability, it has struggled to respond effectively to the wave of unconstitutional power seizures. This is no longer just a series of isolated events. It is a full-blown crisis. And the question now is: what can ECOWAS do next?

A Region on the Brink

BB | *In just five years, four West African nations have fallen to military coups.*

In Mali, a president was ousted in 2020 and again in 2021. Guinea followed in 2021. Burkina Faso experienced two coups within a single year in 2022. Then came Niger in 2023, where the president was overthrown by his own presidential guard. These events point to something deeper than political instability. They reflect the fragility of democratic institutions and the loss of public faith in civilian leadership. In the midst of insecurity, corruption, and economic hardship, military interventions are increasingly seen, rightly or wrongly, as necessary resets.

ECOWAS: A Watchdog Without Teeth?

ECOWAS has not been silent. It has imposed sanctions, suspended memberships, and dispatched high-level envoys to negotiate political transitions. In the case of Niger, it even threatened military intervention. But these measures have largely failed to reverse the coups or deter others.

Sanctions have often backfired, thus hurting ordinary citizens more than the generals. Mediation missions have been rebuffed. And the threat of military action lacked the consensus and capacity to be taken seriously. The result? In early 2025, Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger formally withdrew from ECOWAS and announced the formation of a rival bloc: the Alliance of Sahel States. This rupture exposed ECOWAS's waning influence and the erosion of its authority in a region it once helped stabilise.

Why Are Coups Making a Comeback?

There is no single explanation. Instead, a combination of interconnected factors has created the perfect storm:

1. Weak governance has allowed corruption and authoritarianism to flourish.
2. Insecurity, especially from terrorist groups in the Sahel, has undermined public trust in

civilian governments.

3. Disillusioned youth face rising unemployment and political exclusion, fuelling resentment.
4. Geopolitical shifts have opened space for military regimes to defy international norms without facing serious consequences.



*This is not just a regional crisis.
It's a crisis of legitimacy,
governance, and public confidence.*

So, What Must ECOWAS Do Now?

If ECOWAS is to remain relevant, it must go beyond reactive diplomacy. It needs to become a proactive force for democratic renewal and regional cooperation. Here's how:

1. **Update the Rulebook:** ECOWAS must revise its outdated democratic governance protocols. It should define clear red lines, enforceable penalties, and realistic transition timelines to deal with unconstitutional takeovers.
2. **Build a Real Standby Force:** For decades, ECOWAS has talked about a regional standby force. It's time to make it operational, not just for fighting terrorism, but for defending constitutional rule when it's under threat.
3. **Address the Root Causes:** Coups don't happen in strong, inclusive societies. ECOWAS should support member states in addressing corruption, reforming their judiciaries, and creating economic opportunities, especially for young people.
4. **Reconnect with Citizens:** Regional legitimacy cannot be built on elite agreements alone. ECOWAS must invest in civil society, media freedom, and civic education to ensure citizens feel seen and heard.
5. **Rebuild Ties with Breakaway States:** Dialogue with the new Alliance of Sahel States should continue. Common security and development interests like terrorism, food insecurity, and trade require regional collaboration, regardless of political divisions.
6. **Strengthen African Solutions:** Foreign partnerships matter, but West Africa's solutions must be led by West Africans. ECOWAS should reaffirm its independence and commitment to homegrown, consensus-driven strategies.

A Defining Moment

The West African coup crisis is not just about military men in fatigues. It's about the health of democratic institutions, the credibility of regional organisations, and the future of a region with immense potential but growing instability. ECOWAS now faces a pivotal choice: reform and rise to the challenge, or watch its influence fade as the region drifts into fragmentation. The road ahead is not easy, but inaction is not an option.



*This is West Africa's moment of reckoning.
ECOWAS must act, and act wisely.*

Paul Terlunum Bemgba, PhD, is a researcher and policy analyst specialising in regional security, governance, and democratic development in West Africa. With a strong background in political science, security and strategic studies, he has authored and contributed to numerous publications on national security, civic engagement, and sub-regional cooperation. He currently works at the Legislative Centre for Security Analysis (LeCeSA), National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS), where he provides research support to legislators and policymakers.



HOW NIGERIA'S PARLIAMENT IS LEADING THE CHARGE FOR INSTITUTIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

By Dr. Shafiu Mika'il

In a time when public trust in government is being tested globally, Nigeria's National Assembly is quietly redefining its role as a vanguard of democratic accountability. No longer content with being a passive participant in governance, the Parliament is increasingly stepping into its constitutional role, not just as a law-making body, but as a watchdog of public institutions, a driver of reforms, and a platform for citizens' voices.

From Rubber Stamp to Reform Engine

Historically perceived as subservient to the executive, Nigeria's Legislature has long struggled with an image problem. But recent developments signal a strategic shift. Legislative committees are becoming more assertive, actively engaging ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) in oversight, budget scrutiny, and compliance monitoring.

Committees such as the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) and those on Finance, Appropriations, and Anti-Corruption have begun to wield their constitutional powers more effectively, demanding transparency, probing fiscal mismanagement, and halting further budget disbursements to non-compliant agencies. A recent example came with the scrutiny of the 2024 Appropriation Act, where financial reconciliations were made a precondition for additional budget releases.

Tools of the Trade: Strengthening Legislative Capacity

Behind this renewed vigour lies a commitment to capacity building. The establishment of the **National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS)** has been a game-changer. Through targeted training, policy research, and advisory services, NILDS has equipped lawmakers and their aides with the skills to interrogate complex policy documents, budgets, and audit reports.

Legislative debates are now increasingly driven by data and empirical evidence, marking a shift from political rhetoric to informed decision-making. Initiatives like the digitalisation of legislative

records, budget-tracking dashboards, and e-petition platforms are also creating new channels for transparency and citizen oversight.

Opening the Doors to Citizens

Perhaps one of the most transformative changes is the growing inclusion of citizens in legislative processes. Civil society organisations, professional bodies, and advocacy groups are becoming regular contributors at public hearings, shaping the trajectory of landmark bills such as the Petroleum Industry Act, Electoral Act Amendment, and the Gender and Equal Opportunities Bill. Constitutional review exercises have also taken a more consultative tone, with public hearings held across the six geopolitical zones. These engagements are not mere formalities; they are reshaping legislation to reflect the people's aspirations.

Keeping the Executive in Check

True accountability requires that no arm of government operate without scrutiny. Nigeria's Legislature is increasingly challenging executive overreach, from querying the nation's borrowing habits to demanding value-for-money audits on capital projects.

A striking example was the investigative hearing on fuel subsidy payments, which exposed discrepancies in fuel importation data and cast a spotlight on opaque fiscal operations. The probe did more than uncover facts; it sparked national conversations and fuelled calls for deeper reform in the petroleum sector.

Obstacles on the Path to Progress

Yet, the journey is not without obstacles. Political interference, partisan pressures, and limited enforcement mechanisms can blunt the impact of even the most well-intentioned resolutions. Budgetary constraints and delayed responses from MDAs also hamper the timely execution of oversight duties.

The Road Ahead

Despite these challenges, Nigeria's Legislature is slowly but surely reclaiming its place as the conscience of the nation. Through enhanced oversight, stronger legislative tools, and deeper public engagement, it is laying the foundation for a more accountable and transparent democracy.



In a nation where democratic institutions often teeter under the weight of executive dominance, the growing assertiveness of the National Assembly could well be one of the most defining developments of Nigeria's political evolution.

ELECTORAL REFORMS IN AFRICA: LESSONS FROM GHANA, KENYA, AND NIGERIA

By Umar Musa Padah

Across Africa, democracy continues to evolve, but elections, the bedrock of democratic practice, often trigger the opposite of what they promise: peace, stability, and development. In too many cases, they ignite ethnic tensions, foster instability, and sometimes lead to violence. While some progress has been made, particularly through electoral reforms, challenges remain.

This article spotlights three countries, **Ghana, Kenya, and Nigeria**, to examine how electoral reforms are shaping democracy in Africa.

Three Countries, Three Paths

Ghana, Kenya, and Nigeria offer distinct yet overlapping stories. While **Ghana and Nigeria** share a history of military interventions and transitions to civilian rule, **Kenya** stands out for avoiding military coups but endured a long period of one-party dictatorship until 1992. Each country has since made notable strides toward

democratic consolidation, though at varying paces and depths.

Ghana is often seen as a continental model, especially following its 2024 presidential election, its fifth peaceful transition of power, including three that involved the opposition taking over. Nigeria's electoral journey, once dominated by allegations of rigging and violence, has improved, particularly since the 2007 elections, thanks in part to legal and procedural reforms. Kenya, though pioneering in areas like diaspora voting and electronic tallying, still battles ethnic-driven politics and fragile trust in institutions.

What's Working, and What's Not

Electoral reforms across the three countries have focused on inclusivity, transparency, and institutional integrity:

- **Nigeria** has made significant gains through technology, such as biometric voter registration and electronic result transmission, helping to reduce human interference. However, vote-buying, weak campaign finance enforcement, and elite-driven politics remain serious setbacks.
- **Kenya** has adopted computerised voting and included diaspora voting in its constitution. Yet ethnic polarisation continues to undermine confidence in the system. Electoral outcomes often become court battles, raising concerns about the politicisation of the judiciary.
- **Ghana** has prioritised strengthening the independence of its Electoral Commission. It has also received commendation for peaceful transitions, although it still grapples with vote trading and limited youth and female representation.

Key Reform Priorities

Across the three democracies, several areas need urgent attention:

- **Diaspora Voting:** Ghana passed a law in 2006 permitting it but has yet to implement it. Nigeria lacks a legal framework, while Kenya has constitutional provisions but limited access for most citizens abroad.
- **Women & Youth Representation:** Nigeria is considering special legislative seats for women and has lowered the age for candidates to encourage youth participation. Ghana faces similar calls for action.
- **Timely Resolution of Disputes:** In both Ghana and Nigeria, the speed and transparency of electoral tribunals remain a priority to build public confidence.
- **Strengthening Electoral Bodies:** All three countries need to reinforce the independence and credibility of their electoral management bodies to ensure impartiality and fairness.

Beyond Legal Reforms

While institutional reforms are essential, they're not enough. The persistent flaws in these electoral systems suggest deeper socio-political issues that reforms alone cannot fix. **Civic education, national orientation, and political culture change** are critical to ensuring that reforms translate into lasting democratic gains.

Conclusion

Electoral reform is not a destination but a continuous process. For Ghana, Kenya, and Nigeria, and indeed Africa at large, credible elections must move beyond procedural checklists. They must embody the true spirit of democracy: reflecting the people's will, protecting minority rights, and fostering national unity. The path is long, but progress is not out of reach.

UNDERSTANDING GOVERNANCE TERMINOLOGY: A PREREQUISITE FOR CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS IN NIGERIA

BETHEL UZOMA IHUGBA (LLB, LLM, PhD, BL)

Coordinator, Centre for Advanced Executive Education Programme,
NILDS – National Assembly, Abuja

INTRODUCTION

Ever since Nigeria's 1999 Constitution came into force, the debate over its future has never truly gone quiet. Some voices insist it should be scrapped altogether in favour of a wholly homegrown, autochthonous charter. Others argue that the wiser path is to keep the existing framework but make key amendments where needed.

Today, that conversation is alive and well in the 10th National Assembly, which, much like those before it, is once again steering the ship toward constitutional alteration, according to recent reports from civic policy experts and national news outlets. While this effort is commendable, it is crucial that all stakeholders have a deep understanding of the underlying concepts and theoretical frameworks before pursuing changes. A clear grasp of governance terminology is a fundamental step towards achieving this understanding. It ensures consistency and coherence in alteration proposals brought forward and lays a seamless foundation for any subsequent alteration or changes that may be proposed. Hence the necessity to pay close and careful attention to terminology deployed in either describing the current governance framework or proposed governance frameworks.

The Importance of Precise Governance Terminology

Governance terminology is the backbone of effective lawmaking and constitutional reforms. Each jurisdiction or legal system has terminologies whose meanings are peculiar to it. Those meanings are the building blocks for government actions. This is especially so for constitutional democracies that rely on written constitutions. For example, given the Nigerian constitutional history of having practised both parliamentary and presidential systems of government, understanding the nuances of terms like "legislature" and "parliament" is essential for lawmakers, policymakers, and stakeholders to navigate the complexities of governance. These terms are often used interchangeably, but they have distinct meanings and implications for governance structures. A scan through national newspaper reports will demonstrate the often erroneous description of the National Assembly as a parliament. A clear differentiation will demonstrate these differences and their implications on governance.

Legislature and Parliament: Understanding the Differences

A legislature is a lawmaking body in a country or state, which can take various forms, such as unicameral or bicameral. On the other hand, a parliament typically refers to a specific type of legislative system, often associated with countries that follow the Westminster model. In a parliamentary system, the head of state and head of government are separate, and the legislative body often includes cabinet members who are members of the executive. For instance, under the Ghanaian Constitution, which practises a mixed parliamentary/presidential system, the legislature is also referred to as the Parliament. Here, the majority of the members of the executive, specifically ministers, are constitutionally required to be appointed from the Ghanaian Parliament. Similarly, in the UK, the government consists of some members of the Legislature, House of Lords and House of Commons, who are selected persons who are also cabinet members.

This group of persons forms the government. This means that the same individuals will be performing legislative and executive functions. This does not apply to the Nigerian or US constitution, both of which are presidential and not parliamentary. Under the US and Nigerian constitutions, a minister cannot at the same time act as a member of the legislature. Thus, referring to the lawmaking arm of the Nigerian government as a Parliament instead of as a Legislature has some constitutional implications.

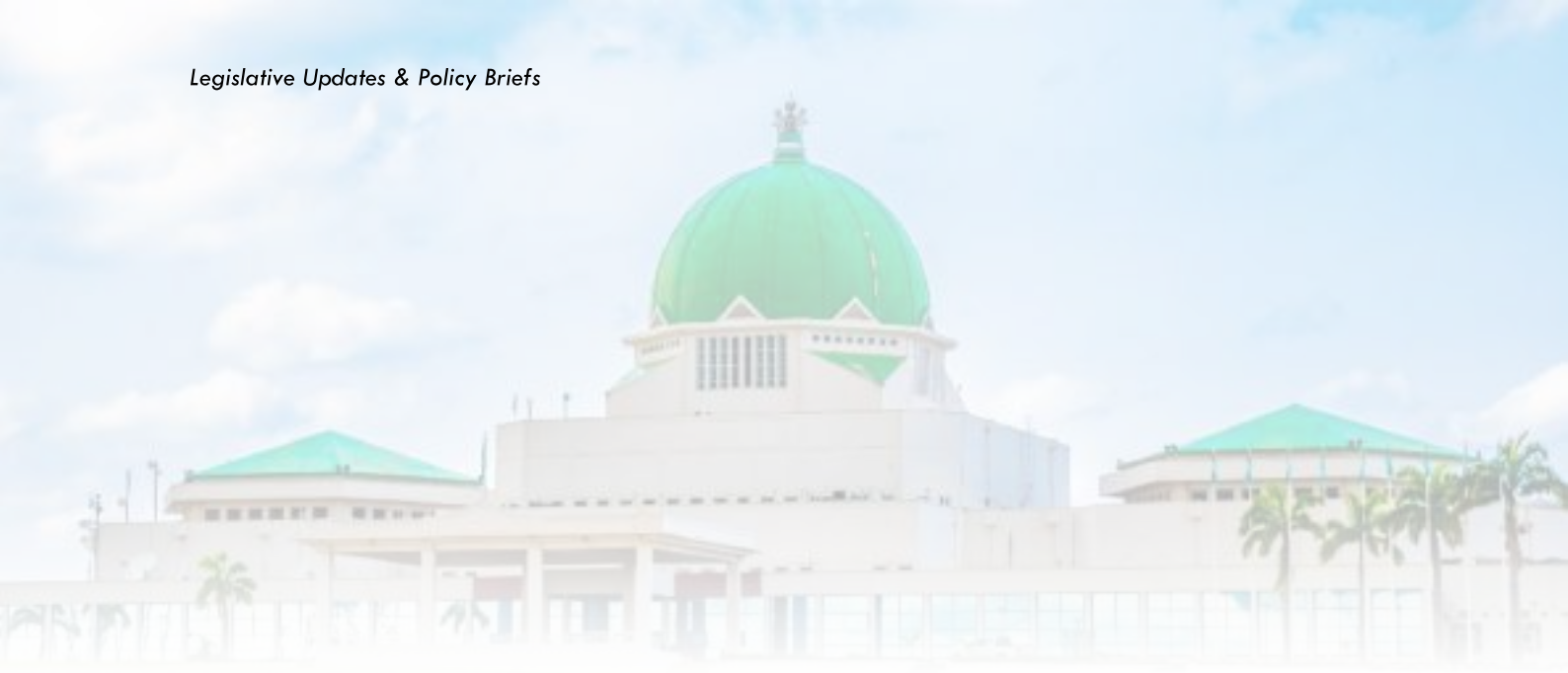
Implications of Misunderstanding Governance Terminology

The misuse or misunderstanding of governance terminology can have significant implications for constitutional reforms. For example, if lawmakers and stakeholders are not clear about the differences between a Legislature and a Parliament, they may inadvertently borrow practices or powers from one system and apply them to another, potentially disrupting the balance of power or leading to constitutional crises. In Nigeria, governance can only be in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution; hence, the description of Nigeria as a Constitutional Democracy.

The Nigerian Context

In Nigeria, the National Assembly is a Legislature, not a parliament (CFRN 1999 s 4). Understanding this distinction is crucial for effective lawmaking and constitutional reforms. The Nigerian Constitution outlines the powers and limitations of the National Assembly, and it is essential that lawmakers and stakeholders are familiar with these provisions to avoid overstepping their authority or undermining the balance of power. For Nigeria, this requires clear adherence to constitutional limits, especially on issues of legislative competence. This is unlike the case with the British Parliament, whose legislative competence is usually unlimited. But for constitutional democracies like Nigeria, the legislature has limited and clearly defined legislative power.





The Need for Capacity Building

To ensure that constitutional reforms are effective and sustainable, it is essential to invest in capacity building for lawmakers and stakeholders. This includes education and training on governance terminology, constitutional frameworks, and the principles of effective lawmaking. By enhancing their knowledge and skills, lawmakers can navigate the complexities of governance and make informed decisions that promote good governance and stability.

Recommendations

1. Lawmakers and stakeholders should prioritise education and training on governance terminology and constitutional frameworks. For example, terms like 'legislative oversight', 'executive directive' (as against 'executive order'), 'subsidiary legislation', etc. have peculiar constitutional meanings under the Nigerian Constitution.
2. The National Assembly should establish clear guidelines and procedures for constitutional reforms, taking into account the unique characteristics of Nigeria's legislative system.
3. Capacity-building programmes should focus on enhancing the knowledge and skills of lawmakers and stakeholders to promote effective lawmaking and good governance.
4. Precise governance terminology should be promoted through official documents, public discourse, and educational materials to ensure consistency and accuracy.

A careful consideration and application of these recommendations will assist in ensuring that the Nigerian constitutional reform process is informed, coherent, consistent and sustainable. This can best be achieved through a deep understanding of governance terminology and principles, which will in turn promote effective governance and stability for generations to come.

Conclusion

In conclusion, understanding governance terminology is a critical prerequisite for constitutional reforms in Nigeria.



The distinction between a Legislature and a Parliament is not merely semantic; it has significant implications for governance structures and the balance of power.

As the National Assembly pursues constitutional reforms through the alteration route, it's essential that all stakeholders have a deep understanding of the underlying concepts and theoretical frameworks. By investing in capacity building and promoting precise governance terminology, Nigeria can ensure that its constitutional reforms are effective, sustainable, and promote good governance and stability.



SPOTLIGHT ON AFRICA

DEMOCRACY UNDER PRESSURE: SHRINKING CIVIC SPACES IN THE SAHEL

By Soliu Shamshudeen Opeyemi

Research Officer, Department of Democracy and Governance, NILDS

Across the Sahel, a vast semi-arid region stretching from Senegal to Chad, the democratic promise is fast eroding. Once viewed as emerging democracies, countries like Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Chad are now sliding into authoritarianism. Military coups, media crackdowns, and rising hostility toward civil society are suffocating freedoms once seen as the foundation of democratic renewal.

At the heart of this democratic rollback is the shrinking of *civic space*, the right to speak, assemble, and organise without fear. Governments across the region increasingly invoke national security and counterterrorism to silence dissent, repress journalists, and restrict political participation.

Mali: From Coup to Clampdown

Mali's democratic unravelling began with a military coup in August 2020, which ousted President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta. A second coup in May 2021 cemented Colonel Assimi Goïta's hold on power. Since then, elections have been repeatedly delayed, demonstrations banned, and critical voices silenced. In 2023, prominent outlets like *Jeune Afrique* were suspended, and human rights defenders reported rising threats.

Burkina Faso: Coups and Censorship

In just one year, Burkina Faso experienced two military takeovers. First came Lieutenant Colonel Paul-Henri Damiba in January 2022, then Captain Ibrahim Traoré in September. Under Traoré, civic freedoms deteriorated swiftly. International media outlets like France 24 and RFI were banned for interviewing jihadist leaders, while local journalists report constant surveillance and harassment. NGOs have raised alarms about the rising climate of fear. The space for free speech and independent reporting is closing fast.

Niger: A Sudden Halt to Democratic Gains

Niger stood out in the region for its peaceful democratic transition in 2021 with the election of President Mohamed Bazoum. That trajectory was violently disrupted in July 2023, when General Abdourahamane Tchiani staged a coup. The new junta wasted no time in banning political activity, censoring media, and pushing anti-Western rhetoric to justify authoritarian rule.



Mali's growing alignment with Russia's Wagner Group and its pivot away from Western partners has further emboldened the regime's authoritarian drift, isolating it from international norms while emboldening domestic crackdowns.

Chad: Military Rule and Suppression

Following the battlefield death of President Idriss Déby in 2021, his son Mahamat Idriss Déby assumed power through a transitional military council. Despite promising a return to civilian rule, he extended military control. When protesters took to the streets in October 2022 to oppose the transition delay, over 50 people were killed. Key opposition leaders, including former Prime Minister Succès Masra, were exiled; though some have since returned, repression continues.



Silencing Dissent: The Tools of Repression

Across these countries, vaguely worded anti-terror laws are used to criminalise protest, independent journalism, and civic advocacy. Journalists reporting on government abuses face arrest. Internet shutdowns have become common during protests and elections, limiting civic organising and muting public discourse.

Yet, repression hasn't silenced resistance.

- In **Chad**, the *Wakit Tama* coalition—uniting opposition parties, unions, and civic groups, continues to push for civilian rule.
- In **Niger**, digital activists challenge junta narratives online, despite surveillance.
- In **Mali**, groups like *Observatoire pour les élections et la bonne gouvernance* still monitor abuses and push for accountability.

Global Response: Uneven and Waning

International reactions have been inconsistent. ECOWAS initially imposed sanctions on Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, but enforcement has been lacklustre. Meanwhile, Western influence is waning, as military regimes forge new partnerships with Russia and other powers that offer security support without democratic conditions. This shift emboldens autocratic leaders to suppress dissent with little fear of consequence.

Conclusion: The Fight for Civic Space

The Sahel's democratic decline reflects a broader trend on the continent. When civic space contracts, democracy becomes hollow. But despite threats, the resilience of journalists, activists, and ordinary citizens reveals an enduring desire for accountable governance.



Safeguarding civic space is not just a prerequisite for democratic return; it is essential for its survival and sustainability.

The Digital Frontier: DISINFORMATION AND THE FUTURE OF AFRICAN ELECTIONS

By Dr. Ishaka Dele

*Department of Democracy & Governance,
National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies,
National Assembly, Nigeria*



The digital revolution is transforming African elections—at once deepening democratic participation and also threatening its foundations. Social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, and TikTok have become powerful tools for voter mobilisation and civic engagement. But they have also become fertile ground for disinformation, digital manipulation, and attacks on electoral trust.

As more Africans rely on online sources for political information, the line between fact and fiction continues to blur, often with dangerous consequences.

DIGITAL TOOLS, REAL-WORLD CONSEQUENCES

Recent elections in Kenya (2022) and Nigeria (2023) underscore the promise and peril of

digital democracy. On one hand, online platforms offered new spaces for citizen voices and election transparency. On the other, they became battlegrounds for *digital mercenaries*, paid agents producing deepfakes, fake news articles, and divisive content to discredit opponents and inflame ethnic tensions.

Disinformation was no longer crude propaganda but surgically targeted falsehoods, often spread via encrypted messaging apps like WhatsApp, making them more personal, trusted, and harder to trace.

AI AND THE RISE OF SYNTHETIC MISINFORMATION

Artificial intelligence (AI) is further complicating the landscape. Deepfakes (hyper-realistic audio or video forgeries) have emerged as a potent tool of deception. In Nigeria's 2023 elections, AI-generated audio clips fabricated conversations implicating prominent politicians, fuelling conspiracy theories and public distrust.

Meanwhile, electoral commissions are cautiously adopting AI for tasks like biometric verification and fraud detection. While these technologies can enhance efficiency, they also

introduce new vulnerabilities: algorithmic bias, system errors, and the potential for sabotage in the absence of strong safeguards.

WHY FACT-CHECKING ALONE ISN'T ENOUGH

Confronting digital disinformation demands more than reactive fact-checking. The speed and scale of misinformation outpace traditional responses. A more effective model is collaborative and proactive; uniting electoral bodies, civil society, media, and tech companies to monitor, flag, and counter falsehoods in real time.

Education plays a critical role. Media and digital literacy programmes—especially those embedded in schools and community outreach, can equip citizens to detect and reject misinformation. Zambia's *iVerify* initiative offers a promising example, teaching people to question viral claims instead of amplifying them.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE DIGITAL CRISIS

Digital threats are amplified by socio-economic vulnerabilities. Low literacy, limited access to credible media, and weak critical thinking skills make citizens more susceptible to manipulation. In many cases, the problem is not just the message but the *conditions* that make it resonate.

Strengthening democracy must therefore involve more than policing platforms. It requires holistic efforts to support professional journalism, civic education, inclusive public discourse, and access to accurate information at all levels of society.

THE WAY FORWARD: BALANCING FREEDOM AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Looking ahead, the survival of democratic processes in Africa will hinge on how well we manage this volatile digital terrain. Urgent questions remain: How do we regulate tech platforms without silencing legitimate voices? Can legislation keep pace with rapidly evolving technologies? And who bears responsibility when digital tools are weaponised against the public interest?

The answer lies in a shared commitment. Governments, electoral commissions, tech companies, and citizens must work together to protect not just the ballot, but the *integrity of information* itself.

In a world where truth can be digitally forged, the real contest for democracy in Africa is unfolding, not just in polling stations, but across the contested arenas of the digital public square.



NIGERIAN BIRTH TOURISM: SEEKING FOREIGN CITIZENSHIP

By Amina Iman Zakari

In recent years, an increasing number of Nigerian parents have opted to give birth abroad, not merely for better medical care, but as a strategic means to secure foreign citizenship for their children. Once an isolated phenomenon in the 1990s, birth tourism has surged since 2020, especially among middle- and upper-class Nigerians eyeing long-term opportunities abroad.

The Appeal of Foreign Citizenship

Countries such as the United States, Canada, and Brazil grant automatic citizenship to any child born on their soil. For Nigerian families, this translates into a passport that opens doors to superior education, enhanced job prospects, and greater global mobility. Whereas the early incidents were largely driven by the quest for quality healthcare, the current wave is fuelled by a broader desire for a better future. In places like Chicago and Calgary, hospitals now routinely see Nigerian women arriving in their third trimester with citizenship in mind.

A Growing Trend

Reliable figures are hard to come by, yet Nigeria now ranks among the top five nations globally in terms of citizens travelling abroad for birth tourism. For instance, estimates by the Centre for Immigration Studies suggest that between 20,000 and 26,000 Nigerian women travelled to the United States between 2016 and 2017 with the primary aim of giving birth. The trend continues to rise amid poor confidence in Nigeria's healthcare system and the allure of dual citizenship, a financial investment that can cost anywhere from \$5,000 to \$30,000 or more when covering travel, accommodation, hospital, and legal fees.

Policy Pushback and Ethical Debates

The increasing prevalence of birth tourism has sparked vigorous debates among destination countries, with heightened scrutiny over its economic and legal implications. The U.S., for example, has recently tightened visa policies. The U.S. Mission in Nigeria now warns that visa applicants suspected of travelling solely to give birth may be denied entry, a move designed to curb what many see as an exploitation of *jus soli* citizenship.

These policy adjustments raise larger questions: Who benefits from this practice? And what does it mean for national identity and equality in access to global opportunities? Critics argue that birth tourism further entrenches inequality, enabling only those who can afford the costs to access the long-term advantages of foreign citizenship.

Looking Ahead

For many Nigerian families, the promise of a better future for their children outweighs the mounting challenges and ethical considerations. Yet, as destination countries tighten their regulations amid growing ethical concerns and political debate, the sustainability of this trend remains uncertain. Birth tourism, once seen as a niche option, is now at the heart of discussions on privilege, inequality, and the evolving global mobility agenda.

As countries worldwide recalibrate their immigration policies, the Nigerian phenomenon of birth tourism may well serve as a bellwether for the future of citizenship in an increasingly interconnected world.



RESEARCH & INSTITUTIONAL FOCUS

NILDS IN FOCUS

A centre of excellence for **legislative training, research, and democratic outreach.**
Strengthening Nigeria's democracy from the inside out.



BUILDING RESILIENCE THROUGH CAPACITY

Mission: Train legislators, build institutions, deepen democracy.

Key Functions:

- High-level training for lawmakers
- Strategic policy research, briefs and bills analyses
- Civic outreach & education

SOME PROGRAMMES (2023–2025)

1. Induction for New Lawmakers (Post-2023 Elections)

Who

**109 Senators +
360 House Members**

Focus

Ethics, committee
systems, legislative
procedures

Goal

Prepare lawmakers
for parliamentary life

2. State Assembly Capacity Training

Who

Akwa Ibom & other
state legislatures

Focus

Legislative drafting,
budget analysis,
oversight

Goal

Strengthen lawmaking
at sub-national level

3 Parliamentary Diplomacy & Regional Integration

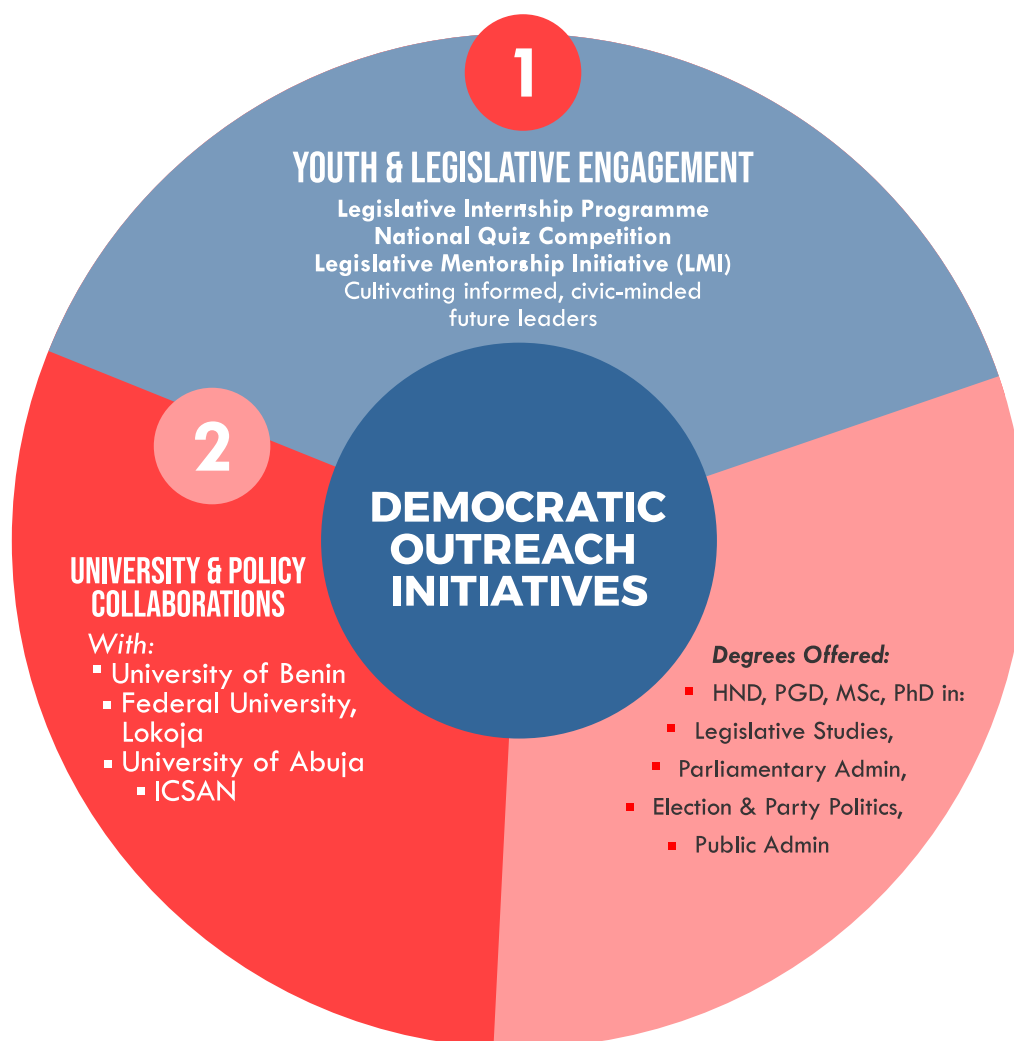
*Malawi Lawmakers
Workshop – July 2025*

*ECOWAS Engagement
– July 2025*

*African Continental Free
Trade Area (AfCFTA Training)
– August 2024*

Goal

Prepare legislators for
**regional/global
leadership**



3. Community & Grassroots Campaigns

Partner: **UN-Women**

- Focus:
- Gender inclusion
 - Electoral integrity
 - Civic education
 - Women's political participation
 - Traditional leaders, CSOs, and local youth engaged directly.

LOOKING AHEAD A REGIONAL HUB

Expansion Plan:

→ **West African Parliamentary Capacity-Building Initiative**

Goal: Share best practices across ECOWAS legislatures

NILDS = Backbone of Democratic Resilience

- Trained lawmakers
- Engaged citizens
- Future-focused, regionally relevant
- Driving democratic consolidation across Nigeria and West Africa

DEPARTMENT OF DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE (DD&G) AT A GLANCE

January - September 2025

The Department of Democracy and Governance has emerged as a powerhouse of policy intelligence and legislative support within the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies. In just nine months, the department generated **180 high-impact transmissions to the National Assembly**, reflecting a dynamic blend of research, analysis, and actionable insight.

Figure 1: Total Outputs

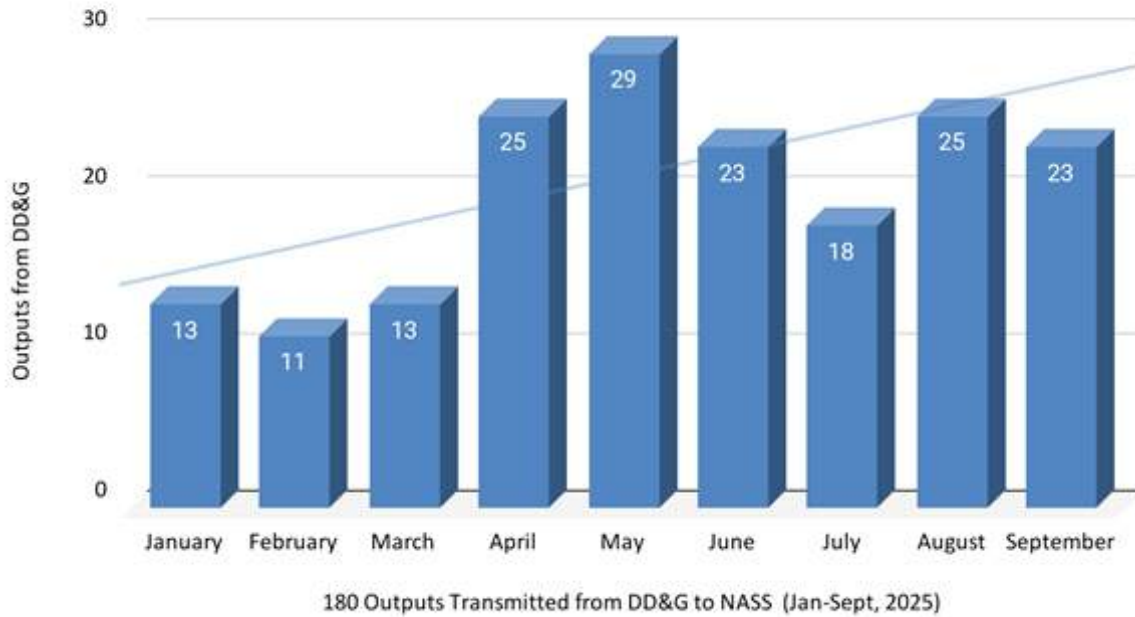
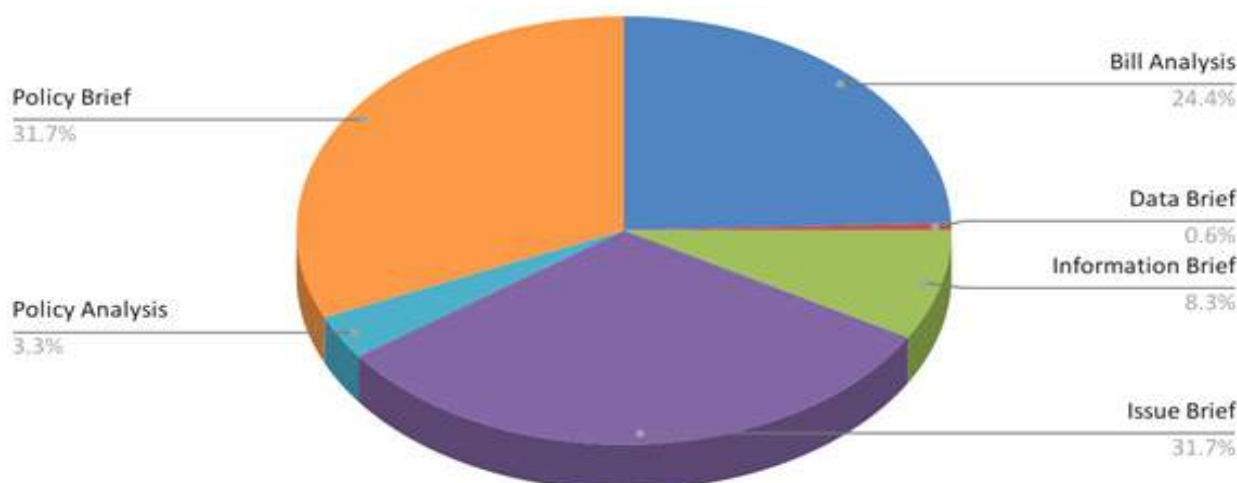


Table 1: Category of Transmissions to NASS from DD&G

	Count of Transmission
Bill Analysis	44
Data Brief	1
Information Brief	15
Issue Brief	57
Policy Analysis	6
Policy Brief	57
Grand Total	180

A striking **180 outputs**—from bill analyses to policy briefs—show DD&G's relentless drive to equip lawmakers with timely, evidence-based guidance for effective governance.

Figure 2 – Categories of Outputs

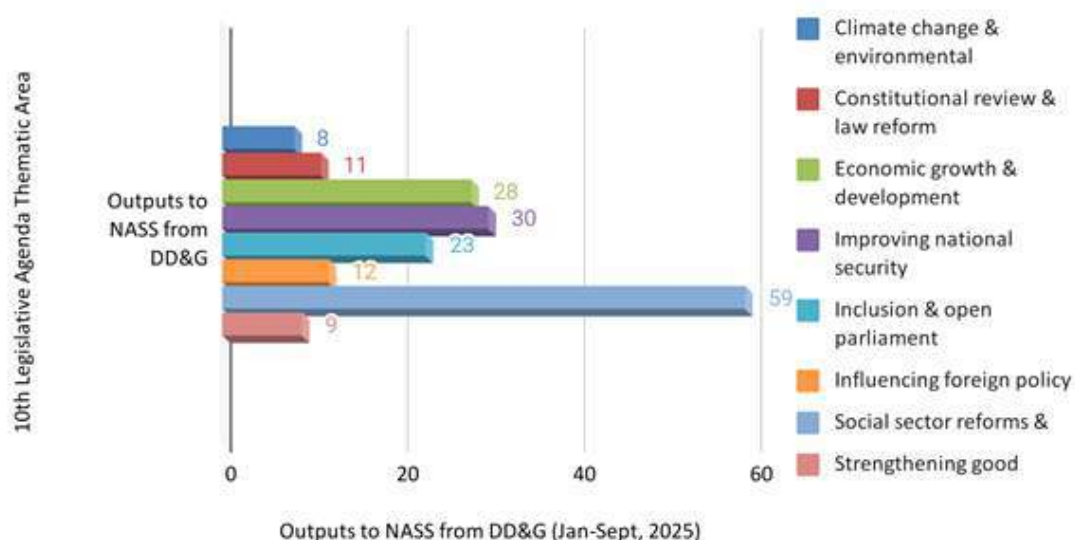


DD&G's work spans a broad spectrum of legislative support. Between January and September 2025 the department delivered:

- **44 Bill Analyses** – in-depth reviews to sharpen debate and improve lawmaking.
- **57 Issue Briefs** – concise examinations of emerging governance challenges.
- **57 Policy Briefs** – actionable recommendations on key policy areas.
- **15 Information Briefs, 6 Policy Analyses, and 1 Data Brief** – targeted insights for legislators and stakeholders.

This distribution reflects DD&G's dual focus on rigorous bill review and practical policy advice.

Figure 3 – Thematic Alignment with the Legislative Agenda of the 10th National Assembly



DD&G's research outputs map directly onto the priority pillars of the 10th National Assembly's Legislative Agenda, ranging from economic growth and infrastructure to security, social development, and institutional reform. This alignment ensures that every brief, analysis, and policy paper directly supports the National Assembly's strategic goals, translating democratic ideals into measurable legislative action.



FROM PROTEST TO POLICY: TRANSLATING CIVIC ACTION INTO LEGISLATIVE CHANGE

THE JUNE 12, 2025 “END BAD GOVERNANCE” PROTEST IN FOCUS

By Adisa Muhammed

A Democracy Day Defined by Defiance

On June 12, 2025, Nigeria's Democracy Day, the streets of Lagos, Abuja, Kano, Jos, and other cities bore witness not to celebration, but to resistance.

Banners read: “**End Bad Governance**,” “**We're Starving!**” “**Secure Our Future.**”

The crowd was diverse, but united in its outrage.

From young professionals to market women, students to the elderly, thousands marched to voice their frustration with the worsening economic climate, deepening insecurity, and what many see as an erosion of democratic freedoms. Organized by civic groups such as the **Take It Back Movement** and the **#EndBadGovernance Coalition**, the protest tapped into a well of public anger that had long been simmering.

As *The Guardian Nigeria* editorialized the next day:

“This was not a protest born of politics, but of pain.”

Beyond the March: What the Protest Signified

While protests have long been part of Nigeria's political fabric, fuelled by hardship, inequality, and corruption, the June 12 demonstration stood out for its sheer scale and timing. Coming amid skyrocketing inflation, a weakened naira, and ongoing fallout from the removal of fuel subsidies, the protest was a clarion call for change.



*But more importantly, it raised a critical question:
**Can civic energy move beyond street demonstrations
to meaningful legislative outcomes?***

The Disconnect Between Agitation and Action

Historically, Nigeria's protest movements have had mixed results. They bring attention, galvanize citizens, and may even prompt temporary policy shifts. But **lasting legislative reform**—the kind that changes how power is structured or how funds are allocated—remains rare. Why?

- **No Policy Translation Pipeline:** After the protests end, few groups follow through with converting demands into legislative proposals.
- **Weak Engagement with Lawmakers:** Activists seldom build long-term relationships with legislators or legislative committees, leaving no champions for their causes inside the system.
- **Lack of Unified Agenda:** Fragmentation among protest organizers often dilutes their impact and makes coordination difficult when the time comes to engage formally.

Lessons from the Wins: Protests That Changed Laws

Despite these challenges, there have been **notable exceptions**, proof that civic action can indeed change laws:

- **#NotTooYoungToRun (2018):** Youth-led activism translated into a constitutional amendment lowering the age for political office.
- **Electoral Act Amendment (2022):** Civil society pressure helped legalize electronic transmission of election results.
- **Sexual Harassment Bill (2020):** Sustained advocacy gave the bill national prominence and pushed it through key legislative stages.

These victories shared key traits:

- ✦ A clear, specific policy goal
- ✦ Persistent media and public visibility
- ✦ Strong collaboration with reform-minded lawmakers
- ✦ Policy proposals backed by research and public pressure

A New Model for Civic Action

To replicate these successes, protest movements must evolve. Here's how:

1. **Translate Demands into Policy Proposals**
Don't stop at placards. Draft white papers, petitions, or draft bills. Submit them to relevant committees or legislators who can act as sponsors.
2. **Build Relationships with Lawmakers**
Change often comes from the inside. Cultivate allies among National Assembly members and state legislators who are receptive to reform.
3. **Invest in Civic Education**
Teach citizens how the legislature works, how bills are passed, budgets debated, and oversight conducted. An informed electorate is an empowered one.
4. **Sustain Momentum Post-Protest**
Follow up. Monitor legislative progress. Engage the media. Keep public pressure alive through town halls, op-eds, and digital campaigns.

The Role of the Legislature: Listening, Responding, Reforming

Lawmakers must recognize protests not as threats, but as feedback mechanisms of a functioning democracy. They can respond more effectively by:

- ✦ Hosting **public hearings** and **inviting protest leaders** for dialogue
- ✦ Conducting **regional listening sessions** to gather citizen input
- ✦ Launching **opinion polls** to inform bills and oversight functions
- ✦ Collaborating with civil society to co-create people-focused legislation

Conclusion: Democracy Is More Than Protest, It's Policy

The June 12, 2025 protests demonstrated that Nigerians are not passive. They are *awake, informed, and ready to act*. But if this passion ends in the streets, without crossing into the halls of legislation, the cycle will repeat.



Democracy thrives not on noise alone, but on negotiation, documentation, and legislation.
Protest is the spark—but policy is the flame that lights the way forward.

DEMOCRACY IS NOT ENOUGH - WE MUST DEMAND GOVERNANCE

Martins Solomon Udom, PhD

I wish to participate in the discussion “Democracy is Not Enough – We Must Demand Governance”, approaching it through a philosophical perspective, as the topic reveals the tension between democracy as a political system and its substantive impact. I am not opposed to democracy, which is fundamentally rooted in the rule of the people. However, my observations over the years and as it is practised in Nigeria suggest that its ideology does not automatically ensure effective governance. This leads me to reflect on the deeper principles of justice, accountability, and the common good, and how these can be realised in a society like Nigeria, where democratic structures frequently fail to produce meaningful results notwithstanding government efforts.

Democracy, as Plato articulated in *The Republic*, risks devolving into mob rule or manipulation by the few in leadership if unchecked by virtue and wisdom because it would never lead to authentic governance. In Nigeria, for instance, the democratic framework captures elections, representation, and constitutionalism, but in truth, its efficacy is undermined by systemic issues: corruption, weak institutions, and a disconnect between leaders and citizens. This existential reality suggests that democracy, as a procedural tool, is insufficient without governance rooted in ethical responsibility and practical competence with total respect to the rule of law. Governance, in this sense, I would argue, is the art of steering society toward justice, equity, flourishing and happiness, demanding more than periodic elections.

From an Aristotelian perception, the purpose of the state is to enable a true sense of governance, or what he called 'eudaimonia'. According to Aristotle, eudaimonia is the highest human good, the only human good that is desirable for its own sake (as an end in itself) rather than for the sake of something else (as a means toward some other end) – which Aristotle says that the purpose of mankind is eudaimonia – happiness. So, to him, the purpose of man is to achieve eudaimonia, which true governance can give. Democracy alone cannot achieve this eudaimonia if it lacks teleological direction, where leaders and citizens alike pursue the common good.

In Nigeria, the challenge is not the absence of democratic frameworks but their inability to be applied in their true context. As a result of this failure, democratic blueprints such as elections often reward loyalty over merit, and institutions like the judiciary or civil service are hampered by inefficiency or partiality. This misalignment calls for a reorientation of governance toward accountability, competence, and public trust. In truth, our discussion's demand for governance and not just democracy as a system of government reflects a Sartrean yearning for authenticity – a refusal to accept the inauthenticity of a democracy that promises freedom and development but delivers stagnation and lack of self-actualisation in the state. Jean-Jacques Rousseau's concept of the social contract further illuminates this: citizens surrender certain freedoms to the state in exchange for security and progress. When the state fails to uphold its end, as seen in Nigeria's persistent issues like insecurity or economic disparity, the contract is breached, justifying demands for better governance.

However, to move beyond democracy, we must demand governance. As a result of this, I propose the following solutions: First, Nigeria must strengthen its institutions. This submission is drawn from John Rawls' *A Theory of Justice*, which argues that governance should prioritise fairness and justice. In this sense, I recommend that institutions like the electoral commission and judicial or anti-corruption agencies operate independently and transparently to insulate these institutions from political capture as perceived by certain groups in Nigeria. Second, civic education must be given more prominence to emphasise active citizenship to empower Nigerian students through it to engage through informed participation in policy discourse, not just demand for their rights. Third, leadership selection must focus on competence and virtue over merely on personal interest and



emotion. It is my argument that with strong institutions in place, political parties will be incentivised to nominate candidates with expertise over charisma since the latter may lack the needed tactic to lead. These steps, I believe, will help to build a just and equitable system that upholds the principles of fairness and empowers citizens for sustainable governance.

Finally, I submit that democracy is the scaffolding, but governance is the edifice, built through collective commitment to justice, fairness, equity and competence. Nigeria's path forward lies not only in practising democracy but in demanding that it fulfil its promise through authentic governance. Nigeria can move toward a state where democracy is not an empty ritual but a vibrant means to human flourishing, or what Aristotle called eudaimonia. In conclusion, the call for governance over mere democracy is a philosophical demand for substance over form, for a state that serves its people rather than itself.

Dr. Martins Udom is a Philosopher and Researcher

TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION AND ELECTORAL ADMINISTRATION IN NIGERIA

THE 2023 AKWA IBOM GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION IN PERSPECTIVE

By Paul Ozegbe,
Independent National Electoral Commission, Uyo



In recent years, the integration of technology into Nigeria's electoral process has fundamentally reshaped the way elections are planned, managed, and perceived. From the adoption of biometric voter registration to the deployment of real-time result transmission systems, these innovations have been designed to strengthen transparency, enhance credibility, and rebuild public confidence in the democratic process. The 2023 Akwa Ibom State gubernatorial election stands as a notable case study for evaluating both the promises and challenges of this technological shift.

At the heart of these reforms was the deployment of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS), a device that combines fingerprint and facial recognition for voter accreditation. Its use in the Akwa Ibom election was intended to significantly reduce incidents of voter impersonation, a recurring challenge in previous polls. In many polling units, BVAS proved effective, enabling quicker accreditation and delivering results that reflected the actual number of accredited voters. However, as with any new system, it was not without challenges. Reports emerged of isolated technical glitches, slow processing in certain locations, and the need for ad hoc technical support to ensure smooth operations.

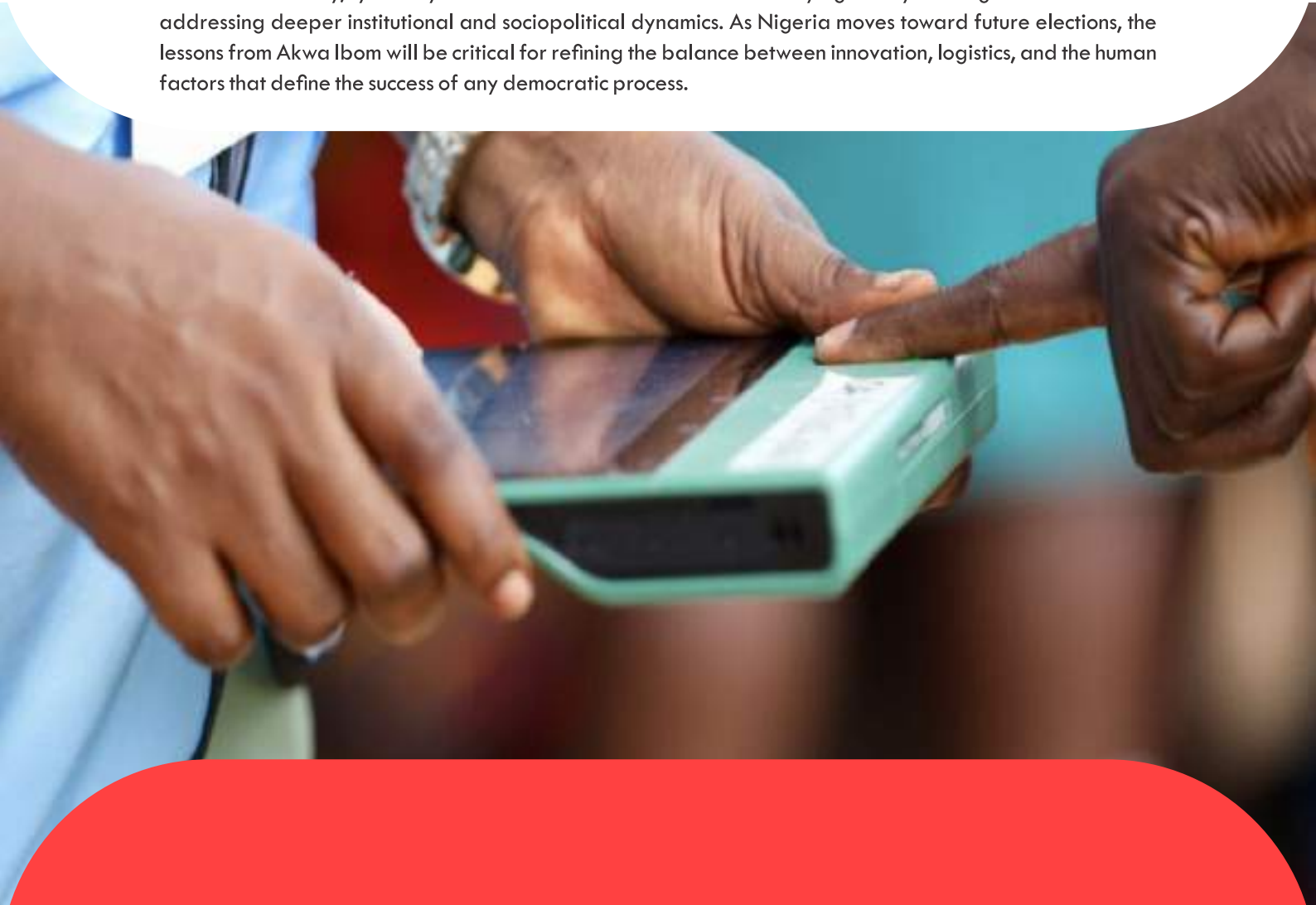
The election also marked a milestone in result collation and transparency. Through the INEC Result Viewing (IReV) portal, polling unit results were uploaded in real time, allowing the public and political stakeholders to track developments as they unfolded. This innovation not only strengthened transparency but also served as a deterrent to electoral malpractice at the collation stage, since results could be cross-verified with the original entries from polling units. In Akwa Ibom, the portal's accessibility allowed citizens to participate in

electoral oversight, contributing to a broader sense of ownership over the process.

Despite these advances, the 2023 election highlighted persistent systemic issues that technology alone cannot solve. Logistics, security concerns, voter intimidation in certain areas, and limited civic awareness about the use of new tools still posed significant challenges. For instance, while BVAS addressed issues of accreditation fraud, it could not prevent instances where political actors attempted to manipulate outcomes through other forms of interference. This underscored the reality that technological innovation must be accompanied by institutional resilience, robust legal frameworks, and civic education to achieve lasting reforms.

Furthermore, the Akwa Ibom gubernatorial election served as a microcosm of Nigeria's broader electoral reform journey. It demonstrated that while technology can reduce human error and fraud, its effectiveness ultimately depends on the integrity and preparedness of electoral officers, the cooperation of political stakeholders, and the vigilance of the electorate.

In conclusion, the 2023 Akwa Ibom gubernatorial election provided a compelling window into how technology is shaping electoral administration in Nigeria. BVAS and IReV brought greater transparency and accountability, yet they also revealed the limitations of relying solely on digital tools without addressing deeper institutional and sociopolitical dynamics. As Nigeria moves toward future elections, the lessons from Akwa Ibom will be critical for refining the balance between innovation, logistics, and the human factors that define the success of any democratic process.



VISUAL HIGHLIGHTS MOMENTS FROM EVENTS

DEPARTMENT OF DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE



NILDS POLICY DIALOGUE ON STRENGTHENING ELECTORAL INTEGRITY IN NIGERIA: LEGISLATIVE AND INSTITUTIONAL REFORMS

NILDS hosted a policy dialogue on “Strengthening Electoral Integrity in Nigeria: Legislative and Institutional Reforms” on Thursday, 24th April 2025, bringing together stakeholders to discuss pathways for credible, transparent, and inclusive elections.





DEMOCRACY WEEK - 2025

As part of activities to mark Democracy Week, the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS) on June 24, 2025, held a high-level policy dialogue on 'Election and Technology' to commemorate June 12.





ROUNDTABLE ON LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT

On Thursday, 26th June 2025, the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS) hosted a Roundtable on “Best Practices and Strategies for Strengthening Legislative Oversight in Nigeria. The event drew distinguished participants, legislators, former National Assembly leaders, clerks of committees, policy researchers, civil society representatives, and governance experts, for an in-depth exchange on overcoming institutional, political, and procedural bottlenecks to effective legislative oversight. Discussions spotlighted both global and homegrown best practices, with participants charting a roadmap for a practical, context-specific, and adaptable oversight model that bolsters legislative efficiency, safeguards the separation of powers, and deepens Nigeria's democratic governance.





NILDS POLICY DIALOGUE ON ELECTION SECURITY

NILDS Policy Dialogue on Election Security held on the 22nd of July, 2025, brought together stakeholders to discuss strategies for safeguarding electoral processes and ensuring credible, transparent, and violence-free elections in Nigeria.



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CELEBRATING

PROFESSOR ABUBAKAR O. SULAIMAN



We join colleagues, friends, and admirers across Nigeria in celebrating a milestone of uncommon significance: the 60th birthday of Professor Abubakar O. Sulaiman—scholar, statesman, and nation-builder. The pages of Democracy & Governance Digest are honoured to lead the celebration of a man whose life embodies the marriage of rigorous scholarship and purposeful public service.

Scholar of Distinction

Born in Kwara State, Professor Sulaiman charted an early course toward learning and leadership. He earned a B.Sc. in Political Science from Ahmadu Bello University (1990), an M.Sc. in International Relations & Strategic Studies from the University of Jos (1995), and a PhD in International Relations from the University of Abuja (2003), later enriching his credentials with executive training at the Harvard Kennedy School.

From lecturer to full Professor of Political Science, he has inspired generations of students, grounding them in the discipline of evidence-based analysis and the civic duty of informed citizenship.

Public Servant and Builder of Institutions

Professor Sulaiman carried his academic brilliance into national service. He served with distinction as Minister of National Planning and Deputy Chairman of the National Planning Commission, guiding Nigeria's development frameworks and representing the nation in international planning forums.

Since 2019, and following his reappointment in 2023, he has been Director-General of the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS), transforming the Institute into a premier hub for legislative research, capacity-building, and democratic innovation.

Achievements that Endure

Under his leadership, NILDS has strengthened the National Assembly's research capacity, broadened civic engagement, and championed policy initiatives that resonate with the Legislative Agenda of the 9th and 10th National Assemblies.

Beyond titles and offices, he is celebrated for integrity, mentorship, and steadfast commitment to transparent, people-centred governance.

A Life Worth Emulating

As Professor Sulaiman celebrates his diamond jubilee, his story reminds us that public life can be both principled and impactful. He stands as proof that scholarship need not remain in ivory towers; it can and must shape the destiny of nations.

From the lecture halls of Abuja to the corridors of federal power, his journey is a signal to all who believe in the transformative power of knowledge in service of the people.

On this threshold of sixty years, we salute a life of purpose and invite readers everywhere to join us in saying:

**Happy 60th Birthday,
Professor Abubakar O. Sulaiman.**

May the years ahead shine even brighter than those we so proudly celebrate today.

A Birthday Tribute by Christopher Ngara, PhD

**Acting Director, Department of Democracy and Governance, National Institute for
Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS)**

