Training and International Cooperation Department: Advancing Legislative Excellence and Democratic Governance through Capacity Building and Strategic Partnerships

The Training and International Cooperation Department of National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies has continued to play a pivotal role in strengthening democratic governance, legislative practice, institutional effectiveness, and parliamentary administration in Nigeria and beyond. The Department has significantly expanded the frontiers of legislative capacity building, international cooperation, and parliamentary development across national, sub-national, regional, and continental levels.

Established to provide high-level legislative studies, training, research, and policy support, NILDS has remained committed to building the capacities of legislators, legislative staff, aides, parliamentary institutions, and democratic actors to effectively discharge their constitutional responsibilities. Through the strategic activities of the Training and International Cooperation Department, the Institute has become a leading hub for parliamentary strengthening and democratic consolidation in Africa.

Mandate and Strategic Focus

The Department derives its mandate from the broader objectives of NILDS, particularly in the areas of legislative training, institutional support, democratic governance, and international parliamentary cooperation. Its primary responsibility is to design and implement capacity-building programmes tailored toward improving legislative efficiency, policy development, parliamentary administration, legislative drafting, oversight functions, constituency representation, and democratic accountability.

The Department delivers both supply-driven open programmes and demand-driven tailored courses. While the open programmes are accessible to participants from the National Assembly, State Houses of Assembly, Local Government Councils, Ministries, Departments and Agencies, the tailored programmes are specifically designed to address the unique operational and institutional needs of client organisations.

Over the years, the Department has organised:

- Workshops, seminars, conferences, retreats, lecture series, and roundtable discussions;
- Tailored short-term programmes for legislators and legislative staff;
- Exchange visits, benchmarking tours, and study attachments;
- International training programmes for parliamentary officials and lawmakers;
- Specialised legislative drafting and policy analysis workshops;
- Leadership and governance programmes;
- ICT and digital transformation trainings;
- Research, protocol, communication, and official reporting programmes.

These interventions have consistently enhanced the quality of legislative practice and democratic governance in Nigeria and across the African region.

Growth and Expansion of Capacity Building Programmes

Between 2019 and 2022, the Department witnessed remarkable growth in the implementation of training programmes. The number of annual training programmes increased steadily, with 93 programmes implemented in 2019, rising to 114 in 2021 and 103 in 2022. This growth reflected the Institute's increasing commitment to legislative strengthening and institutional development.

A major milestone recorded during this period was the deliberate expansion of capacity-building programmes to State Houses of Assembly and Local Government legislative institutions. Prior to this intervention, most parliamentary development initiatives were concentrated at the federal level. However, recognising the strategic importance of sub-national legislatures in democratic governance, NILDS broadened its focus to include state and local legislative institutions where institutional capacity gaps were more pronounced.

As a result, over 49 specialised workshops and seminars were organised for State Legislators between 2019 and 2022, involving more than 1,000 participants. These interventions significantly improved legislative competence, committee effectiveness, law-making quality, and oversight functions at the sub-national level.

International Cooperation and Strategic Partnerships

One of the defining achievements of the Department has been the strengthening of international parliamentary cooperation and cross-border institutional partnerships. Through strategic collaborations with regional and international parliamentary institutions, the Department facilitated exchange programmes, benchmarking visits, and specialised international trainings for legislators and parliamentary officials.

Under the stewardship of Prof. Abubakar O. Sulaiman, NILDS deepened cooperation with institutions and parliamentary bodies in:

- Uganda
- Ghana
- Gambia
- Somaliland
- Malawi
- Benin Republic
- ECOWAS Parliament
- South Africa Gauteng Provincial Legislature

These partnerships facilitated benchmarking visits, parliamentary diplomacy, exchange of experiences, and collaborative learning initiatives aimed at strengthening legislative institutions across Africa.

Notably, the Institute hosted and trained officials from the ECOWAS Parliament on evidence-based parliamentary practice, diplomacy, stakeholder engagement, oversight functions, and modern data-driven decision-making processes. It also organised workshops on the interpretation and application of ECOWAS Treaties and Protocols for legal officers across the region.

Innovations in Legislative Capacity Building

A major innovation was the adoption of virtual and hybrid training models during the COVID-19 pandemic. In response to the restrictions caused by the pandemic, the Department leveraged ICT platforms to sustain uninterrupted legislative training, seminars, workshops, and dialogue sessions. This transition strengthened NILDS' digital learning architecture and ensured continuity in legislative capacity building during a critical global period.

Training of Legislators, Legislative Staff and Aides

The Department achieved unprecedented milestones in training legislators, legislative staff, aides, and parliamentary support personnel.

Between 2019 and 2022:

- Over 4,167 legislators participated in various local and international programmes;
- More than 3,000 legislative aides from the Senate and House of Representatives were trained;
- Thousands of parliamentary staff benefited from workshops on legislative administration, drafting, research, budgeting, ethics, oversight, ICT, and governance.

Focus Areas of Training Programmes

The Department's training programmes have remained comprehensive and responsive to contemporary governance realities. Core thematic areas include:

- Legislative process and constitutional practice;
- Parliamentary rules and procedures;
- Committee management;
- Legislative drafting and bill analysis;
- Budgeting and public finance management;
- Oversight and accountability mechanisms;
- Governance and leadership;
- Executive-legislature relations;
- Conflict management and resolution;
- ICT applications in legislative administration;
- Stakeholder communication and constituency relations;
- Policy analysis and evidence-based law-making;
- Parliamentary ethics and privileges;
- Official reporting and record management.

These programmes have contributed immensely to strengthening parliamentary professionalism and democratic governance across Nigeria. The Department has further intensified its capacity-building engagements with remarkable results across Nigeria and the African continent.

It has implemented several strategic programmes covering:

- Legislative drafting;
- Committee management;
- Official reporting;
- Parliamentary security management;
- Grantsmanship and research;
- Local government administration;
- Innovative policy formulation;
- Legislative leadership and governance.

The Institute also strengthened parliamentary cooperation through workshops on the role of parliamentary opposition in promoting good governance and the role of parliament in the budget process. It further consolidated its impact through high-level national and international programmes involving:

- State Houses of Assembly;
- Assembly Service Commissions;
- National Assembly staff;
- ECOWAS Parliament officials;
- Local Government legislative institutions;
- Security agencies and law reform commissions.

Key programmes focused on:

- Legislative bureaucracy and parliamentary performance;
- Financial autonomy and accountability;
- Policy-to-legislation translation;
- Evidence-based parliamentary practice;
- Public procurement and forensic auditing;
- Leadership development;
- Protocol and event management;
- Human resource and administrative reforms;

- Parliamentary research and diplomacy.

These engagements reinforced NILDS' growing reputation as a centre of excellence in parliamentary studies and democratic governance. The Department sustained its momentum with programmes on:

- Strategic legislative leadership;
- Chamber management systems;

- Policy process and legislative drafting;
- Legislative bureaucracy and operational efficiency;
- Parliamentary protocol and executive protection;
- AI-driven parliamentary reporting systems;
- Internal governance and procedural compliance.

Advancing the Vision of Prof. Abubakar O. Sulaiman

The transformational achievements of the Training and International Cooperation Department are closely aligned with the vision of Prof. Abubakar O. Sulaiman, whose leadership has focused on institutional strengthening, internationalisation, professionalism, innovation, and legislative excellence.

Under his administration, NILDS has evolved into a globally recognised parliamentary training and research institution, driving democratic development through knowledge sharing, strategic partnerships, institutional reforms, and evidence-based capacity building.

His vision has ensured:

- Expansion of training opportunities to sub-national legislatures;
- Increased international cooperation and regional integration;
- Adoption of digital and hybrid learning platforms;
- Strengthening of parliamentary professionalism;
- Enhanced institutional visibility and relevance;
- Improved service delivery within democratic institutions.

Conclusion

The Training and International Cooperation Department of National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies remains a cornerstone of legislative strengthening and democratic advancement in Nigeria and Africa. Through strategic capacity-building programmes, international collaborations, innovative learning initiatives, and institutional support services, the Department continues to shape competent legislatures and effective democratic institutions.

Its achievements over the years reflect a sustained commitment to excellence, professionalism, institutional growth, and democratic consolidation.