

The Leading Woman Show Policy Compendium

By WILAN Global



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About The Leading Woman Show

The Leading Woman Show is a groundbreaking talk show aimed at changing how Nigerians perceive women and their societal roles. It provides a dynamic platform to discuss the diverse challenges and opportunities related to women's leadership, featuring some of the Nation's most inspiring changemakers, culture shapers and nation builders. This nonpartisan platform provides a supportive environment to address the obstacles women encounter seeking leadership roles while emphasizing the advantages of female leadership and male allyship and garnering broad support for women across multiple industries. The Leading Woman Show aims to reshape Nigerians' perception of women and their roles in society. Over the years, the show has evolved through 3 seasons; each focused on an impactful area in national development. With over 60 million views and 13 carefully curated episodes per season, TLWS has created an advocacy platform for women leaders, changemakers and influencers to amplify their voices.





Women in Leadership Advancement Network (WILAN) Global is a Nigerian-based global organisation focused on advancing women's leadership across all levels of political, economic, and public life. Our vision is to inspire a shift to gender-balanced leadership across all levels of political, economic, and public life globally.

About WILAN Global

WILAN's mission is to ease access to the community, knowledge, resources, opportunities, and support women need to become effective and thriving leaders. With a firm commitment to our mission, we firmly believe that gender-balanced leadership is crucial for achieving sustainable development and building an inclusive society. Our core programming pillars are Shaping Perception, Equipping Female Leaders and Community Building.



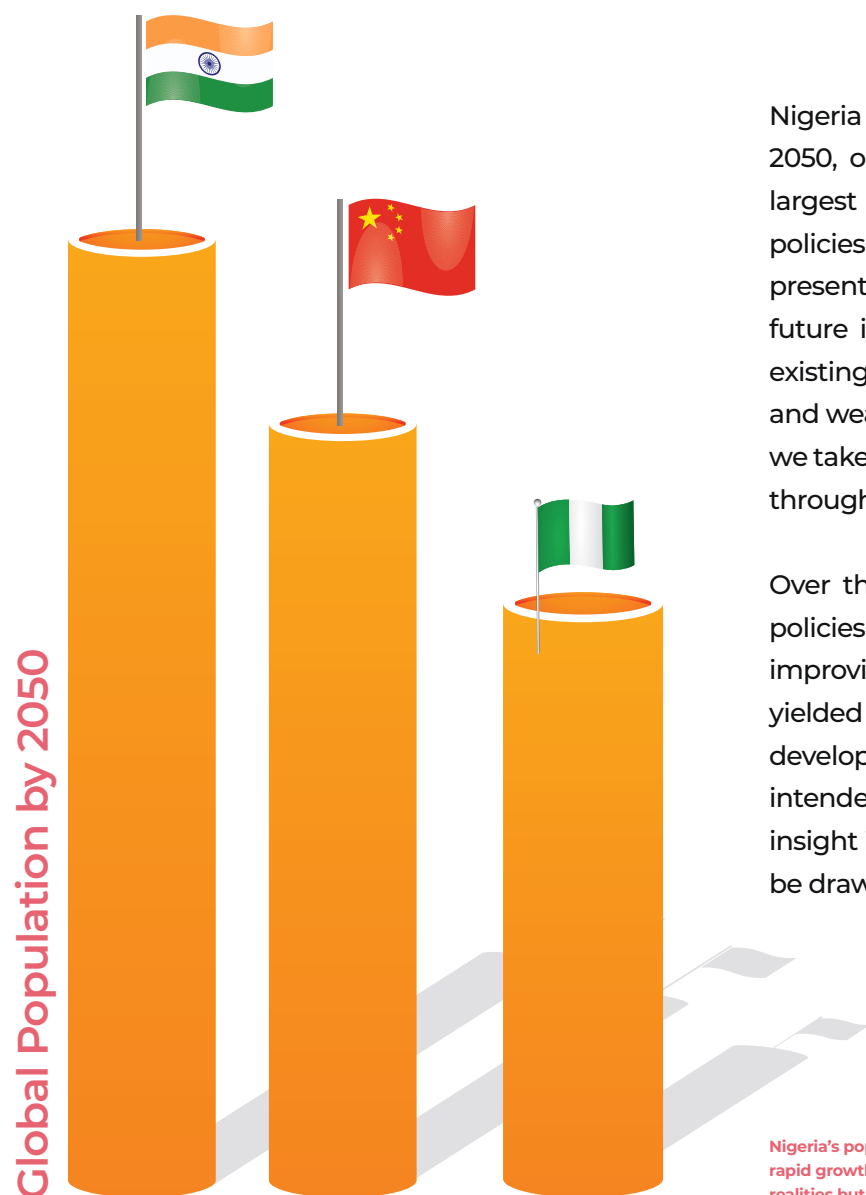
The Policy Compendium

Public policy is the foundation of governance and development in any nation. In Nigeria, the formulation and implementation of policies have been marred by inconsistencies, political interference, elite capture, a lack of continuity, inclusion and public participation.

To address these gaps, demystifying the policy-making process is important. Therefore, this compendium draws insights from The Leading Woman Show – Policy Series. With 9 key Policy briefs, It offers a summary of the key issues and recommendations from the show's guests for a more effective and inclusive policy environment.

Nigeria's vital policies seek strength. Bridging gaps in its consistency, inclusion, and continuity would help build our nation's true future.

Transforming Nigeria's Future Through Policy



Nigeria stands at a pivotal moment in history. By 2050, our population is projected to be the third largest in the world. With this rapid growth, the policies we implement today must not only address present realities but must also be designed with the future in mind. Failure to do so will only deepen existing inequalities, stagnate economic growth, and weaken our social systems. It is imperative that we take strategic steps to transform Nigeria's future through policy.

Over the years, Nigeria has implemented several policies aimed at driving economic growth and improving governance. Some of these policies have yielded positive results, contributing to national development, while others have fallen short of their intended goals. Examining key successes provides insight into what has worked and what lessons can be drawn for future reforms.

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Successes and lessons from past policies

One of the most notable successes in Nigeria's policy history is the Green Revolution policy of the 1970s. Designed to boost agricultural productivity, it encouraged the adoption of modern farming techniques, improved seeds, and fertilizers (Akande, 2003). As a result, food production increased, reducing reliance on imports and contributing to food security. The policy also enhanced rural livelihoods, making agriculture a viable economic sector and positioning Nigeria as a major agricultural exporter at the time.

One of the most notable successes in Nigeria's policy history is the Green Revolution policy of the 1970s.

The National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS) contributed to improved economic growth rates and increased foreign direct investment, reinforcing Nigeria's emergence as one of Africa's leading economies in the mid-2000s.

Another significant policy intervention was the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), launched in 2004. This initiative focused on economic reforms, poverty reduction, and private sector development (Okonjo-Iweala & Osafo-Kwaako, 2007). NEEDS contributed to improved economic growth rates and increased foreign direct investment, reinforcing Nigeria's emergence as one of Africa's leading economies in the mid-2000s.

Failures and lessons learned

Not all policies have yielded positive results. Several policy initiatives have failed to achieve their objectives due to poor implementation, corruption, and a lack of continuity. For instance, the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) of the 1980s, which aimed at fiscal austerity, privatization, and trade liberalization, disproportionately affected vulnerable populations (Tallroth, 1987). The reduction in social services under SAPs led to increased poverty and inequality, undermining the economic stability of many Nigerians.



Education policies have also faced challenges in improving access, quality, and relevance (Okoroma, 2006). Inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, and low teacher quality have weakened Nigeria's education system, limited human capital development and impeded overall national progress.

Similarly, anti-corruption initiatives have repeatedly failed to address deep-rooted corruption in public and private sectors (Goodling, 2003). Widespread corruption has hindered the efficient allocation of resources, undermined public trust in institutions, and impeded sustainable development. The persistence of governance failures highlights the necessity of strong institutions, policy consistency, and leadership accountability.



A vision for the future: The National Agenda 2050

Learning from past successes and failures, Nigeria's national agenda 2050 (NA 2050) provides a roadmap for long-term growth and stability, outlining key aspirations for the country by mid-century. At its core is the need for strong institutions and good governance, critical for sustaining economic and social progress.

With a projected GDP of \$11.7 trillion and a per capita income of \$33,328.02 by 2050, the agenda envisions a globally competitive economy driven by macroeconomic stability, industrial growth, and agricultural transformation.

Agriculture, once the backbone of Nigeria's economy, holds the potential to be revitalized through technological innovation and investment in food security. Similarly, a dynamic manufacturing sector, supported by strategic policies, can position Nigeria as an industrial powerhouse. Infrastructure remains a cornerstone for development, and will require investments in modern transportation, energy, and digital systems. essential for economic productivity and improved living standards. Education and healthcare reforms, anchored in technology and accessibility, will equip Nigeria's workforce for global competitiveness and enhance the well-being of its citizens.

2050





\$117Trn

Nigeria's projected
Gross Domestic Product
(GDP) by 2050

\$33,328.02

Nigeria's projected
Per Capita Income
by 2050



Vision 2050 envisions a globally competitive economy driven by
macroeconomic stability, industrial growth, and agricultural transformation.

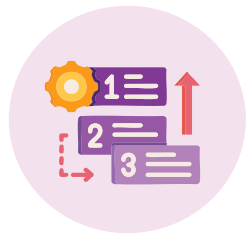
Policy Recommendations

The following recommendations offer valuable guidance for shaping future policy decisions



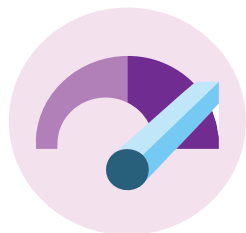
Addressing foundational issues

To build a sustainable future, Nigeria must first resolve fundamental governance and societal challenges. Strengthening national values rooted in integrity, service, and accountability is imperative. Leadership at all levels must embody empathy and patriotism, placing the welfare of citizens over personal gain. Policies should foster national cohesion, ensuring equitable opportunities across regions and demographics. The crisis of leadership remains an obstacle. Mahatma Gandhi once said, "The future depends on what we do in the present." In Nigeria, leadership failures extend beyond politics, affecting governance structures, the private sector, and the civil society. Weak institutions, plagued by corruption and inefficiency, undermine policy execution, rendering even well-crafted strategies ineffective. Strengthening these institutions is crucial for meaningful progress.



Overcoming security challenges

Security remains one of Nigeria's most pressing challenges, with threats such as banditry, insurgency, and kidnappings disrupting economic activities and policy execution. These security concerns hinder investments and contribute to infrastructural neglect, poor transportation networks, and inadequate social services. Addressing these crises requires a multifaceted approach that includes strengthening governance structures, reforming the security sector, and investing in critical infrastructure. Enhanced intelligence gathering, improved law enforcement coordination, and community-driven security initiatives are essential in tackling insecurity at its root. Moreover, fostering inclusive economic opportunities can help mitigate the socio-economic drivers of conflict and instability.



Harnessing the power of a youthful population and digital economy

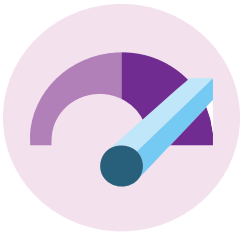
Nigeria's youthful population presents a unique opportunity for transformation. With an expanding labor force and a burgeoning digital economy, the country can harness technology, innovation, and entrepreneurship to drive economic growth. Policies should support digital inclusion, create fiscal pathways for startups, and strengthen digital identity systems to enhance access to services and crime prevention.

Investment in human capital development is non-negotiable. The education system must align with the evolving demands of the future job market by integrating vocational training, technology, entrepreneurship, and essential soft skills such as leadership, communication, and problem-solving. Additionally, gender-responsive policies must ensure equal opportunities for women and persons with disabilities



Sustainable development and economic diversification

To achieve long-term prosperity, Nigeria must diversify its economy beyond oil dependence. Strengthening the creative and cultural economy, expanding agribusiness value chains, and fostering financial sector reforms can drive inclusive growth. The healthcare system requires urgent revitalization, with investments in primary healthcare services and other critical areas. Clean energy adoption and smart urban planning will be critical for environmental sustainability and economic resilience.

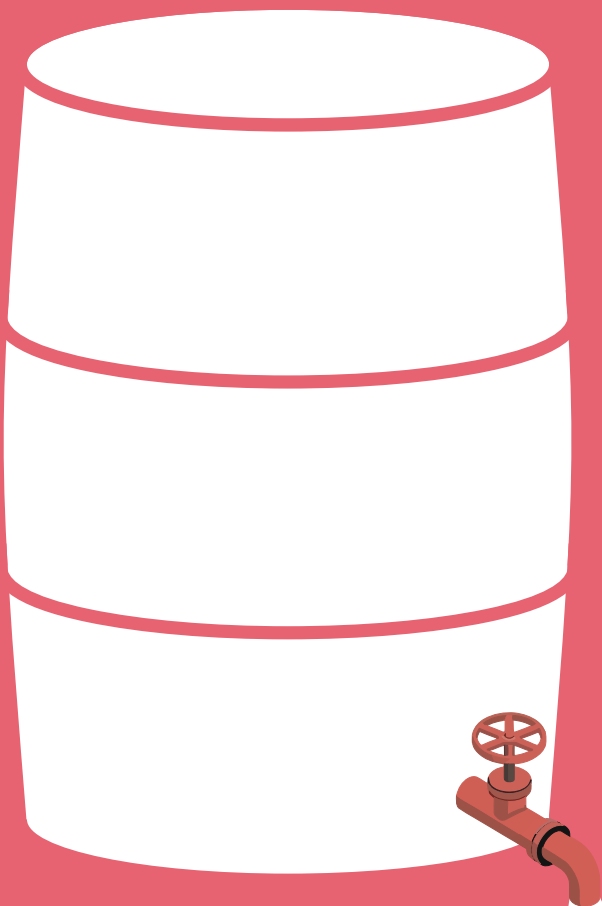


Governance reforms: the pathway to progress

For Nigeria to realise its development goals, governance reforms must focus on leadership development, institutional accountability, and transparency. A new generation of leaders, committed to service and national progress, must emerge. Institutions must be empowered to enforce policies effectively, ensuring resource efficiency and the eradication of corruption. Equitable policies should promote social justice and economic inclusion, while e-governance can enhance operational efficiency and citizen engagement. Policy implementation monitoring will be essential in ensuring that strategies translate into tangible outcomes.



Security remains one of Nigeria's most pressing challenges, with threats such as banditry, insurgency, and kidnappings disrupting economic activities and policy execution. These security concerns hinder investments and contribute to infrastructural neglect, poor transportation networks, and inadequate social services.



The Road Ahead

Nigeria stands at a crossroad. The policies implemented today will determine the country's trajectory for decades to come. Moving from reactive governance to proactive, visionary policymaking is essential. By investing in education, economic inclusion, healthcare, and digital innovation, and by adopting leading best practices, Nigeria can chart a path toward a prosperous and equitable future. The time to act is now. The choices made today will shape Nigeria's destiny in 2050 and beyond.

To achieve long-term prosperity, Nigeria must diversify its economy beyond oil dependence.

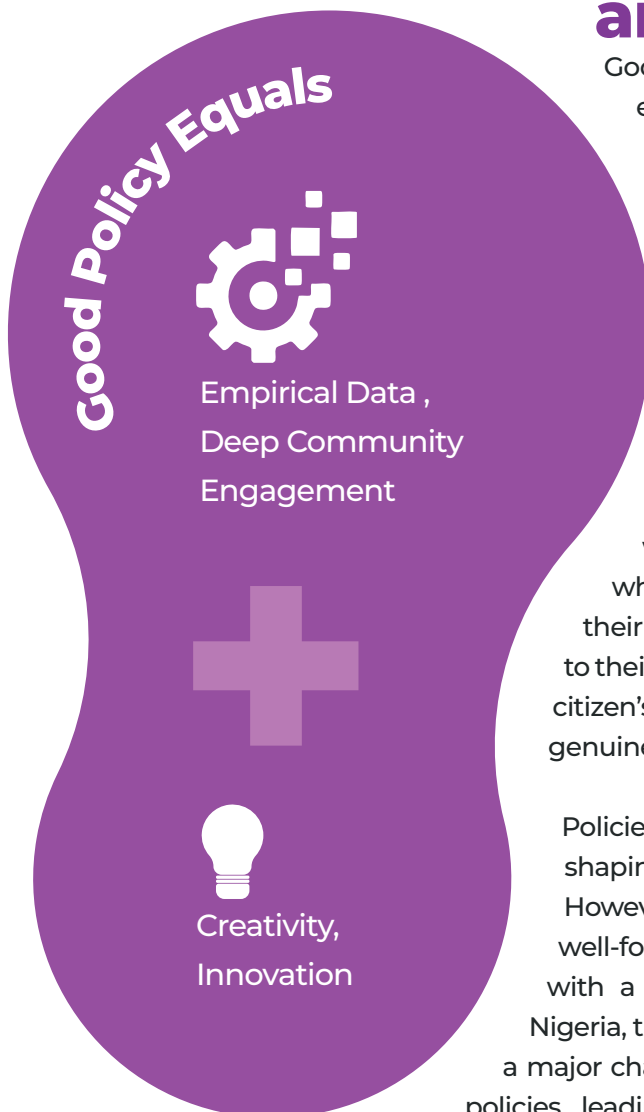
Demystifying Policy In Nigeria

Policymaking Is Both an Art and a Science

Good policies cannot be formulated in a vacuum; they require empirical evidence and deep engagement with the communities they intend to serve. It is important for policy makers to demonstrate that they are relying on the evidence that data provides in formulating policy. However, creativity and innovation are also critical given the complex nature of the people's needs and other nuances that apply in the Nigeria context due to the multi-dimensional nature of poverty


The example from a former State Governor recalled how policymakers initially assumed that access to clean water was the community's most pressing need. However, when the residents were engaged, it was discovered that their primary concern was the absence of a police station due to their proximity to a border. This underscores the importance of citizen's engagement in policy formulation to ensure policies genuinely address community needs.

Policies dictate the direction of a country's development, shaping economic growth, social welfare, security, and inclusion. However, for policies to have the desired outcome, they must be well-formulated, widely accepted, and effectively implemented with a monitoring and accountability framework in place. In Nigeria, the inconsistency in policy and constant changes has been a major challenge. Successive administrations often discard existing policies, leading to wasted resources. The lack of synergy between policymakers and citizens also results in policies that do not reflect people's needs, which diminish their impact



The Policy-making Process in Nigeria

The journey from policy conception to implementation follows a structured but often opaque path. It begins with problem identification, where issues such as economic hardship, security threats, or gender disparities result in a demand for government intervention. However, in Nigeria, this step is frequently rushed or politically motivated, leading to policies that lack a clear understanding of current realities.



Once a problem is identified, it must gain priority status through agenda setting. Political leaders, interest groups, media, and civil society organizations play a role here, though the influence of political interests often outweighs genuine public demands. The next stage is policy formulation, where the relevant government entity draft proposals. In an ideal scenario, expert opinions and public consultations should guide this process, but policymaking in Nigeria is often dominated by bureaucrats and politicians, leaving out critical voices, particularly those of women and other marginalised groups.

In the case where a policy requires legal backing, it moves to the legislative process, which includes readings in the National Assembly, committee reviews, voting, in some cases, adoption at the State assemblies and finally, presidential assent. However, even after going through these stages, implementation remains a major bottleneck. Government agencies are responsible for implementation, yet weak institutional capacity, corruption, and lack of political will often undermine success. Effective policies also require continuous evaluation and review, but in Nigeria, this step is frequently neglected, leading to policy failures.

The Not Too Young to Run story: A case for Youth-driven change

A practical example of how policy can be influenced successfully through civic engagement is the story of the Not Too Young to Run campaign led by YIAGA Africa. The movement was driven by young Nigerians who understood the importance of influencing policy from the grassroots to the national level. The campaign started with widespread advocacy, gathering public support before strategically engaging with lawmakers. By ensuring that political actors, civil society organizations, and international organisations were aligned, the movement successfully led to the passage of a constitutional amendment reducing the age requirement for political officeholders in Nigeria.



Source; ng.boell.org

Gender Mobile: Championing Policy for Gender Justice

Another success story in policy advocacy is Gender Mobile, who are championing the Sexual Harassment in Tertiary Institutions Prohibition Bill, designed to address gender-based violence and create a safer learning environment in Nigeria's higher institutions. Through strategic advocacy, stakeholder engagement, and data-driven research, Gender Mobile ensured that the voices of women and marginalized groups were heard in policy discussions. These two examples demonstrate how government can partner with citizens to shift public policy and legislation. Where citizens champion policy changes such as these, it increases accountability and ensures a greater likelihood of implementation.



Source; vanguardngr.com

Challenges in policy making and execution in Nigeria

1.

Political interference often leads to policies being abandoned for partisan reasons, while ethnic and regional biases hinder national unity.

The disconnect between policymakers and citizens also results in poor acceptance and ownership, exacerbated by corruption, inadequate resources, and gender exclusion.

2.

3.

Many policies are also overly ambitious, promising unrealistic outcomes without the necessary framework for execution.



The role of women in policy making

To unlock nigeria's potential, creating inclusive policies would help build equitable and promising future.

Women's inclusion in the policy process is crucial for achieving equitable development. There is a link between gender-balanced leadership and inclusive policies. An elected legislator who is one of the very few women in Nigeria's 10th Assembly, revealed that lawmakers must have a proper record of issues affecting their constituencies so that when they get into office, they can effectively address these issues. However, despite making up half of Nigeria's population, women remain underrepresented in governance and policymaking spaces due to structural barriers, cultural biases, and inadequate political support. Addressing these gaps requires legal frameworks promoting gender quotas, capacity-building programs for women leaders, and increased advocacy for gender-responsive policies.

Recommendations for effective policy making and execution

To enhance Nigeria's policy landscape, the following steps must be taken:



Promote policy continuity

Successive governments must uphold and improve beneficial policies rather than discard them.



Ensure public participation

Citizens, civil society groups, PWDs, and women leaders must have a voice in policy formulation.



Strengthen institutions

Government agencies must be equipped with adequate resources and technical expertise.



Combat corruption

Transparent budgeting and accountability mechanisms should be enforced.



Gender Inclusion

More women should be involved in policy decision-making at all levels.



Improve Monitoring and Evaluation

Policies should have clear success metrics and regular assessments to ensure effectiveness.

Call to action

Nigeria's development hinges on well-thought-out, inclusive, and sustainable policies. Demystifying policy processes and making them accessible to all citizens—especially women—will enhance participation, drive accountability, and ensure policies address societal needs.

Vision 2050 And The Power Of Policy Communication — Bridging The Gap Between The Policy And The People

By 2050, Nigeria is projected to be the third most populous country in the world. This demographic shift presents both an opportunity and a challenge. Can Nigeria as a nation harness its youthful population to drive innovation, economic growth, and equity; or will weak governance, poor communication, and exclusion widen the existing social and economic divides? While the national policy vision aspires to transform Nigeria into a dynamic, industrialized, and knowledge-driven economy that



By 2050, Nigeria is projected to be the third most populous country in the world.

supports inclusive and sustainable development, a pressing question remains: is there sufficient political will to turn this vision into reality? As Nigeria advances toward Vision 2050, its long-term national development framework, it must recognize that policies alone do not deliver change, people do. Bridging the gap between policy and people requires transparent, inclusive, and participatory communication. Technically sound policies often fail when they lack buy-in, understanding, and ownership.



Transparent communication ensures that:



Citizens trust policy intentions and implementation.



People are engaged early and often.



Feedback is captured and used to adapt strategies.



Grievances are addressed to reduce misinformation and resistance.



Everyone sees themselves in the vision, especially the underserved.

VISION
2050



Invest in Human Capital

Prioritize education, digital skills, and employment pathways.



Leverage Technology

Support innovation, digital inclusion, and infrastructure.



Diversify the Economy

Boost agriculture, manufacturing, creative and green industries.



Institutional Accountability

Strengthen leadership, transparency, and service delivery

Strategic Priorities for Vision 2050

Why communication is important

1.

Communication is the bedrock of policy Implementation

People need to know what, why, and how a policy will affect them. This means delivering clear information on timelines, responsibilities, and expectations. When people understand the intent and implementation structure of a policy, they are more likely to support and participate in its execution. Trust cannot be demanded; it must be built through transparency and consistency. Effective engagement must begin at the policy design stage, not after implementation.

Polymakers should make use of diverse communication channels such as traditional media, social media, town hall meetings, and SMS platforms. This ensures that a broad spectrum of citizens, regardless of literacy level or location, can access and understand the message.

Also, Policy communication is most effective when it is amplified by trusted voices within communities. Key stakeholders like religious leaders, civil society actors, creatives, youth influencers, and traditional leaders should be brought into the conversation early. Their involvement builds credibility, reinforces legitimacy, and encourages wider acceptance of policies.

The exclusion of a key stakeholder or community can lead to active resistance or quiet sabotage. When people feel sidelined or unheard, misinformation spreads and trust is eroded. Only one influential but disengaged voice can stall or derail a policy, underscoring the importance of inclusive stakeholder engagement.



In 2023, Nigeria's currency change policy highlighted the dangers of poor communication and inadequate planning.

2.

Poor communication undermines trust: The naira redesign case

In 2023, Nigeria's currency change policy highlighted the dangers of poor communication and inadequate planning. Implemented without the right digital infrastructure in place or clear messaging, the policy left many citizens stranded. Market women, small-scale traders, and daily wage earners were unable to transact. Food prices skyrocketed, and public frustration grew. While the elite found ways to adjust, the average Nigerian suffered. This situation reflects a broader issue of reactive governance—where decisions are made without forecasting, planning, or stakeholder engagement.

3.

Communication makes media accountability partners and engages citizens

The media is central to communicating government policy. However, beyond simply relaying information, journalists have a duty to analyse, question, and interpret policies in a way that the public can understand and engage with meaningfully. The Nigerian media must rise to this responsibility by asking policymakers the hard questions, creating space for citizen feedback and frustrations; and promoting community outreach and investigative reporting. In today's digital age, when policies trend on platforms like X (formerly Twitter), they capture global attention. Nigerian citizens are not isolated; they are global actors, and when they are informed and satisfied, they become the country's best ambassadors. To build this trust, the government must step out of its comfort zones, embrace data-driven decision-making, and treat communication as a core governance tool not merely a ceremonial activity.

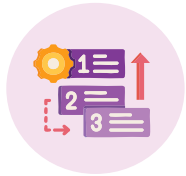


Policy Recommendations



Rebuild the social contract

Policy success hinges on stakeholder buy-in, which requires rebuilding Nigeria's broken social contract. When elected leaders prioritize political survival over service, citizens disengage. Vision 2050 must be different: inclusive, participatory, and citizen owned.



Prioritise the Youth

Vision 2050 aims to move Nigeria into an upper middle-income economy. Achieving this will require the active participation of young Nigerians, who must shift their mindset from being jobseekers to becoming job creators. They need to embrace innovation, adapt to new challenges, and co-create solutions, while actively taking up space in politics, business, and the creative economy. To support this transformation, policies should prioritize access to production hubs, stable electricity for creatives, protection of intellectual property, and the creation of safe and supportive business environments. A vital initiative in this direction is the Digital Literacy for All (DL4ALL) for Youth Corps Members, which targets achieving 70% digital literacy by 2027. This effort supports the broader National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy, which extends to 2030, ensuring that Nigerian youth are equipped with the digital skills required to compete globally.



Accelerating implementation

Nigeria does not suffer from the lack of policies; it suffers from the lack of implementation. Rather than creating new frameworks, there is an urgent need to operationalize existing policies such as the National Gender Policy, Child's Rights Act, VAPP Act, Women's Economic Empowerment Policy and the National Gender Inclusion Strategy.



Conclusion

Vision 2050 is Nigeria's boldest path forward. But without transparent communication, inclusive engagement, and committed implementation, it will remain aspirational. Too often, policies are rolled out for political reasons. Elections are monetized, and public offices become investments. Leaders focus on recouping campaign funds and securing future seats, rather than delivering results. Nigerian citizens can promote and support the Government's policy but first, they must believe in it. Nigeria cannot afford another missed opportunity. Vision 2050 must be more than a plan; it must be a national movement.



Governance must be data-driven.



Policy must be people centered.



Leadership must be values led.

Advancing Gender-Inclusive Leadership And Policies In Nigeria

Women in Nigeria face systemic exclusion from leadership and policy-making processes, perpetuating inequality and limiting national development. Despite Nigeria's commitments to international treaties and the existence of a National Gender Policy, implementation remains weak due to entrenched cultural biases and political resistance. Gender-inclusive leadership is critical for shaping policies that drive progress in education, healthcare, and economic development. Gender Development Experts who were guests on the show highlighted systemic barriers such as patriarchy, political exclusion, and inadequate legislative frameworks as the reason for lack of inclusion.

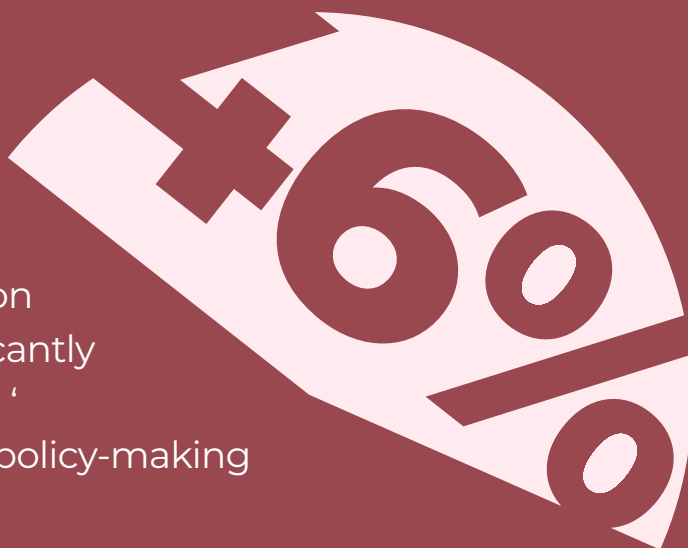
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Women make up nearly half of Nigeria's population yet remain significantly underrepresented in leadership and policy-making roles. This exclusion exacerbates gender inequality and negatively impacts key sectors such as education, healthcare, and economic empowerment. Addressing these gaps requires deliberate effort from policymakers, legislators, development organisations, and civil society actors to promote gender-inclusive leadership as a viable pathway to equitable policies that benefit all Nigerians.



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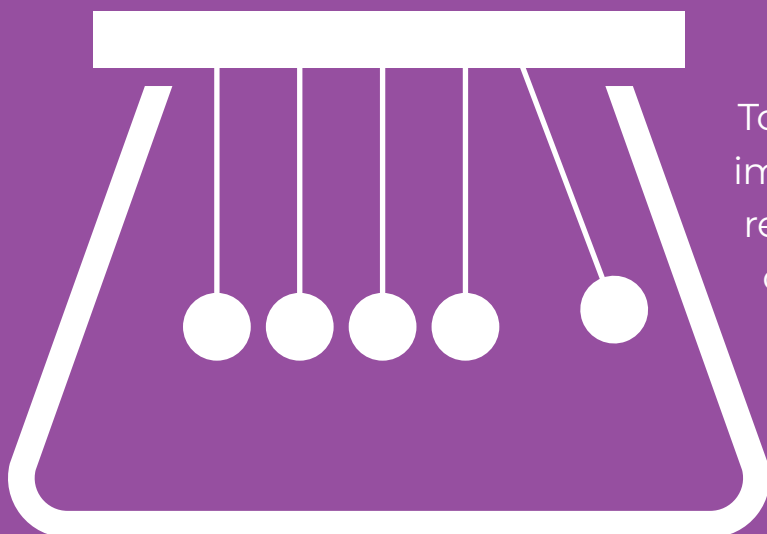


The National Gender Policy mandates 35%
female representation in decision-making,
yet women hold only 20% of executive
positions in corporate Nigeria, and
only 33% participate in the workforce.



Countries such as Rwanda and South Africa have achieved gender parity through affirmative action and legislative reforms

The exclusion of women from leadership roles results in policies that fail to address the unique challenges faced by girls, women and other marginalised groups.



To ensure accountability and impact, the experts recommended the development of a policy tracker to measure the effectiveness of gender inclusion initiatives.

Policy Context and Background

Since the 1995 Beijing Conference, Nigeria has committed to gender equality frameworks such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). However, implementation has been slow, and Nigeria has not domesticated key treaties like CEDAW. The National Gender Policy mandates 35% female representation in decision-making, yet women hold only 20% of executive positions in corporate Nigeria, and only 33% participate in the workforce. Excluding women from leadership stifles national progress and hampers social and economic development. Women bring unique perspectives essential for sustainable human-centred policies. With over 133 million Nigerians living in poverty as of 2022, inclusive leadership is more critical than ever. Countries such as Rwanda and South Africa have achieved gender parity through affirmative action and legislative reforms. States like Kaduna and Kwara have made notable strides, with over 40% female representation within their cabinets.

Cultural norms, political violence, and financial barriers persist as significant obstacles to women's participation in political leadership. Electoral violence and intimidation disproportionately affect women, deterring many from contesting political positions. Experts on the show highlighted the importance of women's organizations uniting to advocate for gender equity and stressed the need for women to support and vote for female

representatives in politics to foster greater inclusion.

One of the guests recounted the rejection of the five gender bills on March 1st, 2022, highlighting how it signified continued systemic exclusion and reinforced harmful

societal norms against women.

However, the women and young activists who continue to champion gender equality were commended,

recognising their resilience in the fight for inclusion.

Beijing's promise: gender equality.
Yet, Nigeria's women still wait since 1995 when the conference happened.

Only 20% of women hold executive positions as against the expected 35%. While only 33% participate in the workforce

Countries such as Rwanda and South Africa have achieved gender parity through affirmative action and legislative reforms.



Key Points

On March 1st, 2022, 5 gender Bills were rejected in the National assembly. However young activists continue to champion gender equality

The Ripple Effect of Exclusion

The exclusion of women from leadership roles results in policies that fail to address the unique challenges faced by girls, women and other marginalised groups. When leadership lacks gender diversity, policy decisions often overlook crucial aspects of healthcare, education, and economic empowerment that disproportionately impact women. For instance, inadequate maternity protections, the gender pay gap, and the lack of policies addressing gender-based violence or the care burden persist due to underrepresentation in decision-making.

Globally, countries with higher female representation in leadership tend to have more inclusive policies, stronger economies, and better social welfare programs. Nigeria's continued gender imbalance in governance undermines its developmental goals and international positioning, limiting the nation's potential for sustainable growth. To ensure accountability and impact, the experts recommended the development of a policy tracker to measure the effectiveness of gender inclusion initiatives. This should be a collective effort, involving both men and women advocating for gender-balanced leadership and inclusive policies.

Another major point that was highlighted is the crucial role that data plays in policymaking, particularly in tracking the effectiveness of gender-inclusive initiatives and identifying gaps in implementation. In line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) principle of "leaving no one behind", the importance of including women, youth, and persons with disabilities in governance and policy development is important. There must be an effort to intentionally foster inclusive leadership that represents the interests of all demographics and breaks the systemic barriers that limit women's participation in governance.

Recommendations



Enforce gender quotas:

Legislate a minimum of 35% female representation in appointive and elective positions.



Domesticate CEDAW:

Expedite Nigeria's adoption of CEDAW to strengthen legal protections for women.



Support female candidates:

Provide financial and logistical support to women running for public office.



Build male alliances:

Engage male leaders as allies in promoting gender equity and in advocacy efforts.



Invest in gender-responsive education:

Integrate gender equality into school curricula to challenge stereotypes and empower future generations.



Develop policy trackers:

Establish mechanisms to measure the impact of gender inclusion policies and hold stakeholders accountable.



Call To Action

Urgent legislative action is needed to pass pending Gender Bills and amend electoral laws to ensure gender-balanced leadership. Collaboration with civil society organizations, traditional leaders, and religious institutions is essential for shifting cultural norms and advocating for gender inclusion.

Nigeria stands at the crossroad, achieving gender-inclusive leadership is crucial to unlock equitable and sustainable development.

Addressing systemic barriers and recruiting male allies will enable women to take their place in leadership, ensuring policies reflect the diverse needs of all citizens. Immediate action is necessary to fulfil Nigeria's national and international gender equality commitments, thereby creating a ripple effect that fosters inclusive policies for a prosperous society.

Driving Inclusive Economic Growth with the Women Economic Empowerment Policy (WEE)

Women's economic empowerment is a game-changer for inclusive and equitable economic growth. Women in Nigeria are resilient and resourceful as economic actors, but they face persistent gender-based barriers in accessing financial services, land, education, and employment that limit their economic potential.

According to the International Finance Corporation study, 70% of women live in extreme poverty and closing gender gaps in the economy could add \$229 billion to Nigeria's GDP over the next decade. Women have demonstrated their ability to build informal and formal businesses with minimal capital, create networks to maximise resources, and balance disproportionate caregiving responsibilities.

The Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) Policy presents a crucial opportunity to eliminate these barriers and establish an environment where women can thrive economically, to drive national development.

Poverty disproportionately burdens women. Empowering them economically unlocks vast potential, enriching Nigeria's future for all.



Policy Context and Background

The WEE policy is an inclusive and well-thought-out policy designed after a 15-month consultative process with 100,000 Nigerians. The WEE policy is a blueprint for closing gender gaps in economic participation and opportunity. Some of the gender gaps identified in the Citizen's Guide to Understanding the National Women's Economic Empowerment Policy and Action Plan include:

44%

Financial exclusion: Only 44% of Nigerian women have access to financial services, compared to 56% of men, restricting their ability to save, invest, and grow businesses.

Poverty levels: Over 70% of Nigerian women live in extreme poverty, with many relying on informal, low-paying jobs for survival.

70%

10%

Agriculture and land ownership: While women contribute 70%- 80% of agricultural labor, they own only 10% of the land, limiting their ability to secure loans and expand their businesses.

Digital divide: 34% of Nigerian women have internet access compared to 54% of men, reducing their ability to access financial services, education, and job opportunities.

34%

20%

Corporate leadership gap: Women hold only 20% of board seats in listed companies, despite studies showing that gender-diverse leadership improves business performance.

Educational disparities: While 67% of boys' complete secondary school, only 53% of girls do, limiting their future employment prospects and earning potential.

53%

Healthcare & social access: Women have less access to quality healthcare, legal protection, and political representation, reducing their ability to participate fully in society.

The Economic and Social Benefits of the WEE Policy

In response to these challenges, the National WEE Policy and Action Plan was launched in May 2023. It provides a strategic framework for empowering women across key economic sectors. The WEE policy targets five key economic sectors to drive measurable improvements in women's economic participation:



Women in Agriculture – Expanding access to land, financing, and market opportunities will increase female participation in agriculture from 19.6% to 30%, enhancing food security and economic stability.



Women's Education and Skill Development – Vocational training and financial literacy programs will help bridge the gender skills gap and improve employment prospects.



Women in Emerging Industries – Encouraging female participation in technology, finance, and other high-growth sectors will diversify Nigeria's economy and create millions of jobs.



Women in Formal and Informal Employment – Strengthening workplace policies and access to childcare will increase women's workforce participation from 55% to 65%.



Women in Entrepreneurship – Expanding financial inclusion, offering business grants, and improving market linkages will increase the number of women-led businesses, fostering innovation and job creation.

Additionally, four (4) cross-cutting enablers will accelerate policy implementation:

1

Women's Financial Inclusion and Literacy

Increasing female financial access from 45% to 75% will drive economic independence and business expansion.

2

Digital Innovation and Access

Closing the gender digital divide will enable more women to leverage technology for education, finance, and entrepreneurship.

3

Household, Workplace, and Community Support Structures

Policies supporting work-life balance and social protection will enhance women's economic participation.

4

Gender-Responsive and Data-Driven Government Processes

Implementing gender-sensitive policies and ensuring accountability will sustain long-term progress.

When fully implemented across Nigeria, the WEE policy is set to drive GDP growth over the next decade, reduce women's extreme poverty by at least 30%, and expand female representation in executive roles and governance. Furthermore, it will strengthen women's decision-making and innovation. It will also enhance financial stability for families, as women reinvest 90% of their income into their households and communities.



Call to action

Driving Nigeria's economic growth requires urgent action. This starts with each State domesticating and implementing the WEE Policy. However, the successful execution of the National WEE Policy and Action Plan will depend on the government, the private sector, and civil society working together to expand women's participation in high-growth industries, strengthen social safety nets, improve childcare services, and enforce work-life balance policies.

Gender-responsive governance must be a priority, ensuring women have a seat at decision-making tables, while financial systems must be restructured to grant women greater access to capital and investment opportunities. Bold affirmative action is required to break systemic barriers and project the full economic potential of Nigerian women.

Women's economic empowerment is not just about fairness; it is a national imperative. When women thrive, businesses grow, families are financially secure, and communities become more resilient. A gender-inclusive economy accelerates innovation, strengthens governance, and builds a future where Nigeria's prosperity is shared by all.



70%

of women live in extreme poverty and closing gender gaps in the economy could add \$229 billion to Nigeria's GDP over the next decade.

Transforming Lives Through Health Policies

A healthy country is a productive country and accessing quality and equitable healthcare is crucial for overall national development. Despite the enactment of the National Health Insurance Authority (NHIA) Act in 2022, which was designed to expand coverage and ensure equitable access to healthcare, only about 7% of Nigerians are currently enrolled in health insurance.



**~80% of
Nigerians pay
out-of-pocket
to access
Health care**

As a result,

healthcare access remains predominantly out-of-pocket, with approximately 80% of Nigerians

bearing the financial burden themselves. This makes Nigeria one of the

worst-performing countries in Africa in terms of financial protection, in stark contrast to

Rwanda, where 90% of the population is covered by health insurance. The low

enrolment in health insurance schemes

exacerbates healthcare inequities, limits access to essential services and pushes millions into poverty due to catastrophic health expenditures. To achieve universal health coverage and improve national well-being, there is an urgent need for stronger policy implementation, increased public awareness, and sustainable financing mechanisms to make health insurance more accessible and affordable for all Nigerians.

~7%

Only 7% of Nigerians are currently enrolled in health insurance

Current Challenges in Nigeria's Health Sector

Limited Health Insurance Coverage

Although health insurance enrolment has increased to 19.1 million individuals in 2024, a significant portion of the population remains uninsured. The reliance on out-of-pocket payments creates financial barriers to accessing healthcare services.

1

2

High Maternal and Child Mortality Rates

Despite some improvements, neonatal mortality remains high at 41 per 1,000 live births, and under-five mortality is 110 per 1,000 live births. Low healthcare facility utilization (43% of births occurring in medical facilities) contributes to this issue.

3

Shortage and Migration of Healthcare Workers

Nigeria has only 2.9 doctors per 10,000 people, significantly below the WHO-recommended 17 per 10,000. The migration of healthcare workers continues to deplete the workforce, disproportionately affecting rural areas.

Healthcare Disparities

Healthcare facilities and personnel are heavily concentrated in urban areas, leaving rural populations underserved. Disparities also exist along regional and gender lines. In certain regions, women must obtain permission from their husbands before seeking medical care. Additionally, although women make up a significant portion of the healthcare workforce, they are underrepresented in leadership positions. This systemic exclusion affects policy decisions on issues such as maternal health and reproductive rights.

4

Inadequate Infrastructure and Medical Supply Chain

While progress has been made in pharmaceutical production, the healthcare sector still suffers from inadequate infrastructure, substandard equipment, and inconsistent medical supply chains. Although there is a policy stating that every ward should have a hospital, implementation remains ineffective, with many facilities lacking electricity, medical supplies, and security.

5

Emerging Health Threats and Pandemic Preparedness

The country remains vulnerable to disease outbreaks, with gaps in surveillance systems and emergency response frameworks.

6

Policy Recommendations

Considering these challenges, here are some short-term and long-term recommendations.

**Expand Health Insurance and Financial Protection:**

Increase funding for the National Health Insurance Authority (NHIA) and the Basic Healthcare Provision Fund (BHCPF) to extend coverage to vulnerable populations and reduce out-of-pocket spending.

**Invest in Healthcare Workforce Development:**

Implement retention policies for healthcare workers, expand training programs, and incentivise professionals to work in underserved areas.

**Enhance Maternal and Child Health Services:**

Strengthen antenatal and postnatal care programs, improve access to skilled birth attendants, and ensure availability of family planning services and essential maternal health commodities.

**Strengthen Healthcare Infrastructure and Local Production:**

Invest in the construction and rehabilitation of healthcare facilities, increase local production of pharmaceuticals and medical supplies, and enhance distribution networks for essential medicines.



**Improve Disease Surveillance and Emergency Preparedness**

Establish a robust public health emergency response system, integrate digital health solutions for real-time disease monitoring, and enhance collaboration with private and international health organisations.

**Leverage Digital Technology for Healthcare Improvement**

Expand the use of telemedicine, electronic health records, and mobile health applications to enhance healthcare access, efficiency, and data-driven decision-making.

**Promote Gender Equity in Healthcare Leadership**

Increase the representation of women in decision-making roles within the healthcare sector. Policies affecting maternal health and reproductive rights must be shaped by those who experience these challenges firsthand.

**Public Awareness and Advocacy**

Strengthen civic engagement in healthcare policy implementation. Nigerians must be informed about existing policies and demand better healthcare services. Investing in community awareness campaigns through media, advocacy groups, and educational programs will help build a collective voice for change.



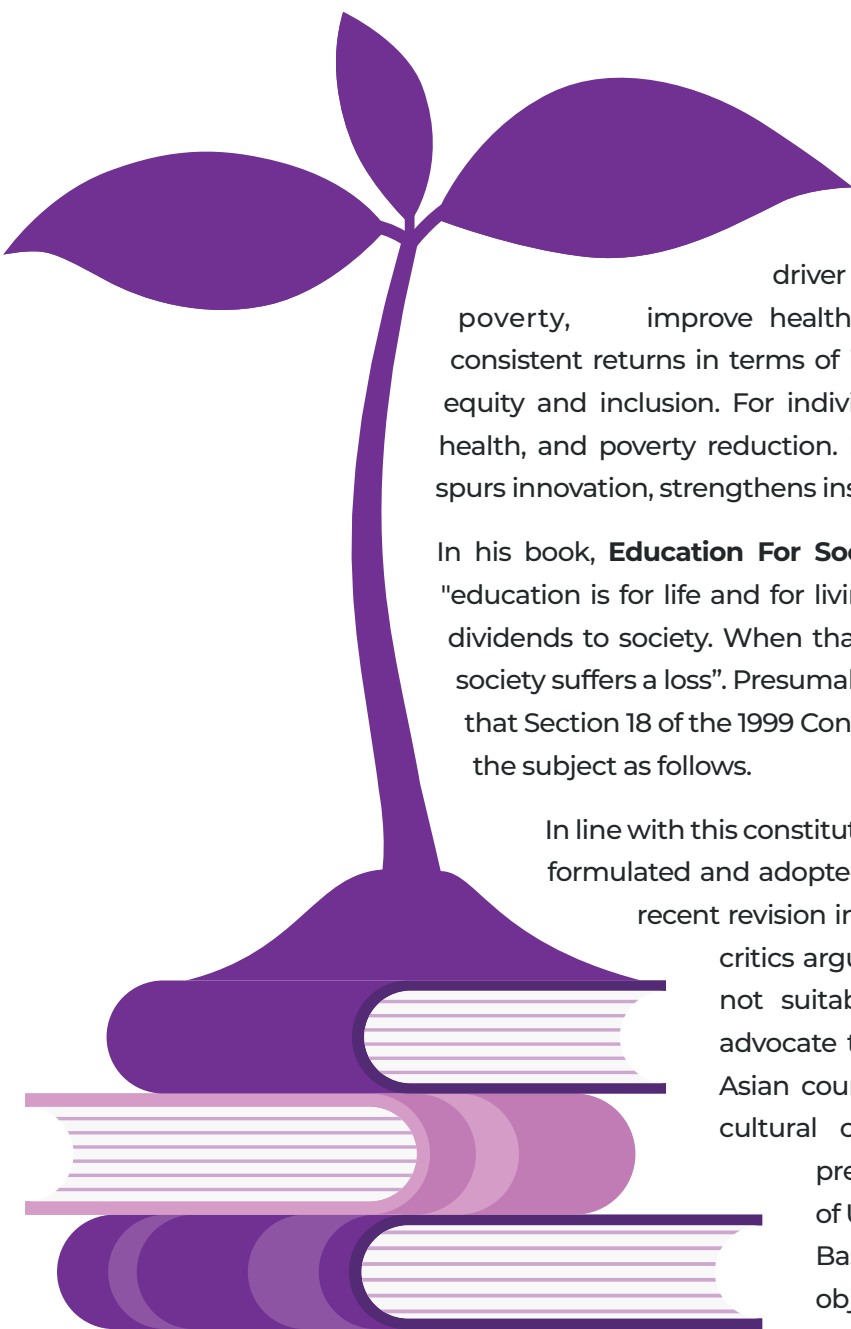


Call to action

To achieve a resilient healthcare system, all stakeholders—including government agencies, private sector actors, and civil society must collaborate to drive sustainable health reforms. Policymakers must prioritise funding, streamline governance, and promote policies that ensure equitable access to healthcare. Additionally, advocacy for functional primary healthcare centers, gender equity in healthcare leadership, and financial protection for all. Investing in Nigeria's health sector is not just a moral imperative but an economic necessity for national development. By collectively analysing the healthcare structure and continuously expressing our voices, we can drive real change.

This policy brief is part of an ongoing series exploring critical policy interventions for Nigeria's sustainable growth. Join us in future editions as we continue to advocate for impactful health policies. The office of the citizen is more powerful than the office of the President; use it!

Investing In The Future: Education Policy In Nigeria



Education is a human right, a powerful driver of development, and a proven strategy to reduce poverty, improve health, gender equality, peace, and stability. It delivers consistent returns in terms of income and is the most important factor to ensure equity and inclusion. For individuals, education promotes employment, earnings, health, and poverty reduction. For societies, it drives long-term economic growth, spurs innovation, strengthens institutions, and fosters social cohesion.

In his book, **Education For Social Reconstruction**, Ukeje (1966) emphasized that "education is for life and for living. It is an investment in people which pays untold dividends to society. When that investment is not made or is made inadequately, society suffers a loss". Presumably it is in recognition of this importance of education that Section 18 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria addresses the subject as follows.

In line with this constitutional provision, the National Policy on Education was formulated and adopted in 1977 and has remained in effect, with the most recent revision in 2013. Though modelled after the American system, critics argue that it fails to address present-day realities and is not suitable across the diverse cultures in Nigeria. Some advocate that Nigeria should adopt the education models of Asian countries like Japan, China, and India, which integrate cultural considerations into their frameworks. From the precolonial British education policy to the introduction of Universal Primary Education (UPE) and later Universal Basic Education (UBE), the gap between intended objectives and actual outcomes continues to widen.

Government shall direct its policy towards ensuring that there are equal and adequate educational opportunities at all levels.

1

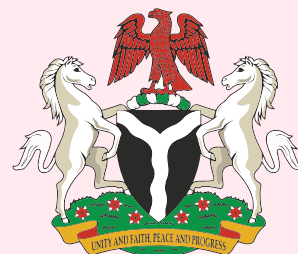
Government shall promote science and technology.

2

Government shall strive to eradicate illiteracy, and to this end, Government shall as and when practicable provide:

- (a) free, compulsory and universal primary education
- (b) free secondary education
- (c) free university education
- (d) free adult literacy programs (FRN, 1999:18).

3



**The 1999 Constitution
of the Federal Republic
of Nigeria's guide on
how Government
partakes in Education**

Education in Nigeria: State of play

Nigeria is facing a learning poverty crisis that threatens its future. Many children who are in school are not learning, and millions who are out of school lack access to quality education.



Nigeria has about 20 million out-of-school children, with girls making up approximately 60% of this number (UNESCO, GEM Report, 2022). Despite policies that aim to provide free basic education, systemic failures, inadequate resources, and weak implementation continue to hinder progress.



While the 2030 Incheon Declaration adopted in 2015 by governments around the world during the World Education Forum, recommends at least 4 to 6% of GDP or 15 to 20% of national budget to education, Nigeria consistently falls short of this benchmark.



The challenges are multi-faceted—ranging from poor coordination between the state and federal governments, lack of gender-responsive policies, insecurity, economic instability, and environmental factors such as climate change and flooding. These issues are further compounded by insufficient funding.

This policy brief seeks to explore the state of education in Nigeria, diagnose key challenges, and propose actionable solutions to ensure that education truly serves as a vehicle for national transformation.

Challenges in Nigeria's education system

1

Learning crisis and access to education

Despite efforts to expand access, foundational learning remains weak. According to the 2023 UNICEF Nigeria Education Fact Sheets, 70% of children in school cannot read at an age-appropriate level. The Universal Basic Education (UBE) program, introduced in 1999, was meant to guarantee free education for all children, but poor implementation, lack of infrastructure, and inadequate funding have limited its impact.

2

Poor educational leadership

The 2024/5 Global Education Monitoring report (GEM Report) concluded that Leadership is at the heart of quality education. There is increasing recognition that educational leadership is the second most significant factor influencing learning outcomes. Effective leadership at various levels plays a crucial role, from school administrators to education inspectors, government officials, and policymakers involved in legislation and oversight.

3

Poor policy implementation and governance

Education policies in Nigeria often look promising on paper but fail at the implementation stage. A major reason is the lack of coordination between federal, state, and local governments, leading to inconsistencies in execution. Additionally, corruption has stagnated educational development, with funds for schools often mismanaged or diverted. According to Transparency International, corruption within the education sector remains a major barrier to progress, with funds allocated to school projects frequently going unaccounted for.

4**Gender disparities and socio-cultural barriers**

Girls are disproportionately affected by educational challenges in Nigeria. According to UNICEF 2021 report on investment case for out-of-school children in Nigeria, 50% of girls are not attending school at the basic education level, largely due to poverty, early marriage, and social norms that prioritize boys' education over girls. In many communities, girls are expected to take on caregiving roles or are married off at a young age, limiting their chances of completing school. Issues such as lack of female teachers, gender-based violence, and inadequate sanitary facilities in schools further discourage girls from continuing their education.

5**Insecurity and conflict**

Violence and insecurity have become significant deterrents to education in Nigeria. Frequent attacks on schools by insurgent groups, particularly in the northern region, have led to widespread fear and school closures. Parents are often reluctant to send their children, especially girls, to school due to safety concerns. The Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA) reports that between 2020 and 2023, over 1,400 students and teachers were abducted in Nigeria, highlighting the urgent need for policies that address security concerns in education.

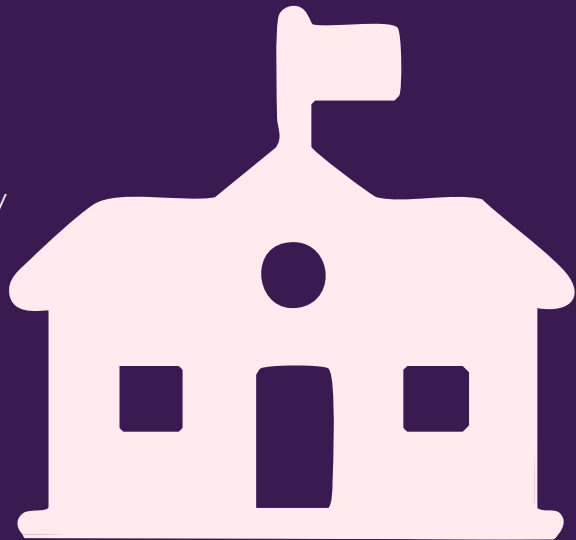
6**Gender disparities and socio-cultural barriers**

Nigeria's education system still relies heavily on rote learning, rather than encourage critical thinking and problem-solving skills. The curriculum is outdated and not aligned with modern economic and technological needs. Leadership in education is a crucial factor in improving learning outcomes. However, Nigeria faces a shortage of well-trained teachers, and many schools lack the necessary instructional materials to support effective learning.



Education policies in Nigeria often look promising on paper but fail at the implementation stage. A major reason is the lack of coordination between federal, state, and local governments, leading to inconsistencies in execution.

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Policy Recommendations

Considering these challenges, here are some short-term and long-term recommendations.



Increase education funding

Nigeria must prioritize education funding by allocating at least 4 to 6% of GDP or 15 to 20% of the national budget to education, in line with global recommendations.



Strengthen policy implementation and governance

Greater transparency, accountability, and coordination between government agencies at all levels is needed to ensure policies are effectively executed.



Enhance security in schools

The government must invest in security infrastructure, including fencing, surveillance, and safe transport services for students in high-risk areas.



Improve teacher training and welfare:

Regular professional development and better remuneration will help attract and retain qualified teachers



Expand universal basic education

Senior secondary school should be included under the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) to ensure free education lasts until after Secondary School.



Promote gender-responsive policies

Special initiatives should be introduced to support girls' education, including scholarship programs, mentorship, and community-based interventions to tackle socio-cultural barriers.



Revamp the curriculum

Nigeria needs to transition towards a competency-based curriculum that emphasizes digital literacy, problem-solving, and creativity.



Call to action

The future of Nigeria depends on the strength of its education system. It is time for all stakeholders; government agencies, private sector players, civil society organizations, and community leaders to take collective action to reform education. Parents must demand better education for their children, policymakers must ensure the proper execution of policies, and the international community must support initiatives that enhance learning opportunities for all.

Education is not just a policy issue; it is a fundamental human right and a critical investment in the nation's future. If Nigeria is to achieve sustainable development, urgent and strategic reforms in education are non-negotiable. The time to act is now.

Leveraging Technology For A Thriving Creative Economy



Technology has transformed economies worldwide, and Nigeria is no exception. With over 122 million internet users and a social media penetration rate of 36%, Nigeria's digital ecosystem is one of the fastest growing in Africa. Young Nigerians have embraced technology in remarkable ways—driving the fintech, digital marketing, and content creation industries. Platforms like TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram have enabled thousands of young Nigerians to build careers, showcasing the power of digital accessibility.

However, access and affordability remain critical challenges. While urban areas enjoy fibre-optic broadband, many rural communities rely on satellite technology for internet access, which is expensive and often unreliable. If harnessed properly, technology can democratize opportunities, allowing diverse talent across the country to thrive.

Despite these opportunities, Nigeria has suffered a significant loss of talent due to migration, popularly known as the "Japa Syndrome." Skilled creatives and tech professionals are leaving the country for better opportunities abroad. This brain drain highlights the urgency needed to appreciate, retain, and invest in local talent. As a nation, we must shift our mindset to see the abundant opportunities around us and create policies that empower our people.

Policies exist in Nigeria to support both the tech and creative sectors, yet many of them remain on the shelf. The public sector must leverage technology to drive innovation, implement policies effectively, and create an enabling environment for the creative economy to flourish.



Artificial Intelligence (AI) Integration

AI is revolutionizing content creation, design, and music production. While it enhances efficiency, it also raises concerns about job security for creative professionals.



Collaborative Platforms

Digital platforms are enabling co-creation and crowdsourcing, allowing global collaborations. Policies must support digital inclusion and fair remuneration.



Intellectual Property (IP) Reforms

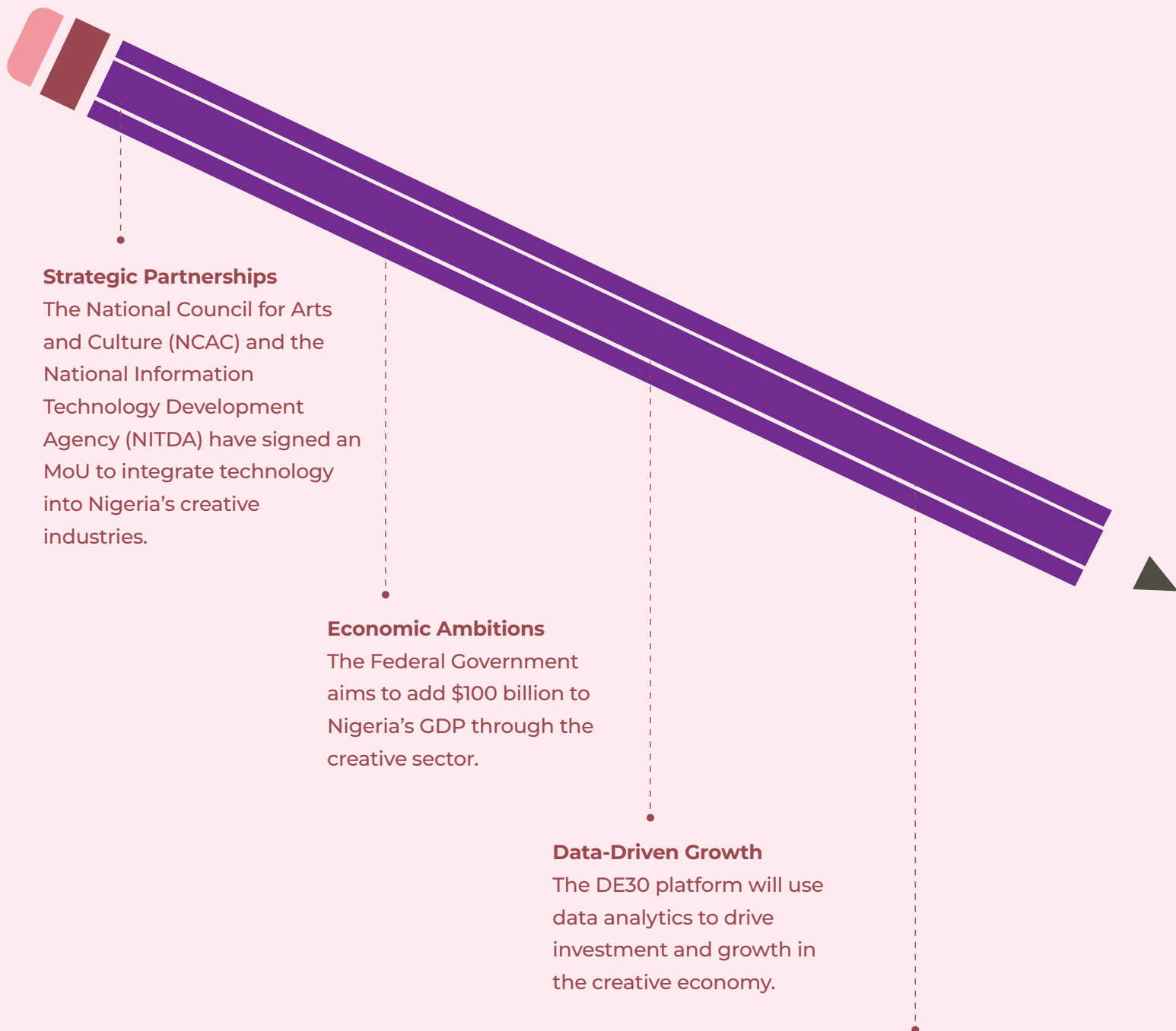
Governments worldwide are updating IP laws to address challenges posed by AI and digital platforms. The UK, for example, is debating AI companies' use of artists' work without permission.



Economic Contributions

The creative industry is an economic powerhouse. The World Bank notes that dollar for dollar, the creative industry generates more jobs than manufacturing.

Global Trends in the Creative Economy



Nigeria's Initiatives to Strengthen the Creative Economy

Policy Recommendations

To fully harness technology for a thriving creative economy, Nigeria must:



Strengthen Intellectual Property (IP) Protection

Update IP laws to safeguard digital content and prevent unauthorized AI usage.



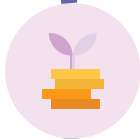
Invest in Digital Infrastructure

Expand affordable and reliable internet access to rural areas using fibre optics and satellite technology.



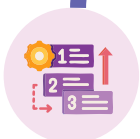
Enhance Educational Reforms

Integrate digital literacy and creative skills into school curricula to prepare future leaders.



Provide Financial Incentives

Offer grants, tax breaks, and investment opportunities for startups and creatives in the digital economy.



Drive Public-Sector Innovation

The government must digitize operations, implement policies effectively, and leverage AI and blockchain for governance.

For these policy recommendations to succeed, it is essential to build a strong talent pipeline equipped with the right skills. These include:



Digital literacy and fluency in emerging technologies (e.g., AI, machine learning, blockchain)



Creative thinking and content development skills



Data analysis and visualization for storytelling and strategy



Business and financial acumen to scale creative ventures



Understanding of intellectual property and digital rights management



Soft skills like collaboration, adaptability, and communication, especially for cross-sector partnerships



Public policy and civic tech know-how to support engagement with governance and implementation

These competencies should be integrated into both formal education systems and informal training programs such as bootcamps, accelerator programs, online courses, and mentorship initiatives.

Call to action

The future of Nigeria's creative economy depends on collaboration between government, private sector, and industry stakeholders. By aligning policy implementation with technological innovation, Nigeria can retain its talents, foster economic growth, and establish itself as a global creative hub.

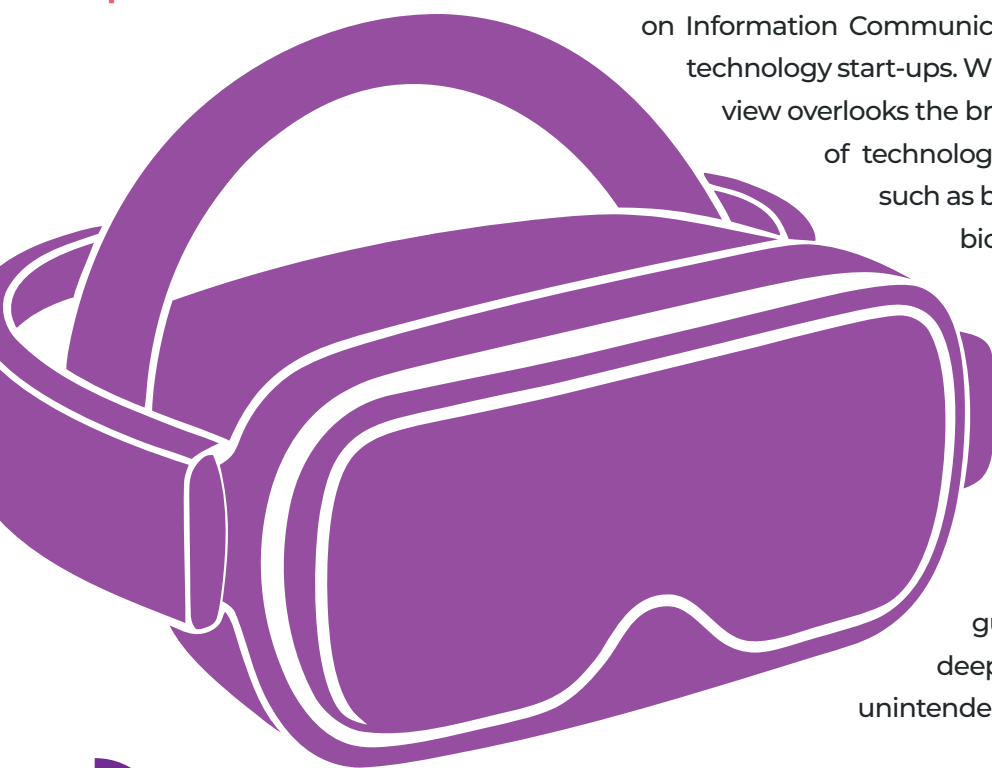
Tech-Driven Policymaking: Shaping Nigeria's Future Through Innovation

Introduction

Nigeria Accounts for over 80% in Tech startups in West Africa. The National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy (NDEPS) 2020–2030 sets out a bold agenda to position Nigeria as a global digital powerhouse.

Technology has emerged as the central pillar for development in the 21st century. It is a core driver of how societies evolve, how economies grow, and how governments deliver public value. In Nigeria, this transformation is significant given her youthful population. With a growing pool of tech talent and a vibrant startup ecosystem, Nigeria is well-positioned to leverage technology in addressing some of its most pressing development challenges.

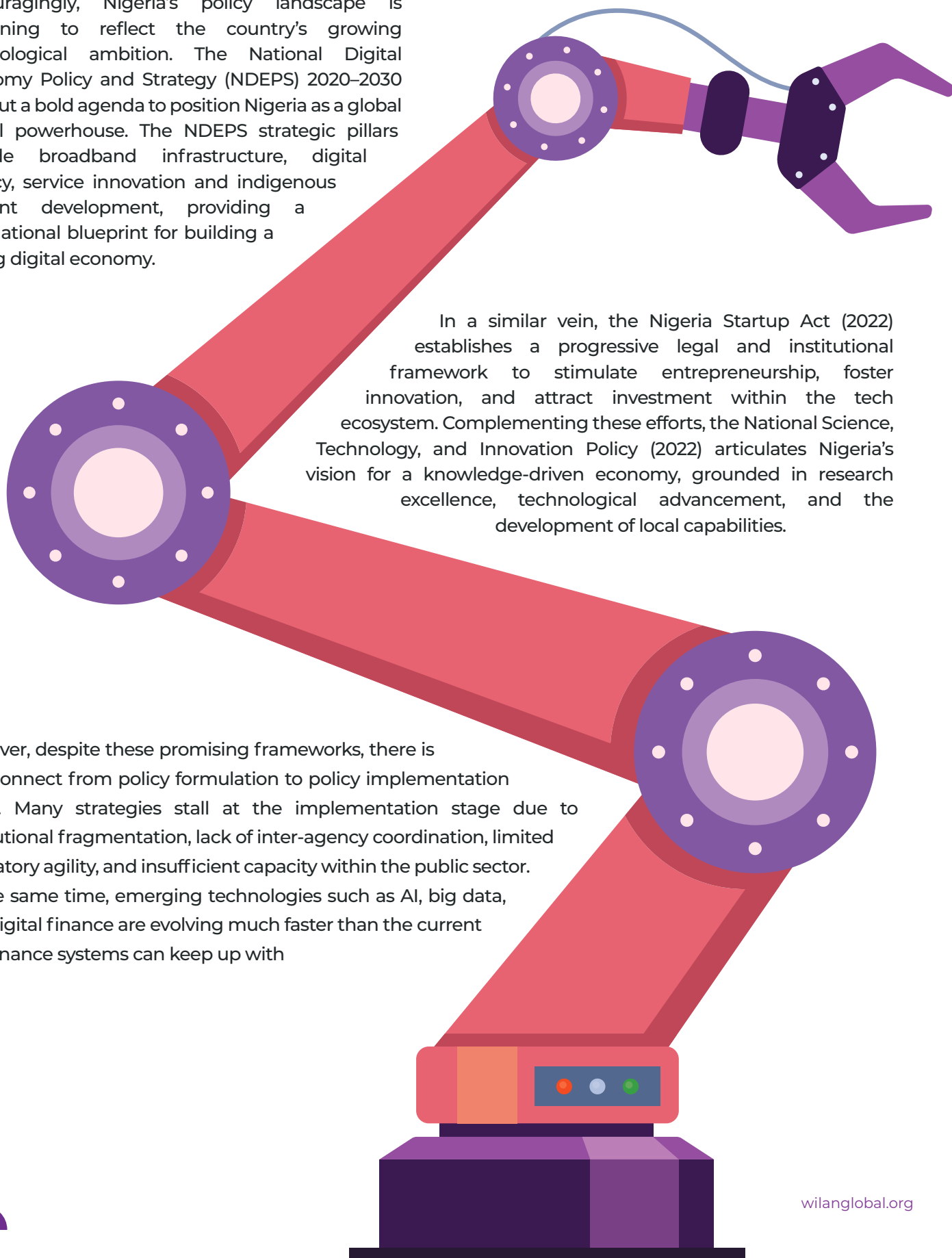
Technology is frequently viewed through a narrow lens, focused mainly on Information Communications Technology (ICT) infrastructure or technology start-ups. While these areas are important, this limited view overlooks the broader and more transformative spectrum of technological innovation. Rapidly emerging fields such as bioengineering, genome editing, synthetic biology, quantum computing, and artificial intelligence are reshaping the future of health, agriculture, environmental sustainability, and national defense. These technologies hold immense promise, but they also raise complex questions around ethics, equity, and environmental impact. Without forward-looking and inclusive policies to guide their development and use, they risk deepening existing inequalities and causing unintended harm to people and the planet.



Encouragingly, Nigeria's policy landscape is beginning to reflect the country's growing technological ambition. The National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy (NDEPS) 2020–2030 sets out a bold agenda to position Nigeria as a global digital powerhouse. The NDEPS strategic pillars include broadband infrastructure, digital literacy, service innovation and indigenous content development, providing a foundational blueprint for building a strong digital economy.

In a similar vein, the Nigeria Startup Act (2022) establishes a progressive legal and institutional framework to stimulate entrepreneurship, foster innovation, and attract investment within the tech ecosystem. Complementing these efforts, the National Science, Technology, and Innovation Policy (2022) articulates Nigeria's vision for a knowledge-driven economy, grounded in research excellence, technological advancement, and the development of local capabilities.

However, despite these promising frameworks, there is a disconnect from policy formulation to policy implementation stage. Many strategies stall at the implementation stage due to institutional fragmentation, lack of inter-agency coordination, limited regulatory agility, and insufficient capacity within the public sector. At the same time, emerging technologies such as AI, big data, and digital finance are evolving much faster than the current governance systems can keep up with



Why it matters

1.

Technology can make policymaking more innovative and inclusive

Technological tools such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, and data analytics are already transforming policymaking across the world. These tools enable evidence-based decisions, predictive modeling, and real-time policy adjustments. For Nigeria, the capacity to use technology for smarter governance will radically improve transparency, service delivery, and citizen trust. Imagine a digital policy dashboard tracking real-time education enrollment or health outcomes, accessible to both policymakers and citizens. But such systems require not just infrastructure, but political will, digital literacy, and sustained funding.

In a country where many policies are reactive or manually monitored, digital tools offer the opportunity for anticipatory and participatory governance. However, this potential remains largely untapped, with most Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) still relying on paper-based systems and outdated decision-making frameworks.

2.

Digital innovation drives economic inclusion

Nigeria's tech sector has shown remarkable resilience and promise. Since 2019, Nigerian startups accounted for over 80% of total startup funding in West Africa¹, with sectors like fintech, healthtech, edtech, and agritech driving inclusion. Youth-led startups are solving real-world problems, from mobile banking in rural communities to on-demand education platforms. However, these successes are clustered in urban centers like Lagos, Abuja, and Port Harcourt, leaving much of rural Nigeria digitally excluded.

The digital divide marked by disparities in access to internet, digital skills, and digital infrastructure risks entrenching inequality. Current broadband penetration sits at 45.61 percent as of January 2025², far below the 70% target outlined in the National Broadband Plan (NBP 2020–2025). This poses a major barrier to scaling digital innovation and limits the reach of tech-enabled services. If not addressed, Nigeria risks a two-speed digital economy where a few benefits while many are left behind.

3.

Good policy implementation leads to positive impact

Though Nigeria boasts of a robust policy framework on paper, the impact of these policies remains limited due to poor implementation. Overlapping mandates, lack of coordination between institutions, and insufficient digital infrastructure prevent policies from delivering their intended results. When policies are harmonised and effectively implemented, they can drive significant progress. A shift toward streamlined governance and a digitally transformed public sector is crucial for birthing good policies which will lead to tangible, positive outcomes. A digital transformation of government operations is therefore not just desirable, but urgent.

Policy Recommendations

To transform Nigeria's policy landscape through technology, targeted and coordinated actions are needed at all levels of governance:



Accelerate nationwide broadband penetration

To enable inclusive innovation, Nigeria must reach at least 70% broadband penetration; The World Bank says raising access to 75% would boost the Country's GDP. This requires strategic investments in last-mile infrastructure, particularly in underserved rural areas. The government should expand access through licensing incentives for telecom operators, reduced Right of Way (RoW) charges, and digital inclusion funds. Infrastructure-sharing frameworks among telcos should be formalised to reduce costs.

Implement the Nigeria Data Protection Act, 2023

The Nigeria Data Protection Act offers a legal backbone for data privacy and trust in digital systems. Its implementation must go beyond formal adoption. The Nigeria Data Protection Commission (NDPC) must be adequately resourced to enforce compliance, raise awareness among citizens, and provide oversight of data handling by public and private actors. Without data trust, digital adoption will remain limited.

Establish a cybersecurity command framework

The National Cybersecurity Policy and Strategy (NCPS 2021) must be regularly updated to account for new risks such as AI misuse, crypto-related fraud, and critical infrastructure vulnerabilities.

A coordinated Cybersecurity Command Centre should be established to consolidate surveillance, response, and policy advisories across agencies. This centre must collaborate with tech firms, civil society, and academia for resilience.

Fully operationalise the Nigeria Startup Act

To make the Startup Act effective, the National Council for Digital Innovation and Entrepreneurship must go beyond its inauguration and become fully operational, as progress on executing its core mandates has so far been limited. The Council should coordinate state-level implementation, ensure regulatory harmonisation, and offer tangible incentives such as tax relief, seed funding, and visa programs for foreign tech talent. Regular monitoring reports should track the startup ecosystem development by state.



Create centers of excellence for emerging technologies

At least three national centers of excellence focusing on Artificial Intelligence, Renewable Energy, and Bioinformatics should be launched in partnership with leading universities and tech hubs. These centers would provide research, capacity-building, and policy input for government and industry. Their mandates should also include gender inclusivity and commercialisation pathways for inventions.

Mainstream STEM and digital education at all levels

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) must become a foundational pillar of Nigeria's education system. Curriculum reforms must start at the primary level, and it should be matched with teacher training, digital devices, and inclusive classroom strategies. Special incentives should be provided to encourage girls' participation in STEM through scholarships, mentorship, and safe learning environments.

Digitize government operations and policy processes

Establish an Office of Digital Governance under the Presidency or the Federal Ministry of Communications, Innovation and Digital Economy, tasked with digitising workflows across all MDAs. This office would support interoperability, data sharing, and electronic monitoring of policy implementation. A digitised public service is essential for delivering timely, transparent, and accountable governance

Invest in policymaker and civil servant digital literacy

Digital transformation cannot succeed without digitally literate leaders. A mandatory Digital Governance Bootcamp should be instituted for all senior civil servants and policymakers, focusing on topics like artificial intelligence, e-governance, cybersecurity, blockchain, and digital regulation. Understanding technology is now as critical as understanding law or economics in public leadership. Addressing these challenges will require deep collaboration between policymakers and technologists, from the ground up. Nigeria must create an enabling environment where technologists actively contribute to public policy.



Conclusion

Technology offers Nigeria an unprecedented opportunity to leapfrog structural barriers and deliver prosperity to millions. But this promise requires more than just apps, infrastructure, or startup hubs, it requires a systemic transformation of how policy is made, implemented, and evaluated. For Nigeria to thrive in the digital age, technology must be woven into the DNA of governance itself.

This means building digital capacity within government, investing in inclusive infrastructure, and promoting a culture of innovation that is both bold and responsible. If done right, technology will not just enable policy, it will elevate it.

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