

January 23, 2019

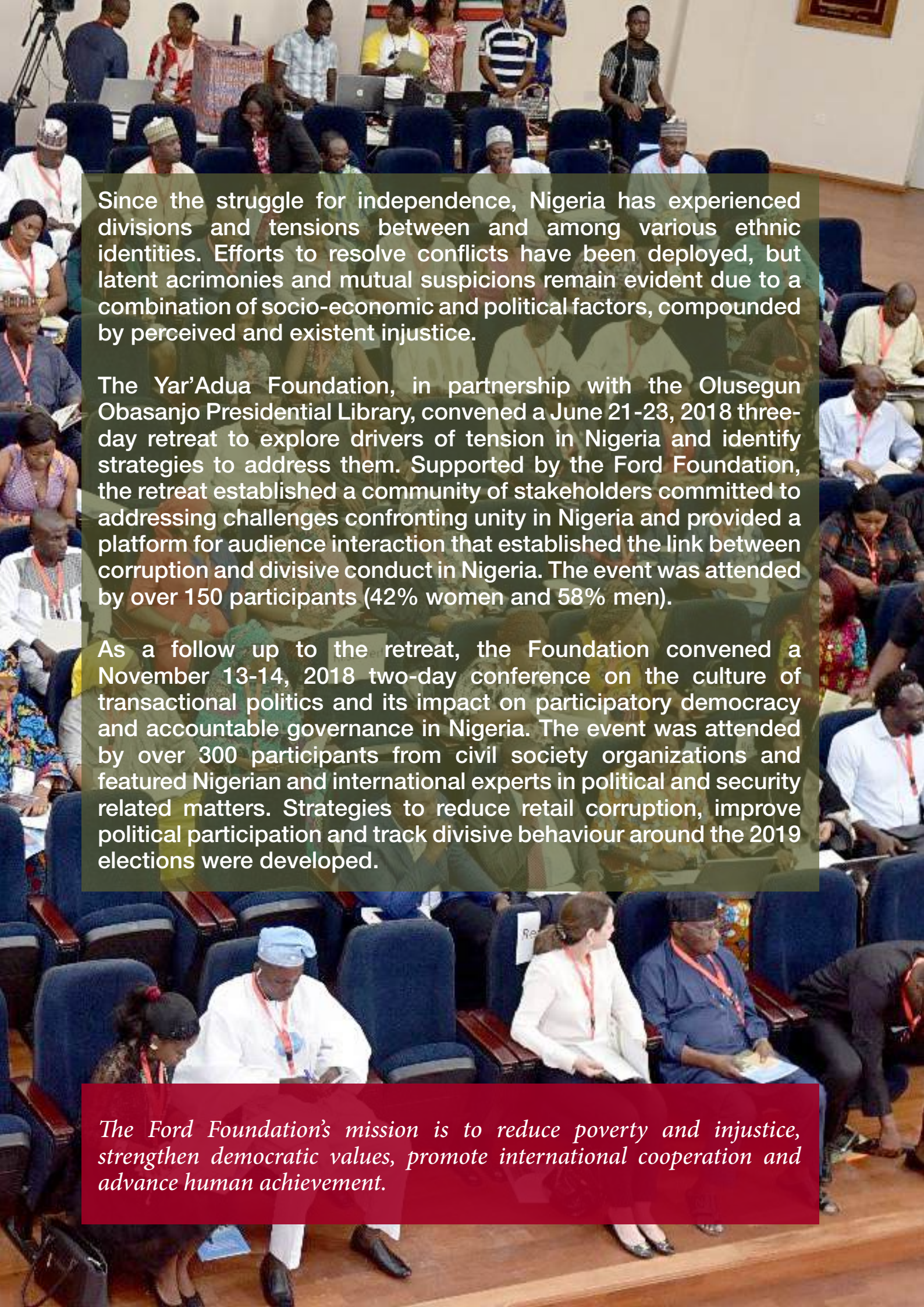
PROJECT REPORT

Promoting National Cohesion and Building Platforms to Counter Divisive Behaviour



FORD
FOUNDATION





Since the struggle for independence, Nigeria has experienced divisions and tensions between and among various ethnic identities. Efforts to resolve conflicts have been deployed, but latent acrimonies and mutual suspicions remain evident due to a combination of socio-economic and political factors, compounded by perceived and existent injustice.

The Yar'Adua Foundation, in partnership with the Olusegun Obasanjo Presidential Library, convened a June 21-23, 2018 three-day retreat to explore drivers of tension in Nigeria and identify strategies to address them. Supported by the Ford Foundation, the retreat established a community of stakeholders committed to addressing challenges confronting unity in Nigeria and provided a platform for audience interaction that established the link between corruption and divisive conduct in Nigeria. The event was attended by over 150 participants (42% women and 58% men).

As a follow up to the retreat, the Foundation convened a November 13-14, 2018 two-day conference on the culture of transactional politics and its impact on participatory democracy and accountable governance in Nigeria. The event was attended by over 300 participants from civil society organizations and featured Nigerian and international experts in political and security related matters. Strategies to reduce retail corruption, improve political participation and track divisive behaviour around the 2019 elections were developed.

The Ford Foundation's mission is to reduce poverty and injustice, strengthen democratic values, promote international cooperation and advance human achievement.

Introduction



I am pleased to convey the Yar'Adua Foundation's sincere appreciation to the Ford Foundation for its tremendous support to promote national cohesion and build platforms to counter divisive behavior in Nigeria around the 2019 elections. The Foundation also duly appreciates the many friends and partners who contributed to making these events successful.

Sadly, the gravity of hate speech and threat of violence has resulted in the International Criminal Court (ICC) placing Nigeria under special observation. Animosity since the 2015 elections continues to be fueled by the impression that certain sections are explicitly favoured.

Diversity is not and cannot be the basis of Nigeria's division. But for Nigeria to be a more peaceful, inclusive and equitable society for all its citizens, deliberate and consistent collective action is required. Responsible formal and informal leadership must mobilize, lead and guide individual and collective actions that promote national cohesion at various tiers of government, the private sector, faith and traditional institutions as well as media, academia and civil society. Managing diversity is a multi-sectoral and multi-agency responsibility. Genuine efforts at cohesion and nation-building must include all Nigerians.

We were honored that thought leaders and experts, including Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, GCFR, Hajiya Saudatu Mahdi, Professor Benjamin Page, Acting INEC Chairman Professor Antonia Okoosi-Simbine and Mr. Benson Olugbuo addressed the conferences on their active role in combating divisive behaviour in Nigeria.

The Yar'Adua Foundation is proud to have made this important contribution to the growth of civic spaces in Nigeria. We remain committed to providing platforms for dialogue that foster a more prosperous and inclusive nation.

Jacqueline Farris
Director General
Shehu Musa Yar'Adua Foundation

June 21-23, 2018

OLUSEGUN OBASANJO PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY ABEOKUTA



Mr. Amara Nwankpa

Director, Public Policy Initiative
Shehu Musa Yar'Adua Foundation

Social media has become the primary communication tool of choice for actors driving divisive narratives.

Welcome

Amara Nwankpa decried poor leadership and decades of corruption that have resulted in inequality and deep anger within many communities in Nigeria. He stated that these in turn have culminated in restiveness and violence and added that politicians and radical extremists in recent years have exploited vulnerabilities among the Nigerian people by spreading divisive messages and stoking hatred in order to garner a following.

Amara cited recent drums of hate, violence and calls for succession that have assumed a frighteningly loud tone and led to deep resentment and hostility, particularly from the southeastern and northern parts of Nigeria.

He noted that sectional and political groups have employed social media influencers to advance their spiteful narratives – resulting in toxic and dangerous conversations among Nigerians online and offline. He stated that these narratives must be countered if we are to prevent them from doing irreparable damage to our national cohesion.

He was optimistic that the three-day retreat will serve as an opportunity to explore the drivers of tension and identify strategies to address them and encouraged participants to work together to develop a Framework for Peace and National Cohesion to address challenges confronting our unity. Amara added that he was hopeful that participants would become a community of stakeholders and partners working together to create and sustain an inclusive, united and prosperous Nigeria.

The OOPL Youth Development Centre is a focal point for young people, locally and globally, to incubate ideas, develop skills, enhance leadership capacity and link young people with opportunities.

Mr. Damian Oyibo

Director, Youth Development Centre
Obasanjo Presidential Library



Remarks



Latent acrimonies and mutual suspicions are the main tools which feed crisis in Nigeria, disguised in the forms of religion, ethnicity, state of origin, tribe and political affiliation.

Mr. Innocent Chukwuma
Director, Ford Foundation

Innocent Chukwuma stated that his organization offered to support the retreat under the aegis of Ford's Difficult Discussions Series because Nigeria must be brought back from the brink of collapse. He identified latent acrimonies and mutual suspicions as the main tools which feed crisis in Nigeria, disguised in the forms of religion, ethnicity, state of origin, tribe and political affiliation.

He admonished civil rights activists to address the question of nationhood and brace up for the challenges of democratization rather than stand aloof to watch politicians destroy the opportunities and possibilities in the nation's democratic space. He recommended that participants build on the success of the Not Too Young To Run Bill, as it is of utmost importance to include young people in peace building and conflict resolution.





Mrs. Saudatu Mahdi

Secretary-General, Women's Rights Advancement & Protection Alternative (WRAPA)

Social media has become the primary communication tool of choice for actors driving divisive narratives.

Guest Speaker

Nigerian Women and Youth Organizing to Change the Dynamics

Mrs. Mahdi berated politicians for taking advantage of citizens to promote ethnic and religious bigotry in the nation's socialisation process. Her presentation set the tone for further retreat deliberations.

In examining trends influencing conflicts that affect the unity of the nation, Mrs. Mahdi stated that for conflicts to be resolved and closure brought, we need a national platform that tells our children the truth. She stressed that religion is personal and said that all Nigerians have a stake so must therefore remain vigilant, consistent and patient.

Hajiya Saudatu further stated that stereotyping and deliberate message distortion through social media channels is prevalent as a tool to heat up the polity and impugn cohesion. She added that rather than promote statecraft, the prevalence of hate speech promotes divisiveness. The quality of media response and body language of security institutions leave significant gaps and send wrong messages. She suggested that for government and citizens to counter divisive behaviour, they must:

- Acknowledge Nigeria's inherent diversities while consciously promoting equality and equity in all government businesses and activities.
- Remain committed to integrity, professionalism and accountability.
- Reject and demote mediocrity, political patronage and blind submission to the psychological pressure to act only to satisfy primordial and self-centered identities and sensitivities in Nigeria.
- Adopt inclusive, sustainable and replicable initiatives and policies for managing diversity at federal, state and local government levels.
- Establish dialogue, learn lessons and adopt best practices from countries that share similar diversity indices with Nigeria.

She emphasized that Nigerian women and youth are crucial in our effort to build one Nigeria that is inclusive and caters to our thriving diversity and suggested the following policy and institutional responses to divisive behaviour:

- Review and reaffirm mandates of existing national and international interventions to respond and bring to an end the menace of insurgency and internal conflicts threatening peace and security.
- Reform the nation's security architecture to respond to gaps in all segments of the country in order to restore trust and security.



We must not allow the merchants of conflict and harbingers of ill-will to deprive us of our collective resolve to tolerate and negotiate our diversities. We should recognize that we have all been affected by ethnic and religious strife, acknowledge each other's pain and transform it into something that binds us together rather than drives us to further violence. We must agree to accommodate our core differences while taking ownership of our destiny as a great nation.

- Tame corruption, enhance performance and develop an effective community policing strategy to ensure all citizens have the right to equal access and protection.
- Persuade the National Assembly and state governments to implement and comply with the National Gender Policy provision of 35% of appointive positions for women in executive and other statutory governance structures.
- Ensure social zero tolerance for derogatory or offensive language, including hate speech and hold persons and institutions accountable.
- Enforce compliance with federal character requirements and pursue a legislative review to include gender and disability as indices of federal character.
- Work with the private sector and leverage on social corporate responsibility ethos to support citizen-centered initiatives that deconstruct the barriers of diversity and exclusion in the work place.
- Outlaw discriminatory practices such as requests for information regarding tribe and religion of applicants by schools, employees and statutory bodies. Disclosure of one's religion should be made optional or be outlawed.
- Create opportunities for regular briefings of citizens as a way of involving them in governance and dousing tension that could arise from information gaps and unmet expectations.
- Work with the National Assembly to revisit specific diversity issues addressed by the 2013-2014 Constitutional review process.

In conclusion, Hajiya Saudatu called on citizens to play an active role in monitoring governance at all levels to ensure that the promise of change does not short-change us.

Chairman of the Occasion



H.E. Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, GCON
Former President
Federal Republic of Nigeria

It was the mismanagement of diversity that facilitated the disunity witnessed in Nigeria today.

President Obasanjo welcomed participants on behalf of the Yar'Adua Foundation, the Olusegun Obasanjo Presidential Library and the Ford Foundation. He commended the three organizations for organizing such an important event and stated that diversity is a natural phenomenon ordained by God. He added that the disunity witnessed in Nigeria today is a result of the mismanagement of our diversity.

President Obasanjo suggested that history is an important tool for the promotion of national cohesion and recalled how a committee was set up after the Civil War to write the history of the war but disagreement resulted in disbandment of the committee. He decried the fact that till date, there is no official record of the Civil War. He also stated that we must be careful of history as it can be a good servant or a bad master.

He also stressed the need for socio-economic development and dialogue as effective means of actualizing national cohesion.





*Our history must be objective and elevating.
And above all should promote national unity.*

H.E. Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, GCON





CHALLENGES OF A MULTI-ETHNIC SOCIETY: IDENTIFYING HISTORICAL IMPEDIMENTS TO NATIONAL UNITY

A panel of scholars and thought leaders identified challenges of diversity and national cohesion through an understanding of the origins of our problems. Discussion focused on the inability of past and present-day leadership to respond to challenges which have resulted in division. The session concluded by examining how primordial and boundary loyalties are exploited and amplified and questioned whether the creation of political platforms has worsened the problem.

AUDIENCE QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

- How can Nigerian youth recreate some of the nation's missed opportunities?
- What can youth do to prevent themselves from being manipulated?
- We can have unity and cohesion if we remain committed to ensuring that ethnicity becomes a thing of the past.
- Young people should change our narratives and counter divisive behaviour.
- Our leaders must be held accountable and ensure that the right people are in positions of authority, and that things are done in a proper way.

Lead Speaker



Prof. Eghosa Osaghae
Vice Chancellor
Igbinedion University

Ethnicity and Contested Citizenship in Africa

Ethnic, racial, religious and regional entities become secondary when civic, political and economic rights are fairly granted.

Prof. Osaghae stated that citizenship, though not a natural phenomenon, is an integral part of the process of state and nation building. He emphasized that this can be achieved by the creation of a national identity and state allegiance in addition to the primary identity of members of the polity. He suggested that extending civil, political, social, and economic rights to members of the state should be provided in return for the duties they render to it.

Prof. Osaghae highlighted factors that compound contested citizenship as competition for scarce resources and social goods, capitalism, structured inequalities, lack of social mobility and the need to protect the corporate identity and survival of ethnic groups.

DISCUSSANTS



Identifying Trigger Points Precipitating Current Realities

Dr. Olajumoke Yacob-Haliso

Lecturer, Dept. of Political Science & Public Administration
Babcock University, Ilesha-Remo

As a nation, we must criminalize ethnic entrepreneurs - people who make a living from making sure that ethnicity remains a problem in Nigeria.



Understanding Origins of Divisive Behaviour in Nigeria

Dr. Abubakar Siddique Mohammed

Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria

Ethnic solidarity is often mobilized in pursuit of individual interests, tied to the grievances and privileges of the group by elites.

COUNTERING CONTEMPORARY THREATS TO A UNITED AND PROSPEROUS NIGERIA

The session brought together civil society experts and emerging leaders to examine the role of youth in fanning current manifestations of division. Discussions focused on identifying spaces through which these tendencies are expressed, as well as the strengths and shortcomings of existing mechanisms to address challenges.



Prof. Sam Egwu

INEC Resident Electoral Commissioner
Niger State

Lead Speaker

Understanding Current Manifestations of Divisive Conduct and Behaviour in Nigeria

The divisive politics of the elite today have resulted in our weak sense of national identity and coherence.

The session brought together civil society experts and emerging leaders to examine the role of youth in fanning current manifestations of division. Discussions focused on identifying spaces through which these tendencies are expressed, as well as the strengths and shortcomings of existing mechanisms to address challenges.

Professor Egwu addressed the legitimacy of the modern state and its capacity to present itself as a provider of public goods while acting as a neutral arbiter. He stated that as capacity declines, fear of the other rises and people resort to religious, ethnic and sectional solidarity – in search of security.

He explained that much of our divisive conduct and behaviour is a product of elite fragmentation and manipulation as well as survival strategies devised by the ruling elite. He suggested that underlying factors of divisive conduct and behaviour in Nigeria are in consonance with the global upsurge of identity politics, challenges of human security, culture of elite settlement, climate change, resource scarcity and conflict.

- Our immense human capacity and natural resources should be used to advance even and balanced development on the basis of effective democratic governance.
- The Federal system should be reformed to enable groups to enjoy substantial local autonomy and address peculiar development challenges.
- Core national values and notions of democratic citizenship should be reinvented around good governance, protection of rights of citizens, rule of law, service delivery and advancement of social and economic rights.
- Inclusion should be promoted, according rights to minority groups who are alienated or who feel unwanted.



Participants were urged to reject stereotypes, embrace technology, self-correct and begin to organize in order to apply all that has been talked about during the retreat.

DISCUSSANTS



Changing the Narratives that Define Our Identities

Ethnicity should first be the love of your people - not the hate of other people.

Dr. ChiChi Aniagolu-Okoye
Water Aid



Examining The Role of Youth in Fanning Divisive Behaviour

Citizens should vote for political candidates based on their ability, not region or religion.

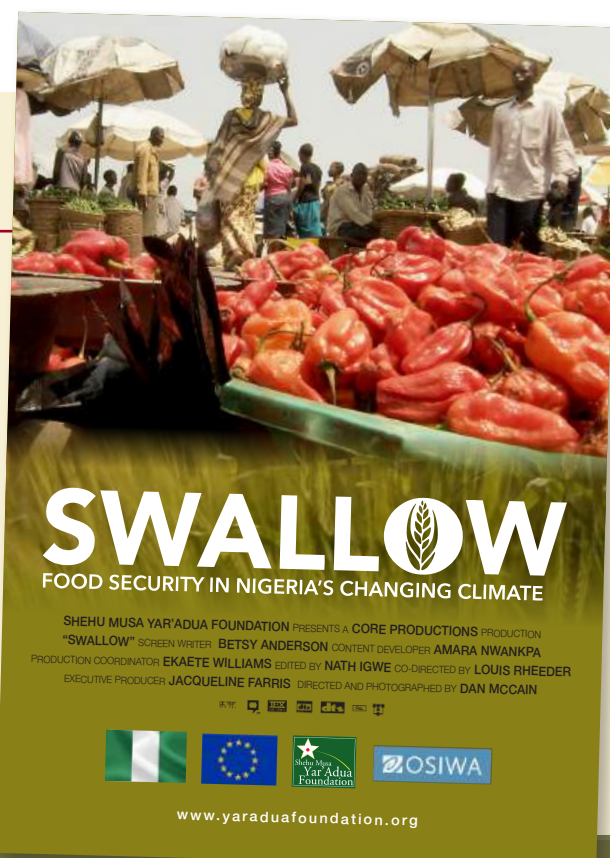
Ms. Chioma Agwuegbo
Founder, TechHer

Film Screening

Swallow: Food Security in Nigeria's Changing Climate

Produced by the Yar'Adua Foundation, the documentary addresses challenges brought on in part by our changing climate, inadequate infrastructure and agricultural practices. It features inspiring stories and explores opportunities and solutions to Nigeria's food security challenge with contributions from UN Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Amina Mohammed and AfDB President, Dr. Akinwumi Adesina.

In his opening remarks, H.E. Ketil Karlsen, Head of Delegation, European Union, stated that the documentary expresses the hope and tenacity that exists in Nigeria.



NEW MECHANISMS, PLATFORMS, AND NETWORKS OF INTER-GENERATIONAL DIALOGUE FOR NATIONAL COHESION

■ ■ ■ Interfaith Networks

- Peer-to-peer education can help individuals understand and be open to ideologies of other religions.
 - Government should create national interfaith partnerships and dialogue to ensure synergy between religious groups.
 - The media should propagate positive narratives through movies and documentaries depicting the successful impact and outcome of interfaith marriages.
- Due to the sensitivity of religious news, media must regulate broadcast content.
 - Civil Society Organisations should carry out advocacy and awareness to rural communities against inter-religious hate speech and serve as a connection between religions by creating platforms for interfaith dialogue.



Saratu Umar Kiro

Justice, Development and Peace Commission



Saadatu Fali Hamu

Legal Practitioner



Professional Networks



Hon. Ngunan Addingi
Member, Benue State House of Assembly



Nana Nwachukwu
Legal Consultant

- Exchange programmes and tours from different zones should be encouraged by Government and other stakeholders.
- Professional bodies in partnership with Government and other stakeholders should create hubs for social inclusion and dialogue.
- Encourage inclusive policies within professional bodies that do not favour nepotism, ethnicity or religion.



Social Networks



Hamzat Lawal

Connected Development Initiative (CODE)



Cynthia Mbamalu

YIAGA Africa Initiative

- Media should identify local and entertainment influencers to create campaigns to counter hate speech and promote national cohesion.
- Media platforms should be used to propagate narratives promoting unity among ethnicities and religions.
- Advocacy for introduction of a revised standard history into the curriculum of the education sector, with focus on reconciliation.
- The media should celebrate successful individuals from different parts of the country.
- Challenge and counter politicians who try to mobilise ethnic and religious differences using social and traditional media.



VOX POPS

What do
Nigerians have
in common?

Do you think our
leaders made
things better or
worse?

What part of
Nigeria does
conflict affect the
most?

Why don't we
get along?

What is hate
speech?

What contributes
to the conflict
there?

How can
Nigerians be
united?

How do you
react when it is
targeted at your
tribe?



When you hear
about hate
speech being
targeted at
your tribe, it
saddens you.

When it comes to
politics, everyone
fights for his or
her ethnic interest
instead of our
national interest.

The conflict is more
in the North and the
reason is poverty.
We never get what
is needed from
the government.
No electricity, no
water, that is what is
causing the crisis.

We must put
all religious
sentiments
aside and start
to think of all
Nigerians as
one.

Spoken Word Performance



Atilola Moronfolu
Drawing Blood

*The word out there says
Nigeria is divided along
ethnic lines. But we know
that is not true because
when you were young,
you shared your sweets
and seats with both Titi
and Nkechi till you got
home and your Mother
said Nkechi and all other
Igbos are ritualists.*

Atilola composed an original spoken word poem to illuminate the Arts and Civics Table's cartoon competition, *Drawing Blood*. Her bold performance tackled violence in Nigeria and held us all responsible, actively or passively, for the current situation. Atilola confronted the division brought about by tribalism and extremism, emphasizing that if we continue to be quiet and look the other way, we could end up being victims too.



Spoken Word Performance cont'd



Dike Chukwumerije

No Culture is Older Than Being Human

To say Nigeria is a mere geographical expression is to discount the constitutional conferences that took place in 1951, 1953, 1956 and 1958 when Nigerians from all walks of life came together, sat down to negotiate and agreed the terms under which they were prepared to live together.

Dike Chukwumerije's performance focused on ethnic divisions in Nigeria and a call to oneness.

- To say that Nigeria is the mistake of 1914 is to discount 1920 and the formation of the Nigerian National Democratic Party by Herbert Macaulay to fight for the rights of the people he considered to be his countrymen; it is to discount 1933 and the formation of the Nigerian youth movement by people like Earnest Ikoli from today's Bayelsa, H. O. Davis from today's Lagos, Eyo Ita from today's Cross River.
- It is to discount 1944 and the formation of the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroun, formed by students to bring together the two political heavy weights of that time, Nnamdi Azikiwe and Herbert Macaulay, to bring them together in one organization so they could more effectively fight for the independence of a country these young people considered to be theirs.
- To say Nigeria is a mere geographical expression is to discount the constitutional conferences that took place in 1951, 1953, 1956 and 1958 when Nigerians from all walks of life came together; sat down to negotiate and agreed the terms under which they were prepared to live together.
- It is to discount Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa who in the early 60's took a trip to the United States and what he saw there made him think to himself that if this country can become a nation, then Nigeria can do it too.

- It is to discount the fact that for a generation of young men and women, Nigeria was an aspiration, a dream; that independence was a fruit of decades of struggle.
- When Chinua Achebe said there was a country, he was expressing nostalgia for a dream that did not come to pass not very different from the sentiments expressed by Anthony Enahoro who as a young man in the parliament in 1953 moved the motion for self-government in 1956.
- I know that there was a war, a brutal war where millions of children starved to death, innocent men, women and children killed and till today there is no plaque, there is no wall, there is no memorial anywhere to remember them. We don't even know what their names were, how many people actually died. Some of them we do not even know where they are buried.
- I know that this giant of Africa stumbled right out of the starting blocks and almost collapsed. I can even understand why it stumbled because our founding fathers, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo, Ahmadu Bello were really and truly different.
- The fact that those three people were able to work together to bring Nigeria into independence is testament to their belief in the viability of one Nigeria. That belief was virtually the only thing they had in common.
- As we have become more similar, why are our politics still locked in the past? There are many reasons for this, but I'll give just two. One, the bedtime stories we've all been told. For instance, you've been told that the Igbo's killed the Sardauna. You are not told that the Sardauna was killed by Major Kaduna Nzeogwu. You are told that the Yorubas betrayed the Igbos. You are not told that Obafemi Awolowo was the Minister of Finance in the Gowon government during the war and it was his responsibility to evolve a strategy for the Federal side during the Civil War.
- Two, the system. I don't care how cosmopolitan you actually are but at some point in your journey as a Nigerian you will encounter the question, "What is your state of origin?". Attempting to answer that question will take you back to 1966 but you need to answer that question because it gives you access to so many parts of Nigerian public life.
- What do Nigerians have in common regardless of faith and tribe? We have bad roads in common, no light in common, no books in our schools in common, no drugs in our hospitals in common, poverty in Sokoto, poverty in Yenagoa, corruption in Maiduguri, corruption in Lagos.
- There is no major ethnic group in Nigeria that has not produced a political leader at some level of government in this country. Which suggests that what we are suffering today has nothing to do with the village the person comes from or the God that he worships. It has everything to do with the quality of his policy prescription and his commitment to executing them.
- If we are able to invest in all these aspects of integration, then that dream that eluded the generation of Chinua Achebe will become realizable in ours.

HARMONIZATION OF ISSUES



Mr. Chidi Odinkalu
Open Society Foundation

Every part of the country has its own fair supply of stupidity; no part of the country has a monopoly on wisdom and expertise.

Chidi Odinkalu stressed that it is important to identify a set of common values around which citizens will cohere and drive messages around national cohesion.

He noted that critical issues emerged from earlier discussions, the most important being safety and security. He stated the importance of creating an opportunity for elected government representatives in 2019 to feel a sense of responsibility to bring the nation together. He also emphasised the issue of livelihood and environment - how can citizens communicate their intentions?

Mr. Odinkalu identified six themes to enhance national cohesion:

- Promoting tolerance
- Encouraging inclusion
- Enhancing co-existence
- De-escalating tension
- Promoting productivity
- Fostering responsible leadership

He stated that to effectively find solutions to our lack of cohesion in Nigeria, we must:

- Address the issue of negative narratives and stereotypes.
- Foster good investment in education.
- Share synergies in communications.
- Recruit supporters and make them understand that we have different identities – gender, ethnic, status, language – all of which must coexist.
- Recruit interlocutors from government, private and public institutions, media, voluntary sector, communities, interfaith and the family.

In conclusion, he urged members of civil society organizations to learn from politicians - not their content, but their process - be inclusive, hardworking, have foresight and plan into the future.



CLOSING DINNER: EVENING OF SATIRE

The conference ended with a closing dinner featuring a comedy performance by Frank D Don and spoken word poetry, *Society's Victim*, by Atilola Moronfolu.

Society's Victim tells the story of an empowered average young woman in Africa, her struggles and how she attempts to use obstacles as stepping stones, including efforts to please society. In the end, she wonders if she should simply give up and succumb to society's expectations of her.



TACT THE ARTS AND
CIVICS TABLE
ORGANISATION



NOVEMBER 13-14, 2018

CITIZENSHIP, DEMOCRACY AND THE CULTURE OF TRANSACTIONAL POLITICS IN NIGERIA

2019 ELECTIONS: COUNTERING DIVISIVE BEHAVIOUR

Welcome

Mr. Amara Nwankpa

Director, Public Policy Initiative
Shehu Musa Yar'Adua Foundation

Political groups have employed social media influencers to advance their spiteful narratives. These actions must be countered if we are to prevent them from doing irreparable damage to our national cohesion.



Amara Nwankpa stated that the coming elections represent a potential flashpoint for violence across many parts of Nigeria, fueled by illicit cashflows and rampant divisive behavior. He mentioned that Nigerians are already witnessing disturbing indications that politicians will seek to mobilize ethno-religious sentiment in their bid to win or retain power.

He highlighted that the session was designed to improve our understanding of hate speech, divisive narratives and drivers of tension in Nigeria, identify current and potential hotspots for violence in Nigeria in the lead up to the 2019 elections, explore practical tools, methodologies and institutional processes for managing incidents of divisive conduct and violence around the 2019 elections and proffer solutions to peacebuilding and conflict management in Nigeria.

He hoped conference deliberations would result in the emergence a network of influencers and collaborators working across the country to counter divisive conduct and foster national cohesion.





Mr. Innocent Chukwuma
Director, Ford Foundation

Remarks

Divisive behaviour and narratives have become pervasive and we must pay attention to them if we want to prevent Nigeria from conflagrating.

Innocent Chukwuma revealed that divisive behaviour increases during election periods because politicians, political parties and their allies often resort to divisive messages when they realize they are losing out. He suggested that the drivers of negative narratives are going beyond national boundaries, adding that there are foreign countries and interest groups exploiting the fault lines in pluralist societies in order to achieve their goals. He concluded his remarks by urging participants to:

- Use available tools on social media to verify messages and video content before sharing them with social networks.
- Not give in to the default mode of believing the worst about those among us. Nigerians are good people.
- Collectively pressure politicians to clearly state how they intend to improve the health, education and infrastructure sectors of the country.



Lead Speakers



Mr. Y. Z. Yau
CITAD

Monitoring Hate Speech

Until we learn not to speak hate, we have to live with the threat that hate speech could spark violence.

Y. Z. Yau defined hate speech as an act that denigrates people on the basis of their gender or membership in an ethnic or religious group. He indicated that inflammatory speech can come in three forms: dangerous speech, hate speech or offensive speech and emphasized the importance of monitoring hate speech in order to design counter messages to neutralize it.

He suggested that we can preempt the consequences of hate speech and eliminate or reduce the potential of dangerous speech to catalyze violence by either neutralizing or countering it in the communication realm. In order to be effective, we need to monitor hate speech circulating through Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, blogs and online newspapers. He stated that countering hate speech is different from peace campaigns as it addresses specific communication problems that have the potential to lead to violence.

Mr. Yau attributed the drivers of hate speech to a perception of injustice and marginalization narratives, unresolved conflicts and politics. He suggested that we can pre-empt violence by informing key stakeholders which include:

- Community leaders
- Security and law enforcement agencies
- Individuals who have influence
- Traditional and social media

He concluded by suggesting the following ways to counter hate speech:

- Neutralize the messages of dangerous speech.
- Persuade the speaker to retract and possibly apologize.
- Ensure people do not act on the basis of hate speech.





Mapping Hotspots

The conduct and integrity of elections are crucial to the democratic process that any perceived or real threat to elections is often interpreted as a grave danger to the survival and sustenance of democracy.

Mr. Benson Olugbuo

Executive Director
CLEEN Foundation

Mr. Olugbuo presented an historical background of Nigerian elections since 1999, characterized by ineffective administration, irregularities and violence resulting in discredited or contested outcomes. He shared examples from an election threat assessment conducted in 12

states (Abia, Adamawa, Akwa Ibom, Benue, Borno, Ekiti, Imo, Kaduna, Osun, Plateau, Rivers and Zamfara) to explore the security environment in the run-up to the 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

He attributed potential causes of electoral violence to hate speech, drug abuse and partiality of security agents. He however acknowledged notable progress in the conduct of elections and commended INEC for embarking on policy, planning, training, and programmatic initiatives to ensure the successful conduct of forthcoming elections.

Mr. Olugbuo concluded his presentation with the following suggestions:

- As the 2019 elections approach, it is important that every stakeholder involved in Election Security Management understands their roles and responsibilities and interfaces with the police and other security agencies involved in election duties.
- There is need for effective media monitoring - print, broadcast and social media platforms - to ensure balanced, responsible and ethically sensitive reporting and sharing of information to avoid the instigation of violence before, during and after elections. Particular attention should be paid to ensuring impartial regulation of social media to tackle inflammatory rhetoric, hate speech, disinformation and misinformation that can trigger electoral violence.
- Government must embark on effective job creation to reduce numbers of unemployed youth who out of frustration have engaged in drug trafficking and consumption. This will reduce idleness and poverty that contributes to youth vulnerability, drug abuse and political thuggery that can mar prospects for peaceful elections.
- Security agencies should engage in a multi-agency mapping exercise to discreetly identify hotspots of drug abuse as well as networks, routes and actors that sustain drug trafficking and smuggling in each zone/state.
- Major stakeholders (government, political parties, media, and civil society organisations) must escalate and sustain enlightenment programmes through town hall meetings, radio, television and social media platforms regarding the dangers of youth involvement in cultism, thuggery and consumption of hard-drugs to mitigate their consequences for the elections.

PANEL DISCUSSION: TRACKING DIVISIVE BEHAVIOUR

Discussants proposed interventions to improve political participation and track divisive behaviour around the 2019 elections. Participants were urged to challenge the existing culture of corrupt practices by political parties and collectively fight against transactional politics so that the practice does not undermine democracy and prevent credible elections.



DISCUSSANTS



Planning Effective Election Observation Coverage

We must encourage participation of citizen observers to increase the scope of election reports.

Mrs. Kemi Okenyedo
Partners West-Africa



Countering Violent Extremism in Nigeria

We need to proactively promote narratives of tolerance and unity.

Mr. Ahmad Jumare
NEEM Foundation



The Role of Young People in Countering Dangerous Speech

Young people must support existing initiatives to report and counter dangerous speech on social media.

Ms. Cynthia Mbamalu, YIAGA Africa Initiative

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

LESSONS LEARNED/MOVING FORWARD

■ ■ Interfaith Networks



Ms. Saadatu Fali Hamu
Legal Practitioner



Ms. Saratu Umar Kiro
Justice, Development and Peace Commission

Short Term

- Establish a WhatsApp group.
- Form a monitoring group to track hate speech and collaborate with the social network group to share clean and clear messages that counter divisive behaviour.

Medium Term

- Dialogue with religious leaders to ensure messages do not instigate divisiveness.
- Create messages via jingles, posters and handbills that discourage hate speech and electoral violence.



Professional Networks



Hon. Ngunan Addingi

Member, Benue State House of Assembly



Mr. Abdulkareem Tijani

Socio Economic Research and Development Centre (SERDEC)

- Form WhatsApp group and create professional network Facebook account.
- Use platforms to inform people how to verify information before sharing.
- Leverage the group to stay informed about issues in other zones.
- Develop infographic messages to create awareness on the danger of hate speech.
- Ensure consistent messaging to influencers regarding peaceful election participation.
- Engage in conversations with networks that promote tolerance.
- Ensure conversations are issue-based rather than personal.
- Communicate in a simple, clear manner for easy comprehension.
- Meet with members of groups indicating divisive tendencies.



Social Networks



Ms. Sandra Ezekwesili
Cool FM, Port Harcourt

- Formed a WhatsApp group.
- Established #friendsacrossnigeria twitter hashtag to retweet and share messages.
- Will collaborate with social network influencers (i.e. Rant HQ, Igbo talk) for wider reach.
- Will build capacity of group administrators to identify hate speech.

MONEY AND THE 2019 ELECTIONS

Welcome



Mallam Murtala Yar'Adua

Treasurer, Board of Trustees
Shehu Musa Yar'Adua Foundation

The theme for the conference is apt because money politics has become the norm in our political landscape.

Mallam Murtala Yar'Adua expressed delight at the turn out of stakeholders and influencers as it indicated that Nigerians are willing to join forces in fighting the nature of transactional politics.

He suggested that Nigeria has a long way to go in achieving the desired transformation and thanked the Ford Foundation and Trust Africa for supporting this initiative to strategize on practical ways of curbing the culture of transactional politics in Nigeria.

He concluded his remarks with the hope that the conference would show how corrupt practices affect Nigerians and produce recommendations that will channel Nigeria towards the path of quality development while addressing issues that seek to divide us and undermine the peace and stability of Nigeria.

Remarks



Dr. Kole Shettima

Director
MacArthur Foundation

Unless the corrupt political system that exists in all spheres is addressed, there is little that can be done to install transparent and accountable candidates in governance.

Dr. Kole Shettima began his remarks by sharing stories demonstrating that political appointments in Nigeria are not based on merit. He observed that between 1999-2015, women's participation in politics declined due to its expensive nature. He suggested that the corrupt political system makes it difficult for people of good character to participate in politics.

Dr. Shettima however stated that the MacArthur Foundation is committed to developing a culture of transparency and accountability in Nigeria which forms the basis for their partnership with Open Society Foundation and Ford Foundation, to support organizations in Africa that are addressing related issues.

Opening Address

Political Campaign Finance Reform in Nigeria

Professor Antonia Okoosi-Simbine described democracy as a system of government in which power is vested in the people who rule through freely elected representatives. She however stated that without the effective participation of citizens in the process of electing leaders, there can be no democracy.

Professor Antonia suggested there are clear indications of politicians engaging in transactional politics and therefore not working for the public good. She agreed that the conference was timely because elections conducted in Anambra, Ekiti and Osun states have raised growing concern about vote buying and selling. She thanked the Foundation for providing the opportunity for a systematic open discussion towards seeking ways to curtail the negative trends of transactional politics as we advance towards the 2019 general elections.

Professor Antonia hoped the conference would recommend solutions to decrease the growing trend of transactional politics and highlight strategies to curtail the open use of money to distort the freedom of citizens choice of candidate. She assured the audience that INEC has remained focused and committed to providing a conducive environment for the administration of free, fair and credible elections, including the establishment of a transparent and credible schedule of activities.

She emphasized that INEC will continue to evolve measures to address the negative trend of vote buying and selling which has become the most visible example of transactional politics in recent times. She recalled the Commission's deliberate efforts during the last governorship election to ensure that voters were provided additional secrecy while casting their votes and denied the opportunity to showcase their votes towards the conclusion of a vote buying transaction.

She announced that the Commission was in the process of publishing the particulars of candidates and assured the audience that the Commission intends to monitor the campaign finance expenditure of candidates and political parties, which will be made public.

She was emphatic that the Commission remains committed to evolving innovative strategies to further strengthen the secrecy of the ballot and curtail or eliminate opportunities for those who choose to engage in dubious activities. She concluded by appealing to CSOs working in the areas of elections and governance to continue to sensitize the electorate about the down side of transactional politics, especially its long-term effect on the political, social and economic development of the nation.



Professor Antonia Okoosi-Simbine
Acting Chairman, INEC

Transactional politics erodes participation and undermines the principles of democracy.

Guest Speaker



Professor Benjamin Page
Northwestern University, Chicago

I believe in majoritarian democracy in which every citizen has an equal voice in making public policy. Because the essence of democracy is political equality.

Professor Page expressed delight at the opportunity accorded him to address the conference. He confessed that he has been interested in Nigeria for many years but that he is still a beginner when it comes to the complexities of Nigerian politics. He made reference to data analysis of surveys regarding the general nature of public opinion and highlighted the following:

- Citizens make sensible distinctions among policy alternatives.
- Collective policy preferences are generally stable over time. They do not often vacillate or change abruptly.
- Collective policy preferences do change, and these changes generally reflect new events or new information in reasonable ways.
- Collective policy preferences are generally consistent with each other - not confused or mutually contradictory.
- Public opinion is coherent. Collective belief systems have structure and make sense.



Professor Page revealed that his research has taught him that majoritarian democracy is extremely difficult to achieve. At this moment in history, he said he is not sure that any country in the world comes very close to achieving political equality. In the United States, for example, he has studied hundreds of cases of federal government foreign and domestic policy making and has compared what policies the majority of Americans want with what policies they actually get. It turns out that the two are not very closely related. In fact, when 90% of Americans favor a particular change in policy, they only get that policy change about 40% of the time. Large majorities often lose out. This cannot be called majoritarian democracy.

He commended INEC and stakeholders for putting in place some of the fundamental foundations for a representative democracy. He advised that many further steps may be needed in order to achieve full, majoritarian democracy as different institutions, processes, laws and practices affect whether or not all citizens have equal voices in politics. He attributed the reasons for vote buying to lack of economic development, unusually high salaries of certain public officials and the existence of large oil revenues that might be used for corrupt purposes.

Professor Page concluded his presentation by recommending the following:

- A fully independent, honest, and effective judicial system.
- Political equality which involves protection of political liberties, especially freedom of speech, association and action. These liberties are necessary for each citizen to have an equal chance to express opinions and influence public policy. It would be helpful if these liberties are clearly spelled out in the constitution and enforced by a fully independent judicial system.
- Policies favored by the citizenry must be carried out, not forgotten by officials or subverted by arbitrary actions or bribery.
- Democratic reforms that make parties and candidates more responsive to the voters are required.
- A more radical reform that might be worth considering in Nigeria is some form of proportional representation.



PANEL DISCUSSION: POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

The panel brought together thought leaders and experts to explore the nature of transactional politics and its effects on participatory democracy. Discussion focused on political processes, vote-buying and the connection between transactional politics and poor governance in Nigeria. The session concluded with suggested solutions to combat the dominant culture and reduce public sector corruption in Nigeria.



DISCUSSANTS



Ms. Ayisha Osori
Executive Director
Open Society Initiative for
West Africa

Choreographed Political Processes: Ignored Citizenry

The systems and political structures in Nigeria have not changed. They are designed to be exploitative and extractive.

Ms. Ayisha Osori stated in clear terms that politics in Nigeria is stage managed. She explained that choreographed political processes began with the idea of nationhood and who should be involved. A neo-colonial, predatory and exploitative state determined the actors and the process and this has impacted politics and governance, political party cultures and structures, primaries and elections and back to governance.

She recalled a 2004 World Bank study which explained that only 1% of our population benefits from 80% of our oil revenue while we have millions who will never leave poverty. She explained that the Nigerian government spends over 100% on recurrent expenditure and obligatory spending and borrows money to fund itself.

Ms. Osori expressed her concern about the proliferation of Nigerian government agencies which she described as symptomatic of an extractive government and unproductive economy making government the biggest employer of labor. She further suggested that the exploitative nature of National Assembly members has been in existence for a long time and recalled that the first action legislators took in 1979 when they were voted into power was to increase their salaries.

Ms. Osori concluded by recommending the following:

- Organize ourselves to build numbers around our values. The 16 million unemployed citizens, mostly rural and urban youth, should question existing political structures, express outrage at how much those in government earn and challenge the fixed narratives of who votes.
- Disrupt the two-party system and give new candidates a chance.
- Focus on important issues and use demographics to enforce debates and make representation more inclusive.
- Find opportunities for nation-building. CSOs must build national cohesion along lines different from ethnicity and religion and ensure electoral reform. Women voters in the US have been the majority since 1980 and they have forced incremental change and number over 100 in Congress in 2019.
- Build long term mental and emotional stamina.
- Government should deepen efforts at political inclusivity in terms of fair representation of gender, religion, age and locality.





Honourable Chudi Offodile
Author and Political Commentator

Primary Elections: Changing the Way We Choose Candidates

The Electoral Act regulates the conduct of direct and indirect political primaries. Unfortunately, the process is corrupt.

Honourable Chudi expressed sadness over the large population of unemployed youth in Nigeria. He stated that the more unemployed people in society, the less possibility of creating the kind of system we seek.

He provided an overview of the history of political parties and their selection processes and suggested that during the Ibrahim Babangida era, SDP and the NRC had a better party system and candidate selection process compared to current political party modes of operation. He cited 1979 when governorship candidates in the UPN were successfully selected without primaries and opined that parties should have the right to determine their mode of selection during primaries.

He stated that the 1999 amended Constitution gave the National Assembly the power to regulate the conduct of political parties and that Section 87 of the Electoral Act establishes the processes that must be followed. It also provides for the right of a candidate to contest decisions in court; something that unfortunately has resulted in total confusion, even at the Supreme Court.

Honourable Chudi closed by saying that political parties should have the absolute power to select the candidate best suited to represent their parties. He stated that the courts should continue to have the power to judge whether internal rules of selection processes of a party are adhered to.





Professor Jibrin Ibrahim
Senior Fellow, Centre for
Democracy and Development

Transactional Politics: Vote Buying, Clientelism

It is really important that in our civic education we focus on people understanding the dangers of vote buying.

Professor Jibrin defined transactional leadership as a form of trading where members of the political class exchange gifts and, in that process, the purpose of good governance gets defeated. He emphasized that transactional politics undermines the most important principle in a democratic system - the popularity principle. He stated that the basis of democracy is that people present themselves to citizens and citizens select the most popular choice. But due to transactional politics, the choices offered to citizens do not emerge on the basis of the popularity principle because candidates who might be popular are eliminated from primaries.

Professor Jibrin opined that vote buying is reflective of our democracy in Nigeria. He explained it reveals that citizens are beginning to count in the electoral process because conclusions from numerous court decisions are that money spent during elections usually goes to godfathers, security agencies and thugs.

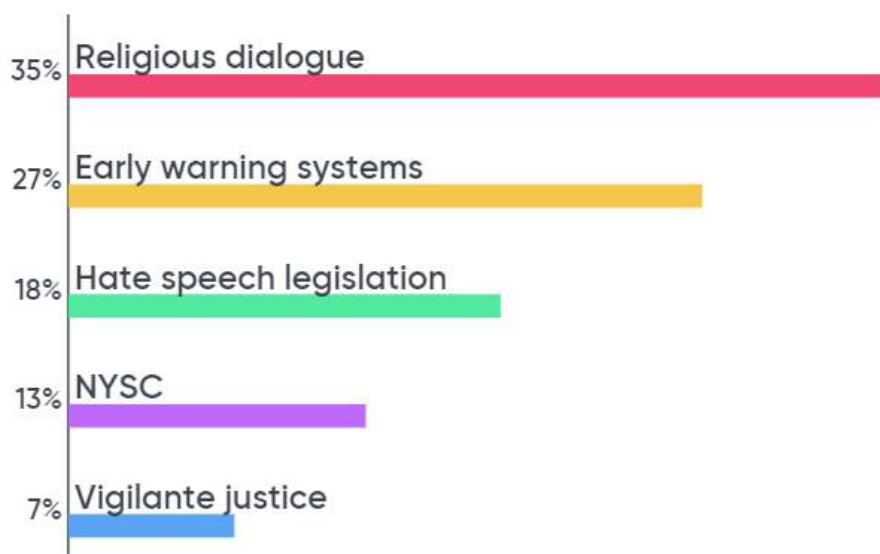
He narrated that politicians are now giving money to voters directly which means there is a qualitative improvement in the electoral process and citizens are beginning to matter. He stated however, that when money is offered, the receiver de-legitimizes his or her own vote which prevents citizens from demanding good governance. He further explained that the strategy of clientelizing the voter means the voter becomes the client and obeys the orders of the political elite. He concluded by suggesting that civic and voter education, with a focus on people understanding the dangers of vote buying, should be prioritized.



MENTIMETER SURVEYS

How would you rank the following interventions to counter divisive conduct in Nigeria?

71



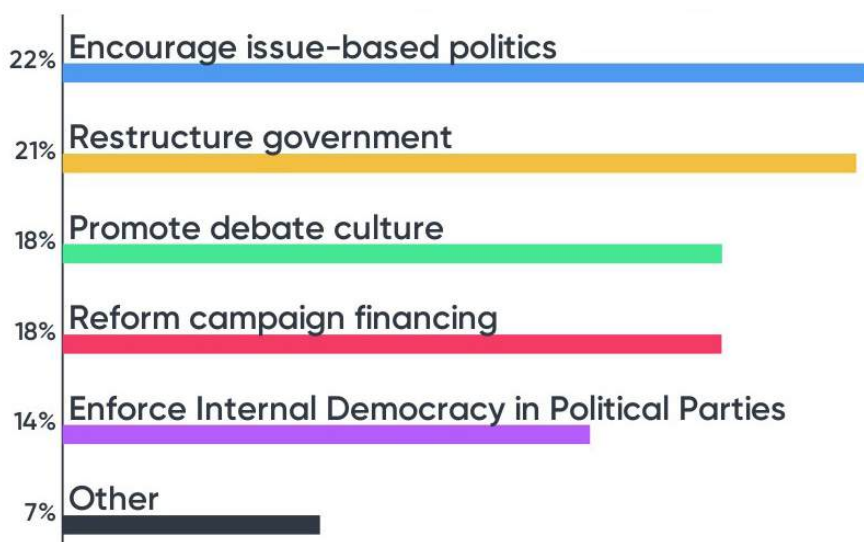
How much does the culture of transactional politics contribute to the following?

99



How would you prioritize solutions to transforming the culture of politics in Nigeria?

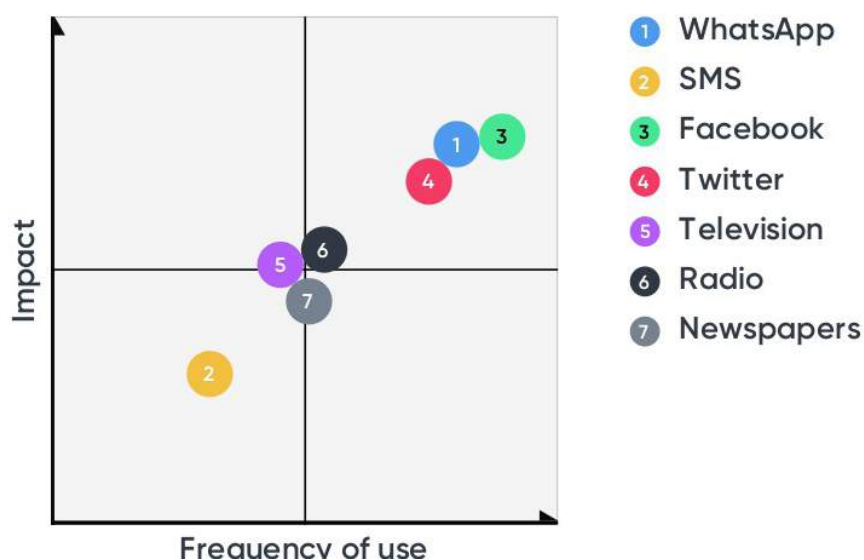
98



 73



69



 102



SOCIAL MEDIA INTERACTION

#FriendsAcrossNigeria

Participants took to social media to share evidence of their commitment to work across ethnic lines to promote peace and unity in Nigeria.



MOCK PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE: THE LEADERS WE DESERVE?

A mock presidential debate performance by Arojah Theatre lampooned the anti-debate political culture of presidential aspirants in Nigeria. Moderated by Ms. Kadaria Ahmed, Daria Media, the debate made the argument that candidates and political parties must win votes based on the strength of their agenda and not the depth of their pockets. The debate ended with a message that a candidate's religious or ethnic background should not be the basis for election. Neither should the electorate consent to selling their votes, no matter how enticing the offer may be.



PERFORMANCE



Age Beeka, Artist
We Must See a New Nigeria



Deji Ige, Poet
One Nigeria



Ms. Efe Oraka, Guitarist
Nigerian Dream



Mr. Chinedu Nwagu
Project Director, Trust Africa

Closing Remarks

There is need to take our conversations beyond the choices offered us.

Chinedu Nwagu highlighted points made by speakers and commended them for providing insights to the dangers of vote buying and for suggesting strategies to combat the nature of transactional politics in Nigeria. He revealed that he has observed elections in parts of Nigeria and Uganda and that experience has taught him that although elections might be a game of numbers, the game is played by the rules of narratives and those narratives are framed around choices.

He urged participants to continue to push for democracy and hoped that part of our progress towards credible elections would be that Nigerians are free to choose whoever they like and not given limited options of candidates.

CONCLUSION

Factors driving ethnic and religious strife in Nigeria are human constructions. Poor leadership and decades of corruption have resulted in inequality and deep anger within many communities, resulting in restiveness and violence. It follows that with deliberate and consistent collective action, Nigeria can be transformed to a more peaceful, inclusive and equitable society for all its citizens.

Countering divisive behaviour will require brave reforms in current governance structures to empower leaders as they

resolve escalating conflicts at the community level - most often the entry point of conflict or its escalation. Responsible and responsive governance is required at all levels to restore people's confidence in the Nigeria project. Nigerians must recognize that countering divisive behaviour and working towards a peaceful nation is a collective responsibility. We must agree to accommodate our core differences while taking ownership of our destiny as a great nation. We must continue to challenge the culture of corruption practiced by government institutions and

It is our duty to make our politicians understand that we cannot fall for this dummy - that because we speak the same language, we should vote for them.

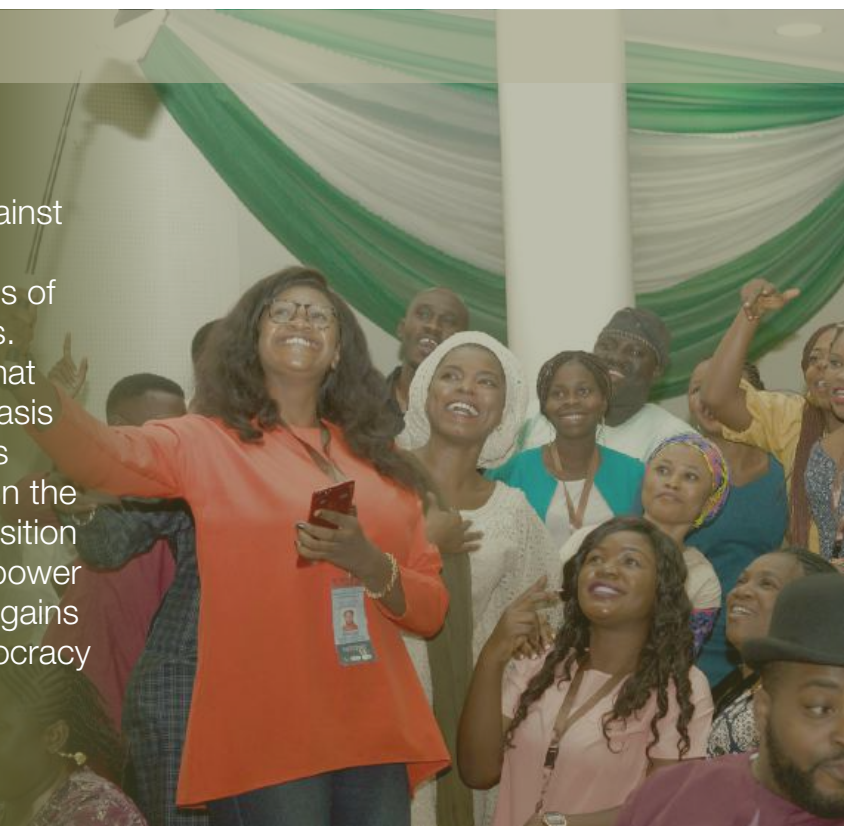
Judo Ilo expressed concern regarding the dangers of hate speech in the forthcoming 2019 elections and emphasized the need to develop effective means to counter it. He urged participants to first see themselves as Nigerians before anything else and shun divisive behaviour from politicians ahead of the elections. He also stated that there is need to inform the public to vote for candidates based on the strength of their agenda and not ethnicity or religion as it undermines democracy.

He empathized with young people who have the most onerous task of changing the narratives of Nigeria and said they should embrace that responsibility. He concluded by stating that a new Nigeria is possible with a different mindset of young people, dedication and consistency.



Mr. Udo Jude Ilo
Country Officer and Head of
Nigeria Office, OSIWA

political parties and collectively fight against transactional politics to ensure that the practice does not undermine the desires of citizens by preventing credible elections. Similarly, we should remind ourselves that religion and ethnicity must not be the basis of our choice of candidates. Nigeria has made great strides toward democracy in the relatively short time since the 1999 transition to civilian rule and peaceful transfer of power in 2015. It is possible to build on these gains to make further progress towards democracy in 2019.



COMMUNIQUE

There was unanimous agreement that diversity is not and should not be the basis of Nigeria's division. Diversity becomes a challenge when it is not managed constructively.

There was also a consensus that managing diversity is a multi-sectoral and multi-agency responsibility. Therefore, any genuine effort at cohesion and nation-building must include all Nigerians, various tiers of government, the private sector, faith and traditional institutions as well as media, academia and civil society.

OBSERVATIONS

- The legitimacy of the modern state is linked to its capacity to provide public goods and serve as a neutral arbiter that guarantees the security of all sections of society.
- Responsible government and good governance are pre-conditions for national cohesion.
- When the state is perceived as serving the interests of one or a few groups, it begins to lose legitimacy and authority. Consequently, the fear of the other rises and people resort to alternate levels of solidarity – religious, ethnic and sectional – in search of security.
- Poor leadership and decades of corruption have resulted in inequality and deep anger within many communities in Nigeria, resulting in restiveness and violence.
- Internal conflicts have spread to a large number of communities across Nigeria – resulting in the loss of tens of thousands of lives and further deepening the animosity and hostility between religious and ethnic groups.
- In recent years, politicians and radical extremists have exploited these vulnerabilities – spreading divisive messages, stoking hatred and causing irreparable damage to our national cohesion.
- Social media has become the primary tool of choice for actors driving divisive narratives. Sectional and political groups have employed influencers to advance their spiteful narratives – resulting in toxic and dangerous conversations both online and offline.
- Group identities only become drivers of conflict when mobilized for individual, sectional or political gain.
- Group identities - including national, ethnic and religious – are a result of nurture rather than nature and with good leadership can foster a Nigerian identity founded on common values of respect for human life, equity and inclusiveness.
- Internal migration contributes to building national cohesion. Nigerians of various origins are equal stakeholders in all our communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made regarding roles and responsibilities of government, political parties, the media, civil society and citizens:

Government

- Government must take concrete and committed steps to restore public confidence in its capacity to mitigate conflict, rebuild public institutions and guarantee equal protection of the lives of all Nigerians.
- As required by the constitution, government must develop and deploy strategies and narratives to promote dialogue for national cohesion. Public agencies such as the National Orientation Agency, established for this purpose, must re-direct public enlightenment and engagement using narratives that unite.
- Civic education, based on ethical values of mutual love, trust, tolerance, and respect for people, should be integrated into the curricula at all levels of education in the country.
- Government's investment in public goods, including education, public health, jobs and productivity must provide sustainable livelihoods in order to reduce tensions from competition over scarce resources.
- Government must ensure the effective application of the Electoral Act and other relevant laws against divisive conduct by political actors.
- Leadership at all levels should promote national cohesion by demonstrating shared values of mutual respect, tolerance, patriotism, hard work, creativity, integrity and peace.
- Government should take all practical steps, including legislation, to eliminate the use

of indigeneship as the primary means for establishing the geographic origin of citizens applying for employment, political appointments, land rights or accessing other government privileges and services.

Political Parties

- Political parties and actors have a duty to sanitise political competition and eliminate the use of emotive religious, ethnic or hate speech to further their objectives.
- Political parties should provide meaningful opportunities for under-represented groups to participate in politics – including women, youth and vulnerable people.
- Political parties should adopt and institutionalize internal democracy and meritocracy.
- Political parties should significantly reduce financial and procedural hurdles that prevent average citizens from participating in political contests.

Media

- The media should ensure compliance with their code of ethics in reporting contentious issues and avoid being used as instruments of mobilization along ethnic and religious lines.
- To guard against the impact of fake news and libellous reports, the media should utilise standard professional processes for verification and factual reporting.
- Traditional and social media actors should create and disseminate content and stories

RECOMMENDATIONS Cont'd

that promote national cohesion – including testimonies that counter and dislodge offensive stereotypes.

- Citizen journalists should promote cohesion and imbibe the culture of sharing only information that is verifiable.

Private Sector and Professional Associations

- Corporate organizations and professional associations should finance and promote the articulation of narratives and activities that encourage tolerance, understanding and cohesion.

Faith Based Organizations

- Religious leaders must teach their followers to approach religion and faith as a mission to build communities rather than tear them down.
- Faith based platforms should self-regulate the content and conduct of their membership as a means of encouraging tolerance and dialogue across diverse faiths.

Civil Society

- Members of civil society should use their social capital in communities to promote inclusive narratives that foster a shared national purpose.
- Civil society must facilitate the collective development of issue-based counter narratives to underscore the benefits of eliminating social divides that inflame hate, ethnic, religious or political tensions.
- CSOs should endeavour to identify, recognize and celebrate individuals from different ethnicities exhibiting unifying conduct and vision.

- CSOs should create awareness regarding the dangers associated with hate speech in order to drive positive behavioural change.

- CSOs should create and utilise existing safe spaces to foster honest and constructive dialogue on solutions to the challenges facing Nigeria's unity.

- CSOs should develop, deploy and ensure compliance with standards and ethics for citizen media engagement and citizen journalism.

All Nigerians

- Nigerian citizens, irrespective of ethnic identity or religious and political affiliations, should support collective efforts to address division.
- Nigerians should desist from uttering hate speech and spreading negative narratives.
- Citizens on social media should be cautious about sharing information that might inflame or aggravate tensions and take steps to verify sensitive news before sharing with their networks.
- Citizens should challenge and counter political or radical extremists who try to mobilize ethnic and religious division using social or traditional media.
- Nigerians should reinforce positive narratives about each other through inter-faith and inter-cultural relations or activities.
- Citizens have a duty to participate in civic processes, especially elections, and support candidates based on character, qualifications and position on issues rather than ethnic identity or religious affiliation.





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SMYFoundation



YouTube