



THE ABUJA
SCHOOL

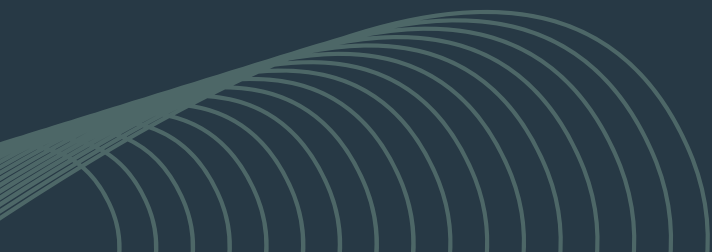
THE 2024 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE ABUJA SCHOOL OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL THOUGHT

Beyond Orthodoxy:
Igniting dialogue, Inspiring change



TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	2
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
INTRODUCTION	5
KEY INITIATIVES	6
RESEARCH AND PUBLICATION	7
WEST AFRICA DEMOCRACY HUB	7
DEEPENING DEMOCRACY SERIES (DDS)	8
POLICY DIALOGUES	9
OTHER DEVELOPMENTS	23
ACHIEVEMENTS AND FUTURE OUTLOOK	24



LIST OF KEY FIGURES

FIGURE 1 KEY INITIATIVES TAS	6
FIGURE 2 PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM VS PRESIDENTIAL SYSTEM	10
FIGURE 3 CHALLENGES OF COUNTER TERRORISM IN WEST AFRICA	13
FIGURE 4 HINDERS OF DEMOCRACY IN WEST AFRICA	15
FIGURE 5 ECOWAS STANDBY FORCE	17
FIGURE 6 FAIR MINIMUM WAGE IN NIGERIA	19
FIGURE 7 PROPOSAL FOR ELECTORAL REFORM	21
FIGURE 8 ELECTORAL REFORM RECOMMENDATIONS.	23
FIGURE 9 STRENGTHENING ONDO ELECTION	24
FIGURE 10 SCHOOL'S GROWTH STRATEGY	25

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Abuja School of Social and Political Thought had a successful year in 2024, establishing itself as a key platform for discussions on governance, democracy, and socioeconomic development in Nigeria and West Africa. The school used a multifaceted approach that includes policy dialogues, research and publications, and capacity building interventions for policymaking and implementation, to engage policymakers, academics, civil society, and the media. One of the major activities in 2024 was the launch of a weekly newsletter designed to share critical perspectives on governance and policy issues. The newsletter attracted over 50 subscribers, including thought leaders and policymakers, however, it was paused after one quarter due to operational challenges.

The school hosted eight impactful policy dialogues in 2024 that addressed critical governance and democracy challenges in Nigeria and West Africa. For example, one dialogue examined the merits and demerits of Nigeria's current presidential system versus a parliamentary system. Participants reached a consensus that reforms to Nigeria's governance system must be grounded in a regime of strong values to build trust and promote national development. Another dialogue addressed the operationalization of the ECOWAS Standby Force. Discussions highlighted the need for standardized training across member states, effective coordination with the African Union, and strategic collaboration to enhance the force's capacity to address emerging threats.

In June, the school inaugurated the West Africa Democracy Hub, a bold initiative aimed at strengthening democratic processes in the region. The hub has consistently provided weekly analyses of democratic trends, challenges, and opportunities in West Africa and has garnered an average readership of 1,000 individuals per edition. The school also began its deepening democracy series in 2024, starting with policy dialogues on elections and governance in Nigeria.

The school's growing influence was evident in the 105 membership applications received via its website. This indicates an expanding community of individuals committed to promoting governance and democracy. The launch of a YouTube channel provided a new avenue for sharing the school's programs and dialogues with a wider audience, increasing accessibility and impact.

Looking ahead, the school is committed to sustaining its efforts in fostering inclusive governance, promoting electoral reforms, and enhancing democratic resilience in West Africa. One of the plans for 2025 includes reviving the newsletter publication, scaling up the West Africa Democracy Hub, and engaging in deeper partnerships with regional and international organizations. Initiatives for 2025 include the 'Social Academy', a capacity building program aimed at enhancing the knowledge of civil society groups and workers organizations on socioeconomic issues that affect human development and social stability. The Social Academy brings together leaders of the Nigerian Labour Congress and the Trade Union Congress across the labor centers in the states and leaders of human rights and other civil society organizations to share ideas and develop consensus on strategic engagement to achieve inclusive growth and social equity. In 2025, The Social Academy will pilot with two geopolitical zones in Nigeria, the Northcentral and the Southeast. A similar project for 2025 is the Southeast Human Rights Bureau which The Abuja School is working with the Rule of Law and Accountability Advocacy Center (RULAAC) to establish with protocols to track, monitor and report human rights violations in the Southeast and engage in strategic litigation and legislative advocacy against abuse of human rights and extra-judicial killings. By building on the successes of 2024, the school aims to solidify its position as a leading voice in policy advocacy and democratic development.



INTRODUCTION

In 2024, The Abuja School of Social and Political Thought continued to provide a platform for critical conversations around governance, democracy, and socio-economic development in Nigeria and West Africa. Through a combination of policy dialogues, publications, and special initiatives, the school engaged policymakers, academics, civil society, and the media to explore innovative solutions to some of the region's most pressing challenges. This report outlines our activities and milestones over the past year, providing insights into our journey and vision for the future.



KEY INITIATIVES

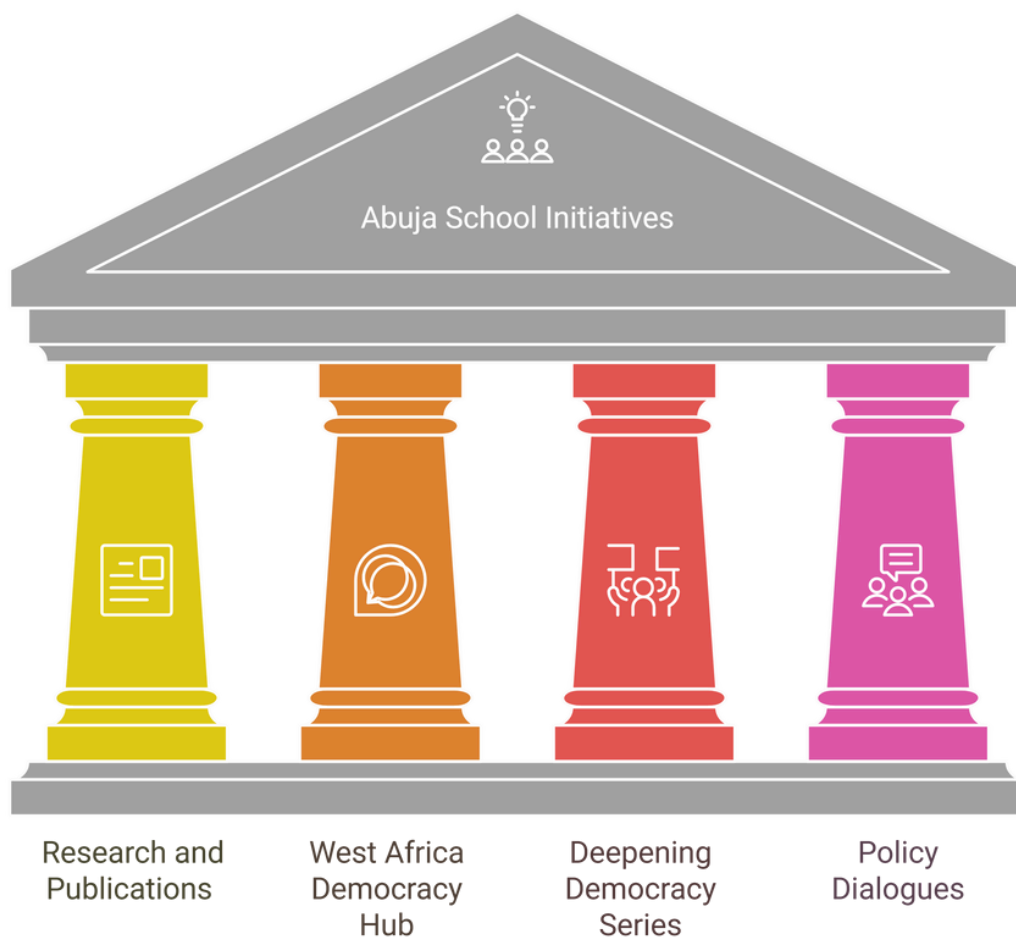


Figure 1 Key Initiatives TAS

RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS

One of the major steps in 2024 was the launch of a weekly newsletter designed to share critical perspectives on democratic governance and socioeconomic policy issues. Over three months, the school published 14 editions of the newsletter, featuring contributions from three notable Fellows: Dr. Sam Amadi, Nze Meeka, and Paul Ogwu. The newsletter attracted over 50 subscribers, including thought leaders and policymakers.

Although the publication was paused after one quarter due to operational challenges, it demonstrated the value of intellectual dialogue in shaping public discourse and highlighted the school's potential in leveraging media for public policy advocacy.

WEST AFRICA DEMOCRACY HUB

The West Africa Democracy-Observatory Hub (WAD-OH) is a project of the Abuja School of Social and Political Thoughts focused on consolidating democracy in West Africa through monitoring, reporting, and analyzing political and social activities in the countries of the region, and advocacy of responsibility, accountability, and sustainability in the region. The project arises from the extreme necessity of protecting democratic governance that is accountable and developmental in the region in the context of the growing poverty and insecurity in the region and the recent democratic backsliding. The immediate context of the project is that the recent transition of three countries into military rule suggests the weakening of the institutional support for democracy and public trust in democratic governance in those countries. It further carries grave risks for human development in the region considering the level of poverty, insecurity, and conflicts in the region.

In June, the School inaugurated the West Africa Democracy Hub, a bold initiative aimed at strengthening democratic processes in the region. The Hub's activities were twofold:

WEEKLY WEST AFRICA DEMOCRACY DIGEST

This publication, launched in June, has consistently provided a weekly analysis of democratic trends, challenges, and opportunities in West Africa. It has garnered an average readership of 1,000 individuals per edition, reflecting its relevance and reach.



POLICY DIALOGUES ON WEST AFRICA DEMOCRACY

Three dialogues were organized under this program in June, July, and September, focusing on issues critical to democratic consolidation in the region, such as governance reforms, security, and regional cooperation. These dialogues attracted leading scholars of democracy and governance and brought together scholars, practitioners and public sector policymakers in conversations that enhanced intellectual rigor of policymaking.

DEEPENING DEMOCRACY SERIES (DDS)

The Abuja School of Social and Political Thought began its deepening democracy series in 2024 with policy dialogues on elections and governance in Nigeria. The first dialogue criticized the Edo state Guber elections that was held in September 2024, it called for a free, fair and credible elections and less interference from the Judiciary ahead of the Ondo gubernatorial election. Democracy in Nigeria requires continuous nurturing and strategic intervention. The Abuja School recognizes that democratic sustainability goes beyond periodic elections and requires deep-rooted institutional transformation. Our approach focuses on comprehensive electoral reform, citizen engagement, and institutional accountability. The series aims at developing insights that will address the systemic challenges facing democratic governance and democratization in the region. As part of the project, the school held two dialogues in 2024.



POLICY DIALOGUES



FROM PARLIAMENTARY TO PRESIDENTIAL SYSTEM

On March 8, 2024, the School hosted a policy dialogue examining the merits and demerits of Nigeria's current presidential system versus a parliamentary system. Experts and stakeholders discussed the need for governance structures that prioritize accountability, inclusivity, and citizen participation. Suggestions such as the introduction of a Property Verification Number (PVN) to curb corruption and reforms to the electoral process were central to the discussions. Participants reached a consensus that reforms to Nigeria's governance system must be grounded in strong values to build trust and promote national development.

Which governance system better promotes accountability and inclusivity in Nigeria?



Presidential System

Focuses on strong executive leadership



Parliamentary System

Emphasizes collaborative decision-making

Figure 2 Parliamentary System vs Presidential System



(L-R) Cardinal John Onayekan, Dr Sam Amadi, Hon Kingsley Chinda (Honorable Member representing Obio/Akpor Federal Constituency), at the event.



APPRAISING THE SUCCESS OF COUNTER-TERRORISM MEASURES IN THE DÉFENSE OF DEMOCRACY IN WEST AFRICA.

The first WAD-OH dialogue held in June brought together experts and stakeholders to evaluate the effectiveness of existing strategies in counter-terrorism measures to protect democracy and economic and social development in West Africa and propose solutions to the rising threat of terrorism in the region. Discussions emphasized that terrorism remains a complex issue, deeply rooted in poverty, political instability, and social marginalization. Participants highlighted the inadequacy of current efforts at state, regional, and international levels, despite interventions by organizations such as the African Union and the United Nations. They stressed the urgent need to address the root causes of terrorism while focusing on its impact on livelihoods and democratic governance.

The dialogue underscored the importance of a holistic and proactive approach to counterterrorism. Recommendations included strengthening regional and international collaboration, addressing socioeconomic inequalities, and improving governance frameworks to enhance security measures. Participants called for increased investments in poverty reduction, education, and community development to weaken the appeal of terrorist groups. The need for strategic stakeholder engagement and capacity-building within security institutions was also highlighted to ensure more effective and sustainable counter-terrorism initiatives.



Analyzing Counter-Terrorism Challenges in West Africa

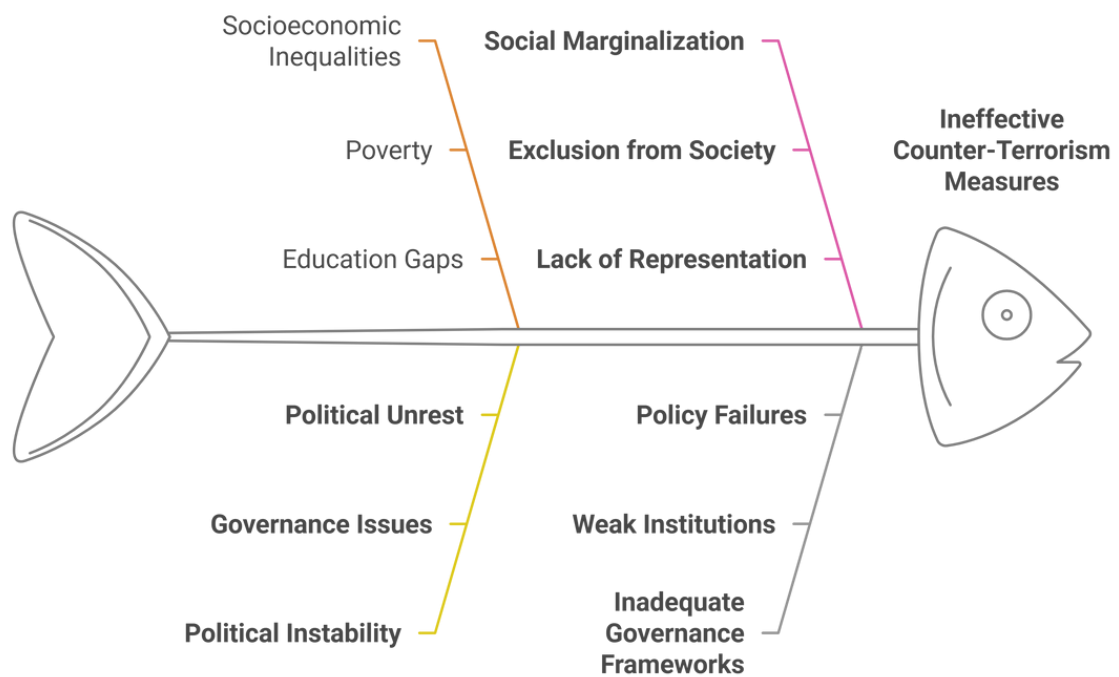


Figure 3 Challenges of Counter Terrorism in West Africa



(L-R) Director of the School, Dr Sam Amadi and Distinguished Fellow, Prof Udentia Udentia, at the policy dialogue

DEMOCRACY AND THE FUTURE OF ECOWAS (JULY)

As part of the WAD-OH, this dialogue explored ECOWAS' potential as a driver of democracy in West Africa and the challenges it faces due to Nigeria's inconsistent leadership. Participants proposed creating a West African Observatory to monitor and analyze governance trends, as well as strengthen the region's response to crises such as insecurity and economic instability. The discussions emphasized accountability, institutional reforms, and sustainability as pillars for improving democracy in the region.

Inconsistent Leadership Hinders Democracy in ECOWAS

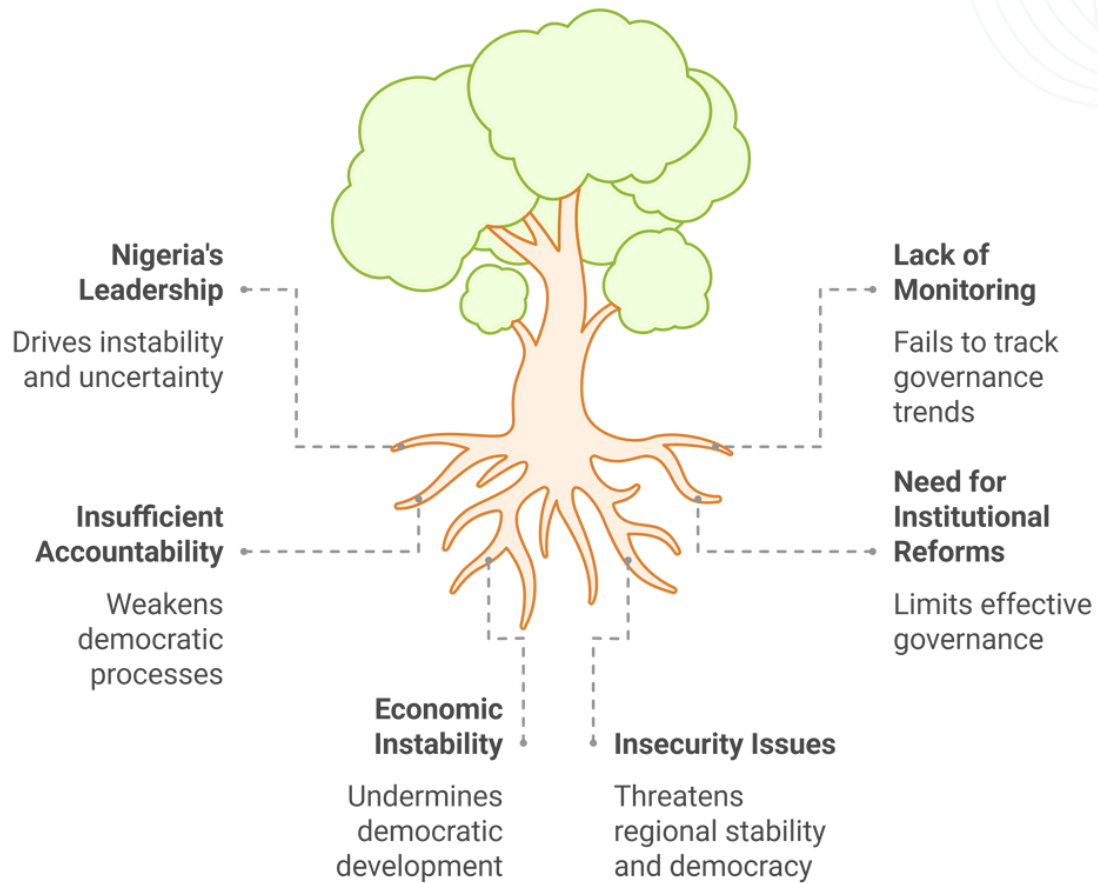


Figure 3 Challenges of Counter Terrorism in West Africa

ESTABLISHMENT OF A STANDBY FORCE IN WEST AFRICA (SEPTEMBER)

The first WAD-OH dialogue held in June brought together experts and stakeholders to evaluate the effectiveness of existing strategies in counter-terrorism measures to protect democracy and economic and social development in West Africa and propose solutions to the rising threat of terrorism in the region. Discussions emphasized that terrorism remains a complex issue, deeply rooted in poverty, political instability, and social marginalization. Participants highlighted the inadequacy of current efforts at state, regional, and international levels, despite interventions by organizations such as the African Union and the United Nations. They stressed the urgent need to address the root causes of terrorism while focusing on its impact on livelihoods and democratic governance. The dialogue underscored the importance of a holistic and proactive approach to counterterrorism.

Recommendations included strengthening regional and international collaboration, addressing socioeconomic inequalities, and improving governance frameworks to enhance security measures. Participants called for increased investments in poverty reduction, education, and community development to weaken the appeal of terrorist groups. The need for strategic stakeholder engagement and capacity-building within security institutions was also highlighted to ensure more effective and sustainable counter-terrorism initiatives.



MD, Beacon Security & Intelligence Ltd, Dr Kabiru Adamu, sharing his insight at the event.



Enhance ECOWAS Standby Force Capacity

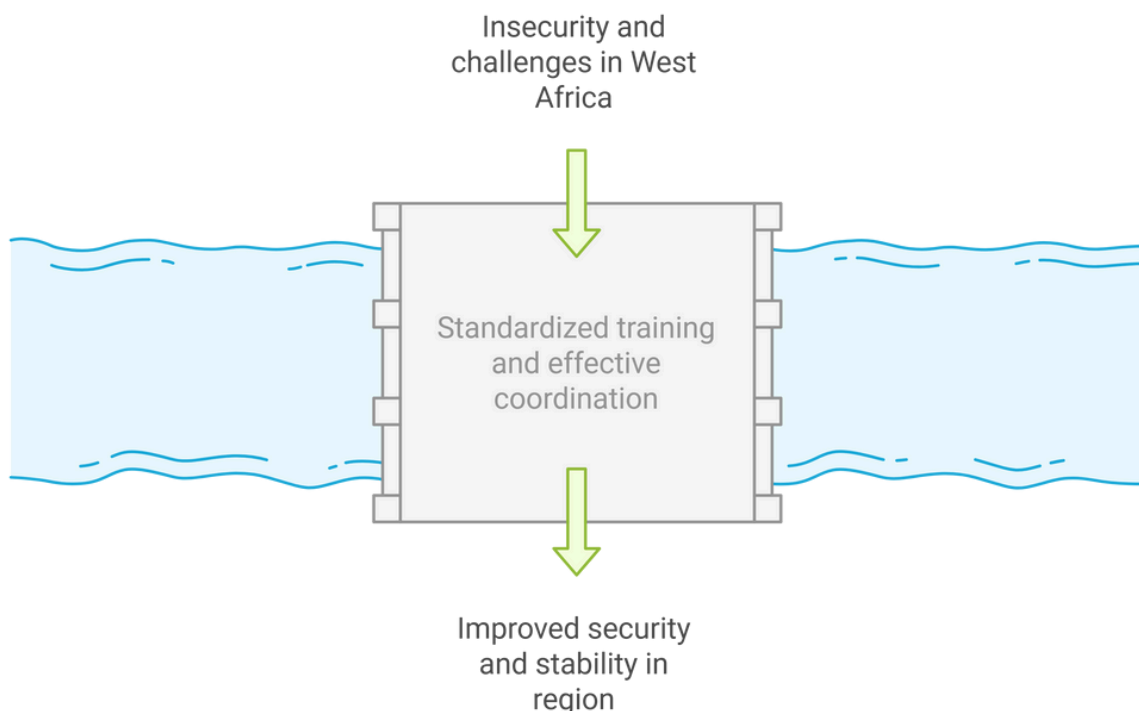


Figure 5 ECOWAS standby force

DETERMINING A FAIR MINIMUM WAGE FOR NIGERIAN WORKERS (MAY)

Recognizing the socio-economic struggles faced by Nigerian workers, and considering the minimum wage demands and subsequent strike by the leadership of organized labor under the auspices of the Nigerian Labour Congress and the Trade Union Congress (TUC), the school organized a roundtable to examine the economic and political considerations for the determination of a fair minimum wage for Nigeria. This dialogue advocated for a living wage that guarantees access to essential services such as education, healthcare, and housing. Participants emphasized the need for a holistic approach to economic policies, focusing on systemic reforms to ensure sustainable growth and equity. The roundtable resulted in a well-regarded paper on minimum wage that supported the campaign for fair living wages of Nigerian workers.



Country Representative Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Lennart Oestergaard, speaking at the event.



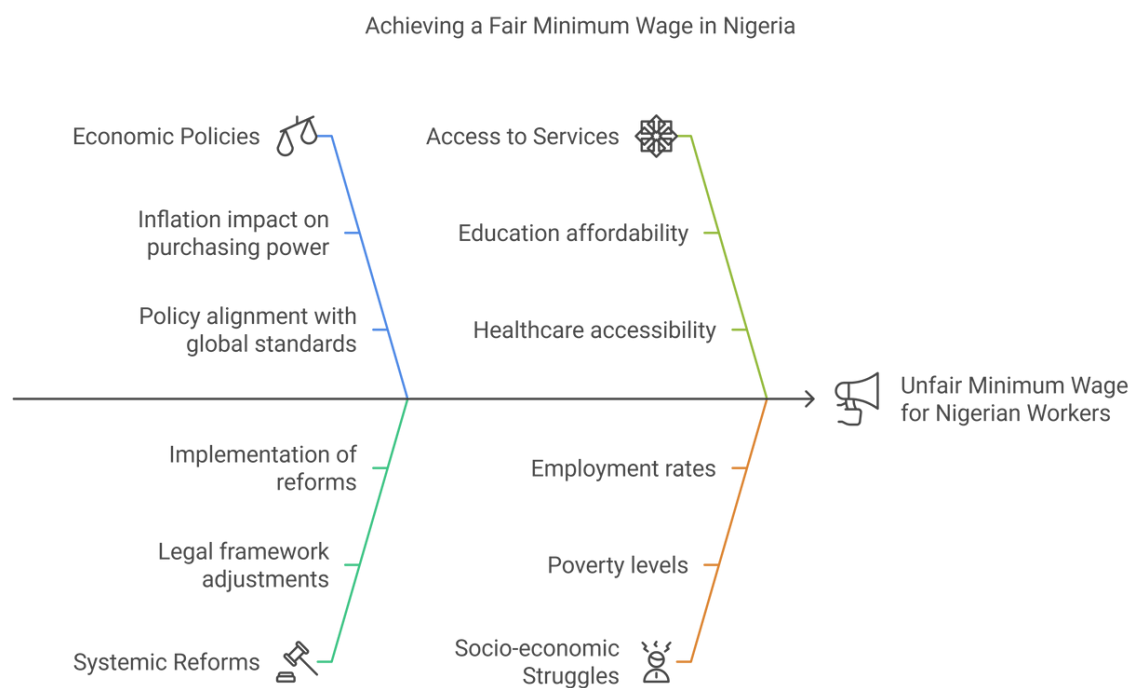


Figure 6 Fair Minimum Wage in Nigeria

NATIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR ELECTORAL REFORM (OCTOBER)

This dialogue as part of the DDS underscored the urgency of addressing systemic failures in Nigeria's electoral system. Participants proposed innovative solutions such as leveraging digital tools for advocacy, ensuring INEC's independence through transparent appointments, and implementing robust civic education campaigns.

Inclusivity for marginalized groups, particularly women and persons with disabilities, was a recurring theme in the dialogue.



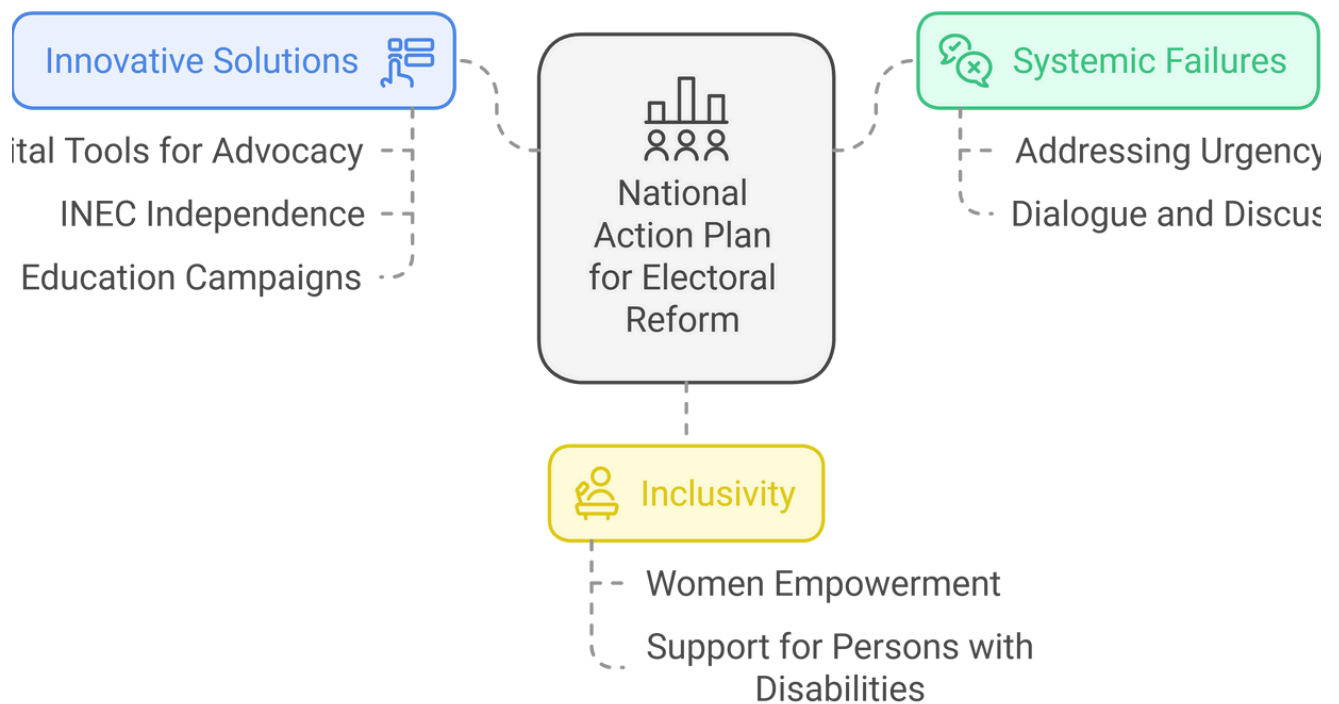


Figure 7 Proposal for Electoral Reform

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION: ELECTORAL SYSTEM RECOMMENDATIONS (NOVEMBER)

Building on earlier dialogues, this November discussion provided concrete recommendations for electoral reforms, including constitutional amendments, profiling of political actors, and enhancing transparency in electoral processes. The roundtable reaffirmed the need for a comprehensive approach to restore public trust in electoral institutions.



Former Country director, Action Aid, Ene Obi, giving her remarks at the National Action Plan for Electoral Reform event



Unveiling Electoral Reform Strategies

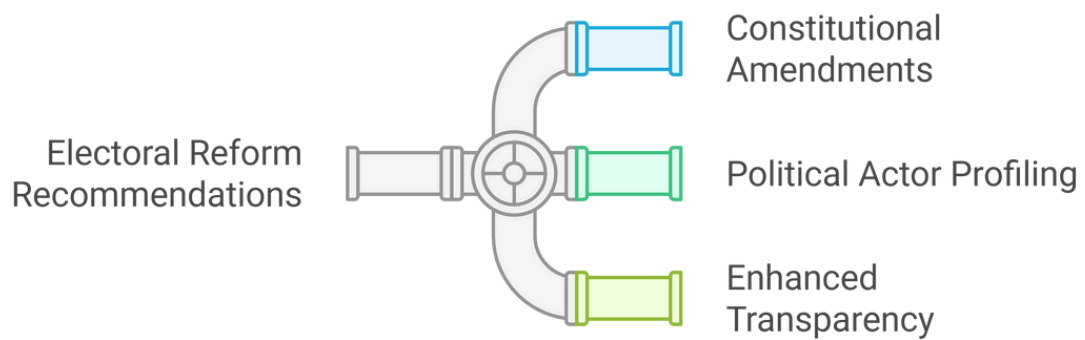


Figure 8 Electoral Reform Recommendations.

FROM EDO TO ONDO: PREVENTING ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY COLLAPSE (NOVEMBER)

The second DDS reflected on lessons from the Edo gubernatorial election, participants identified critical reforms needed to ensure credibility in future elections, particularly in off-season elections in states like Ondo State. Recommendations focused on strengthening INEC's capacity, ensuring judicial deterrence against malpractice, and enhancing voter confidence through transparent electoral processes.

Strengthening Electoral Democracy

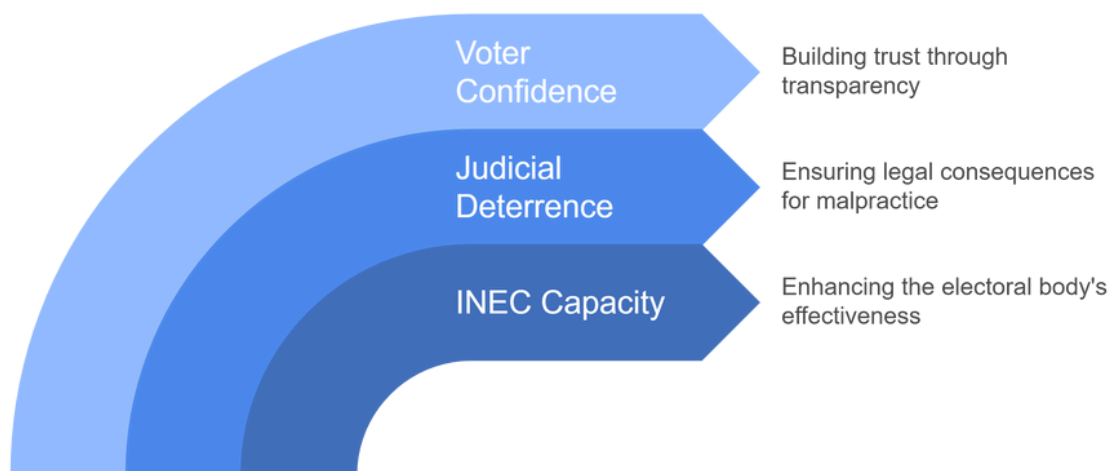


Figure 9 Strengthening Ondo Election



OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

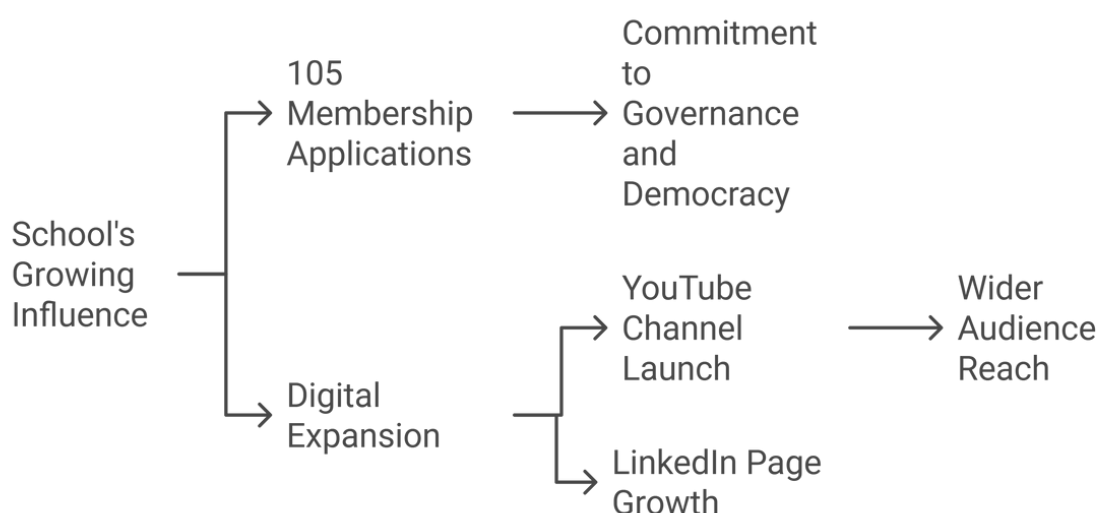


Figure 10 School's growth Strategy

1. Membership Growth: The school's growing influence was evident in the 105 membership applications received via its website. This indicates an expanding community of individuals committed to promoting governance and democracy.

2. Digital Expansion: The launch of a YouTube channel provided a new avenue for sharing the school's programs and dialogues with a wider audience,

increasing accessibility and impact. The school also opened its LinkedIn page that is gradually growing.



ACHIEVEMENTS & FUTURE OUTLOOK

The Abuja School of Social and Political Thought achieved significant milestones in 2024, including

01

Hosting eight impactful policy dialogues that addressed critical governance and democracy challenges in Nigeria and West Africa.

02

Launching the West Africa Democracy Hub, which continues to provide valuable insights through its weekly publications and regional dialogues.

03

Expanding the School's reach through digital platforms and fostering a growing community of thought leaders and advocates

04

Implementing the Social Academy as a capacity building platform for Nigerian social movement in Southeast and Northcentral regions of Nigeria

05

Establishing and operationalizing the Southeast Human Rights Bureau, a special intervention to ensure prevention, reporting and effective remedies for violations of human rights, especially extrajudicial killings in Southeast Nigeria.



CONTACT US.



THE ABUJA SCHOOL



THE ABUJA SCHOOL



**THE ABUJA SCHOOL OF SOCIAL
AND POLITICAL THOUGHT**



**THE ABUJA SCHOOL OF SOCIAL
AND POLITICAL THOUGHT**

www.abujaschool.org.ng

info@abujaschool.org.ng

+234 (0) 813 911 0901



**THE ABUJA
SCHOOL**