

Nigerian Youth and Political Participation

As Nigeria gets closer to the 2023 general elections, there are comments on how the effect of last year's EndSars movement may impact Nigerian youth participation in politics to challenge the status quo.

Can the awareness created by the movement inspire Nigerian youths to mobilize effectively to increase their electoral 'wins'?

A cursory Glance at Youths In Politics

The victory of 39-year-old Emmanuel Macron as President of France in 2017 was an encouraging sign that young people globally can contest and win elections. Research from the inter-parliamentary union show that young people under 30 make up 2% of the world's members of parliament. 67% of the world's upper houses of parliament have no member of parliament under 30 years old.

The situation in Nigeria is worse than the statistics above. The number of youths aged 18-29, voted into elective positions in the country in the 2019 general election was less than 1% (Ajodo-Adebanjoko, 2019), despite having almost 70% of voting strength. Nigeria's political machinery is managed by men over 50 years old. As Mbah (2018) observed, *all civilian heads of government were more than 50 years old before they were elected, and nearly two decades after the advent of civilian rule, former military leaders retain a strong influence over politics.*

Nigerian Youths and the 2023 Elections

President Buhari signed the Not-Too-Young-To-Run Bill into law in 2018. With this development, it was expected that youth participation in politics will increase, and it did slightly from 21% in 2015 to 34% in the 2019 elections. Data from the Youth Initiative for Advocacy, Growth, and Advancement (YIAGA) Africa shows that the youth candidacy for senatorial position in the 2015 election in the country stood at 10.0% and rose to 13.5% in 2019. While that of House of Representative was at 18.0% in 2015 and increased to 27.4% in 2019.

#NotTooYoungToRun

Nigerian youths can mobilize effectively citing the EndSARS movement as a case study. The movement showed how Nigerian youths organized by creating different committees to handle aspects of the protest such as financial administration, security, logistics, legal, healthcare, welfare, and helplines.

Will Nigerian youths step up the challenge in the 2023 elections? Some thoughts:

1. Are Nigerian youths ready to step up and take the reins?
2. Are Nigerian youths organizing politically, and building political alliances at the grassroots?
3. Will Nigerian youths work towards the 2023 general elections with the same rigor, strategy, planning, ingenuity, and doggedness as seen in the 2020 EndSARS protest?