

CIVIC ACTION TEAMS

FEBRUARY 2022

MAKING GOVERNANCE WORK

UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES IN PLATEAU AND FCT, ABUJA

accountabilitylab NIGERIA

Luminate

Canada

Open Government Partnership NIGERIA

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Nigerian society seldom places equal focus on women and men and often excludes People with Disabilities (PWDs) as they are seen by many as unfit for employment, with little or no access to public buildings. Such perceptions have been encouraged by traditional gender roles and deep-rooted cultural norms that insinuate that PWDs and women are unfit for leadership roles. Therefore, PWDs and women are often not supported or encouraged to contribute to the economy and governance processes. In addition, citizens and communities are rarely consulted about decisions that affect their lives and often lack the information they need to engage with their constituencies in meaningful ways.

In an attempt to understand the challenges preventing women and PWDs from being well represented in politics and decision-making processes, and actively participating in governance processes, we surveyed Girin, Kabong, and Gengere communities in Jos, Plateau state, as well as in Kiyi, Dukpa and Ungwan- Dodo communities in FCT-Abuja. Surveys were conducted by our Community Frontline Activists (CFAs) with guidance from Accountability Lab Nigeria to help establish a shared basis of understanding around gender and inclusion. The survey had a total of 1,273 respondents. Radio shows were used to amplify survey results so that the perspectives of women and PWDs were widely distributed in target areas. In addition, boot camps were conducted for women, PWDs, the media and civil society organizations to deepen discussion and develop strategies to tackle some of the issues unearthed by our CFAs. Town hall meetings were also conducted in the identified communities with elected representatives in attendance, to promote mutually beneficial and sustainable engagements.

The methodology used demonstrated that access to information around active participation in governance processes is a key factor preventing women and persons with disability from engaging in decision-making processes. Some key findings from the survey include:

- Many community members hardly participate in societal activities and decision-making activities because of a lack of time and willingness;

- Many community members are not aware of mechanisms within political party structures that encourage the inclusion of women and persons with disabilities;

- Community members are not aware of any local laws and regulations that explicitly discriminate against women and persons with disabilities.



INTRODUCTION

Accountability Lab Nigeria under its Gov-HER-Nance program, supported by the Canadian Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI) and Luminate, surveyed six (6) communities - Kabong, Dahwol Giring and Gangare in Plateau state and Dukpa, Ungwan- Dodo and Kiyi in Federal Capital Territory. The survey was geared towards collecting critical information from communities to solve daily problems for marginalized citizens, close the loop on challenges and strengthen the community's ability to self-advocate.

The project's primary objective aimed to promote women's civic participation, and gender-sensitive and inclusive policy-making in the focal locations. We also trained communities so that they have an improved understanding of their rights and are better equipped to advocate for improved policies in future.

> Access to information is vital to active participation.



METHODOLOGY

The data used in this report was collected using a survey with randomly selected members of the six targeted areas in Plateau and FCT-Abuja. The questionnaire was configured on KoBo Toolbox, and data collection was done using smartphones. The Community Frontline Activists who were involved in the data collection were trained on the use of the KoBo Collect tool in order to accurately document community responses.

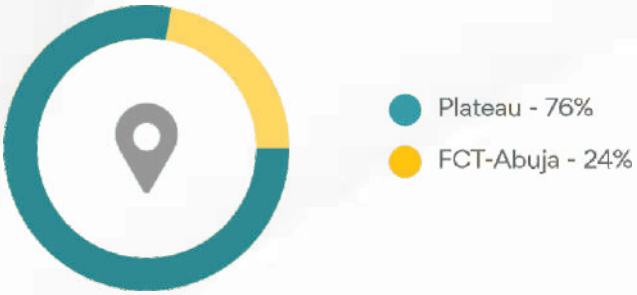
The use of KoBo Toolbox was to ensure the integrity of the data being collected. It also facilitated real-time data collection.



DATA ANALYSIS

1.1 GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION OF RESPONDENTS.

Under this project, we recorded a total respondent of 1,273 responses, broken down as follows:



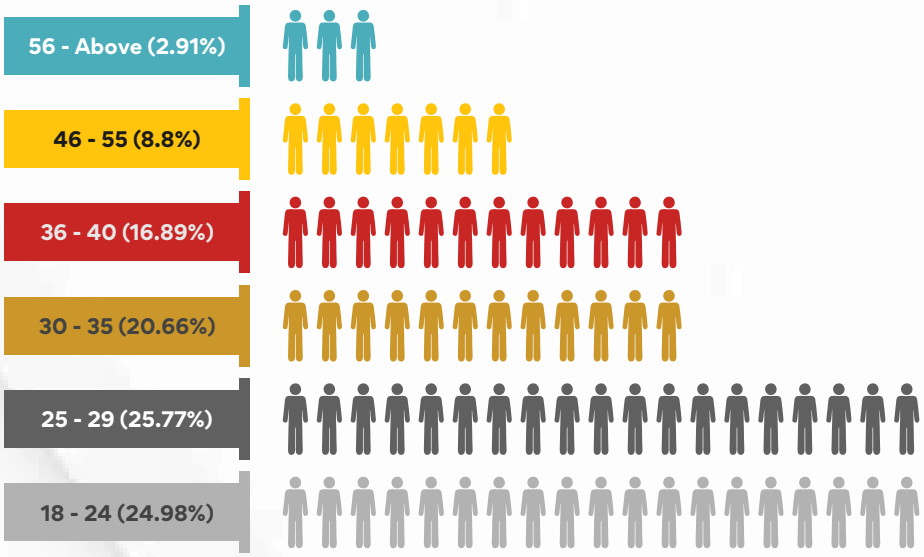
1.2 GENDER REPRESENTATION OF RESPONDENTS

The gender representation shows a 71.09% female and 28.75% male breakdown. A high representation of the views and opinions of women within the sampled communities reinforces AL Nigeria's principle of prioritizing female participation in all aspects of its project design and implementation.



1.3 AGE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS

The graph below shows the age breakdown of respondents. Due to the fact that we sought to hear from groups who are often left out of decision-making processes, we prioritized gathering the perceptions of younger people.

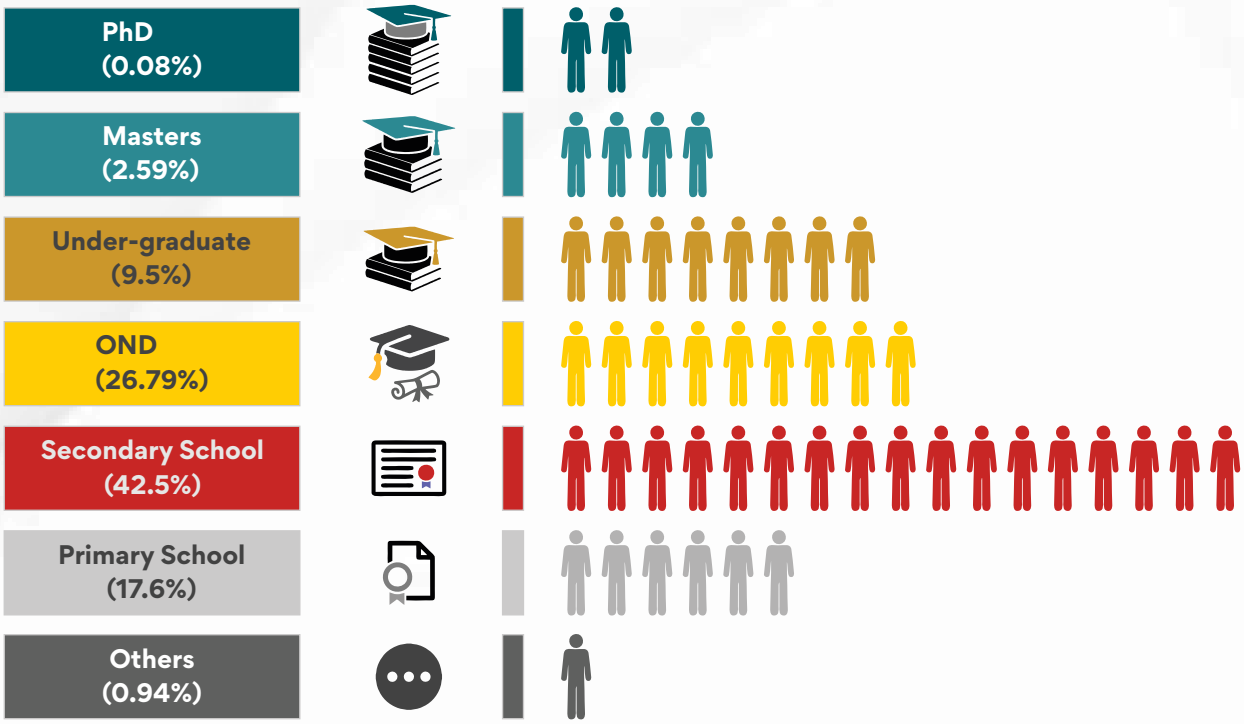




DATA ANALYSIS

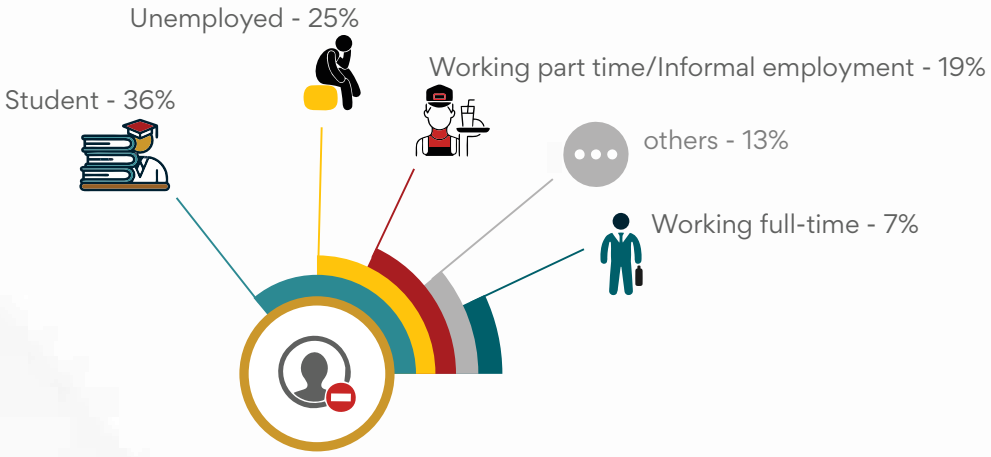
1.4 EDUCATION DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS

This shows that an overwhelming number of the respondents had at least completed some secondary education, which means that they would have the basic comprehension skills to answer the questions we posed. Having said that, a considerable group of them did not complete their high school education, and this is also likely to affect their ability to navigate and participate in decision-making fora.



1.5 EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF RESPONDENTS

The majority of respondents fell into the student or unemployed categories. This aligns with the fact that underserved groups often find it hard to find formal employment, and points to a need for government and private sector stakeholders to create an enabling environment for everyone to access employment opportunities. Respondents' Participation in Local Organizations.





DATA ANALYSIS

1.6 DISTRIBUTION OF PWD RESPONDENTS

As of 2020, there are reportedly over 31 million Nigerians living with some form of disability. This demography has been constantly excluded on issues of governance. policy development and decision-making in Nigeria. In January 2019, the Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act (2018) was signed into law. It prohibits discrimination against people with a disability. The project engaged a PWD as one of the CFAs during the survey, however, it was a bit difficult to access their community to get the required responses. identified In Plateau state, the Disability Rights Commission Law has been repealed in 2019 to make the law inclusive and improve engagement with PWDs in governance processes.



1.7 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS

How often do elected Reps visit their constituency?

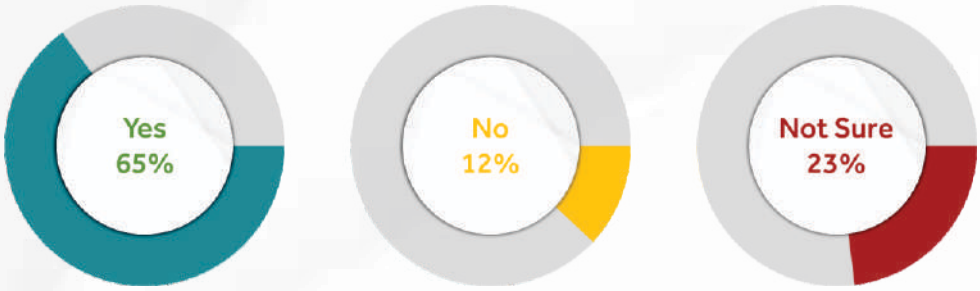


The majority of the respondents in the surveyed communities feel elected representatives do not visit constituents enough to interact with them to understand their needs, which is perceived as a lack of accountability by the populations they serve. Mismanagement at various levels of government within Nigeria is well documented,, and sampled communities have seen very slow progress in development in their community or any form of accountability from these leaders.

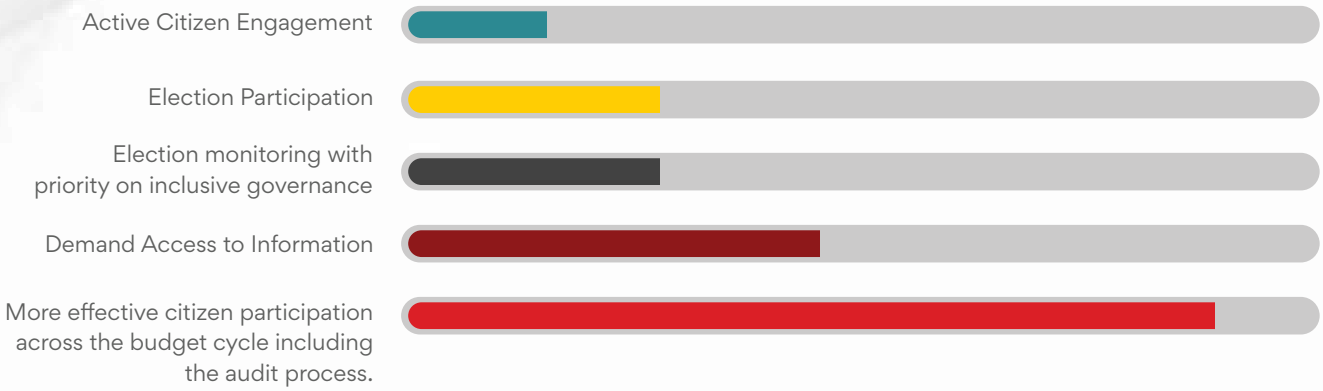


DATA ANALYSIS

1.8 DO YOU THINK THAT MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY CAN PLAY AN ACTIVE ROLE IN HOLDING ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES AND GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABLE?



1.9 WHAT ROLE CAN COMMUNITY MEMBERS PLAY?

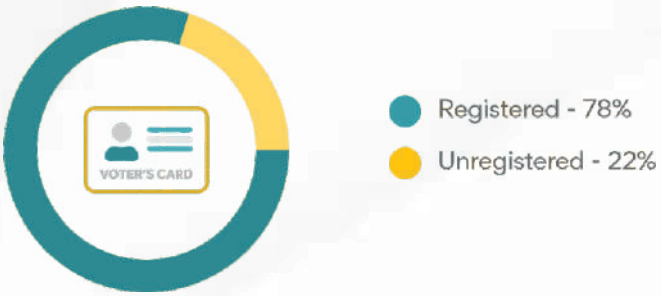


The majority of the respondents think that elected representatives can be held accountable through effective citizen participation. The pursuit of good governance in Nigeria should focus on encouraging trustworthy and competent elected officials, committed to serving, with citizens and community development as the priority. Disenfranchisement from the political system, especially among the rapidly growing young population, makes this more challenging and requires urgent attention. This can have an impact on the 2023 elections in a number of ways. First, it can catalyze a high turn-out in which people demand good governance; or these challenges can lead to apathy and low turn-out. It is expected that the high stakes at play during the upcoming election cycle will lead to greater voter mobilization. There is a need for people to participate in electing political leaders who will serve the public's interest through inclusive and good governance.



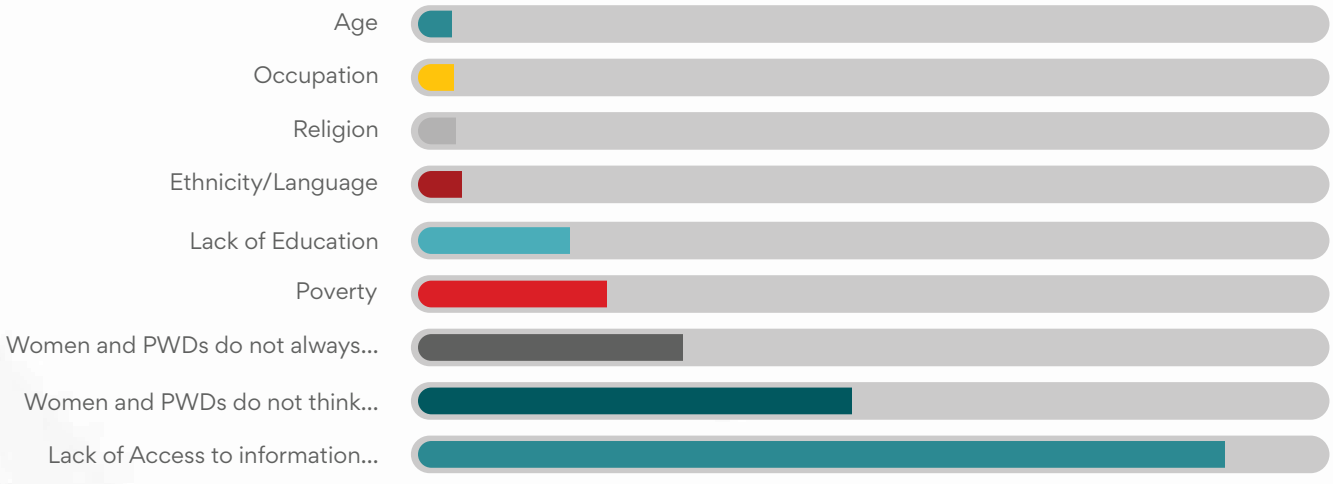
DATA ANALYSIS

1.10 REGISTERED VOTERS FOR 2023 ELECTIONS



The majority of our respondents indicated that they are registered to vote. More than six months after the Independent National Electoral Commission began its Continuous Voter Registration program, many Nigerians are yet to register to vote. However, CVR statistics released by INEC showed that only 2.8 million people had completed their online and physical registration, representing about 14% of INEC's target. Nigeria has consistently witnessed low voter turnouts (more recently in the FCT elections) and this could be worse in the critical 2023 general election if a good number of Nigeria's population do not show interest in registering to vote, and the necessary accessibility structures are put in place for PWDs. President Muhammadu Buhari needs to quickly sign the Electoral Act Amendment Bill, which has been resubmitted with the necessary revisions by the National Assembly after it was rejected in December 2021. The bill legalizes the electronic transmission of results which can encourage many to vote and can boost the transparency in elections, political experts say.

1.11 MAJOR FACTOR THAT HINDERS WOMEN AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES FROM ENGAGING IN DECISION MAKING.



Access to information is a key factor preventing women and PWDs from actively engaging in decision-making processes. Access to information is an enabler for citizens' voices to be heard, in order to effectively demand accountability and engage in decision-making processes that affect their lives, in a well-informed manner. It is vital to empower citizens, including vulnerable and excluded people with the necessary



DATA ANALYSIS

information to use their constitutional rights. Government transparency in providing information to citizens is key to achieving inclusive governance, as well as the ability of citizens to access or demand and use the available information. Citizens may not be aware of their legal right to information, or, in some cases may be reluctant to assert it, either because of fear of a repressive regime, or a prevailing culture of not questioning authority. In other cases, there are barriers to accessing and using the information, such as internet penetration in rural areas.

1.12 ARE PWDs REPRESENTED WITHIN POLITICAL PARTY STRUCTURES AND LEADERSHIP AT THE LOCAL LEVEL?

PWDs Representation within Political Parties



A close inspection of the operational structures of political parties in Nigeria reveals few PWDs are ultimately included across board. PWDs experience a very distinct set of additional barriers e.g accessibility, resourcing, ableism, etc.

1.13 KNOWLEDGE OF MECHANISMS WITHIN POLITICAL PARTIES THAT ENCOURAGE GENDER EQUALITY AND INCLUSION AT LOCAL LEVELS.



Political parties are the foundation of building a robust democracy, and their modus operandi has a significant impact on participatory democracy, however political parties often have glaring gaps that limit and exclude various underserved groups. In many cases, political parties appear around major elections to capture votes but fail to give account to their supporters once the elections are over. Some parties also fail to develop their appeal to citizens beyond ethno-regional appeals or the patronage available to incumbents. Many parties in Nigeria lack adequate capacity in areas ranging from membership recruitment and retention to inclusive policy development and decision making.



KEY FINDINGS

1 The majority of the community members do not belong and do not actively participate in any civic participation structures or organizations within the community;



2 Many community members don't participate in societal activities and decision-making activities because of a lack of time, and willingness. They do not think that these processes are worthwhile.

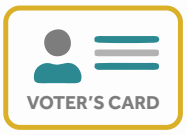




3 Lack of access to information is a key factor preventing women and persons with disabilities from engaging in decision-making processes;



4 The majority of community members we asked have registered to collect Permanent Voters Card and are prepared to vote in the 2023 general elections, however, voter apathy remains a concern;



5 Town Hall meetings are the most common medium for citizens' consultation and input in local planning and budgeting processes and the provision and delivery of public services. There is a lack of trust between community members and power holders as a result of representatives' absence and empty promises made to the community.





KEY FINDINGS

6 Community members are not aware of mechanisms within political party structures that encourage the inclusion of women and persons with disabilities. In most cases, women and persons with disabilities are not equitably represented in decision-making and local governing bodies within the sampled area. The responses we gathered indicate that women and people with disabilities will likely participate in decision-making processes if more inclusive opportunities for participation are created, Women and PWDs will participate in decision-making



7 The majority of community members are aware they can play an active role in holding elected representatives accountable by participating in the entire budget cycle and audit processes at the local and state level;



8 Community members are not aware of any local laws and regulations that explicitly discriminate against women and persons with disabilities.



9 Women and persons with disabilities are not equitably represented in decision-making and local governing bodies within the sampled area.







RECOMMENDATIONS

Through our data collection and analysis, the following recommendations that could lead to improved participation of women and PWDs in decision-making processes are :

1. NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

(1) Revisit and pass the five rejected gender bills, and the Gender and Equal Opportunities Bill to increase opportunities for women in political leadership.

2. INDEPENDENT NATIONAL ELECTORAL COMMISSION (INEC)

(1) Develop a nationwide campaign, in line with the INEC gender policy, with a focus on reorienting citizens at the grassroots level on critical tenets of voter education to demystify processes and strengthen their ability to participate.

3. CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS (CSOs)

(1) Enhance efforts to channel citizen priorities at the state and local level to elected representatives and state-level party structures to promote more responsive and accountable governance;

(2) Create a broad-based coalition and advocate collectively to increase the political participation of underrepresented groups; and

(3) Explore mentorship and coaching programs to target young girls in schools, universities, and as well as the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC). This strategy will positively influence women and young girls to actively participate in the political arena.



RECOMMENDATIONS

4. POLITICAL PARTIES

(1) Dedicate resources and effort to building local structures long before the electioneering phase and develop mechanisms for effective resolution of intra-party disputes;

(2) Increase voter education and political sensitization and embrace digital approaches to ease membership and registration and aid their visibility at the grassroot level; and

(3) Create and implement Persons with Disabilities (PWD)-friendly policies to increase participation and representation in future elections.

5. UNDERSERVED GROUPS

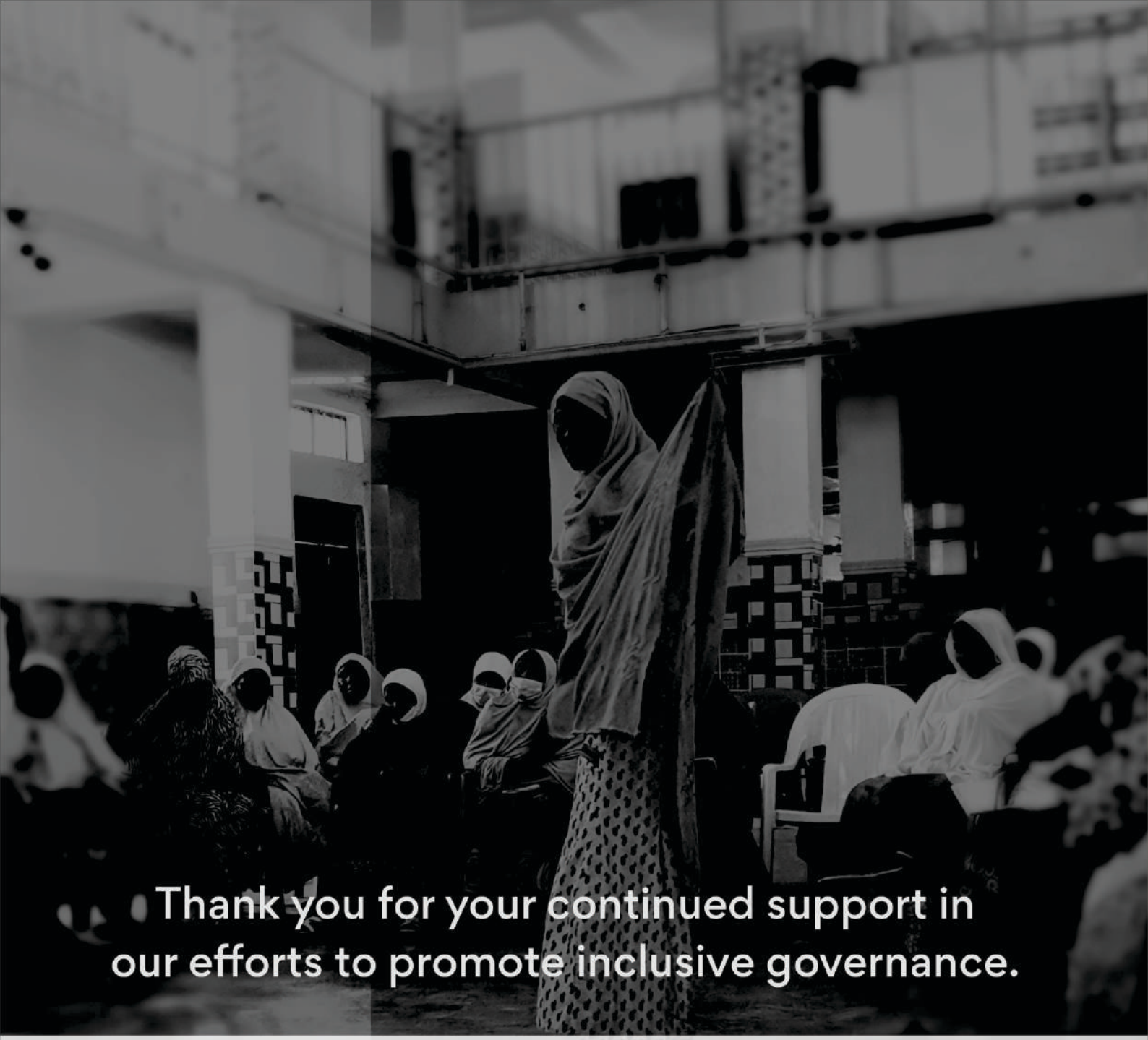
- Commit to joining groups such as community unions, political parties, etc. and actively participate in the decision-making process.



CONCLUSION

The participation of underrepresented groups in decision-making and governance processes is essential to building and sustaining strong, vibrant democracies. A diversity of voices affects the range of policy issues and bills that are considered in legislative assemblies, as well as the types of solutions proposed. If we are to fast track progress toward more inclusive representation, stakeholders should see the underrepresentation of underserved groups as a question of discrimination, rather than that of lack of resources or other factors that hinder their participation. Equal representation is a moral imperative. From this perspective, the strategy for addressing the political underrepresentation of underserved groups should focus on changing how the political institutions themselves work, rather than on adjusting the resources and capacity that the underserved do or do not possess.

With an increase in political will by the government and efforts by political parties, legislators, and civil society organizations, Nigeria can attain the requisite capacity to facilitate the required revolution for underrepresented groups.



Luminate Canada Open Government Partnership NIGERIA

Contact

Accountability Lab Nigeria
House 1, 63 Road, Gwarinpa,
Abuja.
+234 8053503402

www.accountabilitylab.org
nigeria@accountabilitylab.org
@accountlabng