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YOUTH ELECTORAL GUARDS: THE GUARDRAILS OF NIGERIA'S ELECTORAL INTEGRITY — LESSONS FROM OSUN



FCT-Abuja, Monday 17th August 2026.

Nigeria's electoral democracy requires more than citizens turning out to vote on election day. It requires an informed, vigilant and responsible citizenry capable of protecting the integrity of the electoral process before, during and after the ballot. The recent Osun election offers important lessons on how citizen engagement, electoral observation and institutional collaboration can strengthen democratic processes.

This is precisely the gap that the **Youth Electoral Guards Observer (YEGO)** seeks to address ahead of the 2027 General Elections.

Through the **Youth-Action for Electoral Accountability Partnership and Alliance (YEAPA)**, **Nigeria Youths in Politics (NYP)**, its sister organization, **Nigeria Youth Policy Development Advocacy (NYPDA)**, and other strategic partners have developed a nationwide framework to



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engage over **300,000 young Nigerians**, by directly recruit, train and deploy **50,000 young Nigerians as electoral master trainers and frontline civic actors across the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory**.

Beyond this core network, YEGO is projected to engage **more than 3 million young Nigerians across over 170,000 polling units**, promoting peaceful electoral participation, civic responsibility, violence prevention, incident documentation and responsible intelligence sharing with established security and electoral institutions, within applicable laws and protocols.

Osun: A Step Ahead

The Osun election provided an opportunity for Nigeria Youths in Politics and its partners to observe first-hand the realities of electoral participation, citizen vigilance and the wider security and accountability environment surrounding elections.

Through a delegation led by the **Director, Electoral Affairs and Monitoring**, NYiP participated in the Osun election observation process. The experience provided valuable practical lessons that will inform the development and nationwide rollout of the YEGO framework.

Our participation in Osun represents more than observation. It is **a step ahead in testing, refining and preparing YEGO for nationwide deployment ahead of the 2027 General Elections**.

The lessons from Osun reinforce the importance of building a structured network of young citizens who understand their responsibilities within the electoral process and can act responsibly within the law.

Beyond the Ballot

YEGO is designed to ensure that young citizens are not merely participants at the point of voting. It seeks to equip them to responsibly engage throughout the electoral cycle.

YEGO members will be trained to:

- Promote peaceful and lawful electoral participation within their communities.
- Resist and discourage electoral violence, intimidation and other harmful practices.
- Observe and document electoral incidents through the YEGO platform.
- Report credible incidents electoral malpractices to the authorized channels.
- Follow the counting, collation and other stages of the electoral process.
- Support community-level early-warning and violence-prevention mechanisms.
- Share relevant information responsibly with appropriate electoral and security institutions, subject to applicable laws and protocols.
- Remain engaged in post-election accountability and democratic participation.



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The objective is not to create parallel security structures or substitute citizens for state institutions. Rather, YEGO seeks to establish a **responsible citizen-led support architecture** that strengthens communication, vigilance, peaceful participation and early identification of emerging electoral risks.

Building the Guardrails for 2027

The scale of Nigeria's electoral landscape demands a coordinated approach, in other to forestall large-scale electoral violence and anarchy as speculated. With more than 170,000 polling units nationwide, protecting the integrity of elections cannot be left exclusively to institutions operating on election day.

Young Nigerians constitute a significant part of the country's population and electoral community. Their energy, reach and presence at community level can become a powerful democratic asset when properly organized, trained and guided by law.

YEGO therefore represents an effort to move from **passive electoral participation to organized civic responsibility**.

Its proposed network of 300,000 trained electoral accountability ambassadors, supported by wider partnerships reaching millions of young Nigerians, is intended to create a national culture of electoral vigilance and safeguard Nigeria's electoral integrity in the eyes of global community. Through community engagement and responsible reporting, the initiative seeks to help identify risks early, promote dialogue and support efforts to prevent electoral violence before it escalates.

Institutionalizing Citizen-Led Electoral Vigilance

The lessons emerging from Osun provide an important opportunity to deepen our commitment to citizen-led election observation and vigilance.

The challenge ahead is not simply how to deploy more observers. It is how to **institutionalize, coordinate and scale citizen engagement** in a manner that complements the work of INEC, security agencies, accredited election observers, civil society organizations, traditional institutions, community leaders and other stakeholders.

YEGO is being developed with this principle at its core.

As Nigeria looks toward 2027, the question should not only be whether young people will vote. The bigger question is whether they will be sufficiently organized, informed and empowered to help protect the democratic process before, during and after elections.

Osun has provided lessons. YEGO is preparing to turn those lessons into a nationwide framework for responsible electoral citizenship.



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The guardrails for a peaceful and credible 2027 election must be built before election day. And Nigeria's young people have a critical role to play in building them.

We call on critical stakeholders of Nigeria electoral management institutions, civil society organizations, developments partners working to advance democracy and electoral integrity, as well as peace and loving citizens of Nigeria to come onboard as we transform the Nigeria electoral trajectory for greater good.

Sign.

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