

CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT TOOL FOR NIGERIA'S HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



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INTRODUCTION

Objectives

For Nigeria's democracy to grow, prosper and deliver the desired goods, citizens – especially ordinary folks outside of the political class – need to actively participate in the political process. But in order to do so effectively, they need to first have a good and clear understanding of the essence, structure and workings of the government and political institutions, such as the Legislature; and in addition, citizens need to fully know the actual roles elected legislators play (including extent and limits of such roles), as well as how they (the citizens) can engage legislators meaningfully. This way, constituents are better able to relate with their elected representatives, and the will of the people can truly be expressed and translated into legislation and oversight of the executive arm of government for the betterment of society.

Nigeria's House of Representatives, as the People's House, derives its legitimacy from citizens' active participation and engagement. When citizens understand, monitor, and contribute to legislative activities, the resulting laws and other outputs from the Green Chamber better reflect public needs and aspirations that in turn strengthen democratic institutions and ensure responsive governance.

This Citizen Engagement Toolkit for the 10th House of Representatives primarily aims to bridge the gap between Nigerian citizens and their elected representatives toward fostering robust participation in the legislative process. It serves to raise awareness among citizens about the roles and functions of the House of Representatives while establishing direct channels of communication between the people and their representatives.

Through the resources provided, this toolkit seeks to galvanize active citizens' involvement in legislative processes and strengthens transparency and accountability within the 10th House. By empowering both citizens and legislators with practical strategies and tools, we envision a more inclusive, responsive, and effective legislative environment that enriches Nigeria's democratic space, engenders good governance, and brings the legislative process closer to the people.

A Guide to Using this Toolkit

This Citizen Engagement Toolkit is designed as a practical resource for a diverse audience, including individual citizens, communities, civil society organizations, legislative staff, and members of the 10th House of Representatives. It is designed to be accessible and action-oriented toward empowering all stakeholders to participate meaningfully in Nigeria's legislative processes. To maximize its effectiveness, consider the subsequent guide.

For Citizens, community groups, and Civil Society Organizations:

Begin with the "Understanding the Legislature" section to familiarize yourself with the structure and functions of the House of Representatives. The Directory section provides essential contact information to reach your representatives directly. The "Understanding Citizen Engagement" section explains various levels of engagement, while "Developing a Citizen Engagement Strategy" offers practical tools and methods to participate effectively in legislative processes.

For Legislators and Legislative Staff:

Focus on the "Developing a Citizen Engagement Strategy" section to identify suitable mechanisms for connecting with constituents. The toolkit provides templates, best practices, and case studies that can help design effective engagement programmes tailored to your constituency's specific needs and demographics.

How to Navigate:

1. **Identify Your Goal:** Whether you want to submit a petition, attend a committee hearing, organize a town hall meeting, or simply learn about the legislative process, locate the relevant section in the Table of Contents.
2. **Utilize Resources:** Each section contains practical resources including templates, checklists, and step-by-step guides for different engagement activities.
3. **Select Appropriate Tools:** Choose from in-person activities, digital tools, or traditional/social media engagement options based on your needs and capabilities.
4. **Follow Up:** Use the contact information provided to maintain consistent communication with representatives and track the progress of legislative initiatives.

UNDERSTANDING THE LEGISLATURE

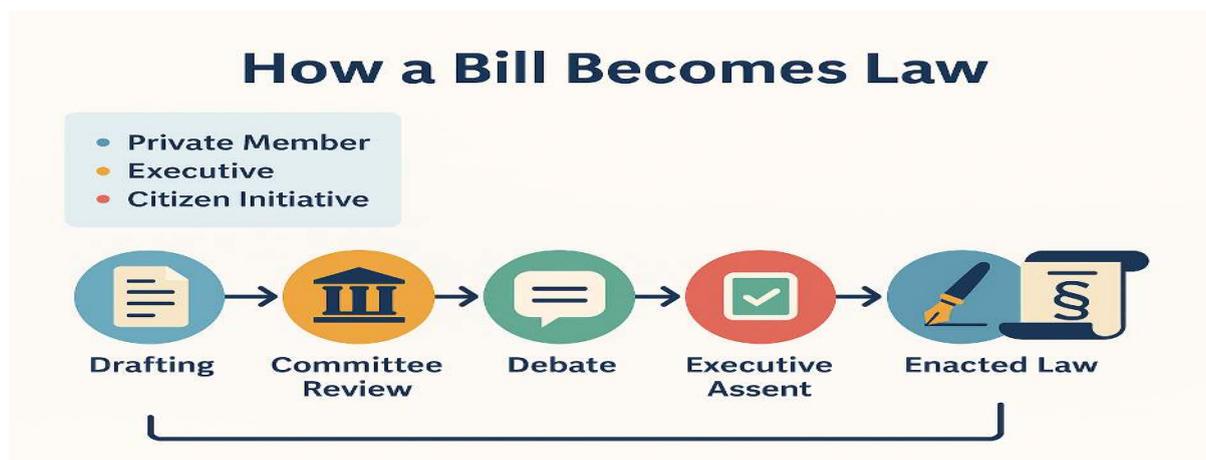
Meaning and Functions

The Legislature is the branch of government responsible for making laws, among other key functions. A country's legislature, or parliament, embodies representative democracy by bringing together elected officials from across constituencies to deliberate on matters of public importance and enact laws that govern society.

The legislature performs several functions that are essential to democratic governance. The core functions of the legislature include the following:

Law-Making

The primary function of the legislature is to make, amend, or repeal laws. Through a systematic process of bill drafting, deliberation, and passage, the legislature creates the legal framework that governs a country. Bills may originate from members (private member bills), the Executive arm of government (executive bills), or through citizens' initiatives.



Representation

Members of the legislature represent specific constituencies, serving as the voice of their constituents. This representative function ensures that diverse perspectives from across the country inform the legislative process, making laws more inclusive and responsive to citizens' needs.



Oversight

The legislature exercises oversight over the executive branch to ensure accountability in governance. Through committee investigations, public hearings, and questioning of

government officials, representatives monitor the implementation of laws and policies, scrutinize government spending, and check potential abuses of power.



Budget Approval

The "power of the purse" gives the legislature authority to approve government spending. Accordingly, it examines, debates, and approves the annual budget proposed by the Executive, ensuring that public funds are allocated appropriately to address national priorities.



Constituency Service

Legislators address the specific needs of their constituencies by facilitating development projects, interventions, and problem-solving at the local level. This function connects national governance directly to community development.



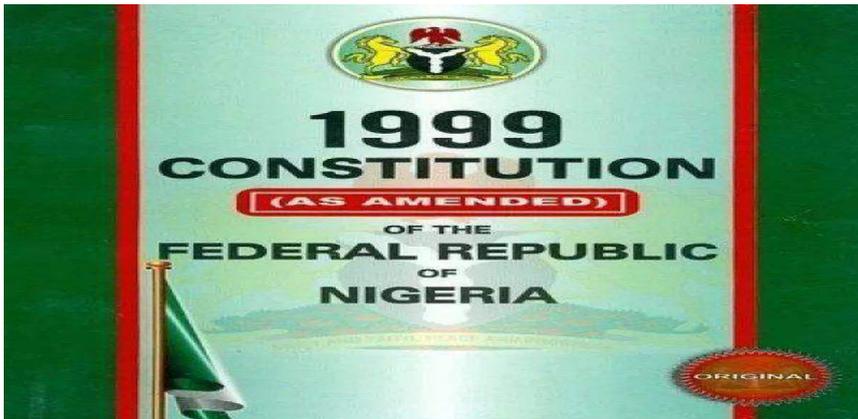
Conflict Resolution

The legislature serves as a forum for mediating competing interests in society. Through debate and compromise, legislators work to resolve conflicts between different groups, regions, or interests in ways that promote national cohesion.



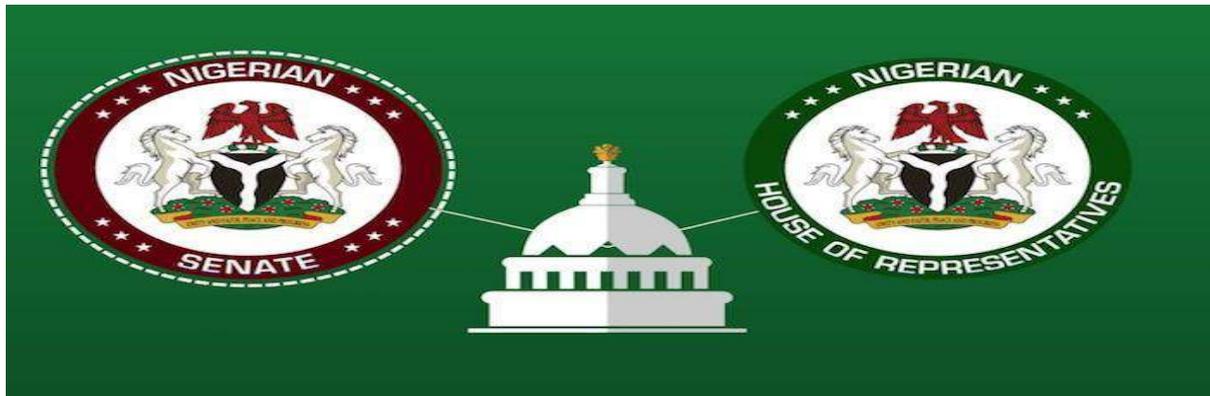
Constitutional Amendment

The legislature has the power to amend the constitution through a specified process, allowing a country's fundamental law to evolve in response to changing circumstances and societal needs.



The National Assembly (NASS) - a Brief Historical Context

Under Nigeria's democratic system, the federal legislature, also known as the National Assembly (NASS), is a bicameral institution consisting of the Senate and the House of Representatives. Its historical context underscores the significance of Nigeria's current democratic dispensation and the importance of citizens' engagement with the legislative processes that have been hard-won through decades of political struggles and institutional development.



The history of NASS reflects Nigeria's complex journey toward democratic governance, marked by alternating periods of civilian administrations and military interventions.

Colonial Foundations to Independence (1914-1960)

Nigeria's legislative history began under British colonial rule with the introduction of the Legislative Council in 1914 following the amalgamation of Northern and Southern Protectorates. This council evolved through various constitutional reforms, including the Clifford Constitution (1922), Richards Constitution (1946), Macpherson Constitution (1951), and Lyttleton Constitution (1954) that gradually expanded Nigerian representation and laid groundwork for the parliamentary system adopted at independence in 1960.

First Republic (1960-1966)

At Independence, Nigeria established a bicameral legislature modeled after the Westminster system, with a Senate and House of Representatives. The legislature operated within a parliamentary democracy until the military coup of January 1966 abruptly ended the First Republic.

Second Republic (1979-1983)

After 13 years of military rule, Nigeria returned to civil democratic rule. The 1979 Constitution established a presidential system with a bicameral National Assembly consisting of a 95-member Senate and a 450-member House of Representatives. This era ended with another military coup in December 1983.

Aborted Third Republic (1992-1993)

Nigeria briefly established a National Assembly in 1992 as part of the transition programme to the Third Republic. However, this democratic experiment was short-lived, as the military annulled the June 12, 1993 presidential election and dissolved the legislature.

Fourth Republic (1999-Present)

The current NASS began with Nigeria's return to democratic rule in 1999. It derives its powers from Chapter V of the 1999 Constitution (as amended), which defines its composition, powers, and procedures. The 1999 Constitution established a bicameral legislature with a 109-member Senate (three senators from each state and one from the Federal Capital Territory) and a 360-member House of Representatives (based on population). The NASS has since functioned continuously - the longest period of uninterrupted legislative activity in Nigeria's history.

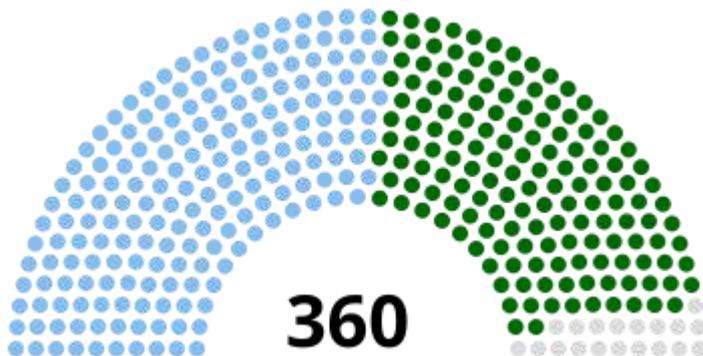
Throughout the Fourth Republic, the NASS has experienced significant institutional development. And each successive Assembly, from the 4th (1999-2003) to the current 10th Assembly (2023-2027), has contributed to the maturation of Nigeria's legislative branch, reinforcing its critical role in the country's democratic consolidation.

The 10th House of Representatives at a Glance

The 10th House of Representatives was inaugurated on June 13, 2023, following the general elections held on February 25 of the same year. It is scheduled to serve until June 2027 when it will complete the standard four-year term as provided in the Constitution. Understanding its composition, structure and priorities as herein highlighted provides citizens with essential context for meaningful engagement with their representatives and effective participation in the legislative process.

Composition

Like the previous sessions, the 10th House consists of 360 members representing federal constituencies across Nigeria's 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory. The distribution of seats is based on population which ensures proportional representation.



Source: Wikimedia Commons

The 10th House has recorded a slight improvement in female representation compared to the 9th Assembly, rising from 13 to 17 members, though this still falls below the 22 women in the 8th Assembly and remains under 10% of total membership. Notably, the 10th House has the highest turnover in recent history, with 77% of members (276) being first-timers and only 84 returning. It also includes more younger legislators, with several under 40 years of age, reflecting a gradual demographic shift in Nigeria's legislative composition.

Leadership Structure

The House is led by the Speaker, Rt. Hon. Tajudeen Abbas and the Deputy Speaker, Rt. Hon. Benjamin Kalu. They were popularly elected by members of the House on the day of inauguration. Other Principal Officers of the 10th House include:

1. House Leader (Hon. Prof. Julius Ihonvbere, OON): Leads government business in the House, coordinating debates, bills, and liaison with the Executive.
2. Deputy House Leader (Hon. Halims Abdullahi): Assists and stands in for the House Leader in managing majority legislative business.
3. Minority Leader (Hon. Kingsley Chinda): Speaks for and protects the interests of the opposition, offering alternative positions on issues.
4. Deputy Minority Leader (Hon. Aliyu Sani Madaki): Supports and represents the Minority Leader in coordinating opposition activities.
5. Chief Whip (Hon. Usman Bello Kumo): Enforces party discipline and mobilizes majority members for debates and voting.
6. Deputy Chief Whip (Hon. Adewunmi Onanuga): Assists and substitutes for the Chief Whip in maintaining discipline and order.
7. Minority Whip (Hon. Ali Isah): Ensures discipline, attendance, and participation of minority members in House proceedings.

Deputy Minority Whip (Hon. George Ibezimako): Assists and acts for the Minority Whip in managing minority party discipline.

Legislative Agenda

The 10th House has outlined an ambitious legislative agenda around eight interconnected priority areas to guide lawmaking, oversight, and representation. These priorities reflect citizens' needs and provide measurable benchmarks for accountability.

1. Strengthening Good Governance
 - Focus: Deepening transparency, accountability, and efficiency in public institutions; strengthening anti-corruption frameworks.
 - Achievement: Passage of motions enhancing oversight of Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) to curb leakages and improve accountability in public finance.
 - Citizen Engagement: Demand regular constituency briefings and feedback sessions, report corruption and inefficiency in public services to oversight committees, and participate in public hearings on governance-related bills.
2. Improving National Security
 - Focus: Supporting legislation that strengthens security agencies, modernizes equipment, and addresses root causes of insecurity such as poverty and unemployment.
 - Achievement: Increased legislative support for security sector funding and community-based security initiatives.
 - Citizen Engagement: Share community-level intelligence through recognized local security platforms, participate in town halls on security-related bills and motions, hold representatives accountable on how security funds are utilized.
3. Law Reform

- Focus: Reviewing outdated laws to meet contemporary realities, harmonizing conflicting statutes, and ensuring justice delivery systems are fair and efficient.
- Achievement: Initiated amendment of key criminal justice and electoral laws to strengthen democracy and rule of law.
- Citizen Engagement: Contribute opinions during calls for memoranda on law reform, engage civil society groups pushing for legal changes, track and question lawmakers on progress with reforms affecting justice and elections.

4. Economic Growth and Development

- Focus: Enacting laws that improve the business environment, encourage investment, support SMEs, and ensure job creation.
- Achievement: Support for legislation on tax reforms and ease of doing business, contributing to economic diversification efforts.
- Citizen Engagement: Provide feedback on laws or policies that affect small businesses, join advocacy campaigns on job creation and entrepreneurship support, partner with constituency offices on local economic empowerment projects.

5. Social Sector Reform and Development

- Focus: Improving education, healthcare, social welfare, and youth empowerment through targeted legislation and oversight.
- Achievement: Motions passed on revitalizing primary healthcare and expanding access to educational opportunities for vulnerable groups.
- Citizen Engagement: Report poor service delivery in schools and health centers to relevant committees, participate in education and health policy dialogues, and volunteer in community initiatives supported by legislators.

6. Inclusion and Open Parliament

- Focus: Promoting citizen participation, transparency in legislative activities, gender equality, and youth inclusion in governance.
- Achievement: Development of citizen engagement platforms and increased publication of House activities for public access.
- Citizen Engagement: Follow House proceedings through official platforms and demand transparency, push for inclusion of women, youth, and persons with disabilities in governance, and join constituency consultations on legislation and oversight.

7. Influencing/Directing Nigeria's Foreign Policy

- Focus: Using parliamentary diplomacy to protect Nigeria's interests abroad, strengthen bilateral and multilateral relations, and advance regional integration.
- Achievement: Active engagement with regional parliamentary bodies like ECOWAS Parliament to influence policies on trade and migration.
- Citizen Engagement: Track how foreign policy decisions affect local communities (e.g., trade agreements); join dialogues on migration, diaspora rights, and cross-border trade; and hold lawmakers accountable on how Nigeria's international commitments benefit citizens.

8. Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability

- Focus: Enacting policies on renewable energy, environmental protection, disaster risk management, and sustainable resource use.
- Achievement: Sponsored motions and debates on flood management and renewable energy transition, highlighting Nigeria’s climate commitments.
- Citizen Engagement: Participate in community sensitization on environmental protection; engage lawmakers on renewable energy and climate adaptation bills; and report environmental hazards in local areas to relevant committees.

Committee System

The 10th House operates through a network of committees, which serve as the engine room of legislative activities. There are 140 committees, both standing and special committees, covering every sector of national life. These committees conduct investigations, hold public hearings, and process bills within their jurisdictions before presenting recommendations to the entire House.

Innovation and Technology

The 10th House has embraced technological innovation to enhance its operations and accessibility. This include:

1. Digital Voting System: Electronic voting by its members for more transparent decision-making
2. E-parliament Initiatives: Digital platforms for committee management and legislative tracking
3. Enhanced Public Access: Improved broadcasting of proceedings and online access to legislative information
4. Social Media Presence: Increased use of digital platforms for public engagement

Legislative Output

Since its inauguration, the 10th House has considered numerous bills and motions addressing pressing national issues. The House maintains an active plenary schedule, typically meeting Tuesday through Thursday when in session, with committees conducting hearings and investigations throughout the week.

The Legislative Process

The legislative process refers to the steps through which laws are proposed, debated, amended, and passed by the National Assembly. In Nigeria, this process typically begins with the introduction of a bill—either by a member of the House of Representatives or the Senate, or by the Executive.

What is a Bill?

- A bill is a proposed law presented to the legislature (National Assembly) for debate and approval. It can be introduced by a legislator (private member bill) or by the Executive (executive bill).

Why it Matters for Citizens?

- Bills shape policies that affect daily life (e.g., education, healthcare, security).
- Citizens have the right to contribute through public hearings and consultations.
- Engaging with bills ensures laws reflect the people's needs and interests.

Once introduced, a bill goes through several readings and stages, including committee scrutiny, public hearings, and plenary debates. After it passes through both chambers of the National Assembly, the bill is sent to the President for assent. If signed, it becomes law. This process ensures that legislation is carefully examined, inclusive, and reflective of the interests of the people.

Flowchart Summary of the Legislative Process

1. **Bill Introduction**

A bill is introduced by a member of the House of Representatives, Senate, or by the Executive.



2. **First Reading**

The bill is formally read out for the first time—no debate takes place at this stage.



3. **Second Reading**

The general principles of the bill are debated by members. If approved, it moves to the next stage.



4. **Committee Stage**

The bill is referred to a relevant committee for detailed examination, including possible public hearings and stakeholder input.

⇒ Often, public hearings are conducted to enable citizens, community groups, and stakeholders present their views and submissions on the bill.

5. **Report Stage**

The committee reports its findings and recommendations. Amendments may be proposed.



6. **Third Reading**

Final debate on the bill. If passed, it proceeds to the other chamber (House or Senate) and repeats steps 2–6.



7. **Harmonization (if needed)**

If there are differences between the House and Senate versions, a conference committee resolves them.



8. **Presidential Assent/or Veto**

The final version is sent to the President for assent. Once signed, it becomes law.

⇔⇔ If the President declines assent, the bill is returned with observations. The National Assembly may amend it and resend, or override the veto with a two-thirds majority in both chambers, after which it becomes law without presidential assent.

9. **Gazetting**

The new law is published in the official government gazette for public knowledge and implementation.

ACCESS TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

The National Assembly of Nigeria is committed to ensuring that citizens can engage with legislative activities both physically and electronically. To promote transparency, inclusivity, and civic participation, access is provided through the aforementioned means.

Physical Access



Citizens, community groups, civil society organisations, students, and researchers can visit the National Assembly complex in Abuja to observe legislative sessions, attend committee hearings, or engage with legislators. However, it is important to first secure an appointment by communicating with the office to be visited and obtaining a letter of invitation; or by registering in advance for a public hearing session.

How to Arrange a Visit to the National Assembly

- ❖ *Identify the Purpose of Your Visit: Decide if you want to observe plenary sessions, attend a committee hearing, or meet a legislator.*
- ❖ *Contact the Relevant Office: Call, email, or write to the legislator's office, committee secretariat, or the Public Affairs Department.*
- ❖ *Request an Appointment or Invitation: Secure a formal appointment and obtain a letter of invitation, which grants you access to the complex.*
- ❖ *Register for Public Hearings (if applicable): For hearings, ensure you register ahead of time as required, either online or through the committee clerk.*

Visitor Entry Requirements

All visitors must present a valid form of identification and may need to show proof of appointment or official invitation. Security screening is mandatory.

Gallery Access

Designated galleries in both chambers (House of Representatives and Senate) are open to the public for observing plenary sessions. However, this is strictly by invitation and accreditation, as entry into the National Assembly complex requires prior clearance. Once admitted, visitors must comply with space limitations and decorum rules.

Committee Hearings

Members of the public may attend public committee meetings or hearings. Those interested in making submissions may be required to notify the committee secretariat in advance.

Tours and Educational Visits

Educational institutions and civic groups may schedule guided tours by writing formally to the National Assembly's Public Affairs or Citizens Engagement office.

Accessibility

Ramps, elevators, and accessible restrooms are available to accommodate visitors, including persons with disabilities.

Electronic Access



To improve legislative openness and reach wider audiences across Nigeria and beyond, the National Assembly provides several electronic platforms for citizen access.

Official Website

The National Assembly's website (www.nass.gov.ng) offers information on bills, legislative activities, committee reports, member profiles, and live plenary sessions.

Live Streaming

Plenary sessions are occasionally broadcast live via official social media handles and streaming services to allow remote observation.

Social Media Engagement

Citizens can follow legislative updates and communicate via platforms such as Twitter (@nassnigeria), Facebook, and YouTube.

E-Petitions and Submissions

Some committees and public hearings accept digital submissions through official email or e-petition portals.

Mobile Applications

Efforts are ongoing to develop and deploy mobile apps for easier real-time access to legislative data and citizen feedback mechanisms.

DIRECTORY OF THE 10TH HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

This section provides essential information on the structure, leadership, and contact details of key stakeholders within the 10th House of Representatives. It is designed to guide citizens in identifying the appropriate offices, committees, and representatives for effective engagement.

Principal Officers

These are the key elected leadership figures of the 10th House of Representatives, responsible for steering legislative business and coordinating parliamentary affairs.

1. House Leader: [Hon Prof. Julius Ihonvbere]
2. Deputy House Leader: [Hon Halims Abdullahi]
3. Minority Leader: [Hon Kingsley Chinda]
4. Deputy Minority Leader: [Hon Aliyu Sani Madaki]
5. Chief Whip: [Hon Usman Bello Kumo]
6. Deputy Chief Whip: [Hon Ibrahim Ayokunle Isiaka]
7. Minority Whip: [Hon Ali Isah],
8. Deputy Minority Whip: [Hon. George Ozodinobi]

Statutory Committees

These are permanent committees established by law or the Standing Orders of the House to oversee critical functions of governance. They play a vital role in ensuring accountability, transparency, and effective legislative oversight.

1. Agricultural Production and Services
2. Appropriations
3. Banking Regulations
4. Constituency Outreach
5. Constitution Review
6. Defense
7. Ecological Fund
8. Federal Capital Territory (FCT)
9. Federal Character
10. House Services
11. National Security and Intelligence
12. Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC)
13. Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring

14. North East Development Commission (NEDC)
15. North-West Development Commission (NWDC)
16. North Central Development Commission (NCDC)
17. South West Development Commission (SWDC)
18. South-East Development Commission (SEDC)
19. Petroleum Resources Training Funds
20. Public Accounts
21. Public Petitions
22. States and Local Governments
23. Traditional Institutions
24. Works

Standing Committees

These are permanent committees constituted at the start of each Assembly to handle specific sectors of governance and legislation. They facilitate in-depth review of bills, policies, and government activities within their assigned mandates.

1. Agricultural Colleges and Institutions
2. Aids, Loans and Debt Management
3. Air Force
4. Alternative Education
5. Anti-Corruption
6. Army
7. Arts, Culture and Creative Economy
8. Aviation
9. Aviation Technology
10. Banking and Other Ancillary Institutions
11. Basic Education and Services
12. Basic Education Examination Bodies
13. Capital Market and Institutions
14. Christian Pilgrims Affairs
15. Civil Society and Development Partners

16. Climate Change
17. Commerce
18. Communications
19. Community And Social Development Agency (CSDA)/Nigeria Cares
20. Cooperation and Integration in Africa
21. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)
22. Customs and Excise
23. Delegated Legislation
24. Diaspora
25. Digital and Communication Technology
26. Digital and Electronic Banking
27. Disabilities
28. Drugs and Narcotics
29. Electoral Matters
30. Emergency and Disaster Preparedness
31. Environment
32. Ethics and Privileges
33. FCT Area Councils and Ancillary Matters
34. FCT Judiciary
35. Federal Colleges of Education
36. Federal Polytechnics and Higher Technical Education
37. Federal Road Maintenance Agency (FERMA)
38. Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC)
39. Financial Crimes
40. FOI (Reform of Government Institutions)
41. Food and Drugs Administration and Control
42. Foreign Affairs
43. Gas Resources
44. Health Institutions
45. Healthcare Services

46. HIV, AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria Control
47. Host Communities
48. Housing and Habitat
49. Human Rights
50. Hydrological Services HYPADDEC
51. Industry
52. Information, National Orientation, Ethics and Values
53. Inland Waterways
54. Insurance and Actuarial Matters
55. Inter-Governmental Affairs
56. Inter-Parliamentary Relations
57. Interior
58. Internal Security of the National Assembly
59. Internally Displaced Persons and Refugees
60. Islamic Pilgrims Affairs
61. Judiciary
62. Justice
63. Labour, Employment and Productivity
64. Lake Chad
65. Land Transport
66. Legislative Budget and Research
67. Legislative Compliance
68. Legislative Library, Research and Documentation
69. Livestock Development
70. Maritime Safety, Education and Administration
71. Media and Public Affairs
72. Monitoring & Evaluation of Implementation of the Legislative Agenda
73. Monitoring and Evaluation of Standing / Ad-hoc Committees
74. National Agency for Science and Engineering (NASANI)
75. National Planning and Economic Development

76. Navy
77. Nutrition and Food Security
78. Ocean and Fisheries
79. Peace Building and Social Cohesion
80. Pensions
81. Petroleum Resources (Downstream)
82. Petroleum Resources (Midstream)
83. Petroleum Resources (Upstream)
84. Police Affairs
85. Police Institutions
86. Political Parties Matters
87. Population
88. Ports and Harbours
89. Poverty Alleviation
90. Power
91. Privatisation and Commercialisation
92. Public Assets
93. Public Procurement
94. Public Sector, Institutional Reforms
95. Public Service Matters
96. Reformatory Institutions
97. Regional Development
98. Renewable Energy
99. Rules and Business
100. Rural Development
101. Rural Electrification
102. Safety Standards
103. Science and Technology
104. Science Engineering
105. Science Research Institutions

106. Shipping Services
107. Small Arms And Light Weapons
108. Small and Medium Enterprises
109. Solid Minerals Development
110. Special Duties
111. Specialty Healthcare
112. Sports
113. Steels Development
114. Student Loans, Scholarships and Higher Education Financing
115. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
116. TETFUND and Other Services
117. Tourism
118. Treaties, Protocol and Agreements
119. University Education
120. Urban Development and Regional Planning
121. Water Resources
122. Women Affairs and Social Development
123. Women in Parliament
124. Youth Development
125. Youths in Parliament

UNDERSTANDING CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

Citizen engagement with the legislature is an obligation that ensures accountability, representation, and democratic governance. The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (Section 14(2)) affirms that sovereignty belongs to the people, from whom the government derives its authority, and that participation in governance is both their right and duty. This means the security and welfare of citizens are the primary purpose of government, and citizen engagement with governance is constitutionally guaranteed and required.

Defining Citizen Engagement

Citizen engagement refers to the active participation of citizens in public decision-making processes that affect their lives. In the legislative context, it encompasses the various ways through which citizens interact with lawmakers, contribute to policy formulation, and influence legislative outcomes. This is a two-way relationship where:

1. Citizens provide input, feedback, and ideas to legislators
2. Legislators seek, receive, and incorporate public perspectives into their work

Effective citizen engagement goes beyond mere consultation or information sharing. It involves genuine collaboration between representatives and the represented, creating opportunities for citizens to actively shape legislation rather than simply reacting to it. In Nigeria's maturing democracy, meaningful citizen engagement serves as a vital bridge between the people and their representatives in the House of Representatives.

Essence of Citizen Engagement

Citizen engagement in legislative processes serves several fundamental purposes. These include the following:

Enhancing Democratic Legitimacy

When citizens participate actively in lawmaking, the resulting legislation carries greater legitimacy. Laws developed with public input more accurately reflect societal values and needs, thus gaining broader acceptance and compliance.

Improving Policy Quality

Citizens bring diverse perspectives, practical insights, and local knowledge that professional lawmakers may lack. This input helps identify potential implementation challenges, unintended consequences, and innovative solutions, leading to more effective and responsive legislation.

Strengthening Accountability

Engagement creates transparency, allowing citizens to monitor their representatives' performance against public expectations and electoral promises. This visibility encourages lawmakers to remain accountable to their constituents rather than special interests.

Building Public Trust

Regular meaningful interaction between citizens and representatives builds mutual understanding and trust. When people feel, hear and see their input reflected in legislative outcomes, they develop greater confidence in democratic institutions.

Fostering Civic Education

The engagement process educates citizens about legislative procedures, policy issues, and governance structures. This knowledge empowers people to participate more effectively in democratic processes and advocate for their interests.

Promoting Social Inclusion

Deliberate engagement efforts can amplify traditionally marginalized voices, creating more equitable representation in policy deliberations and ensuring laws address the needs of diverse population groups.

Preventing Conflict

By providing peaceful channels for expressing grievances and influencing policy, citizen engagement mechanisms help prevent social unrest that might otherwise emerge when citizens feel powerless or excluded from decision-making.

Citizen Engagement Ladder

Citizen engagement occurs along a spectrum of increasing public impact. The "Engagement Ladder" (depicted in Figure 1) illustrates the progressive levels of citizen involvement in legislative processes as subsequently highlighted:



Figure 1: Citizen Engagement Ladder

Source: From ParlAmericas' "Toolkit: Citizen Participation in the Legislative Process (2017, p. 11)", based on an adaptation of the Ladder of Citizen Participation by Sherry Arnstein (1969).

INFORM Citizens as Recipients

1. One-way communication from government to citizens
2. Information about legislative activities, decisions, and rights
3. Examples: Public notices, legislative broadcasts, educational materials
4. Citizen Impact: Low; limited to awareness

CONSULT Citizens as Advisors

1. Government requests and receives citizen feedback
2. Limited opportunity to influence outcomes
3. Examples: Public hearings, surveys, comment periods
4. Citizen Impact: Low to moderate; opinions considered but no guarantee of influence

INVOLVE Citizens as Contributors

1. Citizens work directly with legislators throughout the process
2. Multiple opportunities to influence legislation
3. Examples: Stakeholder meetings, focus groups, town halls
4. Citizen Impact: Moderate; consistent dialogue ensures public concerns are considered

COLLABORATE Citizens as Partners

1. Joint decision-making and shared responsibility
2. Citizens actively participate in developing alternatives and solutions
3. Examples: Working groups, citizen advisory committees, collaborative drafting
4. Citizen Impact: High; partnership approach with significant public influence

EMPOWER Citizens as Decision-Makers

1. Final decision-making authority placed in citizens' hands
2. Representatives implement what citizens decide
3. Examples: Citizen assemblies with binding recommendations, referendums
4. Citizen Impact: Highest; citizens have direct control over outcomes

It is thus clear that moving up the ladder requires increasing commitments from both citizens and representatives, and such offers greater public impact and democratic legitimacy. The most effective citizen engagement strategies employ multiple rungs of the ladder to create diverse opportunities for participation that accommodate different levels of citizen interest, expertise, and capacity.

Within Nigeria's evolving democracy, engagement practices continue to develop as the House of Representatives and citizens discover more effective ways to work together in shaping the nation's laws and policies.

Top Management of the National Assembly

These are senior officials responsible for administrative, legislative, and legal support within the National Assembly.

NAME	DESIGNATION	DIRECTORATE
Kamoru Ogunlana	Clerk to the National Assembly	Office of the CNA
Bashir Yero	Deputy Clerk to the National Assembly	Office of the CNA
Andrew O. Nwoba	Clerk, Senate	Senate
Rawlings Agada	Deputy Clerk (Legislative)	Senate
Emmanuel Odo	Deputy Clerk (Admin)	Senate
Yahaya Danzaria	Clerk, House of Rep.	House of Representatives

Florence K. Amos	Deputy Clerk (Legislative)	House of Representatives
Vivian Njemanze	Deputy Clerk (Admin)	House of Representatives
Dr. Abubakar Alkali	Secretary	Human Resources & Staff Development
Clement Inyang	Secretary	Finance & Accounts
Atiku Ibrahim	Secretary	Procurement & Supplies
Navati Iliya	Secretary	Legal Services
Dr. Bashir Hamza	Secretary	Health Services
Dr. Obasi Ukoha	Secretary	Legislative Budget and Planning
Eyo E. Essien	Secretary	Zonal Liason Offices
Okon B. Ekpenyong	Secretary	Inter Parliamentary Relations & Protocol
Mofoluwake O. Ogunbayo	Secretary	Parliamentary, Security & Special Duties
Dr. Ali Barde Umoru	Secretary	Research & Information
Engr. Baba S. Liman	Secretary	Estate & Works
Nana Asein	Director, Legislative	Office of the Speaker, House of Representatives

DEVELOPING A CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Principles of Citizen Engagement

Effective citizen engagement by the House of Representatives rests on several fundamental principles that should guide all interaction initiatives. These are:

Transparency and Openness

1. Clear Communication: Provide straightforward information about legislative processes, decisions, and outcomes
2. Accessible Information: Ensure all information is available in formats and languages accessible to diverse populations

3. **Process Transparency:** Clearly explain how citizen input will be used and its potential impact on legislative outcomes

Inclusivity and Diversity

1. **Diverse Representation:** Actively seek input from all demographics, particularly marginalized and underrepresented communities
2. **Multiple Access Points:** Offer various engagement channels (digital, physical, synchronous, asynchronous) to accommodate different circumstances
3. **Cultural Sensitivity:** Adapt engagement approaches to respect cultural differences across constituencies

Authenticity and Responsiveness

1. **Genuine Listening:** Demonstrate that citizen input is valued and considered seriously
2. **Timely Feedback:** Provide prompt responses to citizen inquiries and submissions
3. **Impact Tracking:** Report back to citizens on how their input influenced decisions

Continuity and Commitment

1. **Sustained Engagement:** Maintain ongoing dialogue beyond electoral cycles
2. **Institutional Support:** Embed engagement practices within the institutional framework of the House
3. **Resource Allocation:** Dedicate sufficient staff, time, and budget to engagement initiatives

Evidence-Based Decision-making

1. **Data Collection:** Gather and analyze information about engagement effectiveness
2. **Evaluation Framework:** Establish clear metrics to assess engagement outcomes
3. **Continuous Improvement:** Regularly review and refine engagement strategies based on feedback and results

Resources to Support Citizen Engagement

Successful citizen engagement requires dedicated resources across multiple dimensions as depicted in Figure 2:

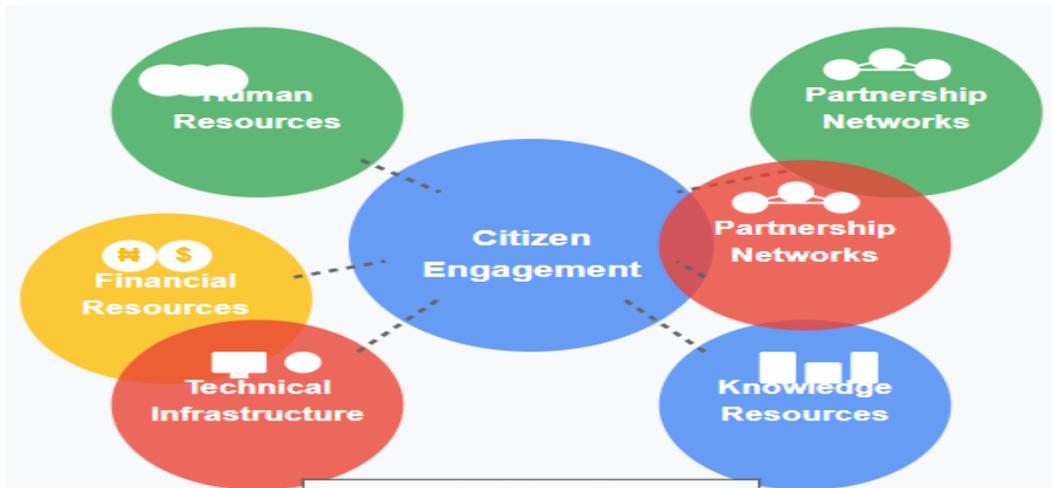


Figure 2: Resources for successful citizens' engagement
Source: The author

Human Resources

1. Engagement Specialists: Staff trained specifically in community outreach and public consultation
2. Training Programs: Ongoing professional development for representatives and staff in engagement techniques
3. Subject Matter Experts: Access to policy experts who can explain complex legislation to citizens

Financial Resources

1. Dedicated Budget Lines: Specific funding allocations for engagement activities
2. Flexible Funding: Resources that can be deployed rapidly in response to emerging issues
3. Grant Programmes: Funds to support civil society organizations in facilitating citizen participation

Technical Infrastructure

1. Digital Platforms: Robust online systems for virtual engagement and information sharing
2. Data Management Systems: Tools to collect, analyze, and respond to citizen input
3. Accessibility Technologies: Resources to ensure engagement is accessible to disadvantaged populations like persons with disabilities

Knowledge Resources

1. Best Practice Library: Compilation of successful engagement case studies
2. Research Support: Access to academic and practical research on effective engagement
3. Evaluation Frameworks: Tools to assess the impact and effectiveness of engagement efforts

Partnership Networks

1. Civil Society Connections: Establishing relationships with NGOs, community organizations, and advocacy groups
2. Academic Partnerships: Collaborations with universities for research and evaluation
3. Media Relationships: Networks with media outlets to amplify engagement opportunities

Citizen Engagement Opportunities

In-person Activities

1. Citizen Engagement Offices (or Constituency Offices): Dedicated physical spaces to serve as direct contact points between citizens and their representatives. These should include:
 - i. Permanent offices in each representative's district
 - ii. Satellite offices in underserved areas with regular operating hours
 - iii. Mobile offices that rotate through remote communities

The services provided by the offices should include:

- i. Casework assistance for constituents navigating federal agencies
- ii. Information on pending legislation and House activities
- iii. Collection of citizen opinions and concerns
- iv. Resource hub for community organizations and local governments

Best practices to ensure the efficient operation of the offices include:

- i. Staffing with knowledgeable local team members
- ii. Maintaining consistent hours and accessibility
- iii. Creating welcoming environments for all citizens
- iv. Establishing clear protocols for handling inquiries and feedback

2. Ad-hoc Meetings/Workshops with CSOs: Targeted interactions with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) provide structured dialogue on specific issues. These should include:
 - i. Issue-specific roundtables with relevant stakeholders
 - ii. Working groups focused on pending legislation
 - iii. Policy development workshops with expert input

The implementation strategies for the meetings/workshops should include:

- i. Co-design meeting formats with participating organizations
- ii. Establish clear objectives and deliverables for each interaction

- iii. Provide advance materials and background information
- iv. Document outcomes and follow-up actions

In order to achieve the objectives of organizing meetings/workshops, the following should be ensured:

- i. Diverse representation of perspectives
 - ii. Skilled facilitation to ensure productive discussion
 - iii. Transparent reporting of how input influences policy
 - iv. Regular follow-up on commitments made
3. Institutional Bodies: Formalized structures within or connected to the House that enable sustained citizen participation. These include:
- i. Citizen Advisory Committees on specific policy areas
 - ii. Youth Parliaments to engage future voters
 - iii. Constituent Review Boards for legislative feedback
 - iv. Expert Panels drawing on citizen expertise

The operational framework of the bodies should include:

- i. Clear terms of reference and mandate
- ii. Transparent member selection processes
- iii. Regular meeting schedules and public reporting
- iv. Direct channels to relevant committees or representatives

To ensure the effective operation of the bodies, the following measures should be taken:

- i. Balanced representation of diverse perspectives
 - ii. Meaningful influence on legislative processes
 - iii. Continuity across legislative sessions
 - iv. Regular evaluation and refinement of operations
4. Public Outreach: Proactive initiatives that bring the House to citizens rather than waiting for citizens to engage. These should include:
- i. Educational programs in schools and universities
 - ii. Community forums in neighborhood settings
 - iii. Presence at community events and gatherings
 - iv. Door-to-door canvassing on significant legislation

Implementation approaches for public outreach should include:

- i. Coordination with local community leaders and organizations

- ii. Training staff specifically for outreach activities
- iii. Developing user-friendly materials explaining complex issues
- iv. Targeting outreach to traditionally under engaged communities

Success strategies for public outreach should include:

- i. Culturally appropriate communication styles
 - ii. Addressing practical barriers to participation
 - iii. Creating non-intimidating environments for dialogue
 - iv. Following up with participants about outcomes
5. Town Hall Meetings: Large-scale public forums that enable direct dialogue between representatives and constituents. These should involve:
- i. Open topic community forums
 - ii. Issue-specific policy discussions
 - iii. Legislative feedback sessions
 - iv. Hybrid in-person/virtual formats for broader participation

Planning town hall meetings should involve the following elements to ensure success:

- i. Strategic selection of accessible venues and times
- ii. Advance promotion through multiple channels
- iii. Structured agenda balanced with open question periods
- iv. Professional facilitation to ensure equitable participation

To be effective, town hall meetings should ensure the following:

- i. Clear ground rules for respectful dialogue
 - ii. Documentation of all citizen input
 - iii. Provision of follow-up information on raised issues
 - iv. Report back on actions taken as a result of town hall input
6. Focus Groups: Small, facilitated discussions that allow for in-depth exploration of specific topics. Major considerations for designing focus group discussions should be:
- i. Strategic participant selection to capture diverse perspectives, with deliberate inclusion of minority groups and traditionally disenfranchised populations.
 - ii. Carefully crafted discussion guides
 - iii. Skilled moderation to ensure balanced participation
 - iv. Appropriate settings for comfortable dialogue

Strategies to ensure effective focus group discussions include:

- i. Collaboration with research professionals on methodology

- ii. Considering multiple sessions with different demographic groups
- iii. Providing participants with necessary background information
- iv. Recording sessions (with consent) for thorough analysis

To utilize the output of focus group discussions, the following should be ensured:

- i. Detailed analysis of qualitative feedback
 - ii. Integration of findings into legislative development
 - iii. Reporting back to participants on how input was used
 - iv. Identification of areas requiring further exploration
7. Committee Hearings and Witnesses: Formal legislative processes that incorporate citizen voices. To enhance access to such, the following should be ensured:
- i. Public notification well in advance of hearings
 - ii. Clear instructions on how to participate or observe
 - iii. Multiple channels for submission of testimony
 - iv. Accommodation for persons with disabilities

To support citizens who participate in committee hearings, the following should be provided:

- i. Guidelines on preparing effective testimony
- ii. Technical assistance for first-time witnesses
- iii. Travel stipends for witnesses with financial constraints
- iv. Preparation sessions for those unfamiliar with procedure

The process of citizens' participation in committee hearings should be improved through:

- i. Dedicated time for citizen testimony
- ii. Evening or weekend hearings for working citizens
- iii. Virtual participation options
- iv. Plain language summaries of technical discussions

8. Appearances or Submissions: Formal mechanisms for citizens and organizations to provide input on legislation. These include:

- i. Written briefs on pending legislation
- ii. Video testimonials from affected citizens
- iii. Expert analysis from stakeholder organizations
- iv. Position papers on emerging issues

The submission process should be enhanced with:

- i. User-friendly templates for submissions
- ii. Clear deadlines and procedures
- iii. Acknowledgment of all submissions received
- iv. Feedback on how submissions influenced decisions

To ensure maximum accessibility of submission, the following measures should be taken:

- v. Multiple submission channels (online, postal, in-person)
 - vi. Support for those with literacy or language barriers
 - vii. Technical assistance for complex submissions
 - viii. Translation services for non-English submissions
9. Citizen Assemblies: Representative groups of randomly selected citizens who deliberate on specific issues. The major features of citizen assemblies should include:
- i. Scientifically sound selection methodology for representative samples
 - ii. Independent facilitation and oversight
 - iii. Access to balanced expert information
 - iv. Adequate time for deliberation and consensus-building

The implementation framework of citizen assemblies should include:

- i. Clear mandate and scope of authority
- ii. Transparent connection to legislative process
- iii. Sufficient resources for thorough deliberation
- iv. Public reporting of proceedings and outcomes

To ensure success, citizen assemblies should involve:

- i. Non-partisan administrative support
- ii. Commitment to consider assembly recommendations
- iii. Public awareness of the assembly process
- iv. Follow-up reporting on implementation of recommendations

10. Political Party Conventions, Policy Meetings and Constituency Associations: Party-based forums that connect elected officials with party members and supporters. Engagement opportunities in such should include:

- i. Policy development sessions with constituent input
- ii. Resolution processes for platform development
- iii. Direct access to representatives at party events
- iv. Constituency association meetings on local priorities

Measures to maximize inclusivity in party-based forums include:

- i. Reduced barriers to party membership and participation
- ii. Outreach to diverse demographic groups
- iii. Accessible meeting locations and times
- iv. Virtual participation options

Practices that will breed effectiveness in party-based forums include:

- i. Transparent processes for policy adoption
- ii. Clear pathways from party policy to legislation
- iii. Regular communication with members on policy implementation
- iv. Feedback mechanisms on representative performance

11. Awareness Raising Programmes and Campaigns: Strategic initiatives to inform citizens about legislative issues and participation opportunities. These include:

- i. Civic education programmes on legislative processes
- ii. Issue-specific information campaigns
- iii. Participation promotion initiatives
- iv. Targeted outreach to underrepresented communities

Implementation strategies to ensure the effectiveness of campaigns include:

- i. Multi-channel communication approach
- ii. Partnerships with trusted community organizations
- iii. Use of accessible, plain language materials
- iv. Culturally appropriate messaging and imagery

Effective evaluation of campaigns should involve:

- i. Pre/post awareness measurement
- ii. Tracking of participation rates following campaigns
- iii. Feedback collection on campaign effectiveness
- iv. Analysis of reach across diverse demographics

12. Tours of Parliament and Attendance of Sittings: Direct exposure to legislative environments and processes. This should involve:

- i. Interactive educational components to tours
- ii. Behind-the-scenes insights into legislative work
- iii. Meet-and-greet opportunities with representatives
- iv. Age-appropriate programs for student groups

To maximize citizens' accessibility of tours, the following measures should be taken:

- i. Virtual tour options for remote citizens
- ii. Accommodations for visitors with disabilities
- iii. Multilingual tour offerings
- iv. Financial assistance for underserved school groups

Measures to strengthen tour engagement include:

- i. Follow-up materials for continued learning
- ii. Connections to ongoing engagement opportunities
- iii. Feedback collection on visitor experience
- iv. Special programs for in-depth civic education

Digital Tools

1. Citizen Proposals and E-petitions: Online mechanisms for citizens to collectively raise issues for legislative consideration. Requirements to ensure effective submissions include:
 - i. User-friendly interface for petition creation and signing
 - ii. Verification processes to ensure legitimate participation
 - iii. Transparent thresholds for official response
 - iv. Clear tracking of petition status and outcomes

Best practices for the implementation of online proposals and petitions include:

- i. Establishing reasonable signature thresholds
- ii. Setting predictable timelines for official response
- iii. Providing technical support for petition creators
- iv. Creating searchable archives of past petitions and responses

To enhance the impact of online proposals and petitions, the following measure should be taken:

- i. Direct routing to relevant committees or representatives
 - ii. Regular reporting on actions taken in response to successful petitions
 - iii. Integration with committee hearing schedules
 - iv. Public celebration of citizen-initiated policy changes
2. Online Portals and Mobile Applications: Digital platforms that facilitate continuous engagement and information access. The core functionalities of these should be:
 - i. Bill tracking with plain language summaries
 - ii. Representative contact and scheduling systems
 - iii. Comment submission on pending legislation

- iv. Personalized alerts on issues of interest

The design of digital platforms should include the following features:

- i. User-centered interface development
- ii. Mobile-first approach for maximum accessibility
- iii. Progressive enhancement for various device capabilities
- iv. Rigorous privacy and data protection standards

The contents of digital platforms should include:

- i. Interactive educational modules on legislative processes
- ii. Opinion polling on current issues
- iii. Community forums for citizen discussion
- iv. Integration with social media platforms

- 3. Online Briefings to Committees: Virtual participation options for committee proceedings. Technical Requirements for this include:

- i. Reliable video conferencing platforms
- ii. Recording capabilities for public archives
- iii. Moderated chat functions for participant questions
- iv. Screen sharing for presentation materials

Participation enhancement strategies for virtual participation options include:

- i. Pre-registration systems with reminder notifications
- ii. Technical support for first-time participants
- iii. Practice sessions for scheduled speakers
- iv. Multiple participation channels (video, audio, text)

Effective implementation strategies of virtual participation include:

- i. Clear protocols for virtual participation
- ii. Equal treatment of in-person and virtual contributions
- iii. Accessibility features such as closed captioning
- iv. Post-briefing follow-up with participants

- 4. Online Consultations: Structured digital processes for gathering citizen input on specific issues. This include:

- i. Surveys and questionnaires on policy proposals
- ii. Online deliberative forums
- iii. Crowdsourcing platforms for policy solutions
- iv. Comment periods on draft legislation

Principles for effective design of online consultation process include:

- i. Clear explanation of consultation purpose and process
- ii. Appropriate time frames for meaningful participation
- iii. Multiple participation options of varying commitment levels
- iv. Accessible language and format for diverse users

To maximize the positive impact of online consultations, the following measures should be taken:

- i. Transparent reporting of consultation results
- ii. Explanation of how input influenced decisions
- iii. Follow-up communication with participants
- iv. Evaluation of consultation effectiveness

Traditional and Social Media

1. Social Media: Digital platforms that enable direct, immediate, and widespread engagement between the House of Representatives and citizens. When utilized effectively, these platforms can enhance transparency, foster two-way communication, and build public trust. Recommended platforms are:
 - i. Twitter/X—Ideal for quick updates, announcements, legislative alerts, and real-time engagement during significant events
 - ii. Facebook—Suitable for more detailed content, community building, and event promotions
 - iii. Instagram—Effective for visual storytelling, behind-the-scenes glimpses, and reaching younger demographics
 - iv. YouTube—Perfect for sharing committee hearings, floor debates, educational content, and in-depth interviews
 - v. LinkedIn—Valuable for professional engagement, policy discussions, and connecting with industry leaders

Leveraging the different platforms should be guided by the following strategies:

- i. Tailored approaches for different platform demographics
- ii. Content calendars aligned with legislative activities
- iii. Consistent brand voice across platforms
- iv. Integration with official House communications

Navigating the different social media should be enhanced by the following strategies:

- i. Assigning dedicated communication staff for each platform
- ii. Developing content calendars aligned with the legislative agenda

- iii. Creating approval workflows for timely posting while ensuring accuracy
- iv. Establishing crisis communication protocols for sensitive issues

Best practices for members' social media usage include:

- i. Consistent branding and voice by (a) maintaining consistent visual elements and communication style across all platforms, and (b) developing platform-specific content strategies while preserving a unified message
- i. Active engagement by (a) responding promptly to citizen inquiries when appropriate, (b) hosting live Q&A sessions on specific legislation or issues, (c) creating polls and surveys to gather public input on pending legislation, (d) acknowledging and amplifying constructive citizen feedback, (e) sharing real-time updates on floor action and votes, and (e) establishing clear community guidelines for respectful discourse
- ii. Appealing content by (a) sharing clear, accessible explanations of complex legislative processes, (b) highlighting committee work, bill progress, and legislative achievements, (c) featuring "Day in the Life" content showcasing representatives' constituency work, (d) creating infographics explaining bills, budgets, and legislative impacts, and (e) live-streaming important hearings, floor debates, and town halls.
- iii. Analytics and refinement by (a) regularly reviewing engagement metrics to identify effective content, (b) adjusting strategies based on audience response and platform changes, and (c) tracking which legislative topics generate the most public interest

Management best practices for social media usage include:

- i. Clear social media policies for representatives and staff
 - ii. Dedicated personnel for content creation and monitoring
 - iii. Crisis communication protocols for sensitive issues
 - iv. Regular analytics review for strategy refinement
2. Television and Radio: Traditional broadcast media that remain crucial for reaching diverse demographics, particularly older citizens and those with limited internet access. They provide platforms for in-depth discussions and broader public education. Programming opportunities offered by these platforms include:
- i. Regular legislative update segments
 - ii. Call-in shows with representatives
 - iii. Public service announcements on participation opportunities
 - iv. Educational content on legislative processes

Strategies to utilize television for effective engagement with citizens include:

- i. Regular programming by (a) developing recurring segments on local news stations highlighting legislative updates, (b) creating a monthly "House Report" program for public access television, and (c) encouraging representatives to participate in political talk shows and interviews

- ii. Public broadcasting partnerships by (a) collaborating with public television stations for educational content, (b) creating documentary-style features explaining significant legislation, and (c) sponsoring town halls broadcast live with viewer call-in opportunities
- iii. Cable access utilization by (a) leveraging local cable access channels to broadcast committee hearings, and (b) creating district-specific programming highlighting local impacts of national legislation

Strategies to utilize radio for effective engagement with citizens include:

- i. Talk radio appearances by (a) scheduling regular appearances by representatives on local talk radio, and (b) participating in call-in shows to directly address citizen questions
- ii. Public service announcements by (a) developing brief informational segments about citizen participation opportunities, and (b) creating announcements for upcoming town halls and public forums
- iii. Podcast development by (a) launching House-sponsored podcasts on specific policy areas, and (b) creating district-specific podcasts for representatives to discuss local concerns

Measures to maximize accessibility for traditional media platforms include:

- i. Closed captioning for all television content
- ii. Transcripts of radio programs
- iii. Broadcast times that reach diverse audiences
- iv. Multilingual programming where appropriate

Measure to maximize the effectiveness of media engagement by member include:

- i. Providing media training for effective television and radio appearances
- ii. Maintaining updated contact lists of media outlets and journalists
- iii. Establish regular press briefings and media availability sessions
- iv. Creating a rapid response system for emerging issues

3. Hybridization: For maximum impact, traditional and social media approaches can be integrated into a cohesive communication strategy. Strategies to maximize the benefits of this include:

- i. Cross-Platform Promotion by (a) promoting television appearances through social media channels, (b) sharing snippets of radio interviews on digital platforms, and (c) directing social media followers to full broadcasts and recordings
- ii. Content repurposing by (a) converting television interviews into shorter social media clips, (b) transforming radio discussions into shareable podcast episodes, and (C) creating transcripts of broadcast appearances for website content

- iii. Coordinated messaging by (a) developing comprehensive messaging guidelines for all media channels, (b) ensuring consistent information across traditional and digital platforms, and (c) creating media calendars to align content across all channels
- iv. Impact measurement by (a) tracking media mentions and citizen engagement across all platforms, (b) conducting regular surveys on how citizens access legislative information, and (c) adjusting resource allocation based on which channels drive meaningful interaction

To maximize accessibility to both digital and traditional media platforms, the following should be ensured:

- i. Language access by (a) providing multilingual content on both traditional and social media, (b) captioning all video contents and, (c) providing transcripts for audio
- ii. Disability accommodations by (a) ensuring all digital content meets accessibility standards, and (b) providing audio descriptions for visual content when appropriate
- iii. Digital divide awareness by (a) maintaining robust traditional media presence to reach citizens without reliable internet, and (b) creating low-bandwidth versions of digital content for areas with limited connectivity.

Practical Guide for Citizens

Active citizen participation makes laws and other legislative processes more responsive to community needs. Below are practical steps you can take to engage your representatives and the National Assembly.

Remember: Your voice matters! By organizing, engaging, and following up, you can influence decisions that shape budgets, laws, and development in your community.

1. Initiating Participation in the Budgetary Process

- Follow the Budget Calendar: Track when the budget is presented, debated, and defended in the National Assembly.
- Identify Priority Needs: Work with your community to highlight pressing needs (schools, health centers, roads, electricity).
- Communicate with Your Representative: Share your community's priorities with your legislator before and during the budget debate.

2. Types of Issues to Engage Representatives On

- Local infrastructure needs (roads, water supply, electrification).
- Education and healthcare services.
- Employment and youth empowerment programs.
- Security challenges.
- Social welfare and poverty reduction measures.

3. Organizing Community Engagement

- Form Citizen Groups: Mobilize neighbors, community associations, women/youth groups, or professional unions.
- Develop a Joint Agenda: Agree on 2–3 urgent issues affecting everyone.
- Assign Roles: Choose spokespersons, record-keepers, and mobilizers to ensure effective engagement.

4. Hosting Town Halls with Legislators

- Plan Ahead: Decide the objectives and issues to be discussed.
- Invite Broad Participation: Involve community leaders, students, market associations, and vulnerable groups.
- Document Outcomes: Share resolutions from the town hall with your representative and follow up for accountability.

5. How to Write Petitions

- Be Clear and Concise: State the issue, who is affected, and the action you want taken.
- Provide Evidence: Attach photos, data, or testimonies where possible.
- Follow Procedure: Submit petitions through the Clerk of the House or the relevant committee. Keep a copy for your records.

6. Engaging in Public Hearings

- Register Early: Sign up through the committee secretariat before the hearing date.
- Prepare Your Submission: Write a short, clear statement of your views on the bill or policy.

→ **Speak Respectfully:** Present your position confidently but respectfully before lawmakers.

7. Giving Testimonials Before NASS Committees

→ **Personalize Your Story:** Explain how the issue affects you or your community.

→ **Keep It Short:** Stick to key facts and recommendations.

→ **Stay Calm and Professional:** Even when emotional, present your testimony in a respectful manner.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

On Bills

Q: Where can I obtain copies of bills being considered by the House of Representatives?

A: You can get copies from the official National Assembly website or request them from the Clerk of the relevant committee.

Q: How do I confirm that I have the latest and official version of a bill?

A: Check the version on the National Assembly website or contact the legislative department directly for verification.

Q: Where can I access proposed amendments to bills?

A: Proposed amendments are usually presented during committee stages and can be accessed through the committee secretariat or official records.

Q: How can I get copies of Acts that have been passed and assented to by the President?

A: Passed Acts are available in the Official Gazette or on the website of the National Assembly and Federal Ministry of Justice.

Q: How can I track the progress or status of a bill in the National Assembly?

A: Visit the National Assembly website to monitor the status of bills through their various stages—readings, committee, and plenary sessions.

On Committees

Q: When and where do House Committees hold meetings?

A: Committee meetings are held at designated rooms within the National Assembly complex, with schedules posted on notice boards or announced online.

Q: How do I find out if a committee will deliberate on a specific bill?

A: Committee schedules and agendas are often published on the National Assembly website or can be obtained from the committee clerk.

Q: Can members of the public attend or make submissions at committee hearings?

A: Yes. Public attendance and submissions are allowed, but prior notification or formal request may be required.

Q: I live with a disability and require support to attend or participate in a committee session. Who do I contact?

A: Contact the Citizens and Public Affairs Office at the National Assembly to request assistance in advance.

Q: Do I need to register as a lobbyist or citizen advocate to engage with legislators?

A: No formal registration is required to engage, but advocacy must follow proper protocol and decorum.

On Legislators

Q: How can I contact my Representative from my state or constituency to share my views or concerns?

A: Contact details are available on the National Assembly website or in the directory section of this toolkit.

Q: If I visit the National Assembly complex, where can I go to meet or leave a message for my Representative?

A: Go to the reception or front desk at the House of Representatives wing and ask to leave a message or request for an appointment.

On Physical Access and Accommodation

Q: Is there designated parking for visitors at the National Assembly complex in Abuja?

A: Yes, but parking is limited and subject to security clearance.

Q: What are the procedures for gaining entry into the National Assembly premises?

A: Present a valid ID, state your purpose of visit, and undergo routine security screening at the entrance.

Q: Are elevators available for accessing upper floors of the complex?

A: Yes, elevators are available in key areas of the building.

Q: Are there clearly marked seating areas for visitors during plenary or committee sessions?

A: Yes, public galleries are marked and accessible for observers.

Q: Where are public restrooms located within the complex?

A: Restrooms are located on each floor and are clearly labeled.

Q: What support services are available for individuals with mobility challenges?

A: Ramps, elevators, and staff assistance are available to aid movement within the complex.

Q: Are there sign language interpreters or hearing assistance devices for individuals with hearing impairments?

A: These services can be arranged upon request through the Citizens Engagement Office.

Contact Information and Details of Members

Each member of the House represents a federal constituency. Citizens are encouraged to contact their Representative for constituency matters or legislative input.

Abia State

No.	Name	Constituency	Office No.	Phone No.	Email
1	Alexandar Mascot Ikwehegh	Aba North/South	1.72	08063902835	alexanderikwehegh@gmail.com
2	Ifeanyi Ibe Okwara	Arochukwu/ohafia	0.58	08021229949	ibe@ibeokwara.com
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Committee Rooms Allocation

Committee hearings take place in specific rooms within the National Assembly complex. Visitors attending sessions or submitting input should check room assignments in advance.

S/N	ROOM NO.	LOCATION	COMMITTEES ALLOCATED
1	Room 436	4th Floor New Building	1. Agric Colleges and Institutions 2. Agric Production and Services 3. Aids Loans and Debt Management 4. Alternative Education 5. Anti Corruption 6. Public Service Matters
2	Room 425	4th Floor New Building	1. Air Force 2. Appropriations 3. Rules and Business 4. Aviation Technology 5. Basic Education Examination Bodies 6. Christian Pilgrims Affairs

3	Room 468	4th Floor Extension	1. Army 2. Aviation 3. Shipping Services 4. Constituency Outreach 5. Culture and Tourism 6. Civil Societies and Development Matters
4	Room 459	4th Floor Extension	1. Banking Institutions 2. Banking Regulations 3. Small and Medium Enterprises 4. Drugs and Narcotics 5. Ecological Funds 6. Climate Change
5	Room 447	4th Floor Extension	1. Basic Education 2. Capital Market and Institutions 3. Sustainable Development Goals SDGs 4. Environment 5. FCT Area Councils and Ancillary Matters
6	Room 304	3rd Floor New Building	1. Cooperation and Integration for Africa 2. Navy 3. Niger Delta Development Commission 4. Sports 5. Steel 6. Legislative Library Research and Documentation
7	Room 305	3rd Floor New Building	1. Constitutional Review 2. Corporate Social Responsibilities 3. University Education 4. Federal Road Safety Commission FRSC 5. Food and Drugs Administration and Control 6. Diaspora
8	Room 312	3rd Floor New Building	1. Customs and Excise 2. Defence 3. Water Resources 4. HIV AIDS Tuberculosis and Malaria Control 5. Hydrological Services HYPADDEC 6. Disabilities
9	Room 323	3rd Floor New Building	1. Digital and Communication Technology ICT 2. Digital and Electronic Banking 3. Works 4. Institutional Reforms 5. Inter Governmental Affairs 6. Ethics and Privileges
10	Room 324	3rd Floor New Building	1. Electoral Matters 2. Emergency and Disaster Management 3. Inter Parliamentary Relations 4. Justice 5. FCT Judiciary
11	Room 327	3rd Floor New Building	1. Federal Capital Territory 2. Federal Character 3. Land Transport 4. ME of Implementation of Legislative Agenda 5. Financial Crimes
12	Room 348	3rd Floor Extension	1. Federal Road Maintenance Agency FERMA 2. Finance 3. Media and Public Affairs 4. Monitoring and Evaluation of Standing Ad hoc Committees 5. FOI Reform of Government Institutions
13	Room 345	3rd Floor Extension	1. Foreign Affairs 2. Gas Resources 3. National Planning and Economic Development 4. Niger Delta Ministry 5. Human Rights
14	Room 344	3rd Floor Extension	1. Health Institutions 2. Healthcare Services 3. Pensions 4. Police Institutions 5. Inland Waterways
15	Room 202	2nd Floor New Building	1. Host Communities 2. House Services 3. Populations 4. Poverty Alleviation 5. Internal Security of the National Assembly
16	Room 236	2nd Floor Extension	1. Housing and Habitat 2. Industry 3. Power 4. Privatisation and Commercialisation 5. Urban Development and Regional Planning

17	Room 244	2nd Floor Extension	1. Information National Orientation Ethics and Values 2. Insurance and Actuarial Matters 3. Reformatory Institutions 4. Rural Development 5. Internally Displaced Persons and Refugees
18	Room 245	2nd Floor Extension	1. Interior 2. Judiciary 3. Rural Electrification 4. Safety Standards
19	Room 246	2nd Floor Extension	1. Islamic Pilgrims Affairs 2. Labour Employment and Productivity 3. Local Content 4. Science and Technology 5. Science Engineering
20	Room 247	2nd Floor Extension	1. Lake Chad 2. Maritime Safety Education and Administration 3. Military and Paramilitary Pensions 4. Science Research Institutions 5. Solid Minerals
21	Room 107	1st Floor New Building	1. Legislative Budget and Research 2. National Agency for Science and Engineering 3. National Security and Intelligence 4. Special Duties 5. Specialty Healthcare
22	Room 117	1st Floor New Building	1. Legislative Compliance 2. Commerce 3. Communications 4. TETFUND and other Services 5. Federal Colleges of Education 6. Federal Polytechnics
23	Room 120	1st Floor New Building	1. Delegated Legislation 2. North East Development Commission 3. Petroleum Resources Downstream 4. Women Affairs and Social Development 5. Youth Development
24	Room 141	1st Floor Extension	1. Political Parties Matters 2. Petroleum Resources Midstream 3. Petroleum Resources Upstream 4. Public Assets 5. Renewable Energy
25	Room 144	1st Floor Extension	1. Youth in Parliament 2. Police Affairs 3. Ports and Harbours 4. Public Procurement 5. Treaties Protocol and Agreements 6. Women in Parliament