



Nigeria Labour Congress and Youth Stakeholders  
Dialogue on Nigeria's SDGs Progress

# Bridging Gaps in SDGs Implementation

A Labour and Youth Stakeholders  
Dialogue on SDGs Progress in Nigeria



# Introduction

The high-level engagement titled "Bridging Gaps: An NLC and Youth Organisations Stakeholder Dialogue on Nigeria's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Progress Towards 2030" brought together a diverse mix of stakeholders from Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), youth-led organizations, international development agencies, and government representatives. The meeting, convened at the UN House in Abuja with a total attendance of 103 participants (49 male and 54 female), served as a strategic platform to foster meaningful dialogue between the International Labour Organization (ILO), Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), and youth organisation stakeholders.

The dialogue was designed to strengthen collaboration, share evidence-based insights, and ensure that both Trade unions and youth perspectives are fully reflected in Nigeria's SDG progress narrative. Central to the engagement was the dissemination of key findings from the Youth Shadow Report and the Nigeria Labour Congress Voluntary National Review (VNR) 2025 paper. These documents provided a critical appraisal of Nigeria's SDG performance, highlighting achievements, gaps, and priority areas that demand urgent action before 2030.

By facilitating a multi-stakeholder exchange, the event created space for youth leaders, government officials, civil society organisations, ILO and NLC representatives, and development partners to present their unique positions, examine progress to date, and collectively develop pathways for accelerated SDG implementation. Discussions addressed cross-cutting issues such as gender inequality, rural-urban disparities, mental health, and employment challenges that are both deeply interconnected and central to sustainable development. The event also underscored the need for greater accountability, transparency, and equitable resource allocation, particularly for youth-focused interventions, to ensure no one is left behind on Nigeria's journey towards the 2030 Agenda.





# WELCOME ADDRESS

Ms. Inviolata Chinyangarara, Senior Specialist in Worker's Activities at the ILO, opened the session with a warm welcome and an emphasis on why collaborative initiatives such as this are critical for accelerating progress. She underscored the need for synergy between trade unions youth advocates, and relevant policy actors to ensure inclusive sustainable development.



# KEYNOTE SPEECHES

Three keynote addresses set the tone for the day:

- Mr. Mohammed Malick Fall, United Nations Resident Coordinator, highlighted the urgency of scaling up implementation strategies for the SDGs, noting that Nigeria stands at a pivotal moment where youth inclusion and decent work are essential drivers of progress.
- Comrade Joe Ajaero, President of the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), represented by Comrade Benson Upah stressed the importance of protecting workers' rights, promoting decent work, and ensuring fair wages in alignment with SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth)
- Mr. Sadiq Rabi, Special Assistant to the President on Capacity Development, reiterated the government's commitment to building capacity within key sectors, with a focus on workforce readiness and youth empowerment.

Dr. Muttaqa Yushau, Director of Education and Policy Research at the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), delivered an in-depth presentation of the union's position paper, which provided a trade union -focused perspectives on Nigeria's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) progress. He outlined persistent challenges facing Nigerian workers, including wage stagnation, high unemployment rates, and the prevalence of precarious job conditions.



The paper put forward a series of labour-friendly policy recommendations aimed at strengthening social protection systems, improving working conditions, and ensuring that labour policies are effectively aligned with the SDGs. Dr. Yushau stressed the importance of localizing the SDGs to ensure effective delivery and measurable impact at the grassroots level. He underscored the need for greater involvement of trade unions and grassroots organisations in SDG implementation, highlighting their proximity to communities and ability to drive practical change.

Overall, the NLC position paper emphasized the critical role of local-level implementation and inclusive stakeholder engagement in achieving the SDGs, reiterating that sustainable progress requires collaboration across sectors, timely action, and a people-centred approach to development.



# YOUTH PERSPECTIVE ON NIGERIA'S SDGS PROGRESS

The Youth Shadow Report, presented by Ms. Oluwabukunmi Obadeyi, Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Manager at NGYouthSDGs, offered a youth-led, evidence-based assessment of Nigeria's progress on seven key SDGs, health, education, decent work, innovation, climate action, peace and institutions, and partnerships complementing the country's 2025 Voluntary National Review (VNR) already presented at the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF).

Developed through a nationwide survey of 974 youth, virtual consultations, desk review of the VNR, and a validation workshop with diverse youth groups, the report compares official claims with grassroots realities. While the VNR highlights achievements such as expanded health facilities, maternal health initiatives, new classrooms, digital learning platforms, vocational training reforms, and climate strategies, young people report persistent gaps in access, quality, and inclusivity.

In health, many face poor service delivery, high costs, and stigma around mental and reproductive care. In education, overcrowded classrooms, outdated curricula, and rural digital exclusion hinder learning. Job creation has not kept pace with need, forcing many into precarious self-employment. Innovation policies and broadband expansion remain uneven, leaving rural youth behind. Climate action is often urban-focused, with low youth engagement. Governance reforms have not eased political exclusion or safety concerns in civic spaces, while partnerships still sideline youth-led organisations in planning and funding.

The report calls for integrated youth-friendly health systems, equitable quality education, bold economic opportunities, rural digital access, climate inclusion, safer civic spaces, and authentic youth participation in partnerships backed by sustainable funding and robust accountability frameworks.

## KEY OUTCOMES AND DISCUSSIONS FROM THE PANEL SESSION

### 1. Education and Skills Gap:

Panelists observed that Nigeria's education system remains outdated and does not adequately prepare young people for the labour market. They noted gaps in problem-solving, digital literacy, and critical thinking skills, as well as disparities in access to technology between urban and rural areas. These shortcomings contribute to inequality and limit opportunities for youth.

### 2. Disconnect Between Youth Inputs and Policy Implementation:

The panel highlighted the recurring challenge of youth contributions not being translated into concrete government action. While young people are often consulted, their recommendations rarely become institutionalized within state and local government plans. This disconnect undermines the value of civic participation and weakens accountability.

### **3. The Need for Bottom-Up, Community-Driven Approaches**

Panelists emphasized that sustainable solutions must be rooted in community realities. They stressed that co-creation with local stakeholders, workers, and employers is vital to ensure that interventions address root causes rather than surface-level symptoms. Such bottom-up approaches were seen as essential for context-specific and long-term impact.

### **4. The Role of the Labour Movement in Development**

The discussion underscored the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) as a key platform with the organizational strength to monitor progress on development indicators and amplify youth voices. Panelists noted that stronger youth-labour coalitions could bridge the gap between policy frameworks and lived experiences, and move beyond dialogue to concrete advocacy, public campaigns, and policy proposals.

### **5. Cross-Cutting Challenges Affecting Youth**

Throughout the discussion, underemployment, gender inequality, and the disconnect between policy and lived experience emerged as shared concerns. These challenges point to the need for stronger institutional frameworks, more inclusive decision-making processes, and targeted investment in youth skills for emerging industries.

## **OPEN SPACE FOR INTERACTIONS**

The open-floor session encouraged vibrant and active participation from attendees, creating a space for open dialogue and idea sharing. Participants raised critical issues such as the outdated nature of school curricula and teaching practices, which they felt no longer aligned with the skills and knowledge required in today's world. They also discussed the importance of creating smart and innovative employment opportunities that are easily accessible to young people across the country. Another key focus was on identifying effective mechanisms to hold policymakers accountable for delivering on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), ensuring that commitments translate into tangible results for communities.

## **REFLECTIONS**

During the reflection session, UN Resident Coordinator Mr. Fall, Dr. Yushau from NLC, and Mr. Alade the Executive Director of Network of Youth for Sustainable Initiative (NGYouthSDGs). Each reiterated the need for collaborative action. They emphasized that Nigeria's SDG goals will only be met if trade unions, youth, and policymakers work in unison, with a shared commitment to equity, sustainability, and inclusion.





## RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

### 1. Co-create Solutions

Strengthen collaboration with local communities to develop context-specific and sustainable interventions. Adopt a bottom-up approach that values community knowledge, ensuring solutions are inclusive and practical.

**Next Step:** Facilitate community dialogues and participatory planning sessions to co-design projects and monitor their implementation.

### 2. Address Root Causes

Tackle underlying systemic issues rather than surface symptoms, emphasizing inclusive and consultative decision-making processes.

**Next Step:** Conduct research and stakeholder consultations to identify barriers and develop policy briefs that address these root challenges.

### 3. Leave No One Behind

Ensure that interventions intentionally reach vulnerable and marginalized populations, extending social protection and empowerment to those most in need.

**Next Step:** Map and engage underserved communities to integrate their voices and needs into program planning and evaluation.

### 4. Foster Collaboration

Promote sustained partnerships through social dialogue and multi-stakeholder engagement among trade unions, youth groups, civil society, and other relevant actors.

**Next Step:** Establish a joint working group or coalition platform to strengthen coordination and share best practices.



## 5. Build Capacity

Enhance the knowledge and skills of workers and youth through targeted training, mentorship, and knowledge-sharing initiatives on sustainable development and decent work.

**Next Step:** Develop and implement a structured capacity-building plan that includes workshops, online courses, and peer learning sessions.

## 6. Promote Inclusive Development

Advocate for equitable development strategies that prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion, ensuring benefits reach all social groups.

**Next Step:** Review institutional policies to embed inclusive practices and promote representation of youth, women, and marginalized groups in decision-making spaces.



Ms. Inviolata Chinyangarara delivered the closing remarks, expressing appreciation to all participants for their active contributions and insightful discussions. She reiterated the ILO's commitment to fostering strong partnerships that drive progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The event concluded with an informal networking session, where participants exchanged contacts, discussed potential collaboration opportunities, and explored practical ways to strengthen their shared agenda for inclusive and sustainable development.

## CONCLUSION

The engagement successfully bridged the perspectives of labour unions and youth advocates, fostering a united front for accelerating the achievement of the SDGs in Nigeria. It underscored the importance of inclusive dialogue, evidence-based advocacy, and actionable commitments. The momentum generated from this gathering will serve as a strong foundation for sustained multi-stakeholder collaboration, ensuring that the ideas and commitments discussed are translated into tangible impact in the months ahead.



# GET IN TOUCH WITH US

For any questions or concerns about the Report kindly reach out to us. Also, feel free to stay connected to us to learn more about our work towards meaningful youth engagement, in Nigeria.

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