



CHRISTIAN (CATHOLIC) YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL PROCESSES IN NIGERIA:

Challenges and Prospects.

(Webinar) 18th February, 2023.

Policy Brief

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SUMMARY

It is critical for youths to understand what their responsibilities are and participate actively in every political process. This includes participation in grassroot party politics up to the entire electoral process. However, to effectively participate in political and electoral processes, the youth must be given the proper tools such as education and access to credible and requisite information that enables them to understand their role in the socio-political national discourse and actions that can promote meaningful participation. Importantly, youths should participate not only as voters but also as contestants and electoral officials to fulfil their civic role in governance processes.

Out of an estimated population of 1.3 billion, the youth demographic makes up an estimated 430 million of Africa's population. According to the Mo Ibrahim Foundation 2019 assessment, "almost 60 per cent of Africa's population was under the age of 25, making Africa the world's youngest continent." The Afrobarometer (2016) survey across 36 African countries noted that 78 per cent of the youth believe in the civic responsibility of voting. Therefore, their participation cannot and should not be a subject of debate but a certain and obvious reality.

However, the attitude of Christian Youths to political participation over the years in

Nigeria has been low and dismal. Politics is seen as dirty and political participation as a process left for the corrupt and contaminated. May Christian youths continue to sustain an attitude of waiting for heavenly compensation rather than strategic political engagement. Yet political participation is and should be a vocation for all Christian youths. It is an evangelical imperative and a pastoral response to the call of Jesus to give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God (Mark 12:17). Political participation for all Christians, particularly Christian youths is at the heart of the Catholic Social Teachings.

It is for this reason that The Kukah Centre, in partnership with the Health, Justice, Development and Peace - Provisional Centre, Kaduna, held a zoom webinar to discuss the challenges and prospects of Christian Youth participation in Political Processes in Nigeria. The Webinar, led by Mr. Wilson Manji identified the prospects and challenges for youth participation in general, and that of the Christian Youths in particular. These challenges, if not tackled, poise evident negative effect on electoral activities. The project digs into these challenges and offers recommendations to improve the issue.

GOAL



The Kukah Centre has designed this project to awaken the place of the Church's teaching in Christian Youth Participation in Political Processes in Nigeria. Most importantly, the project intends to underscore how the Church's teaching will be the basis for promoting Youth involvement in Political Processes for common good in the society.

OBJECTIVES

To learn and constructively engage in Political Processes.

Recollect and document the role of the Church in resolving emerging social issues by deploying the ingredients of Catholic Social Teachings.

Develop policy recommendations from the discussions to be shared with key partners and stakeholders.

EVENT OVERVIEW

The event was a webinar, held on Saturday, 18th February, 2023 at The Kukah Centre, Kaduna.

This event was organized to educate youths on the criteria for Christians to make informed and conscious choices when voting. This is because a well-informed Christian conscience does not permit one to vote for a political part or an individual law that contradicts the fundamental contents of faith and morals.

A well-informed Christian conscience in turn shapes and influences how Christians contribute to civil and respectful public dialogue and political choices in the year of elections. This is a call to discipleship in the world of politics, which is a civic means ensuring equitable distribution of the common good, while guaranteeing both civic and religious virtue.

We had a fluctuating attendance of 15 to 20 participants due to network glitches. These audience consisted of 6 - 9 female participants range and a 9 - 11. male participant range. From the comments of participants and answers from resource person, some of the new information from the events are;



The BVAS (Bimodal Voters Accreditation System) accreditation will still need Permanent Voters Card (PVC) details, hence PVC is still valid.



The results should be instantly uploaded on BVAS and also pasted at Polling Unit.



The voting system in Nigeria, has evolved positively - contrary to the common opinion.



The best reaction to infractions, is to document infractions and report to Electoral Commission.

CHALLENGES

Integrity and Trust Deficit in the Electoral Process: One of the biggest challenges for Christian Youth participation in politics is the perceived loss of trust in the system. Many youths believe that their votes will not count and that the Nigerian electoral system is very transactional. This perception has derailed the active participation of Christian youths in the electoral process.



The Perception of Ethnic and Religious Profiling in the Political Space:

For some time, there are allegation of massive religious and ethnic profiling where Christians are seen persona non-grata in certain constituencies. This level of injustice and ethnic religious profiling has discouraged many Christian Youths from undertaking political participation as a vocation.

Unrealistic Expectations:

The approach of Christian Youths to electoral issues in Nigeria, evidently comes from an angle of where Nigeria should be, rather than where Nigeria is. This has urged Christian youths to demonstrate impatience and constantly ignore to follow the growth and changes in Nigeria's political processes. This makes becomes self-defeating because the ideal expectations have not been met.

Poor knowledge of Electoral Process Rules:

Some Christian Youths are either poorly informed, misinformed or totally ignorant of the compulsory and necessary rules

guiding Political Processes, especially the voting process. For instance, folding your paper in a certain way could invalidate your vote. There is time allocate for the elections to be carried out, failure to adhere could mean an individual will not be allowed to cast any vote.

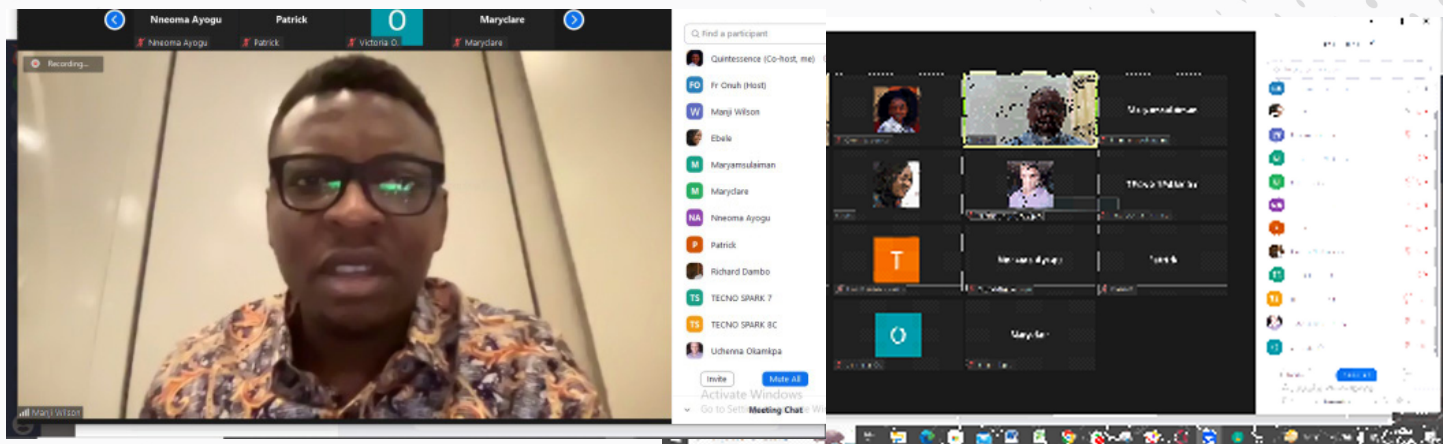
The Monetization of the Electoral Process:

The monetization of the electoral processes is also a challenge for many Christian youths. This is particularly visible for Christian youths who come from impoverished backgrounds, lack mentors and financial support to realize their political dreams.

The impact of the New Media (social media):

The increased levels of fake news, disinformation and misrepresentation affects the participation of Christian youths. These social media platforms have become purveyors of hate and spread of incitement. It has intimidated many Christian youths who have failed to participate in Nigeria's political processes.

Nuggets/Photos:



"As a Christian Youth, your non-participation in political processes, does not make you holier than those who participate in political processes"

Mr. Wilson Manji



"Contrary to what some youths think, Nigeria is not backward in her voting system"

Mr. Wilson Manji

Strategic Policy Recommendations for Christian Youths and Leaders.

CHRISTIAN YOUTHS

The Need to Uphold Integrity and Trust in the Electoral Process: Christian youths must participate in politics to use Christian values to sanitize and provide trust in the entire electoral process. This is important because politics is not dirty and Christian participation is a moral obligation towards the society and the human community. Therefore, Christian youths must uphold integrity and trust at all levels of engagements in the society.

Promoting the Narratives of Common Citizenship and Equal Political Participation: Youths generally, and Christian youths have a moral duty to promote common citizenship. This will be achieved through political participation and undertaking decision making processes at the highest level of governments. Christian youths must avoid all strategies of discrimination, promote common citizenship and the dignity of the human person.

Improved Knowledge of the Electoral Process and Rules: Christian youths must undertake to educate themselves on the electoral legal framework. This will support them in making informed decisions and how to overcome challenges in political participation.

The Promotion of Qualitative Electoral and Political Debate: Youth leaders must design strategies for promoting quality electoral and political debates. Part of this is to discourage the monetization of the electoral process among Christians.

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CHURCH LEADERS

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Upon providing the political strategy for engagement, Church leaders must advocate and lead youth involvement in political processes. This must be done in an inclusive and gender-sensitive manner.

Establishment of Church ministries dedicated to the training of future political leaders with the view to enhancing their competences and capacities to improving the political systems in Nigeria. More importantly, to ensure that Christian social teachings promote peace and stability, thereby mitigating the challenges that impact the electoral process.

Church leaders must promote responsible engagement with the political and electoral process ensuring youth non-involvement in negative vices such as drug consumption, thuggery, vandalism and any other action that hampers the smooth conduct of elections at all levels.

Church leaders should encourage more participation of traditionally marginalized groups such as women and persons with disabilities. In this case, particular attention should be given to the mentorship of young girls as a form of promoting active female participation in politics.

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About The Kukah Centre

The Kukah Centre (TKC) is a Nigeria-based policy research institute, founded by Most Rev. Matthew Hassan Kukah, Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Sokoto. The Centre has offices in Abuja and Kaduna and treats political leadership as a collaborative exercise that requires multiple governance structures at various levels - individuals, households, small businesses, the organized private sector, NGOs and government.

Interfaith dialogue is at the core of the Centre's work and involves actively promoting conversations among Nigeria's faith communities, as well as between leaders in faith and public policy. The Kukah Centre aspires to become Nigeria's leading institution for the promotion of an active and engaged citizenry by providing support for inclusive dialogue and advocacy initiatives.

