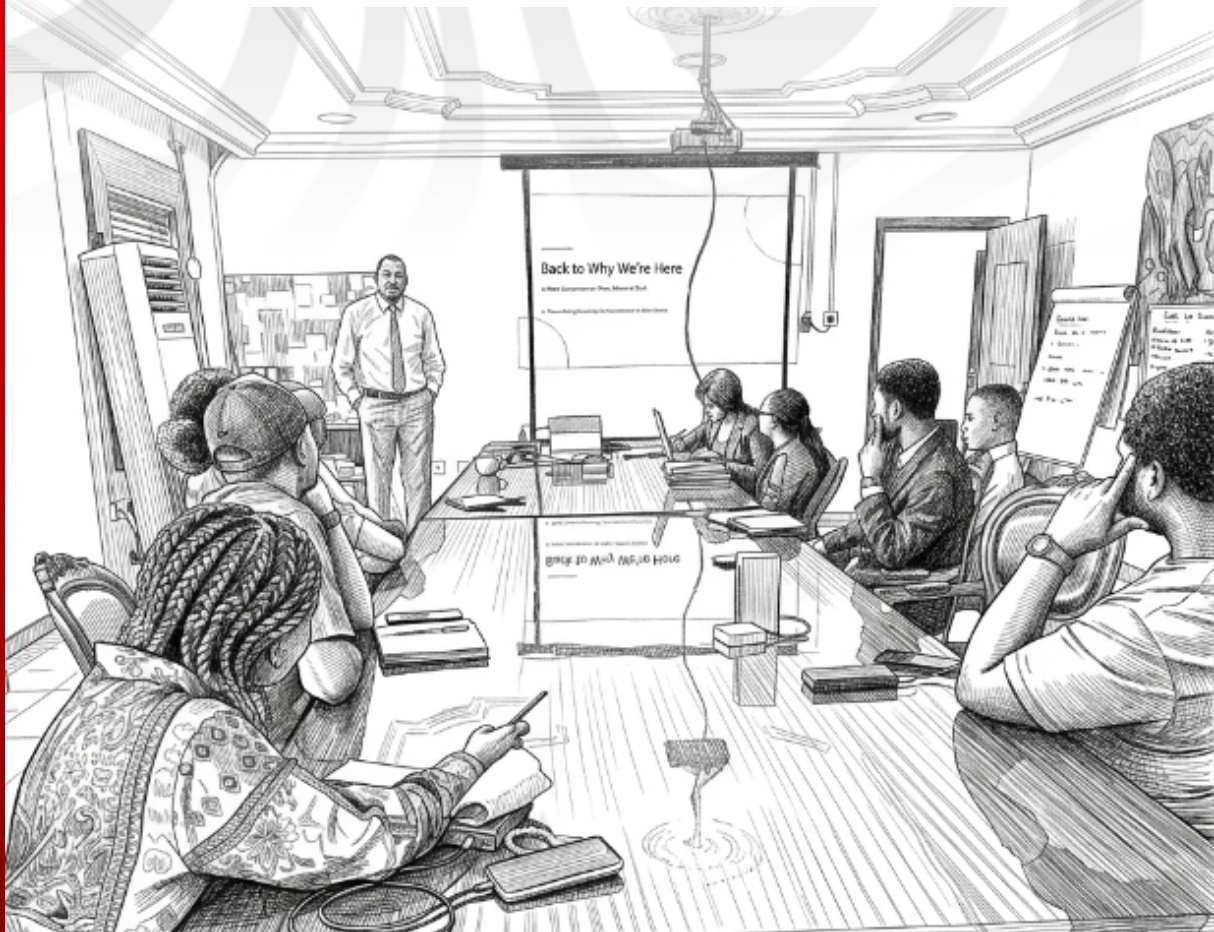


TOS
FOUNDATION AFRICA

VOICES OF IMPACT

TOS FOUNDATION AFRICA NEWSLETTER



J U L Y , 2 0 2 6 .

The work of shaping society rarely begins in the public eye. It begins much earlier, in classrooms, around boardroom tables, inside organisations, and in conversations that prepare people for responsibilities they have not yet been invited to carry.

That belief runs through every story in this edition.

You will read about women being equipped to lead before the political moment demands them. You will read our continued call for a democracy that reflects the people it serves. You will see our contribution to conversations on peace, our work to strengthen health systems, and, just as importantly, our decision to pause and invest in the growth of our own team. We did so because organisations cannot ask society to evolve while neglecting the people responsible for driving that evolution.

For us, these are not disconnected initiatives. They are different expressions of the same conviction: people shape institutions, and institutions, in turn, shape nations. If we desire better governance, healthier communities, and more inclusive leadership, then our first responsibility is to ensure that capable people are ready to carry that work with excellence and integrity.

This is why TOS Foundation Africa continues to invest as deliberately in knowledge as we do in programmes; in leadership as much as advocacy; and in organisational capacity alongside community impact. Influence is sustained not by good intentions, but by competence, credibility, and consistency.

I hope these pages offer more than an account of our activities. I hope they invite reflection on the kind of society we are building, the kind of leadership it requires, and the responsibility each of us has in preparing for it.

Thank you for believing in this work and for continuing to walk this path with us.



Chief (Mrs.) Osasu Igbiniedion Ogwuche
Founder, TOS Foundation Africa

REFLECTION:

Recently Concluded Primary Elections and the Future of Women's Political Representation in Nigeria



If the recently concluded party primaries have taught us anything, it is that Nigeria's conversation about women's political inclusion can no longer revolve around aspiration alone; it must now confront the architecture of our politics. For years, political parties have announced discounted nomination forms, affirmative action commitments and public declarations of support for women. Yet, when candidates eventually emerged from the primaries, the familiar pattern repeated itself: relatively few women secured party tickets.

This outcome surprised many observers, but perhaps it should not have. In an analysis recently published by Premium Times, investigative reporter Sharon Eboesomi argued that Nigeria had entered another electoral cycle without resolving the structural question of women's representation, warning that the continued delay in passing the Reserved Seats for Women Bill had effectively closed the window for meaningful reform before the 2027 general elections. Her assessment echoes a growing concern among policy experts that without structural interventions, women's political representation may continue to stagnate despite years of advocacy.

This concern has not come from advocacy organizations alone. During a recent media briefing held on X Spaces, findings from a post-primary audit of political parties were presented by gender advocates and electoral experts. Reporting on the briefing, Premium Times noted that prohibitively expensive nomination forms, weak regulation of direct primaries, consensus arrangements and the growing influence of money politics had combined to narrow opportunities for women long before voters ever had the chance to cast a ballot. Participants warned that unless these systemic barriers were addressed, women's already limited representation could "nosedive" even further.

Perhaps the most important lesson from these analyses is that they shift the conversation away from women themselves and towards the system within which they must compete. For too long, discussions around women's political participation have focused on whether enough women are interested in contesting elections or sufficiently prepared for leadership. The evidence emerging from the primaries suggests otherwise. Across the major political parties, women declared their ambitions, built grassroots networks, raised campaign resources and subjected themselves to party processes. The challenge was not a shortage of capable women; it was the nature of the political terrain.

It is precisely this reality that has renewed national attention on the Reserved Seats for Women Bill, not as a symbolic concession, but as a structural intervention designed to correct a long-standing democratic imbalance. Rather than replacing existing electoral contests, the proposed constitutional amendment seeks to create one additional Senate seat and one additional House of Representatives seat for women in each state and the Federal Capital Territory, alongside three additional seats for women in every State House of Assembly, for an initial period of four election cycles.

Critics have questioned whether such a measure is necessary. Yet history suggests that temporary special measures have often provided the momentum needed to break long-standing patterns of exclusion. Countries such as Rwanda, Senegal and Tanzania have adopted different models of affirmative representation with measurable improvements in women's legislative participation and, in many cases, broader policy responsiveness. Nigeria, by contrast, continues to rank among the weakest performers on the continent. Today, women occupy just 17 of the 469 seats in the National Assembly, approximately 3.6 per cent, a figure that falls far below both the global average and the African continental average. Increasingly, therefore, the argument for reform is no longer simply about fairness; it is about strengthening the representative quality, legitimacy and effectiveness of Nigeria's democracy.

Of course, no constitutional amendment can single-handedly resolve a problem shaped by political culture, party structures, campaign financing, and public attitudes. Even if the Reserved Seats for Women Bill eventually becomes law, political parties will still need to democratise their internal processes, invest intentionally in women leaders and create pathways through which competence, not merely political patronage or financial influence, determines political opportunity. Legislative reform, important as it is, must therefore be accompanied by institutional and cultural change.

Yet, despite the disappointments of the primaries, there are still reasons for cautious optimism. Democracies often evolve through moments that expose their deepest weaknesses, and this electoral cycle may prove to be one of those moments for Nigeria. If the lessons of the primaries encourage political actors to move beyond rhetoric towards genuine institutional reform, then today's setbacks could become tomorrow's turning point.

The future of women's political representation in Nigeria remains uncertain, but it is far from predetermined. With sustained advocacy, courageous political leadership and reforms such as the Reserved Seats for Women Bill, a more inclusive and representative democracy is still within reach.

Hammed Adejare

Communications Lead, TOS Foundation Africa

Field Note:

Five Lessons from Assessing Primary Healthcare Centres Across Nigeria



A functioning Primary Healthcare Centre is often the difference between timely care and a preventable tragedy. Through the WAGE PHC Equipping Project, TOS Foundation Africa has assessed facilities across several states, examining infrastructure, equipment, utilities, staffing and readiness to provide essential maternal and child health services. While each community presented its own realities, the assessments revealed recurring challenges, and important lessons about what it will take to strengthen Nigeria's primary healthcare system.

1) INFRASTRUCTURE IS A HEALTHCARE INTERVENTION, NOT A CONSTRUCTION PROJECT

One of the clearest lessons from the field is that the condition of a health facility directly affects the quality of care it can provide. Several facilities assessed had ageing structures, inadequate maternity spaces, poor ventilation, damaged fittings and insufficient patient areas. These conditions are not merely aesthetic concerns; they affect infection prevention, patient dignity, staff productivity and clinical outcomes.

A facility where mothers deliver in overcrowded or untidy, ill-equipped rooms or where health workers operate without appropriate spaces cannot consistently provide safe and quality care. Improving infrastructure must therefore be viewed as a core healthcare investment, not a secondary upgrade.

2) EQUIPMENT GAPS ARE ONLY PART OF THE PROBLEM- MAINTENANCE SYSTEMS MATTER

Across the assessed facilities, the absence or poor condition of essential equipment was a recurring concern. Delivery couches, autoclaves, radiant warmers, baby cots, laboratory tools and basic diagnostic equipment were either unavailable, inadequate or non-functional.

However, the assessments also highlighted a deeper challenge: equipment provision without systems for maintenance, electricity and technical support is unlikely to deliver sustainable impact. A functional health system requires more than supplying equipment; it requires ensuring that those tools remain available and usable when patients need them.



3) FRONTLINE HEALTH WORKERS ARE CARRYING THE WEIGHT OF SYSTEMIC GAPS

Perhaps the most encouraging observation from the assessments was the commitment of frontline health workers. Across facilities, nurses, community health extension workers and facility managers continued to provide care despite significant operational constraints.

Their dedication is commendable, but it also exposes a difficult reality: resilience cannot replace investment. A healthcare system should not depend on the ability of workers to constantly improvise. Sustainable improvement requires equipping health workers with the infrastructure, tools and support necessary to deliver effectively.

4) COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP DETERMINES SUSTAINABILITY

The assessments reinforced the importance of communities in sustaining healthcare investments. Facilities with active community engagement structures, supportive local leadership and involved stakeholders often demonstrated stronger ownership and better maintenance practices.

Primary healthcare cannot be strengthened through government action or donor funding alone. Communities must be recognised as partners, not just beneficiaries, in planning, protecting and sustaining the facilities that serve them.

5) EVIDENCE MUST DRIVE HEALTHCARE INVESTMENT

The most important lesson from conducting facility assessments is the value of evidence. Health challenges vary significantly from one community to another, and effective solutions must reflect those realities.

Data from the field enables governments and partners to identify priority needs, allocate resources strategically and measure progress over time. Without evidence, investments risk.





HerCademy Fellow Spotlight

Amb. Bethel Gekpe

1

Tell us a little about yourself and what inspired you to join HerCademy.

My name is Hon. Amb. (Mrs.) Bethel Gekpe. I am an indigene of Itigidi clan in Abi LGA, Cross River State, by marriage, though I was born in Imo State. My background is a bit diverse, if I'm honest. Law, business, a stint in PR, diplomacy work with a humanitarian foundation, and lately, political mobilisation that stretches beyond my state to all 36 states of Nigeria. I coordinate nationally with The Marshalls of Democracy, a political support group, and I've started engaging at the federal and international level too; including a recent lunch with Switzerland's Federal Councillor for Home Affairs facilitated by TOS Foundation Africa.

Before HerCademy, I was already doing welfare work in my constituency; palliative distributions for widows, solar street lights, eye care outreach. I joined the programme because I could talk about community impact all day long, but what I lacked was the practical, political mechanics of legislation; how a bill actually survives committee, how coalitions get built before a vote, how a budget gets interrogated line by line. I have a legal background, so the theory was familiar. What I didn't have was the strategy. That gap bothered me more than I expected.

2

What was the most valuable lesson or experience you gained, and why has it stayed with you?

The National Assembly immersion did something to me I did not see coming. Watching committee proceedings closely, the actual mechanics of it, made the classroom material click in a way lectures alone never did. But if I'm honest, the lesson that has actually stuck is an uncomfortable one. The goodwill I built in my constituency over the years is real, but it is not the same thing as legislative skill. I used to think they were basically the same muscle. They're not. I'm still sitting with that.

3

What did it mean to you to be named Best Graduating Fellow, and how has it shaped your sense of purpose?

Honestly, my first reaction was closer to relief than pride. I walked into that programme with fifteen years of experience and a quiet assumption that experience alone would carry me. Some of the sessions humbled me. Being named top of the cohort told me the discomfort was doing something; I wasn't just sitting there being challenged for nothing. It hasn't inflated my sense of purpose so much as narrowed it. I feel less like I need to prove something general and more like I owe something specific to the women coming after me in this programme.

4

How has HerCademy changed how you think about leadership, particularly as a woman?

I used to think leadership was mostly about relationships. Show up. Be trusted. Be present. That's not wrong, but it's incomplete, and HerCademy is what showed me the gap. One person's energy and goodwill cannot carry an entire constituency's development, no matter how consistent you are. And that scales up, not just down. The same gap exists whether you're organising at ward level or sitting across from a federal minister. You need to process. Documentation. Something that keeps working when you are tired or away. That was a hard one to sit with, because relationships are where I'm strongest. Systems are where I'm still learning.

5

What impact do you hope to make over the next few years?

I want to keep building on what's already running in my constituency; the welfare programmes, the healthcare outreach and keep pushing on the Reserved Seats for Women Bill, which I currently coordinate in Cross River State, Nigeria.

I'm also not limiting myself to state-level work anymore. I want to keep showing up at the federal level and in international spaces where Nigerian women's political future actually gets discussed; the kind of room I sat in with Switzerland's Federal Councilor recently. Beyond that, I'd like to help other women prepare properly before they run, not just cheer them into contesting, but make sure they're ready with the actual mechanics of governance. I don't have all of this fully mapped out yet. I'm figuring it out as I go, same as everyone else.

6

What would you say to young women uncertain about taking the first step?

Stop waiting to feel ready. I did not have all the answers when I started this. I had years of diverse experience and a strong conviction that my community deserved better representation. The legislative strategy came later, and it came because I went looking for it, not because I felt prepared beforehand. Whatever you're already doing; the community work, the daily job, the small consistent things, that's not preparation for leadership. That already is leadership. You just haven't called it that yet.



Our Team *Speaks*

Leadership, Women and the Future (I)

Leadership, at its core, is influence. Full stop. John C. Maxwell said it best: "Leadership influences nothing more, nothing less." At TOS Foundation Africa, that's not a quote on a wall, it's how we show up in communities and rally people around a shared vision. And here's the lesson our work keeps hammering home: there's no sustainable development without women at the leadership table. We've seen firsthand the resilience and problem-solving power women bring to the toughest community challenges is hard to overstate. Inclusive leadership isn't a nice-to-have. It's a strategy.

When women lead, everyone wins broader perspectives, richer experience, sharper decisions, and a track record of investing in education, healthcare, and community well-being that outlasts a single generation. For Nigeria, this isn't just about fairness, it's about growth. PwC Nigeria puts real numbers on it: closing the gender gap in economic participation could unlock billions in value through productivity and innovation alone. The African Development Bank says the same thing in different words: women aren't a side character in Africa's development story; they're driving it.

And yet women own a huge share of Nigeria's micro and small businesses, power much of our agriculture and community development, and still get boxed out of boardrooms, executive suites, and political offices. That gap doesn't close with symbolic gestures. It closes when we dismantle the systemic barriers and build real pathways for qualified women to lead and shape policy.

The future won't be built by one gender alone. It will be built by all of us, leading together.

Moses Agbara
COO, TOS Group



Moses Agbara, COO, TOS Group



Our Team *Speaks*

Our Team Speaks: Leadership, Women and the Future (II)

Watching great leaders do the actual work has shaped my idea of leadership and it's quieter than I used to think. It's not about the title or always having the answers. It's influence: the quiet decisions made when no one's watching, the promises kept, the consistency between what someone says and how they live. Influence can't be demanded, it's earned slowly, through integrity, through showing up when it's inconvenient. The leaders who've shaped our society most weren't the loudest. They were the ones whose actions matched their words. Working at TOS Foundation Africa sharpened this, especially around women's leadership. Coordinating the HerCademy Leadership Institute put me in a room with women from across Nigeria of different backgrounds, different ambitions, all preparing for legislative and public life. Watching them taught me women's leadership doesn't need to be explained into existence, it's already there. I've also seen what it costs women: the extra scrutiny, the extra proving. Building space for them doesn't happen by accident; it's deliberate work.

That's why women's representation matters so much for Nigeria's future. A country makes better decisions when the people making them reflect the people living with the outcomes. It's bigger than numbers on a page. Every leader I've watched makes it a little easier for the next woman to imagine herself in that room. If Nigeria wants a future shaped by its full talent and not half of it, this has to be part of how we build it.

I don't think leaders are called to be perfect, just genuine. So I keep coming back to a few questions: Am I making room for others to grow? Am I adding something, or just taking up space? Leadership, as I understand it, is service wearing a quiet coat lifting instead of competing, leaving people stronger than we found them.

Lawrence Blessing Johnson

Asst. Program Officer, TOS Foundation Africa



Lawrence Blessing Johnson
TOS Foundation Africa



United for Impact

TOS Foundation Africa and TOS TV Network Align for the Future



This month, TOS Foundation Africa and TOS TV Network came together in a special training session to realign around the TOS Group's shared vision and mission. The conversation centered on purpose-driven enterprise, business excellence, social impact, and empowered communities, with both TOS Foundation and TV Network's mission reaffirmed.

For the Foundation, the road ahead is full: taking the Academy Leadership Institute beyond Abuja into new states and regions, rolling out a WAGE - (PHC Equipping) project across seven states, and continuing the national push for women's political participation.

On the TV Network side, the focus is on programming for national and global impact. The session reinforced that while TOS Foundation Africa and TOS TV Network serve through different platforms, they are united by a common purpose: creating lasting social impact. With renewed clarity, stronger alignment, and a shared commitment to excellence, both organizations are well positioned to deepen their influence, expand their reach, and drive meaningful change in the communities they serve.

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



5 GENDER EQUALITY



17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"The work of shaping society rarely begins in the public eye. It begins much earlier, in classrooms, around boardroom tables, inside organisations, and in conversations that prepare people for responsibilities they have not yet been invited to carry."

Chief (Mrs.) Osasu Igbinedion Ogwuche

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