



VOICES OF IMPACT

TOS FOUNDATION AFRICA NEWSLETTER



The Archbishop Tutu Leadership Programme
5th - 12th September 2026



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Founder's Note

Lasting change is built in the details: who is invited into the conversation, whether a clinic has what it needs to serve a mother and her newborn, and whether a young leader gets the chance to learn before the responsibility arrives.

That is what September looked like at TOS Foundation Africa.

In this edition of our monthly newsletter, you will read about our International Day of Democracy conversation, where voices from media, politics, youth leadership and grassroots mobilisation asked who truly gets heard. You will see our engagement with the NPHCDA on improving maternal and newborn care across six states, and why sustainability matters as much as equipment. You will also find a closer look at what social impact means to us.

For us, this is one body of work. People must be prepared to lead, and institutions must be strengthened to serve. Neither happens overnight, and much of it takes place long before results become visible.

This month also brought my Tutu Fellowship program to a close. From Cape Town to Oxford, I return with new perspectives, valuable relationships and a deeper sense of responsibility for the Africa I envision.

As Nigeria marks sixty-six years of independence, my reflection in these pages is an invitation to look honestly at where we are, and to keep building where we can. To our team, esteemed partners and colleagues, thank you for standing with us. Let's keep building.



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

Leading Together: The Power of Inclusive Democracy (I)

This month, TOS Foundation Africa convened a virtual conversation to mark the International Day of Democracy, bringing together four voices from media, politics, youth leadership, and grassroots mobilisation. The guest panelists were Akintunde Babatunde, Executive Director at the Center for Journalism Innovation and Development; Ms. Sophie Uzodinma, a politician and gender advocate; Ms. Hadiza Malumfashi, Member of the Katsina State Youth Parliament; and Honorable Bitrus Lawrence Garki, FCT Director of the City Boy Movement.



Together, our panelists moved the discussion beyond elections to the deeper question of representation: who gets heard, who participates in decision-making, and what happens when citizens are excluded from the spaces where policies and priorities are shaped. Ms. Uzodinma anchored this in the experience of women, pointing to limited access to networks and resources, and to lingering perceptions about women's place in leadership, as barriers that keep capable women out of political life.



Leading Together: The Power of Inclusive Democracy (II)

Ms. Malumfashi offered a counterpoint drawn from practice. Her experience in Katsina's Youth Parliament showed how structured platforms can give young people practical exposure to governance, community engagement, and public accountability, and how early participation can prepare them to lead. For Mr. Babatunde, the media helps determine whose voices are amplified and how women and young people are represented in public conversations. He therefore noted that the media should do more in ensuring that inclusive democracy is prioritized in their reporting and programming. Honorable Garki brought the grassroots perspective, reinforcing that democracy cannot end at the ballot box and that citizens must be able to shape policies, identify community priorities, and hold institutions accountable.

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Leading Together: The Power of Inclusive Democracy

A discourse in commemoration of the
International Day of Democracy

PANELISTS

Hon. Bitrus Lawrence
PCT Director, City
Boy Movement

Sophie Uzodinma
Policymaker, Fellow
HerCademy
Leadership Institute

Hadiza Shehu
Policymaker, Fellow
HerCademy
Leadership Institute

Akintunde O. Babatunde
Executive Director,
Center for Journalism
Education and
Development (CJED)

**Tues., 15th
Sept., 2026
12PM - 1:30PM**

LIVE ON
Google Meet
nax-gpnc-otf

SCAN



The panelists' contributions pointed to a shared conclusion: inclusion cannot be left to good intentions. Whether it is women facing barriers of access and perception, young people gaining hands-on exposure to governance, a media that shapes whose voices are heard, or citizens holding institutions to account, participation only counts when it is backed by capacity, access, and real opportunity. This is the principle that guides TOS Foundation Africa's work. Through HerCademy and our wider advocacy and civic engagement efforts, we continue to invest in the people and systems that turn participation into influence. Because democracy is not only about who gets a seat at the table. It is about who has the knowledge, opportunity, and support to use that seat to shape what comes next.

Strengthening Primary Healthcare for Women and Children



TOS Foundation Africa recently engaged with the National Primary Health Care Development Agency (NPHCDA) to advance its proposed investment in primary healthcare, with a focus on improving maternal and newborn health services.

The proposed initiative will begin across six states, representing Nigeria's six geopolitical zones, with priority facilities identified through assessments of approximately 18 primary healthcare centres across 60 political wards.



During the engagement, the Foundation and NPHCDA discussed aligning TOS Foundation Africa's intervention with national healthcare priorities and ensuring that investments respond to existing gaps without duplicating government efforts. In the conversation that ensued, particular attention was given to maternal and newborn health equipment, staffing, antenatal care, referrals and facility-based deliveries.

The discussions also highlighted the importance of sustainability. Notably, state and community involvement, maintenance, security, reliable power supply and clear responsibilities will be critical to ensuring that improved facilities continue to serve women and children effectively.

The engagement marks an important step towards translating TOS Foundation Africa's commitment to health equity into practical investments that strengthen communities and improve access to quality primary healthcare.



The Architecture of Change: What Social Impact Means at TOS Foundation Africa (I)



Enduring social progress is rarely the result of isolated moments or single interventions; it requires a deep structural foundation. Beyond visible milestones like passing a law or launching a program lies an underlying architecture composed of transformative ideas, capable people, effective institutions, and strategic partnerships. For us at TOS Foundation Africa, meaningful impact means shifting focus from immediate, short-term relief toward addressing the systemic causes, policy frameworks, and societal narratives that dictate people's long-term outcomes.



To build sustainable systems, social change must take multiple interconnected forms rather than relying on a single approach. TOS Foundation Africa advances this mission through policy advocacy, convening cross-sector leaders, developing emerging female and youth changemakers, and shaping public understanding through storytelling. Whether fostering inclusive democratic participation or strengthening primary healthcare systems, effective reform demands that physical resources are paired with institutional ownership, accountability, training, and strategic government collaboration to ensure solutions integrate into existing systems rather than operating in isolation.



The Architecture of Change: What Social Impact Means at TOS Foundation Africa (II)



Systemic evolution depends on a dynamic ecosystem where diverse actors contribute unique strengths to move ideas into lasting practice. While institutions provide scale, they rely on human agency, evidence, lived community experiences, and public narrative to function effectively. Advocates, researchers, local communities, government agencies, development partners, and media outlets each play critical roles along the reform journey. Recognizing that no single entity owns this entire process, the Foundation prioritizes building collaborative coalitions and local capacity so that initiatives can eventually grow beyond the initiating organization itself.



Ultimately, the most consequential aspect of social development is the foundational work that occurs long before visible results emerge. Real progress relies on initial research, relationship-building, leadership training, and institutional alignment to establish conditions where reform can take root. The true measure of social impact is not defined by the volume of temporary activity surrounding a crisis, but by whether underlying societal structures are fundamentally transformed and equipped to sustain progress independently.



Celebrating Chief Mrs. Osasu Igbinedion Ogwuche: 2026 Tutu Fellow



TOS Foundation Africa proudly celebrates our Founder and CEO, Chief Mrs. Osasu Igbinedion Ogwuche, on the successful completion of the 2026 Archbishop Desmond Tutu Fellowship.

From Cape Town to Oxford, the Fellowship brought together an exceptional cohort of African leaders for a period of learning, reflection and meaningful exchange on the leadership Africa needs for the future.

For Chief, the experience builds on a journey spanning media, social impact, advocacy and leadership development, with a continued commitment to advancing women's participation, empowering young leaders and strengthening institutions across Africa.

As she concludes this chapter, Chief carries forward new perspectives, relationships and a renewed sense of responsibility to contribute to the Africa we want to build an Africa where women and young people have greater opportunities to lead, institutions serve their communities, and African solutions are driven by Africans.

We celebrate this important milestone and the recognition it represents, while looking forward to the continued impact of her leadership and the work ahead.

Congratulations, Chief, on this remarkable achievement.



Nigeria at 66: Build Systems, Not Personalities

Auditing our systems, affirming our spirit

By Chief (Mrs.) Osasu Igbiniedion Ogwuche



On October 1, 1960, Nigeria became an independent nation. Sixty-six years later, independence is more than a historical milestone. It is an unfinished national project: the work of building institutions capable of turning the enormous potential of our people into shared prosperity, security, dignity and opportunity.

That distinction matters, because the central question at sixty-six is not whether Nigeria has succeeded or failed. It is this: what have our systems enabled Nigerians to achieve, where have they failed us, and what must we redesign if we are serious about the Nigeria we say we want?

Answering it means resisting two unhelpful instincts: romanticising our progress while ignoring our deficits, or cataloguing our failures until pessimism becomes a substitute for patriotism. We need neither denial nor despair. We need solutions.

An honest audit leads to one conclusion that is hard to escape. Nigeria does not suffer from a shortage of talent, ambition or resilience. We suffer from systems that too often fail to convert those assets into outcomes at scale. That is the governance challenge of our generation.

The Nigerian paradox

The distance between the capacity of our people and the performance of our institutions is perhaps our greatest paradox.

The Nigerian who builds a thriving company despite unreliable infrastructure, the one who creates globally competitive music, film, technology or financial products, and the doctor, teacher, engineer, farmer or civil servant who delivers despite institutional constraints are all compensating for gaps the system itself should have closed. Our people repeatedly show that they can compete with the best in the world. The question is why our institutions so often cannot.

This is why nation-building cannot be reduced to the personality of whoever occupies an office at a given moment. Strong leadership matters, but durable progress needs something deeper: strong institutions, clear rules, capable public systems, reliable infrastructure and enforceable accountability that outlast any individual. A country cannot sustainably rely on exceptional individuals to make up for ordinary institutional failure.

I often think of successful individuals who mobilised thousands of people in the private sector around a shared goal and delivered exceptional results. Some of them were later drawn into public office and struggled, sometimes badly. I believe the reason is structural.

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In the private sector, they chose their own teams. In government, they inherited a civil service team they had not selected, working within rules they had not written and incentives they could not easily change.

The lesson is not that these individuals lacked ability. It is that talent alone cannot overcome a system that constrains it. The goal of reform, then, is not merely to find better people to operate broken systems. It is to build systems in which good outcomes are easier to produce, poor performance is visible, accountability is enforceable, and progress survives changes in leadership. That is the leadership Nigeria now needs: leadership that builds systems, not dependency on personalities.

An honest audit of the deficit

Our challenges are not abstract. Nigeria's 2022 Multidimensional Poverty Index found that 62.9 percent of Nigerians, about 133 million people, were multidimensionally poor, facing overlapping deprivations in health, education, living standards, employment and security. Yet that remains the latest official national measurement, which means we have no official figure for 2026 from the National Bureau of Statistics. At a time of global economic uncertainty, rising costs and persistent domestic pressures, the absence of current data is itself a governance challenge. We cannot design, target or evaluate solutions to problems we do not measure often enough.

Healthcare shows the systems problem clearly. Primary healthcare should be the foundation of an effective health system, the first point of contact between citizens and the state. Yet the challenge is not simply how many facilities we build. It is whether those facilities have reliable electricity, water, equipment, medicines, trained personnel, maintenance systems, financing and accountability, and whether citizens can actually get quality care when they need it.

This is why our development conversation must move from projects to systems. A commissioned building is a project. A functioning health facility, with trained staff, reliable power, medicines, financing, maintenance, data and community accountability, is a system. The difference is enormous.

Nigerians also pay for much of their own care. Out-of-pocket spending accounts for more than 75 percent of total health expenditure, one of the highest levels in the world, and only about 5 percent of Nigerians are covered by any form of health insurance or risk pooling. A household that falls ill is often one bill away from poverty. Strengthening public primary healthcare is therefore an economic and human-capital intervention as much as a health one.

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Representation is also a systems question

The same principle applies to political participation. Nigeria cannot credibly pursue inclusive development while large sections of its population remain deeply underrepresented in the institutions where priorities are debated, laws are made and resources are allocated.

Women are roughly half of Nigeria's population, yet hold only about 4 percent of seats in the National Assembly, a record that places Nigeria near the bottom of global rankings for women's parliamentary representation. This is not only a question of fairness, although fairness matters. It is a question of institutional capacity. When half the population is persistently absent from decision-making, the experience, perspective and expertise informing public policy are narrower than they should be.

Increasing women's participation must therefore go beyond symbolic commitments. We must examine the barriers that determine who can enter politics, secure party nominations, finance campaigns, survive electoral competition and ultimately exercise legislative power. If a system consistently produces the same exclusionary outcome, changing individual behaviour will not be enough. The system itself must change.

Other countries show that representation is not a fixed reflection of political culture. It can be shaped by institutional design. Rwanda's constitution guarantees women at least 30 percent of seats in decision-making bodies, and women now hold more than 60 percent of seats in its Chamber of Deputies, well above that floor. The lesson for Nigeria is that a well-designed floor can become a foundation, not a ceiling. When rules change the architecture of participation, they change who gets through the door and, over time, the composition of institutions themselves.

I therefore use this occasion to remind our lawmakers that the Reserved Seats for Women Bill remains before the National Assembly. It offers a chance to address, through institutional reform, one of the most persistent deficits in our democracy. By supporting a measure that would guarantee women no less than 10 percent representation in the National Assembly, our lawmakers can strengthen Nigeria's democratic architecture.

This is not about giving women an advantage over men. It is about ensuring that a democracy of more than 200 million people does not systematically exclude half its population from the rooms where the laws governing all of us are made. If we want different outcomes, we must be willing to redesign the systems that produce the current ones.

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From projects to systems

Nigeria's next phase of development must be different. We have grown accustomed to announcing projects: a new hospital, school, road, empowerment programme or technology initiative. But development is not measured by what we announce. It is measured by what continues to work.

A school succeeds when children learn, not when a building is commissioned. A hospital succeeds when mothers and children receive safe, timely care, not when equipment is delivered. An empowerment programme succeeds when it produces sustainable livelihoods and measurable improvements in household welfare, not when beneficiaries are photographed receiving grants. A legislative reform succeeds when the new law changes behaviour and improves outcomes, not when a bill passes.

This requires us to build feedback loops into governance. Every major public intervention should have a clear problem definition, measurable outcomes, responsible institutions, transparent data, funding for maintenance, community participation, and a way to evaluate what is working and what is not. We should know who is responsible, what success looks like and how progress is measured. When an intervention fails, we should be able to say why, and adapt. That is what functional systems do.

A philosophy of governing

For me, this is more than development theory. It is a philosophy of leadership, built on a few convictions:

- Government should be judged by outcomes, not intentions.
- Public resources are capital entrusted to government on behalf of citizens, not political patronage.
- Policy should begin with evidence, implementation should be measurable, and institutions should be accountable.
- Government should create the conditions in which citizens can thrive, not dependency on the state.
- Inclusion should be designed into institutions, not added as an afterthought.
- Technology and data should make government more transparent, responsive and efficient.
- The private sector, civil society and communities are not substitutes for the state but essential partners in building a capable one.

Above all, I believe Nigeria's greatest resource is the capacity of Nigerians themselves. The role of leadership is to build the systems that allow that capacity to flourish.

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From resilience to prosperity

For decades, Nigerians have shown that they can survive. We must now show that our institutions can help them thrive.

Across technology, finance, medicine, entertainment, sport, academia and business, Nigerians continue to display extraordinary ingenuity. Our fintech ecosystem has reshaped financial access and innovation across Africa. Our film and music industries carry Nigerian stories around the world. Nigerian professionals hold leading positions in global institutions, and our entrepreneurs build in conditions that would discourage most people.

This resilience is a great national asset. But we must not romanticise it to the point where it excuses institutional failure. A functioning country should not require extraordinary citizens to overcome ordinary institutional failures. Our ambition should be to move from a country where exceptional people routinely overcome broken systems to one where well-designed systems enable ordinary citizens to achieve extraordinary things. That is the leap from resilience to prosperity.

The Nigeria we should build

At sixty-six, Nigeria does not need another argument between those who say everything is broken and those who insist everything is fine. Neither position is useful. We need a more mature patriotism, one that loves the country enough to tell the truth about it and believes in its future enough to do the hard work of reform.

Independence gave us sovereignty. Our responsibility now is to build the institutional capacity that makes that sovereignty meaningful in the daily lives of citizens. That means:

- institutions that work, and public systems designed around outcomes rather than announcements;
- data used not merely to describe our problems but to guide decisions;
- sustained investment in human capital;
- accountability at every level of government;
- inclusion built into institutional design;
- a stronger state alongside stronger citizen agency.

Governance is also not the work of government alone. Businesses, civil society, communities, philanthropists, traditional institutions, the media and citizens all have a role in building the systems we want to inherit.

This is the Nigeria I believe is possible. Not a perfect Nigeria, not one dependent on the

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benevolence of a single exceptional leader, not one sustained by slogans. It is a Nigeria where institutions work, citizens have agency, opportunity is broad, women participate fully in national development, public resources produce measurable value, and government delivers the basics exceptionally well. It is a Nigeria where leadership is measured not by how many people depend on the leader, but by how many are empowered by the systems the leader leaves behind.

That, to me, is the essence of reform, and it is the standard by which we should judge every generation of Nigerian leadership: not by the promises we make, but by the systems we build; not by the projects we commission, but by the lives they improve; and not by how powerful our leaders become, but by how capable our institutions become.

Sixty-six years after independence, the work is still before us. But I remain convinced that Nigeria's greatest chapter is not behind us. It is waiting to be built. And the work of our generation is to build it.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"Nigeria does not suffer from a shortage of talent, ambition or resilience. We suffer from systems that too often fail to convert those assets into outcomes at scale. That is the governance challenge of our generation."

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