



DEMOCRACY  
BUILDERS

# HAND BOOK

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT FOR EMPOWERING  
YOUNG MINDS (AGES 15-25)





# ABOUT DEMOCRACY BUILDERS

Democracy Builders is a civic engagement initiative dedicated to empowering youths with the knowledge, tools, and confidence to participate actively in governance and nation-building.

Through civic workshops, clubs, member-led projects, resources, digital content and conversations, we are demystifying civic participation and creating spaces where young voices are empowered to lead change.



# ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The background of the page features a photograph of the National Assembly of Malawi, a large white building with a prominent green dome. In the foreground, there is a large, dark sculpture of a quill pen held by a hand. The sky is overcast with grey clouds. A large, diagonal blue graphic element cuts across the left side of the image, serving as a backdrop for the text.

We are grateful to God Almighty, our source of life, health, inspiration and the passion for inclusive democracy.

We appreciate the School of Politics, Policy and Governance (SPPG) for its unconventional training of a new generation of leaders who listen to and serve citizens who are aware of their rights.

Special thanks to our partners in learning institutions and youth centres for their support.

We acknowledge the work of Mastermind Brands, whose creative designs ensured this handbook met high-quality standards.

Finally, to everyone actively working to build stronger communities through civic action, this handbook is dedicated to you.

**The Democracy Builders Group.**



1

## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Democracy Builders Handbook! This guide was created to help young Nigerians like you understand the power you hold in shaping Nigeria's future. Whether you're a secondary school student, a university undergrad, a creative, or a techie - your voice matters. Let's explore how democracy works and what you can do to make a difference.

2

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Democracy Builders is a youth-focused civic education project aimed at improving democratic participation in Nigeria. Through this handbook, young people between 15 and 25 years old will learn how Nigeria's democracy functions, why their involvement is essential, and how to take action meaningfully.

3

## BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Nigeria's democracy has made progress, but youth participation remains low. Civic education is often outdated or missing from school curricula. This has led to political apathy, weak demand for accountability, and a disconnect between government and the people. This handbook is a response - a tool to empower you to become an informed, active citizen.



# 4

## UNDERSTANDING DEMOCRACY

### What is Democracy?

Democracy is a government system where power belongs to the people. In a democratic society, citizens have the right to participate in making decisions that affect their lives - through voting, public discourse, and community action.

### Core Features of Democracy:

#### Free and Fair Elections:

Leaders are chosen by the people through voting. Elections must be transparent and inclusive.

#### Rule of Law:

Everyone - including government officials - is subject to the law.

#### Respect for Human Rights:

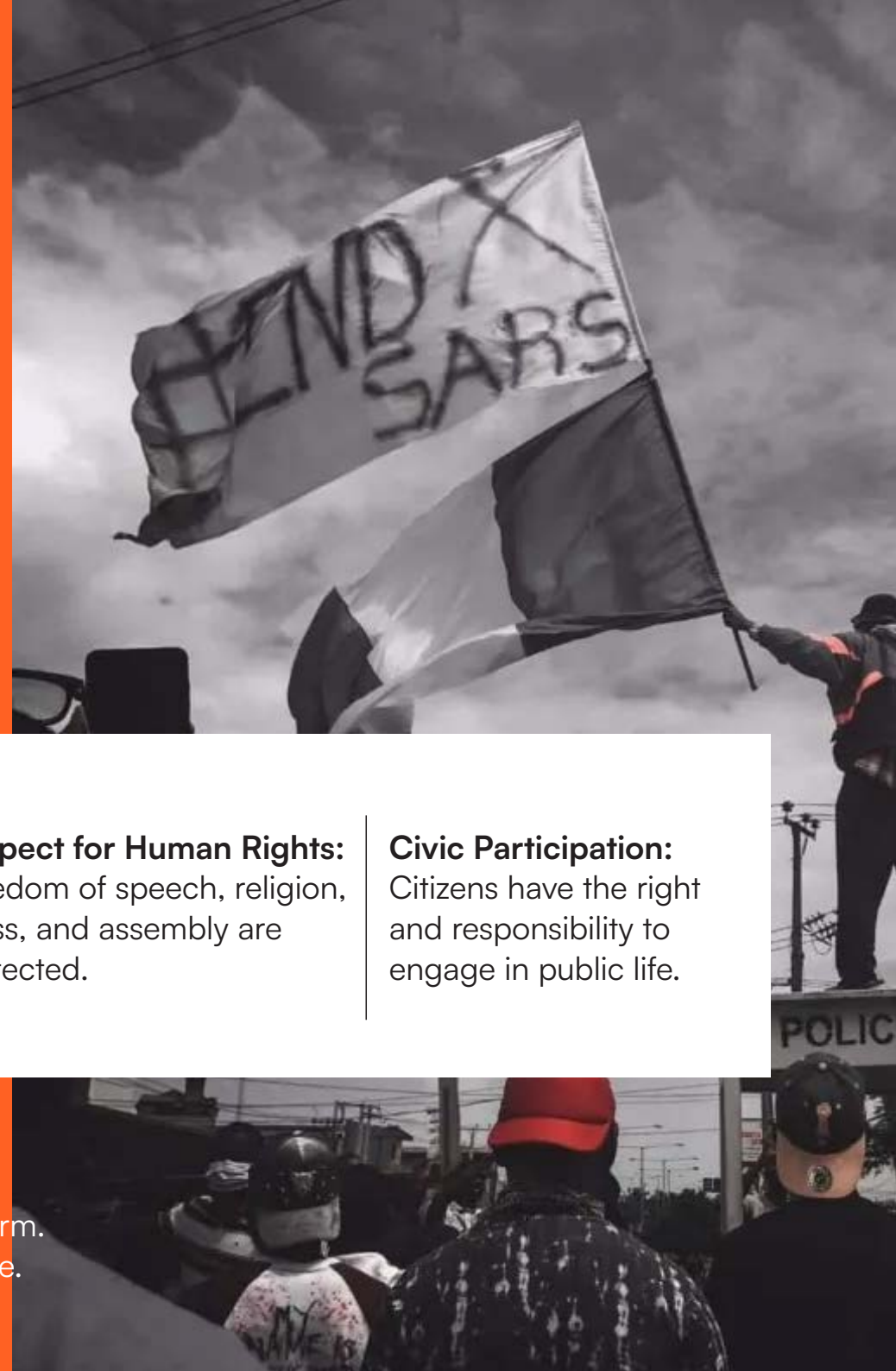
Freedom of speech, religion, press, and assembly are protected.

#### Civic Participation:

Citizens have the right and responsibility to engage in public life.

### Real-Life Example:

When Nigerians protested under the #EndSARS movement, they were exercising democratic rights to demand police reform. That's democracy in action - speaking out to influence change.



# 5

## NIGERIA'S DEMOCRATIC JOURNEY



Nigeria's path to democracy has been long and bumpy. Understanding this journey helps you appreciate the value of your voice in today's system.



### Key Milestones:



- **1960:** Nigeria gained independence from Britain and became a sovereign nation.



- **1966-1999:** Military rule dominated, with frequent coups that suppressed civilian participation.



- **1999:** Nigeria returned to democracy with the election of President Olusegun Obasanjo.



- **Today:** Though challenges persist (like election malpractice and corruption), Nigeria has seen successive civilian transitions. Democracy still growing, with your help

**Lesson for Gen Z:** Democracy didn't come easy. Every vote you cast and every advocacy effort you support helps sustain what past generations fought for.

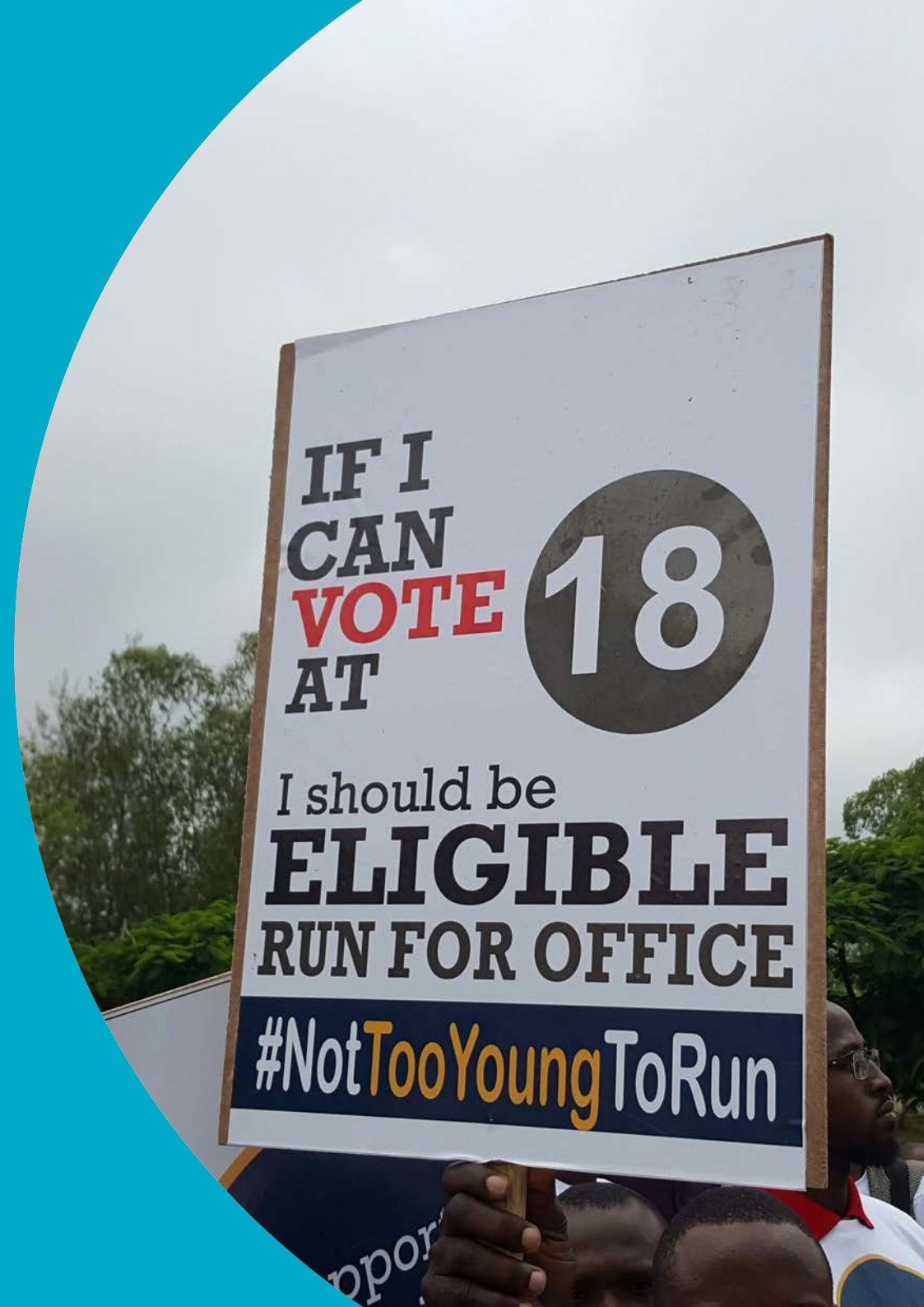
# 6

## ROLE OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN DEMOCRACY

Youths under 30 make up over 60% of Nigeria's population - that's massive power!

### Why Your Role Matters:

- **Voting Power:** If more youths register and vote, they can decide who governs.
- **Innovation:** Youths are leading new tech, media, and civic platforms that boost transparency (e.g., BudgIT, Tracka).
- **Movements:** Youths have led major social campaigns (#NotTooYoungToRun, #EndSARS, etc.).



# 7

## CIVIC RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### Your Rights (Constitutional Guarantees):

- Freedom of expression and press
- Right to vote (once you're 18+)
- Freedom of assembly (e.g., protests, rallies)
- Right to information and education

### Your Responsibilities:

- Stay informed about issues in your community
- Vote during elections
- Obey the law and respect others' rights
- Report wrongdoing and demand transparency

### Bottom Line:

Rights come with duties.  
Use your voice, but also  
show up responsibly  
in your civic life.





# 8

## KEY DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA

- 1. INEC (Independent National Electoral Commission):**  
Organizes elections, registers voters, and ensures the process is credible.
- 2. National Assembly:**  
Made up of the Senate and House of Representatives, they make laws, approve budgets, and check the executive branch.
- 3. Judiciary:**  
Interprets the law and ensures justice. It protects rights and settles electoral or constitutional disputes.
- 4. Political Parties:**  
They offer platforms for candidates to contest elections (e.g., APC, PDP, LP, etc.).
- 5. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs):**  
Groups like Yiaga Africa and Connected Development monitor government actions and mobilize citizens.



# 9

## HOW GOVERNMENT WORKS

### Three Levels of Government:

- **Federal Government (FG):**

Handles national matters (e.g., defence, foreign policy, customs). Example: President Bola Tinubu leads this level.

- **State Government:**

Each of Nigeria's 36 states has a governor and state assembly. They manage state roads, education, and agriculture.

- **Local Government (LG):**

Closest to the people. They manage markets, waste collection, and primary healthcare.

### Why You Should Care:

If your street has no drainage, talk to your local government councillor - they're responsible. Not every problem is “for Abuja.”



## HOW TO ENGAGE: PRACTICAL CIVIC ACTIONS

Even without being in government, you can influence decisions:

- **Register and Vote:**  
Don't just get your PVC - use it. Voting is your loudest civic voice.
- **Attend Community Meetings:**  
Your voice matters in town halls, youth forums, or school discussions.
- **Volunteer:**  
Support voter education, join clean-up campaigns, or mentor others.
- **Start Civic Projects:**  
Launch petitions, organize voter drives, host debates in your school or religious center.
- **Join Clubs or CSOs:**  
Youth hubs and campus clubs are good spaces to start.





# 11

## DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP AND ADVOCACY

In today's world, being a good citizen means knowing how to act online, too.

### Do's of Digital Citizenship:

- Share verified information
- Educate others through social media
- Respect others' views even when you disagree
- Use hashtags to raise awareness (#FixPolitics, #YouthVoteCount)

### Avoid:

- Spreading fake news
- Cyberbullying or trolling
- Posting without fact-checking



# 12

## UNDERSTANDING ELECTIONS AND VOTING



### What You Need to Know:

- You must be 18+ and registered to vote.
- Voting happens every four years at federal and state levels.
- INEC publishes the electoral calendar - follow it!

### Tips for Voting Smart:

- Read candidate manifestos.
- Attend or watch debates.
- Ask, “Who really has my community's interests at heart?”
- Report vote buying or election violence via hotlines.

### Every Vote Counts:

In 2023, only 27% of registered voters turned up. Imagine if more young people showed up - we could change the narrative.

# 13

## HOLDING LEADERS ACCOUNTABLE

Don't go silent after elections.

### Ways to Hold Them Accountable:

- **Track Promises:** Revisit their manifestos.
- **Ask Questions:** Tag them on social media, attend town halls.
- **File FOI Requests:** Ask for government budgets or project updates.
- **Use Platforms Like:**
  - Tracka (to monitor projects)
  - BudgIT (for budget info)
  - UDEME (public finance transparency)

### Remember:

The government works best when citizens watch closely.





# 14

## ORGANIZING FOR IMPACT

Start where you are. Your voice + your peers = change.

### Start a Democracy Club:

- Discuss community challenges.
- Host civic-themed movie nights.
- Hold debates and mock elections.
- Invite role models from media, politics, or activism.
- Collaborate with NGOs and youth hubs.

### Story of Change:



# 15

## HOW TO FIND YOUR WARD OR LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA (LGA)

Your ward and Local Government Area (LGA) are the closest government units to you - and your entry point into politics.

### STEPS TO FIND THEM:

#### 1. Check Your Voter Card (PVC):

Your LGA and ward are printed on the PVC you receive after voter registration.

#### 2. Visit the INEC Voter Portal:

Go to <https://voters.inecnigeria.org> and input your details to confirm your polling unit, ward, and LGA.

#### 3. Ask Your Community Leaders:

Local government workers, traditional rulers, and religious leaders can tell you your ward if you're unsure.

#### 4. Visit Your LGA Secretariat:

There, you can ask for your electoral ward details.

# 16

## HOW TO REGISTER FOR A POLITICAL PARTY



Joining a party is your first step into active politics - as a voter, campaigner, or future leader.

### STEPS:

#### 1. Pick a Party:

Research their values, manifestos, and past performances. Examples are: APC, PDP, Labour Party, etc.

#### 2. Visit Their Local Office:

Go to the ward or LGA office of the party you choose. Ask about membership forms.

#### 3. Complete a Membership Form:

Forms may be physical or digital. Some parties like LP and YPP allow registration online.

#### 4. Pay Membership Dues:

Most parties require a small fee.

#### 5. Collect Your Party Card:

This proves you're a registered member. Keep it safe - you'll need it to vote in primaries or become a delegate.

**Tip:** Avoid signing forms you don't understand. Ask questions or bring someone along.



# 17

## HOW TO BECOME A PARTY DELEGATE



Delegates help decide who becomes a candidate at party primaries - a powerful role!

### TYPES OF DELEGATES:

- Ward delegates vote at local primaries.
- LGA and State delegates move up to pick candidates at higher levels (House of Reps, Senate, Governorship, Presidency)



### STEPS:

#### 1. Be a Party Member:

You must have your party card and be active in meetings and events.

#### 2. Build Trust in Your Ward:

Party executives in your ward recommend who becomes a delegate. Be visible, helpful, and respected.



#### 3. Declare Interest:

When delegate positions open, submit a letter or form to contest.

#### 4. Campaign:

Talk to party members. Sometimes, there's an internal election or consensus process.

#### Get Selected or Elected:

If successful, you'll vote in primaries and represent your ward.





# 18

## HOW TO CONTEST IN AN ELECTION

Whether for local councillor or president, here's how to begin your journey into public office:

### STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE:

#### 1. Meet Eligibility Criteria:

Office	Age Requirement
Councillor	25+
House of Assembly	25+
House of Reps	25+
Senate	35+
Governor	35+
President	35+

#### 2. Be a Party Member:

Most candidates run under political parties. You must be an active member.

#### 3. Declare Your Interest:

Notify your ward or LGA party leaders. Some parties issue Expression of Interest forms.

#### 4. Buy Nomination Form:

Each party sets a price. Youths and women often get discounts.

#### 5. Campaign and Win Primaries:

Convince party delegates to vote for you.

#### 6. INEC Registration:

After winning primaries, your party submits your name to INEC.

#### 7. Start General Campaign:

Share your manifesto, attend debates, meet voters.

#### 8. Election Day:

If you've done the work, voters decide!





# 19

## HOW TO WRITE A PETITION

A petition is a formal written request to a public official or institution to take action.

### **FORMAT:**

**1. Title:** Clear and direct (e.g., Petition Against Misuse of Constituency Funds).

**2. Address It Properly:**

To the Senate President, Speaker, INEC, Police Commissioner, etc.

**1. State the Problem:**

Be factual, short, and clear.

**2. Request Action:**

What do you want done? An investigation? A resignation? A law change?

**3. Include Evidence:**

Photos, documents, videos, or eyewitnesses.

**4. Add Signatures:**

The more supporters, the stronger your case.

**5. Submit Officially:**

Hand-deliver it to their office or email it to the official contact.

**6. Follow Up:**

Call, visit, or use the media to amplify your cause.

**Example:**

We, the undersigned, residents of Ward 4, Akure South LGA, petition Hon. [Name] for failure to complete the youth center promised in the 2022 constituency project.

# 20

## HOW TO RECALL YOUR REPRESENTATIVE

If your elected representative fails you, the Constitution gives you power to remove them before the next election.

### **SECTION 69 OF THE 1999 CONSTITUTION:**

It allows voters to recall a senator or representative if the majority agree.

### **STEPS TO RECALL:**

#### **1. Petition:**

Collect signatures from at least 50% of registered voters in the constituency.

#### **2. Submit to INEC:**

Submit the petition to INEC with valid voter details.

#### **3. INEC Verification:**

INEC checks the authenticity of signatures.

#### **4. Referendum:**

INEC conducts a vote - if the majority support recall, the rep is removed.

### **Important to Note:**

- This process is legal but tough - you need wide support and accurate data. Civil society groups and lawyers can help guide the process.



# 21 TOOLS AND RESOURCES

## TOP PLATFORMS YOU SHOULD KNOW:

- **INEC Website:** [www.inecnigeria.org](http://www.inecnigeria.org)
- **YIAGA Africa:** Resources on elections and accountability (<https://yiaga.org/>)
- **BudgIT & Tracka:** Budget analysis and project tracking (<https://budgit.org> and <https://tracka.ng/>)
- **GovSpend:** Track and Analyze Federal Government Spending over time (<https://www.govspend.ng/>)



# 22



Q: I'm under 18 - can I still participate in democracy?

A: Absolutely! Volunteer, join debates, educate your peers, and follow civic issues. Your preparation starts now.

Q: What if my vote doesn't count?

A: It does - the more young people vote, the more power we have to influence leadership.

Q: What's the point of voting if nothing changes?

A: Change is gradual. Consistent youth turnout

shifts who political parties take seriously. Your vote is your voice - use it.

Q: Are protests illegal?

A: No. Peaceful protests are protected by the constitution. However, always stay informed about safety and rights before protesting.

Q: How can I learn more about political issues?

A: Follow credible civic accounts, subscribe to youth newsletters, attend events/webinars, and join campus clubs.

## 23. CIVIC CLUB TOOLKIT

**WANT TO START A CIVIC CLUB? HERE'S HOW:**

1. Form a group of 5-10 peers
2. Pick a civic issue to focus on (e.g. clean water, voting)
3. Hold weekly meetings
4. Plan small events (e.g. debates, posters, talks)
5. Partner with NGOs
6. Share your work online

## 24. CALL TO ACTION

---

- You are not just the future - you are the present.
- Be informed. Be bold. Be involved.
- Start a conversation today.
- Vote tomorrow.
- Lead the change always.





## CONTACT US



+234 806 683 8211

hello@democracybuilders.ng  
democracybuildersng@gmail.com



www.democracybuilders.ng  
democracybuilders.ng/signup.



@democracybuildersNG



@builddemocracyNG