



Law and Inclusive
Development Summit

FEATURING



FOR



REPORT OF THE LAW AND INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT (LIDS) 2025

Prepared by the Summit Rapporteurs

Location:

Exhibition Pavilion, Area 10, Garki, Abuja

Date:

4th June, 2025

HOST:



Nigerian Bar Association,
Garki Branch (Liberty Bar)
Young Lawyers Forum (YLF)

CONVENER:



Citizens Initiatives
for Rights and
Empowerment

1. Introduction

The Young Lawyers Forum (YLF), Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Garki Branch (Liberty Bar), in collaboration with Citizens Initiatives for Rights and Empowerment (CITIZINRE), convened the Law and Inclusive Development Summit on June 4, 2025, at the Exhibition Pavilion, Area 10, Garki, Abuja. Themed “Setting the Pace: Young Lawyers as Drivers of Transformative Change,” the summit was designed as a strategic platform to reposition young lawyers as agents of systemic reform.

The primary objective was to challenge young legal professionals to look beyond traditional career paths and embrace broader roles in governance, policy, development, and social justice. To this end, the summit brought together seasoned legal practitioners, academics, civil society leaders, policymakers, and development actors to co-create practical solutions for advancing inclusive and sustainable development through the legal profession.

A defining feature of the summit was its community-first and impact-driven approach—a deliberate blend of high-level discourse and hands-on engagement through the YLF Community Development Initiatives (CDIs). These initiatives provide practical platforms for young lawyers to apply legal expertise to real-life challenges and deepen public engagement with the justice system.

2. Registration Summary

The summit recorded a strong and diverse turnout, with 158 participants officially registered. However, actual attendance was estimated at approximately 220, as several dignitaries and their associates who were present did not pass through the formal registration process.

A significant proportion of attendees, approximately 42% were lawyers within 0–6 years post-call, reaffirming the summit’s core focus on engaging young legal professionals. The audience also included mid-career and senior practitioners with over two decades of legal experience, contributing to the richness of perspectives shared throughout the event.

The NBA Garki Branch had the highest representation, accounting for over 40% of the total attendees, followed by the Abuja and Bwari Branches. Participants also came from other NBA branches across the country, alongside representatives from legal institutions, professional bodies, and development organizations. Notably, nearly 30% of attendees were affiliated with non-legal or unspecified organizations, highlighting the summit’s growing relevance to a broader audience beyond the legal profession.

Overall, the registration data reflects the summit’s wide reach, cross-sectoral appeal, and inclusiveness further establishing it as a timely platform for meaningful dialogue among legal professionals, policy influencers, and development actors.

3. Opening/Commencement

The summit commenced at approximately 10:30 a.m., anchored by Ameenah Bint Mohammad and Chuku Lilian George. The opening formalities began with the recitation of the Nigerian National Anthem and the NBA Prayer, followed by the introduction of guests and dignitaries.

Attendees were warmly welcomed, and the delay in commencement was acknowledged with sincere apologies, after which the proceedings began in earnest.

4. Welcome Address

The Welcome Address was delivered by the Chairperson of the NBA Garki Branch YLF, Ms. Zullaihat M. Ohiare, who emphasized that the branch had adopted “Setting the Pace” as its official motto. She underscored that “an educated community is an empowered community” and introduced the Young Lawyers Community Development Initiative (YLCDI) as a joint effort between YLF Garki Branch and CITIZINRE to deepen community impact.

She explained that the YLCDI programs would be implemented in collaboration with other YLF branches within the Federal Capital Territory and positioned as tools for long-term engagement and transformation. According to her, the summit was not just another event but a strategic platform to drive impact at both professional and grassroots levels.

Ms. Ohiare expressed her appreciation to the President of the NBA for his consistent support of young lawyers, and acknowledged the contributions of development partners, YLF executives, and the Summit Planning Committee for believing in her vision. She encouraged young lawyers to take full advantage of the discussions, ask meaningful questions, and embrace their role as agents of transformative change.

5. Branch Chairman’s Address

The Chairman of the NBA Garki Branch (Liberty Bar), Anthony Bamidele Ojo, Esq., delivered a compelling address in which he acknowledged the presence of dignitaries and guests and reaffirmed the significance of the summit. He highlighted the calibre and pedigree of speakers and panelists selected, noting that their participation reflected the seriousness and relevance of the summit’s objectives.

He emphasized the critical role of the legal profession in shaping a nation where citizens are empowered to take ownership of their futures. According to him, the Garki Branch views the summit as a statement that lawyers now and in the future will continue to be prime movers of societal direction, whether as advocates, thought leaders, or judges.

In closing, Mr. Ojo expressed profound gratitude to all special guests, speakers, panelists, and attendees for honoring the invitation and contributing to what he described as an epoch-making event.

6. Goodwill Messages

Several distinguished guests and dignitaries delivered goodwill messages, each emphasizing the significance of the summit’s theme and the critical role of young lawyers in shaping a more inclusive and progressive legal landscape.

President, Nigerian Bar Association – Mazi Afam Osigwe, SAN

Represented by Isaac Adulogu, the NBA President commended the organizers of the summit and noted that its theme was particularly dear to his heart. He pledged continued support for the YLF and encouraged senior lawyers to actively mentor their younger colleagues. He urged members of the YLF to maximize such support, emphasizing that society places enormous expectations on young lawyers. He concluded by stating that in order to truly set the pace, young lawyers must commit to personal growth and seize opportunities for transformative impact.

Chairperson, Board of Trustees, CITIZINRE – Engr. Bethel Esamah

Though unavoidably absent, the Chairperson was represented by the Board Secretary, Joy Orifa. In her message, she highlighted CITIZINRE's vision of a Nigeria where law serves not only as an instrument of justice but as a driver of inclusion, dignity, and national development. She underscored the importance of collaboration in driving legal impact, noting that the future of transformation lies in strong partnerships. She expressed hope that the collaboration between CITIZINRE and YLF would extend to the NBA at the national level and other key stakeholders committed to nation-building through law and civic empowerment.

Aare Olumuyiwa Akinboro, SAN

Aare Akinboro praised the NBA YLF Garki Branch for consistently taking the lead in both professional and developmental initiatives. He emphasized the critical role of mentorship within the legal profession and lauded the evident unity within the branch. He encouraged senior lawyers to remain open to learning from younger colleagues and urged young lawyers to fully embrace mentorship opportunities available to them.

Prof. Foluke Dada-Lawanson

Her message, titled "Being a Beacon of Change", was delivered on her behalf by Keren K. Bitto. Prof. Dada-Lawanson stressed the vital role of young lawyers in championing transformative change within society, calling on them to lead with purpose, principle, and passion.

Paul Harris, SAN

Represented by Oluwaseun Olisa, Mr. Harris echoed the summit's theme and emphasized that positive change is not only possible but inevitable. He urged young lawyers to believe in their capacity to drive transformation both within the legal profession and in broader society.

Founder, Hope Behind Bars – Oluwafunke Adeoye

Her goodwill message, delivered by Dorcas Anaja, shared the mission of Hope Behind Bars, an organization focused on reforming Nigeria's criminal justice system and offering hope to the incarcerated. She called on legal practitioners to use their expertise to address systemic issues and advocate for the marginalized.

National Chairman, Young Lawyers Forum – Timothy Clement

In his remarks, the Chairman encouraged young lawyers to remain optimistic and committed to shaping the future of the legal profession. He reiterated the call for the next generation of lawyers to lead through innovation, advocacy, and integrity.

Provost, Centre for Strategic Research and Studies, National Defence College – Prof. A.O. Ahmed

Represented by Damilola Olabimtan, the Provost commended the foresight of the YLF Garki Branch in organizing such a strategic summit. He reflected on the interconnectedness of law, leadership, and national security, asserting that the legal system represents the conscience of any nation. He called on lawyers to be informed, involved, and inspired—describing them as social architects, policy reformers, and defenders of peace.

U.O. Sule, SAN

Mr. Sule delivered a powerful and reflective goodwill message, congratulating the YLF Garki Branch on a successful event. He assured young lawyers of the continued support of their senior colleagues and encouraged them to embrace lifelong learning. He reminded participants that ethics and character remain central to professional success and cautioned against compromising professional integrity.

7. Opening Address

The Opening Address was delivered by the Chairman of the Summit, Comrade Engr. Ayodele Olawande, Honourable Minister of Youth Development, Federal Republic of Nigeria. He expressed his appreciation to the organizers for the privilege of serving as Chairman and described the summit as a timely reminder of the important work required to make inclusion the cornerstone of national development.

He noted that the summit's theme challenges all stakeholders to rethink existing approaches, strengthen institutions, and co-create systems that leave no one behind. He emphasized that true inclusion requires the legal system to actively protect all segments of society, particularly the voiceless and vulnerable.

The Honourable Minister highlighted the Youth Help Desk initiative of the Ministry of Youth Development, designed specifically to support marginalized young people—stating that this was a key reason for his participation in the event. He encouraged attendees to engage deeply, listen intently, and act with boldness, describing the summit as a vital platform for dialogue and action.

8. Keynote Address

The Keynote Address, titled ***“Bridging Law and Leadership: Young Lawyers at the Forefront of Africa’s Inclusive Development,”*** was delivered by Sa’adatu Falila Hamu, Founder and Managing Partner of Hamu Legal.

In her thought-provoking speech, she emphasized that Africa does not merely need lawyers, it needs lawyer-leaders. According to her, legal practice should go beyond technical mastery and be wielded as a tool for systemic transformation, leadership, and empowerment.

She challenged participants to reflect deeply on their individual purpose, posing the question: “In your moment of solitude, have you ever asked yourself how you can make an influence

using the law as a tool?” She stressed that leadership does not begin with a title but is revealed in how one lives and serves.

Ms. Hamu urged young lawyers to become their own primary advocates, to view the law not just as a profession but as a platform for impact. She concluded by noting that growth is intentional, not accidental and called on participants to continuously build capacity, seek knowledge, and commit to leaving every space better than they met it.

9. Panel Sessions

Panel One

Theme: *Institutionalizing Youth Legal Participation: Bridging the Gap Between Legal Training and Policy Influence*

Moderator: Henry Barnabas Ehi

This session examined the disconnect between legal education and real-world governance, exploring practical reforms to reposition young lawyers as active participants in public leadership, legislative development, and policy influence.

The panel began with a keynote reflection by **Moyosore Onigbanjo, SAN**, who offered a critical appraisal of Nigeria’s legal training framework, particularly at the Law School. He called for a radical overhaul to ensure legal education not only produces courtroom advocates but also cultivates policy influencers, governance actors, and civic leaders.

The discussion tackled several critical issues, including:

- Gaps in Nigeria’s legal education system that leave young lawyers underprepared for public sector roles;
- The absence of structured transition pathways from academic training to policy engagement;
- Strategies for integrating legislative drafting, policy research, and civic education into law faculties and CLE;
- The marginalization of lawyers in spaces now dominated by non-lawyers, despite their foundational role in rights protection and governance.

Pelumi Olajengbesi, Managing Partner, Law Corridor represented by Ajibola Bello, recommended that each university faculty of law host an annex of the Nigerian Law School to bridge the institutional disconnect and provide mentorship opportunities for students.

Dr. Victor Enebeli, a senior lecturer in the Faculty of Law, Rivers State and Director of Studies, Justice Mary Odili Judicial institute, Port Harcourt, Rivers State proposed the creation of NBA liaison systems within universities and the appointment of young lawyers to committees shaping legal reform. He emphasized that legal education must prepare students for the real-world complexities of governance and institutional development.

Adeboro Adamson, SAN, Principal Partner of Adamson Adeboro SAN & Co called for alignment between Nigeria’s legal curriculum and international best practices, particularly in

emerging and interdisciplinary areas of law. He stressed that Nigerian lawyers must be trained to function not only as advocates but as researchers, analysts, and policy drafters.

Olumuyiwa Akinboro, SAN, the principal Partner of Akinboro & Co highlighted the importance of strategic appointments to the Council of Legal Education and emphasized the role of branch-level YLF engagement. He urged young lawyers to take learning seriously, reduce politicking, and pursue ICLE programs tailored to policy and governance practice.

Huwaila Muhammad, the NBA Womens Forum Chairperson represented by Rabiya, outlined the structural barriers that prevent young lawyers from occupying institutional, regulatory, and policy spaces. She identified seniority bias, lack of networks, economic constraints, and overemphasis on litigation as key issues, and urged lawyers to invest in continuous learning, civic engagement, and public interest volunteering.

The panel closed with consensus on the need for a paradigm shift from producing lawyers as case managers to shaping them as institutional builders and societal reformers.

Panel Two

Theme: *Law for the Future: Reimagining Legal Careers for Impact, Innovation, and Social Change*

Moderator: Samuel C. Chukwu, Esq.

This session explored the evolution of the legal profession and how young lawyers can rethink their career trajectories to meet the demands of an increasingly interdisciplinary, innovation-driven, and justice-oriented world.

Kamo Sende, Doctoral Researcher and Lecturer at Robert Gordon University, opened the conversation by highlighting emerging legal specializations that are still underexplored in Nigeria such as trade governance, digital compliance, and sustainability law. He emphasized the importance of a mindset shift among young lawyers to move beyond traditional practice and embrace global relevance.

Lucy James Abagi, CEO of the Public & Private Development Centre (PPDC), stressed the need for lawyers to be at the forefront of transparency, accountability, and digital inclusion. She challenged young lawyers to see themselves not just as legal professionals but as civic innovators and governance influencers.

Ikiemoye Biebele Ozoeze discussed the leadership and operational competencies required in a tech-driven, client-centered legal ecosystem. She encouraged law firm leaders and mentors to incorporate business development, technology integration, and adaptive leadership into how they train and support young professionals.

Dr. Nasiru Mukhtar, Director of Clinical Legal Education at the University of Abuja, emphasized the need to expand practical, community-focused legal training. He proposed that CLE programs be mainstreamed, scaled, and adapted to connect students with real-world problems, particularly in underserved communities.

Prof. Hadiza Hamma, Director at the Centre for Security Studies, University of Abuja, spoke on the importance of cultivating lawyers who are capable of operating across disciplines- law,

development, policy, and governance. She called for the reframing of the identity of the “lawyer” to reflect new societal roles: reformers, facilitators, and strategic thinkers.

Hon. Rinsola Abiola, Senior Special Assistant to the President on Citizenship & Leadership, urged young lawyers to embrace public discourse, political engagement, and national development work. She outlined the civic and leadership competencies—communication, coalition-building, policy literacy that young lawyers must master to drive systemic change beyond the courtroom.

The session concluded with a rapid-fire takeaway round, where panelists shared one key piece of advice for building legal careers that matter:

“Be intentional.”

“Lead with values.”

“Create impact, not just income.”

“Step into spaces no one told you were yours.”

The panel challenged every young lawyer in the room to rethink their purpose and equip themselves for the future, not just of law, but of leadership and legacy.

10. Presentation of Awards

As part of the closing activities, awards were presented to selected individuals in recognition of their outstanding contributions to the success of the Summit and their continued efforts toward empowering young lawyers and promoting transformative, inclusive development. The awards celebrated excellence in mentorship, thought leadership, institutional support, and professional impact.

11. Closing and Refreshments

The Summit was formally brought to a close at approximately 3:26 p.m. with a closing remark by the Chairman of the Summit Planning Committee, Victor Adebayo. In his remarks, he expressed heartfelt appreciation to all attendees for their participation and engagement. He also commended the Planning Committee for their dedication and tireless efforts in delivering a well-organized and impactful Summit.

Following the closing formalities, refreshments were served and informal networking continued among guests, speakers, and participants.

12. Recommendations for Key Stakeholders

A. Council of Legal Education (CLE)

- Urgently review and revise the Nigerian Law School curriculum to integrate governance, legislative drafting, policy engagement, and practical legal training into core academic modules.

- Ensure clinical legal education is mainstreamed as a compulsory component across law faculties nationwide.

B. Nigerian Bar Association (NBA)

- Establish structured mentorship platforms connecting senior lawyers with young lawyers, particularly at the branch level.
- Facilitate transition pipelines from law faculties and the Law School into public sector, policy, and governance roles.
- Set up NBA liaison committees within law faculties to enhance pre-Bar engagement with students and academic staff.
- Appoint more young lawyers to NBA committees, especially those focused on legal reform, youth development, and national policy.
- Collaborate with universities and the Council of Legal Education to establish annex centers that support mentorship and curriculum oversight.

C. Law Faculties and Universities

- Introduce and enforce hands-on legal practice components such as legal clinics, policy labs, and fieldwork as core courses in the curriculum.
- Develop academic-to-practice models that prepare students for public interest lawyering, development work, and institutional leadership.

D. Government Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs)

- Open transparent and inclusive pathways for youth legal professionals to serve in governance, policymaking, and regulatory roles.
- Develop fellowship, internship, or secondment programs targeted at engaging young lawyers in justice, human rights, and development projects.

13. Call for Collaboration and Reform

- The Summit calls on the Nigerian Bar Association, Council of Legal Education, law faculties, civil society organizations, and development partners to work together toward a more inclusive, relevant, and reform-oriented legal training and practice ecosystem.
- Structural challenges such as opaque recruitment processes, seniority bias, limited institutional access, and economic barriers must be addressed to create room for young lawyers to thrive in public institutions.
- The Summit encourages senior lawyers, the Ministry of Youth Development, and international development partners to collaborate with the YLF in scaling community-based justice initiatives, access-to-justice programs, and youth-led legal innovation.