

Nigeria in 2050

The possible futures we should anticipate

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Executive summary

In February 2026, a groundbreaking series of scenarios-building workshops were convened across three major Nigerian cities - Abuja, Lagos, and Kano - under the theme "Child Foresight analysis for future literacy and Intergenerational Equity." The workshop series forms part of a broader effort to institutionalize futures literacy and intergenerational equity within Nigeria's governance and development ecosystem.

Using a combination of participatory and structured foresight methodologies, the workshops created inclusive spaces for reflection and dialogue. With children and youth, the approach emphasized interactive sessions, creative exercises, storytelling, and exploration of future scenarios to surface grounded perspectives on hopes, fears, and aspirations. With professionals and practitioners, the process incorporated structured foresight tools, systems analysis, anticipatory governance discussions, scenario exploration, and multi-stakeholder dialogue to examine policy and institutional implications. Participants across the three locations explored key forces shaping the future of children in Nigeria, including digital transformation, climate stress, access to quality education, economic transitions, safety and security, governance systems, and community resilience.

Overall, the workshop series reinforced the importance of embedding children's voices, evidence, and foresight insights into national and sub-national planning processes. By combining lived experience with institutional and policy expertise, the initiative strengthens anticipatory, child-focused policy and programming. This report details the outcomes of these sessions, which form part of a broader strategic effort to institutionalize futures literacy within Nigeria's governance and development ecosystem.

Overview of the Workshop Series

The regional Scenario-building workshops were held on February 5–6 (Abuja), February 9–10 (Lagos), and February 12–13 (Kano). They brought together a unique constellation of stakeholders: The Abuja workshop was dedicated to children and youth from diverse urban and rural backgrounds creating a dedicated space for them to reflect their lived realities, aspirations and concerns about the future. The Lagos and Kano sessions engaged professionals and practitioners from government, the private sector, and civil society whose work intersects with the long-term well-being of children and youth.

The core objective was to move beyond short-term "firefighting" in policy planning and instead build a robust capacity for anticipatory governance that prioritizes intergenerational equity.

These workshops formed part of the work led by the Office of the Vice President, which aims to build the country's capacity for long-term planning and ensure that future policies are inclusive and rights-based, in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and Nigeria's Child Rights Act. The goal of this programme is to integrate the needs and rights of young people into national development plans, ensuring their voices are considered in decisions that will affect their future.

The workshops were designed to be radically inclusive.

The regional foresight workshops were intentionally designed to ensure broad and balanced representation. Participants were selected to ensure a diverse and balanced representation across gender, geography, age, and sector, with inclusion from all six geopolitical zones and at least 40% youth representation. Selection prioritized individuals with a strong understanding of the Nigerian context, through either professional expertise or lived experience alongside openness to futures thinking, critical and systems thinking, and the ability to engage collaboratively. Particular attention was given to bringing together intergenerational and cross-sectoral perspectives to enrich the foresight process.

- **Children and Youth:** The 24 Participants included students, young entrepreneurs, farmers, innovators, creatives, and community volunteers drawn from urban and rural areas across the North, South, East, and West.
- **Professionals:** To ground the aspirations in reality, policy advisers, regulatory experts, educators, private sector leaders, and academics participated alongside the youth.

> *"If we don't sit up, Nigeria will spoil in our hands."*

> *"With more workshops like these, Nigeria is no longer waiting for change makers but raising them."*

> *"We are doubtful, thoughtful, worried, and weighing; Nigeria is in a state of emergency."*

Key Findings

Region specific themes

While crosscutting themes emerged, each location offered a unique lens:

- **Abuja: children and youth participants brought** by a forward-looking mindset and optimism. Participants emphasized civic responsibility and the role of the citizen in nation-building.

- **Lagos:** Dominated by intense concerns over insecurity and the fast-paced, high-pressure urban environment. There was a strong specific focus on mental health strain and gender inclusion.
- **Kano:** Echoed security fears but placed a distinct emphasis on women's empowerment and the need to break mental health stigmas within conservative cultural frameworks.

Summary of Scenario Stories

Through rigorous application of the **Social**, **Technological**, **Economic**, **Environmental**, **Political** (STEEP) framework and scenario-building methodologies. Scenario planning was used to allows participants to move beyond linear forecasting and instead explore multiple plausible futures. The method was particularly useful in this context because it made it possible to combine lived experience, systems thinking, and long-term policy reflection in a way that was accessible to both young participants and professionals. Participants identified critical drivers of change ranging from the embedding of Artificial Intelligence in daily life to the existential pressures of climate change. Four distinct plausible futures for Nigeria in 2050 were developed:

1. **(Business as Usual) Continuity under Pressure**: Nigeria remains functional but operates under sustained strain. Progress continues in areas such as digital innovation and urban growth, but structural challenges, including inequality, youth unemployment, internal and external migration, and uneven service delivery persist. This future reflects adaptation without full systemic change.
2. **(Collapse) Fragility and Systemic Breakdown**: Existing vulnerabilities intensify and converge. Public systems weaken, trust declines, and households increasingly rely on informal coping mechanisms. Opportunities narrow significantly for children and youth, and survival becomes the dominant organizing logic of everyday life.
3. **(Growth/Disciplined) Structured Progress**: Nigeria improves through stronger governance, policy consistency, and investment. Economic and institutional performance strengthens, and services become more reliable. A future of fiscal discipline and regional specialization where the "Giant Wakes Properly."
4. **Transformation:** A radically reimagined Nigeria where systems are fundamentally redesigned into inclusive, citizen-centred models, driven by social innovation and new forms of governance and economic organization. Children and youth are more central to shaping outcomes, and development pathways are redefined rather than extended.

A comparative snapshot of how key drivers of change evolve across four alternative futures

Driver of Change	Business as Usual (BAU)	Collapse	Growth (Disciplined)	Transform
Demographic Explosion (Youth Bulge)	• Youth population continues to expand under pressure, with limited absorption into stable employment, reinforcing informal livelihoods.	• Youth bulge becomes destabilizing, with high unemployment driving social unrest and vulnerability.	• Youth population is partially absorbed through job creation and skills development, though gaps remain.	• Youth population becomes a system-shaping force, actively redesigning participation across economic, social, and governance systems.
Rapid Urbanization	• Cities expand rapidly but unevenly, with infrastructure lagging and informal settlements increasing.	• Urbanization intensifies system strain, leading to overcrowding and service breakdowns.	• Cities become structured engines of growth, though inequalities persist.	• Urbanization evolves into networked spatial systems, reducing dependence on physical concentration of opportunity.
Education Crisis	• Access improves, but quality gaps persist; alternative learning pathways fill system gaps.	• Education systems deteriorate, with rising dropouts and declining literacy.	• Education systems improve and align better with labour market needs.	• Education becomes continuous, modular, and embedded within life and work, no longer confined to institutions.
Mental Health Trends	• Mental health concerns rise and become more visible,	• Mental health crises intensify with minimal	• Mental health is increasingly integrated into health and	• Wellbeing becomes **systemically embedded**

	but support systems remain uneven.	support systems.	education systems.	across social and economic systems.
AI Integration	• AI adoption expands in pockets, improving productivity but reinforcing access inequality.	• AI systems exist but are poorly governed, increasing inequality and misuse.	• AI is integrated into governance and industry, improving efficiency.	• AI becomes part of **adaptive system infrastructure**, enabling predictive and decentralized coordination.
Digital Economy	• Digital platforms expand livelihoods but deepen dependency and uneven access.	• Digital economy becomes a fragile survival space marked by exclusion and volatility.	• Digital systems drive inclusion, entrepreneurship, and economic expansion.	• Digital economy becomes core system architecture, shaping identity, participation, and value exchange.
Systemic Barriers (Inflation, Unemployment, Gender Gaps)	• Structural barriers persist, with high cost of living and limited formal job growth.	• Economic exclusion deepens, especially for vulnerable groups.	• Economic reforms reduce barriers and improve inclusion, though disparities persist.	• Traditional barriers lose relevance as new participation systems redefine access to opportunity.
Hustle / Informal Economy	• Hustle economy becomes normalized as the primary livelihood structure.	• Informal economy dominates but is unstable and survival-driven.	• Informal sectors are partially formalized and integrated into the broader economy.	• Distinction between formal and informal dissolves into fluid, multi-stream

				participation systems.
Climate Shocks	• Climate impacts intensify, with adaptation efforts struggling to keep pace.	• Climate shocks drive displacement, conflict, and systemic instability.	• Climate adaptation improves, reducing vulnerability in key sectors.	• Climate response becomes anticipatory and system-integrated.
Resource Scarcity & Environmental Degradation	• Resource pressure increases, contributing to localized stress and conflict.	• Resource scarcity intensifies conflict and undermines livelihoods.	• Resource management improves through policy and investment.	• Resource use becomes optimized through circular and regenerative systems.
Institutional Weakness	• Institutions function but remain inconsistent and under pressure.	• Institutional legitimacy erodes significantly, with weak coordination.	• Institutions strengthen through reforms and improved accountability.	• Governance becomes distributed and layered, reducing reliance on centralized systems.
Tech-Enabled Democracy	• Demand for digital participation grows, but implementation remains limited.	• Digital governance is fragmented and inconsistently applied.	• Technology enhances transparency, participation, and accountability.	• Participation becomes continuous and system-embedded, beyond episodic democratic processes.
System Logic	• Systems are stretched but still relied upon, with individuals navigating constraints rather than fundamentally	• Systems are weakened, fragmented, and increasingly bypassed for survival, with informal coping	• Systems are strengthened, optimized, and scaled, becoming more effective in delivering services and supporting	• Systems are reconfigured and no longer central; participation occurs through fluid,

	changing how systems operate.	mechanisms replacing formal structures.	development outcomes.	adaptive, and networked systems that individuals directly engage with and shape.

Emerging Signals of Change

Circular and Networked Mobility Migration becomes multi-directional with individuals participating across multiple geographies. BAU: Emerging unevenly Collapse: Constrained Growth: Structured Transform: Fully fluid	**System Bypass Behaviours** Individuals increasingly solve problems outside formal systems. BAU: Expanding Collapse: Dominant survival strategy Growth: Integrated Transform: Core system logic
Platform-Based Identity Access to opportunity is mediated through digital platforms and reputation systems. BAU: Expanding Collapse: Exclusionary Growth: Formalized Transform: Foundational	**Blurring Life Stages** Learning, earning, and participation overlap across life stages. BAU: Emerging Collapse: Disrupted Growth: Flexible Transform: Fully continuous
Shift in Trust Trust moves from institutions to systems and networks.	**Anticipatory Systems** Shift from reactive to predictive systems. BAU: Limited

BAU: Fragile Collapse: Eroded Growth: Partially restored Transform: Distributed	Collapse: Absent Growth: Expanding Transform: Dominant

Across all scenarios, Nigeria's future is shaped not only by the scale of change, but by whether systems are able to absorb, adapt to, or are bypassed by that change.

This report serves not only as a record of these imaginative exercises but as a strategic blueprint. It outlines specific calls to action for policymakers, educators, and communities to steer the nation away from collapse and towards transformation.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

In February 2026, The Office for Strategic Preparedness and Resilience (OSPRE), Office of the Vice President – Anticipatory Governance and Foresight Capacity Programme, and UNICEF Nigeria, convened a series of foresight workshops under the theme "Child Foresight analysis for future literacy and Intergenerational Equity" in Abuja, Lagos and in Kano. The sessions brought two critical perspectives into the foresight process: children and youth participants contributing lived experiences, aspirations, and concerns about their futures, and professionals and practitioners contributing policy, systems-level, and institutional insights into long-term child wellbeing.

The workshop series forms part of a broader effort to institutionalize futures literacy and intergenerational equity within Nigeria's governance and development ecosystem. Across locations, the workshops aimed to advance the use of foresight to strengthen child-focused and anticipatory governance. Specifically, the process sought to:

- Understand how children and young people perceive the future and the changes shaping their lives.
- Capture lived experiences alongside practitioner and systems-level perspectives on risks and opportunities.
- Identify emerging and cross-sectoral drivers affecting future child wellbeing across education, health, climate, technology, safety, livelihoods, and governance.
- Strengthen child-informed, intergenerational, and evidence-based approaches to long-term policy design, planning, and implementation.

Using a combination of participatory and structured foresight methodologies, the workshops created inclusive spaces for reflection and dialogue. With children and youth, the approach emphasized interactive sessions, creative exercises, storytelling, and exploration of future scenarios to surface grounded perspectives on hopes, fears, and aspirations. With professionals and practitioners, the process incorporated structured foresight tools, systems analysis, anticipatory governance discussions, scenario exploration, and multi-stakeholder dialogue to examine policy and institutional implications. Participants across the three locations explored key forces shaping the future of children in Nigeria, including digital transformation, climate stress, access to quality education, economic transitions, safety and security, governance systems, and community resilience.

Overall, the workshop series reinforced the importance of embedding children's voices, evidence, and foresight insights into national and sub-national planning processes.

1.2 Participants Diversity

In line with the participants selection criteria, focused on diversity across geography, gender, and age, as well as inclusion of individuals with strong contextual understanding of Nigeria through lived experience or professional expertise, this workshop ensured broad and deep perspective, hosting children and youth from various states in Nigeria, reflecting the country's demographic and diversity.

In line with the participant selection criteria, the foresight workshops were designed to ensure broad and balanced representation. Two distinct but complementary groups were convened: children and youth participants, and professionals and practitioners. Together, these groups brought lived experience, institutional insight, and systems-level understanding into a shared exploration of Nigeria's future.

Children and Youth Participants

The children and youth scenario-building workshops ensured both geographic and socio-economic diversity, reflecting Nigeria's demographic and cultural composition. Participants aged 8 - 25 were drawn from different regions of the country, including urban and rural communities in the North, South, East, and West - enabling rich discussions grounded in varied lived realities.

- **Geographic and contextual diversity**: Participants represented diverse local contexts, representing how education, livelihoods, climate change, governance, technology, and economic opportunities shape young people's experiences differently across regions. This diversity surfaced both shared national challenges and region-specific risks and opportunities, strengthening the depth of scenario exploration.
- **Varied exposure and perspectives**: The workshop brought together young people with different levels of exposure to leadership, civic engagement, and futures thinking. While some had prior experience in youth advocacy, entrepreneurship, or community initiatives, others were engaging in structured foresight processes for the first time. This mix fostered peer learning, creativity, and collaborative exploration of alternative futures.
- **Cross-sector aspirations and backgrounds**: Participants reflected a wide range of interests and aspirations, including students, young entrepreneurs, youth farmers, innovators, creatives, and community volunteers. As a result, conversations extended beyond single-issue discussions and instead captured the interconnected systems

shaping children's and youth's lives, including education, employment, technology, climate resilience, governance, and social inclusion. Overall, the youth diversity enriched dialogue, strengthened cross-regional understanding, and demonstrated the value of inclusive foresight processes in amplifying young voices within national development conversations.

Professionals and Practitioners

The adult scenario-building workshops convened a strategically selected group of stakeholders whose professional experiences are critical to understanding Nigeria's evolving development landscape. The selection process emphasized cross-sector balance, geographic spread, and institutional diversity.

- **Geographic and contextual representation**: Participants were drawn from six geopolitical zones, with professional networks and operational experience spanning urban, peri-urban, and community-level contexts. This enabled grounded discussions on how governance systems, livelihoods, education, security, climate pressures, and economic transitions manifest differently across regions, while also identifying cross-cutting national trends.
- **Multi-sectoral composition**: The workshop brought together representatives from government, private sector, civil society, academia, development institutions, informal networks, and the creative economy. Participants included policy advisers, regulatory experts, educators, community development practitioners, private sector actors, and entrepreneurs. This breadth ensured that policy, grassroots, market, and institutional perspectives were integrated into scenario analysis.

  The combination of institutional insight and field-level experience enabled a broad examination of future risks and opportunities affecting children, youth, and society more broadly.
- **Overall Contribution of Diversity:** By intentionally combining intergenerational and multi-sectoral perspectives, the workshops created a robust foundation for anticipatory governance discussions. The diversity of participants strengthened systems thinking, enriched scenario development, and reinforced the importance of inclusive, evidence-informed foresight processes in shaping Nigeria's long-term development pathways.



"With more workshops like these, Nigeria is no longer waiting for change makers but raising them"

– *Workshop* participant

1.3 Methodology

The workshop utilized a systematic, multi-stage foresight framework adapted specifically for a child-centric lens. This approach values lived experience and imagination as valid forms of evidence for long-term planning.

Workshop Process and Framework

The process flowed through four distinct stages across all three cities:

Step 1: Focal Issue Identification: Scanning the general environment using STEEP framework (Social, Technological, Economic, Environmental, and Political) and trend analysis to understand what drives the present and future (10-20+ years).

Step 2: Change Dynamics Analysis: Identifying 'Driving Forces' (accelerators), 'Restraining Forces' (barriers), and 'Signals of Change'.

Step 3: Scenario Building: Using the Manoa methodology to construct plausible stories of the future based on critical uncertainties.

Step 4: Backcasting: Working backward from preferred futures to identify the policy steps needed today.

Six Thinking Hats Methodology

To structure the dialogue effectively, the "Six Thinking Hats" tool was employed:
To support structured reflection and inclusive dialogue, the workshops incorporated the Six Thinking Hats as a facilitation tool. This approach guided participants to examine issues from multiple perspectives, including facts and evidence, risks and challenges, opportunities, emotions, creative possibilities, and priorities for action. By doing so, the process ensured that discussions captured both analytical insights and lived experiences, while also encouraging balanced participation and deeper exploration of complex issues affecting the future of children and youth.

Hat Color	Focus Area	Key Outputs
White Hat	Facts & Data	Population statistics, urbanization trends, economic realities.
Yellow Hat	Opportunities	Demographic dividend, digital transformation, agricultural potential, gender inclusion.
Red Hat	Feelings & Emotions	Anxiety, fear, mental health pressures, mixed feelings of hope (50/50).
Black Hat	Risks & Threats	Expansion of cybercrime ("Yahoo Yahoo"), school dropouts, brain drain, weak implementation.
Green Hat	Innovations	Skills-based education, tech hubs, linking poverty alleviation to vocational training.
Blue Hat	Priorities & Actions	Education reform, youth inclusion, digital access, governance coordination.

2. Insights from the Six Thinking Hats

Nigeria stands at a demographic crossroads. Insights generated through the scenario-building workshops, particularly through the Six Thinking Hats exercise, highlight that the nation's youth, particularly the vast child and adolescent population (0-17 years), face a complex array of structural vulnerabilities that traditional planning models often fail to address.

2.1 Structural vulnerabilities

- **Economic Survival Mode:** For millions of Nigerian families, daily life is dictated by inflation, low wages, and the "hustle economy." This economic precarity forces youth into short-term survival thinking rather than long-term career building.
- **Pervasive Insecurity:** From insurgency in the North East to farmer/herder crises in the Middle Belt and general crime in urban centers, insecurity limits mobility, hampers investment, and creates a psychology of fear.
- **Trust Deficit:** Perhaps the most damaging structural vulnerability is the deep deficit of trust in public institutions. Many young participants expressed feeling "unseen and unsupported" by the state, leading to disengagement from civic processes.
- **The 'Japa' Phenomenon:** The mass migration of skilled youth (Japa) is both a symptom of these vulnerabilities and a driver of further instability, as the country loses its most vital human capital to the diaspora.

2.2 Key Drivers of Change (STEEP Framework)

Participants utilized the STEEP framework to map the forces shaping Nigeria's trajectory toward 2050.

Social Drivers

- **Demographic Explosion:** With a population growth from 90m to 216m in 30 years and a median age of 15, Nigeria is experiencing a youth bulge that is either a dividend or a ticking time bomb.
- **Rapid Urbanization:** 70% of the population is projected to live in urban centers by 2030, putting immense strain on infrastructure.
- **Education Crisis:** Nigeria hosts the world's largest out-of-school population, creating a widening gap between workforce skills and market needs.
- **Mental Health:** Rising trends of loneliness and intergenerational tension are becoming public health concerns.

Technological Drivers

- **AI Integration:** Deep embedding of Artificial Intelligence in daily life is reshaping how Nigerians work and interact.
- **Digital Economy:** The success of platforms like Paystack and Jumia signals a shift toward digital income streams, though social media pressures and new regulation laws create tension.

Economic Drivers

- **Systemic Barriers:** High inflation and unemployment persist, with young women facing specific systemic exclusion.
- **Informal Economies:** The growth of "hustle economies" is redefining work, often outside the

tax net and social safety protections. Many young participants saw this positively, linking it to being "multitalented" and able to generate income from multiple sources.

Environmental Drivers

- **Climate Shocks:** Increasing extreme weather events, including droughts and flash floods, are disrupting food systems and livelihoods.
- **Resource Scarcity:** Increasing pressure on land and water resources is fueling local conflicts, with Lack of operational and maintenance of large public infrastructures (dams, bridges) which pose an additional risk to population
- **Environmental Degradation:** Rising pollution, poor waste management, and heavy metal contamination are degrading air, water, and soil, with serious impacts on public health and vulnerable communities.

Political Drivers

- **Institutional Weakness:** Governance structures are struggling to absorb the youth demographic, leading to a crisis of legitimacy.
- **Tech-Enabled Democracy:** There is a rising demand for electronic voting and direct digital representation among youth.
- **Weak Health Infrastructure:** Limited capacity in basic social services increases the risk of public health emergencies and undermines access to essential care.

2.3 Signals of change

Small, specific indicators or "weak signals" showing potential shifts in direction:

- **The "Japa" Phenomenon**: Youth migration abroad or to urban centers for better opportunities, and the "Japa return" where migrants bring back skills and capital.
- **Mental Health Trends**: Increasing reports of loneliness, intergenerational tension, suicides, and psychological strain among youth.
- **Alternative Work & Education**: Growth of informal work, "hustle economies," and digital or remote employment that bypass traditional formal employment structures.
- **Social & Digital Tension**: Social media pressures, digital presence expectations, and laws regulating online behavior.
- **Violence Normalization for Profit**: Increasing instances where violence is rationalized if it generates income, signaling social instability.
- **Food System Shifts**: Movement toward processed foods, urban agricultural initiatives, and localized food security strategies.
- **Emerging Political Engagement**: Youth demands for representation, new tech-enabled voting methods, and civic participation initiatives.

3. The scenario stories: Nigeria in 2050

Based on the drivers and uncertainties identified, participants co-created four distinct scenarios for Nigeria in 2050.

3.1 Scenario One: Business as Usual (BAU)

"The Line of Separation: The rich laugh more, The poor cry harder"

Guiding question: *If things continue as they are, what will they produce by 2050?*

This Business as Usual (BAU) archetype envisions a future where current trends and conditions continue largely unchanged. It assumes that Nigeria's existing policy directions, governance patterns, economic structures, and social dynamics persist with limited structural reform. By 2050, this future reflects an extension of the present characterized by incremental improvements in some sectors, but with enduring systemic challenges.

While gradual progress may occur in areas such as infrastructure, education access, and technological adoption, deep-rooted inequalities, youth unemployment, governance gaps, and regional disparities remain largely unresolved. It is a world of continuity and slow evolution, where change is uneven and often insufficient to meet the growing needs and aspirations of children and youth.

Summary story of Business as Usual (BAU)

By 2050, Nigeria is still standing, but struglling.

The country no scatter finish, but the deep problems wey people don dey shout about since the 2020s never really clear. Instead, Nigeria enter one kind long stretch of manage-manage progress, where small wins dey show for surface but big structural wahala still dey underneath. Cities like Lagos, Abuja, and Kano don expand well-well. Tech hubs dey bubble, young people dey hustle online, and digital money don become normal way to survive. But for plenty youths, especially outside major urban centers, opportunity still dey scarce and the cost of living don climb pass many families' reach.

The japa life plan never slow down, e just normalize. For many skilled young Nigerians, travelling out no be emergency move again; e become strategy. Those wey remain for country show serious resilience, building livelihoods through informal work, side hustles, and creative survival.

Government reforms come and go in cycles, policy announcements loud, implementation uneven, and follow-through inconsistent. Institutions still dey function, but public trust never fully recover. Many young people still feel unseen and unsupported, even as new programmes dey launched.

Climate pressure quietly tighten the screws. Northern communities dey battle advancing desert conditions, while southern states dey face more frequent flooding. Food still dey available for most people, but price volatility don become normal household stress.

Security improve for some corridors but remain patchy nationwide. Some areas enjoy relative stability; others still dey manage persistent tension and localized violence.

By 2050, Nigeria never collapse, far from it. The country still vibrant, still full of energy, still producing talent and innovation. But the big promise of the demographic dividend never fully land. For many young Nigerians, the future no spoil… but e no fully blossom either.

How Did This Happen?

The Slow Drift (2026–2034)

Na here the pattern begin set. After the mid-2020s, government roll out several reform agendas targeting youth employment, digital growth, and food security. Some progress show, internet access improves, fintech expand, and urban infrastructure projects move forward in major cities.

But implementation gaps remain wide.

- Youth unemployment reduce small for statistics but remain high in real life.
- Education reforms start but curriculum still struggle to match labour market reality.
- “Japa” begin shift from panic exit to structured migration pathway.
- Climate warnings dey acknowledged, but adaptation investments no scale fast enough.

Nigeria no derail, but the country begin enter slow pressure mode.

The Pressure Years (2035–2044)

By the mid-2030s, the cracks become harder to ignore. Population growth continue to outpace job creation. Informal and gig work become the main shock absorber for millions of young people. Hustle culture fully institutionalize, no longer temporary survival, but permanent economic structure.

Government institutions still function, but coordination gaps and trust deficits persist.

Meanwhile:

- Food prices begin show more frequent spikes.
- Flood–drought cycles intensify in vulnerable regions.
- Skilled migration continues steady, not mass panic, but constant outflow.
- Urban congestion worsens as cities absorb millions of new residents.

Security improve in some zones through technology and local stabilization efforts, but new pockets of criminality and bandit activity continue to emerge in fragile regions. Nigeria still dey move forward, but the system dey stretch.

The Managed Strain (2045–2050)

By the late 2040s, Nigeria don enter what many analysts call permanent high-pressure equilibrium. The country remains functional and globally relevant, with strong cultural exports, a large digital economy, and pockets of world-class innovation. However, structural inequalities harden across regions and income groups.

Key features of this period:

- Youth population peaks, but quality job absorption still lag demand.
- Japa continue as pressure valve, not crisis wave.
- Climate adaptation improves but remains uneven geographically.
- Public services expand in coverage but struggle with quality consistency.
- Trust in government improve slightly but never fully stabilize.

Nigeria in 2050 is not a story of failure, but it is also not the full story of transformation many once hoped for. Na country wey survive, adapt, and manage, but never fully reset.

Emerging Scenarios Headlines - Business as Usual

1. Homes abandoned **-** Nigeria “The new sahara”
2. Japa Wahala: Nigeria the forgotten country.
3. Bandit Coup! Aso rock taken over
4. Population Pandemic: food scarcity hits Nigeria.
5. The Line of Separation: The rich laugh more, The poor cry harder.
6. The retired are not tired: Youth on the street
7. Baba in control! This 100-year-old man!
8. 3zch E choke! 1 million youths stranded at sea.

Characteristics of the Business as Usual (BAU) Future – Nigeria 2050

By 2050, Nigeria under the Business as Usual pathway reflects a mixed landscape of incremental progress and persistent structural strain. Systems remain functional but operate under continuous pressure. The country demonstrates resilience and adaptive capacity, yet deep-rooted challenges affecting children and youth remain only partially addressed.

1. **Youth Employment and the Entrenchment of Hustle Culture**
   - **Persistent Underemployment:** While official unemployment figures show modest improvement, underemployment remains widespread. Many young Nigerians are working, but not in stable, well-paying, or secure jobs. The labour market continues to absorb youth through informal and gig-based work rather than through structured, high-productivity sectors.
   - **Hustle Economy Becomes Structural:** What was once temporary survival strategy in the early 2020s has become normalized economic architecture. Side hustles, digital gigs, and informal trade dominate youth livelihoods. As many young people say, *"na who no hustle dey hungry."*
   - **Skills–Jobs Mismatch Persists:** Education reforms expand access but struggle to keep pace with evolving labour market needs. Graduates continue to rely heavily on self-learning, vocational pivots, and digital upskilling to remain competitive.
   - **Gender Gaps Remain Stubborn:** Young women make gains in education and entrepreneurship but still face systemic barriers in formal employment, earnings, and leadership pathways.

2. **Migration and the Normalization of "Japa"**
   - **Japa as Life Strategy:** By 2050, migration is no longer seen primarily as crisis escape but as a mainstream life pathway. For many middle-class and skilled youth, the question is no longer *"if"* but *"when"* to leave.
   - **Steady Talent Outflow:** Nigeria continues to lose a portion of its highly skilled workforce particularly in health, engineering, and advanced tech fields, though not at catastrophic levels.
   - **Diaspora Linkages Strengthen:** Remittances, diaspora investments, and cross-border digital work become important stabilizers for many households and sectors.
   - **Internal Migration Intensifies:** Rapid rural-to-urban migration continues, placing sustained pressure on major urban centers such as Lagos, Abuja, and Kano.

3. **Governance and Institutional Performance**

- **Incremental but Uneven Reform:** Government introduces periodic reforms in digital governance, social protection, and service delivery. However, implementation gaps, coordination weaknesses, and political turnover limit deep systemic transformation.
- **Persistent Trust Deficit:** Public trust improves slightly compared to the 2020s but remains fragile. Many young people still express sentiments like *"government dey try small, but we still dey on our own."*
- **Policy Continuity Challenges:** Long-term national strategies are frequently launched but inconsistently sustained across political cycles, slowing cumulative impact.
- **Localized Governance Variation:** Some states demonstrate stronger service delivery and innovation, while others lag, deepening regional inequality.

4. **Education and Skills Ecosystem**
   - **Expanded Access, Uneven Quality:** School enrollment improves and digital learning expands, but quality disparities remain significant between urban and rural areas, and between public and private institutions.
   - **Rise of Alternative Learning Pathways:** Self-taught skills, online certifications, tech bootcamps, and vocational hubs become mainstream complements to formal education.
   - **Pressure on Tertiary Institutions:** Universities expand intake but continue to face funding, infrastructure, and faculty retention constraints.
   - **Career Uncertainty Among Youth:** Many young people remain unsure whether formal education alone guarantees economic mobility, reinforcing the parallel hustle mindset.

5. **Food Systems and Cost-of-Living Pressures**
   - **Chronic Food Price Volatility:** Nigeria avoids large-scale food system collapse, but households face periodic spikes in food prices due to climate variability, logistics bottlenecks, and population pressure.
   - **Mixed Agricultural Modernization:** Mechanization and agritech expand in some regions, while smallholder vulnerability persists elsewhere.
   - **Nutrition Inequality Persists:** Urban processed food consumption rises, while pockets of undernutrition remain in vulnerable communities.
   - **Household Coping Behaviours Normalize:** Families increasingly rely on income diversification, remittances, and food substitution strategies to manage cost pressures.

6. **Climate and Environmental Stress**

- **Intensifying but Managed Climate Pressure:** Desertification advances gradually in the north, while flooding events increase in southern and riverine regions. Adaptation efforts expand but remain uneven.
- **Urban Environmental Strain:** Rapid urbanization contributes to congestion, waste management challenges, and heat stress in major cities.
- **Localized Displacement Continues:** Climate-related internal displacement occurs episodically, particularly in high-risk ecological zones.
- **Youth Climate Anxiety Rises:** Young Nigerians demonstrate growing awareness and concern about environmental futures, though large-scale green transition remains incomplete.

7. **Security and Social Stability**
   - **Patchwork Stability:** National security improves in some corridors due to technology-enabled surveillance and localized interventions, but fragile zones persist.
   - **Evolution of Criminal Economies:** Rather than large-scale breakdown, Nigeria experiences adaptive forms of organized crime, cyber fraud, and localized bandit activity.
   - **Community Resilience Remains Strong:** Informal community networks, vigilante structures, and local peace mechanisms continue to play important stabilizing roles.

8. **Digital Transformation and Youth Innovation**
   - **Digital Economy Expands:** Fintech, e-commerce, remote work, and creative digital industries continue to grow, providing new income pathways for youth.
   - **Inequality in Digital Access Persists:** Connectivity improves nationally but quality and affordability gaps remain between regions and income groups.
   - **Tech-Enabled Entrepreneurship Rises:** Young Nigerians continue to demonstrate strong adaptive innovation capacity truly, *"Naija no dey carry last"* energy still dey alive.
   - **Platform Dependency Risks Emerge:** Many youth livelihoods become heavily dependent on global digital platforms, creating new vulnerabilities to external shocks.

Opportunities and threats

Opportunities	Threats
• Nigeria's youthful population continues to drive digital innovation and entrepreneurial hustle, creating new income pathways even in the absence of strong formal job growth.	• Youth underemployment remains structurally high, with many young Nigerians trapped in informal, low-paying, and unstable work despite their growing skills and aspirations.

• Major urban centers such as Lagos, Abuja, and Port Harcourt keep attracting investment and commercial activity, sustaining Nigeria's role as a regional economic hub.	• Rapid and poorly planned urbanization deepens spatial inequality, with informal settlements expanding faster than infrastructure and basic services can keep up.
• Strong diaspora connections and the steady flow of remittances continue to cushion many households and support small-scale investments across the country.	• The normalization of the "japa" trend accelerates brain drain, gradually weakening Nigeria's skilled workforce and institutional capacity.
• Private sector actors increasingly step in to provide services in fintech, health, education, and logistics, helping to fill persistent public sector gaps.	• The growing reliance on private provision reinforces inequality, as quality services become increasingly tied to ability to pay.
• Youth civic awareness and online engagement continue to expand, keeping governance and accountability issues visible in the public discourse.	• Persistent trust deficits in public institutions limit the translation of youth activism into sustained policy and institutional reform.
• Incremental improvements in climate adaptation and agricultural practices help some communities adjust to environmental stress.	• Climate pressures including desertification in the north and flooding in the south continue to disrupt food systems and rural livelihoods at a pace faster than adaptation efforts.
• Nigeria's large domestic market remains attractive to investors and entrepreneurs, sustaining pockets of economic dynamism.	• Rising cost of living, especially food, fuel, and housing, continues to outpace income growth for many households, normalizing economic strain.
• Informal and community-based coping systems remain resilient, allowing many Nigerians to navigate economic volatility.	• Overreliance on informal coping mechanisms masks deeper structural weaknesses and increases long-term vulnerability.

How Children and Youth Development Programmes are Affected in the BAU Scenario

- **From Transformation to Continuous Firefighting:** Under Business as Usual, many child- and youth-focused organizations find themselves stuck in reactive mode. Instead of driving long-term systems change, energy and resources are constantly diverted to addressing immediate crises, school dropouts, youth unemployment, food stress, and mental health pressures. Work continues, yes, but e be like say na everyday emergency mode. The ambition to transform systems gradually gives way to managing symptoms.
- **Program Expansion Without Deep Structural Shift:** Government and partners continue to roll out youth empowerment, education access, and skills programmes across Nigeria. However, implementation gaps persist. Many initiatives reach scale on paper but struggle with quality, coordination, and sustainability. As a result, young people see activity everywhere but limited deep change in their lived realities.
- **Growing Pressure on Service Delivery Systems:** With Nigeria's youth population still expanding rapidly, education, health, and social protection systems remain under heavy strain. Classrooms remain overcrowded, teachers overstretched, and youth support services uneven across regions. Organizations increasingly spend time bridging service gaps that public systems have not fully closed.
- **Digital Engagement Expands, But Unevenly:** Technology continues to open new pathways for learning, organizing, and earning. Youth-focused work becomes more digitally enabled, from EdTech to digital livelihoods programming. However, the digital divide persists along rural–urban, gender, and income lines. For many young Nigerians, especially in underserved areas, opportunity still depends on postcode, who get data and who no get.
- **Youth Voice is Visible but Not Always Influential:** Young people remain highly vocal online and in civic spaces. Youth participation platforms expand, and consultation becomes more common in policy conversations. However, meaningful power-shifting remains slow. Many young people continue to feel heard but not heeded, present in the room but not always at the decision table.
- **Mental Health Needs Become More Central:** Across the BAU period, mental health concerns among children and youth become more visible and harder to ignore. Organizations increasingly integrate psychosocial support into programming. However, stigma, workforce shortages, and uneven funding mean demand continues to outpace available support.

BAU Scenario Policy Recommendations for Children and Youth Programmes

In this Business as Usual pathway, Nigeria does not collapse, but neither does it fully transform. Progress is uneven, pressure remains high, and the system bends but does not break. Strategic responses therefore focus on **adaptive scaling, system strengthening, and youth resilience** rather than radical overhaul. The response posture is characterized by:

1. **Adaptive Scaling Rather Than Big-Bang Reform:** Organizations increasingly focus on what works and scale it incrementally. Instead of waiting for perfect policy environments, actors double down on pragmatic, evidence-based programmes that can survive Nigeria's policy and funding volatility. Na steady-steady improvement, not overnight miracle.
2. **Blended Service Delivery Models:** Recognizing persistent public system gaps, organizations strengthen hybrid delivery models that combine government partnerships, private sector innovation, and community-based platforms. The future of youth support becomes more networked and less dependent on any single actor.
3. **Digital-First but Inclusion-Focused Programming:** Youth programming leans heavily into digital tools; online learning, digital livelihoods, virtual mentorship, and AI-enabled services. At the same time, deliberate investments are made to close access gaps for girls, rural youth, and low-income communities so that the digital shift no leave people behind.
4. **Strengthening Youth Economic Pathways:** Given the continued pressure in the formal labour market, programming increasingly prioritizes entrepreneurship, informal sector upgrading, vocational skills, and future-of-work readiness. The focus shifts from "job placement only" to "multiple livelihood pathways" for Nigerian youth.
5. **Embedding Mental Health and Wellbeing:** Mental health support becomes a standard component not an add-on in youth and education programming. Organizations invest in community-based psychosocial models, peer support systems, and school-linked wellbeing services as emotional pressure on young people remains persistently high.
6. **Incremental Governance Engagement:** Rather than expecting rapid institutional transformation, youth-focused actors adopt long-game engagement with government building relationships, improving data systems, and supporting implementation capacity. Progress is gradual, sometimes frustratingly slow, but sustained engagement keeps the door open for future reform.

"We feel pressured but encouraged. Pressurized because of all the statistics of declining situations, but encouraged to work towards preventing or fixing the situation."

- Workshop Participant

3.2 Scenario Two: Collapse

"Digital Sapa Don Cast: Aza Come Empty" / "Nigeria Jaga Jaga"

Guiding question: *If things got worse than they are, like really bad, what will Nigeria look like by 2050?*

The Collapse archetype envisions a future in which existing vulnerabilities intensify and multiple crises converge, overwhelming institutions and systems. It assumes that economic instability, environmental degradation, insecurity, weak governance, and social fragmentation deepen without effective mitigation. By 2050, Nigeria in this scenario faces significant systemic breakdowns that severely constrain opportunities for children and youth.

Public services deteriorate, unemployment rises sharply, social protection systems weaken, and trust in institutions declines. Inequalities widen across regions and socio-economic groups, and many young people face limited access to quality education, livelihoods, and security. It is a world of fragility and regression, where progress stalls or reverses and resilience is severely tested.

Summary story of total collapse

Nigeria Jaga Jaga… (Everything scatter scatter!)

By 2050, Nigeria is not a country in open civil war. It is something quieter and, in many ways, more realistic: a nation worn down by unemployment, collapsing public services, and a population surviving on systems that look modern but feel fragile.

Unemployment has become the country's main constant. Formal jobs still exist, but they are scarce and concentrated in a few sectors and cities. For most people, work means informal trade, short gigs, delivery labour, online hustles, and cash-based micro-businesses that collapse the moment fuel prices spike or a platform changes its rules. Many young people now see school as time spent, not time invested, not because they dislike learning, but because the labour market stopped rewarding it.

Technology fills many of the gaps left by failing institutions. Payments, lending, transport, job matching, health triage, even identity verification everything runs through phones. The country

becomes more digital, but not more secure. If your SIM is blocked, your wallet frozen, or your profile flagged, access to income and mobility can disappear overnight. The state does not always need to detain people to control them; restriction increasingly happens through systems it barely understands but still benefits from. In this Nigeria, connectivity is as essential as food and just as vulnerable to disruption.

Literacy declines in ways that shock those who remember earlier decades. It is not that people have become less intelligent. Rather, reading and structured learning have become luxuries in households permanently managing hunger, rent, and risk. Many can navigate apps smoothly but struggle with sustained reading. A new underclass emerges digitally present but educationally excluded, easily misled, and locked out of higher-earning opportunities.

Formal education loses prestige. Public schools are underfunded, overcrowded, and frequently disrupted. Teachers are poorly paid and often absent. Parents withdraw children because fees, transport, and uniforms are unaffordable, or because the returns to education feel increasingly uncertain. Out-of-school children become normal, not news. Child labour becomes common. Apprenticeships and informal training steadily replace classrooms. A country that once debated “brain drain” now struggles with basic skills at scale.

Public health weakens alongside education. Mortality rises, not from one dramatic catastrophe, but from layered system failure: weak primary care, expensive drugs, poor emergency response, unsafe water in many areas, worsening heat stress, persistent malaria, and maternal health gaps that remain deadly. Many people self-medicate because clinics are overloaded and treatment is costly.

The federal government still exists, but it is trusted less as a source of truth than as a manager of optics. State media insists things are improving; citizens quietly compare that message with daily reality. For most families, the real country is defined by shrinking opportunity, fragile services, and the constant hustle required just to maintain ordinary life. Nigeria in 2050 still carries one name on the map, but in practice it behaves like several anxious regions sharing a strained union.

Aisha is twenty-five in this 2050. She has grown up watching stability become something you rent, not something you inherit. She sees graduates stranded without jobs, children selling goods during school hours, and a society increasingly dependent on screens for survival. Sitting on the edge of a worn building, looking out at a skyline that still glows, she feels the weight of a country that has not collapsed dramatically, but has quietly stopped promising a future.

How Did This Happen?

Managing Through Decline (2026–2034)

The early years of this scenario were marked by a gradual normalization of instability. For many households, daily life increasingly revolved around "managing" recurring disruptions rather than building long-term security. Power outages remained routine, water supply was unreliable, and household planning became increasingly shaped by rising fuel, food, transport, rent, and school-related costs. Although stabilization and reform were repeatedly promised, lived realities changed little for most families.

By the early 2030s, the strain was already visible in the education system. Schools became more overcrowded, teachers more overstretched, and the hidden costs of schooling more burdensome for families. While education continued to be valued socially, confidence in its ability to guarantee mobility or security began to weaken.

Deepening Social and Institutional Breakdown (2035–2044)

By the mid-2030s, the sense of long-term possibility had begun to erode more visibly. Youth unemployment continued to rise, and even those with qualifications increasingly struggled to secure stable work. Many young people exited formal education early and turned instead to trades, dispatch work, digital hustles, or unstable online income streams. However, these alternatives often proved fragile and easily disrupted.

At the same time, learning outcomes and educational continuity deteriorated. Financial pressure, hunger, stress, and instability made sustained learning increasingly difficult, even for motivated students. Literacy and educational attainment began to decline in many communities.

Public health systems also came under growing strain. Hospitals became more overstretched, treatment costs rose further out of reach, and conditions that should have been manageable increasingly became life-threatening. Over time, the cumulative weakening of health systems became more visible in everyday life and community wellbeing.

Fragmented Survival (2045–2050)

By the late 2040s, Nigeria still appeared institutionally intact on paper, but everyday life reflected a far more fragmented and fragile reality. Formal state structures remained in place, yet public confidence in them had declined significantly. Citizens increasingly relied on lived experience, local coping systems, and informal networks rather than official assurances.

Formal employment opportunities remained scarce and often inaccessible without social or political connections. Many young adults depended on multiple unstable income streams and still remained highly vulnerable to economic shocks. For many households, the perceived value of long-term education declined further as immediate survival pressures took precedence. Out-of-school children became more visible, adolescent labour became more normalized, and household decisions increasingly prioritized short-term coping over long-term advancement.
Technology became more central to economic and social life, but also more exclusionary and difficult to navigate. While digital systems mediated access to work, services, and transactions, many of the rules governing them remained opaque, and support systems were weak. Public health continued to deteriorate under cumulative pressure, with overcrowded clinics, expensive medicines, widespread self-medication, and rising preventable mortality.

Aso Rock: From Symbol of Power to Symbol of Decline

In this scenario, Aso Rock remains physically present as a national symbol, but its meaning shifts profoundly. Rather than representing confidence, authority, and national aspiration, it increasingly stands as a witness to institutional erosion and social decline.
Schools that once represented hope and upward mobility become, in some areas, neglected or partially abandoned. Health systems struggle to cope with rising need. Frustration, fatigue, and disillusionment become more visible among young people, some of whom are increasingly drawn toward criminal, violent, or armed networks that offer income, identity, or belonging in the absence of stronger alternatives.

The state does not disappear in this future — but its presence becomes thinner, weaker, and less trusted. What remains is not total collapse in a dramatic sense, but a prolonged condition of systemic breakdown, fragmented survival, and diminished public confidence.

Emerging Scenarios Headlines – Collapse.

- Nigeria Jaga Jaga: The Federation slowly buckles under accumulated strain.
- Mental Health Emergency: Psychological distress among youth reaches crisis levels.
- Nigeria at 90: A nation marked by prolonged fragility and stalled progress.
- Terrorism: The New “Yahoo Yahoo.”
- Education in Nigeria Don Carry Last.
- Nigerian Culture Don Japa, Follow the People.
- Nigeria’s Healthcare System on the Brink.
- Digital Sapa Don Cast: Aza Come Empty.
- A Silent Disaster Facing Nigeria: Climate Pressure Intensifies.

Key Characteristics of the Collapse Scenario

By 2050, Nigeria under the Collapse pathway is not defined by one dramatic failure but by the **accumulation of unresolved pressures** across economic, social, institutional, and environmental systems. The country continues to function formally, but everyday realities reflect deep structural strain.

1. **Survivalist Youth Economy**: Youth livelihoods are dominated by informal, short-term, and highly volatile income streams. Formal employment opportunities remain limited and often connection-dependent. Many young Nigerians maintain multiple small income sources but remain financially fragile. Economic mobility slows significantly, and intergenerational poverty becomes harder to escape.
2. **Education System Under Prolonged Stress**: Public education systems remain overcrowded, under-resourced, and uneven in quality across regions. School completion rates decline in vulnerable communities as households prioritise immediate income over long-term schooling. Alternative learning pathways apprenticeships, informal skills transfer, and self-taught digital work expand but with highly variable quality.
3. **Widening Inequality Across Regions and Social Groups**: Geographic, gender, and income inequalities deepen. Urban centers continue to attract opportunity but also concentrate vulnerability through the expansion of informal settlements. Rural areas experience persistent service gaps. The digital divide reinforces existing inequalities, particularly affecting girls, rural youth, and low-income households.
4. **Public Trust Deficit Becomes Entrenched**: Trust in public institutions remains low and continues to erode gradually. Government communication and citizen lived experience increasingly diverge. Civic frustration grows, but sustained collective action remains fragmented. Many citizens adapt individually rather than expecting systemic reform.
5. **Technology as Both Enabler and Vulnerability**: Nigeria becomes highly digitized in everyday transactions; finance, identity, mobility, and commerce but digital governance and consumer protections lag behind adoption. Platform dependency increases economic exposure for young people whose livelihoods rely on unstable digital ecosystems.
6. **Health and Wellbeing Pressures Intensify**: Mental health challenges among youth become more visible and more widespread. Primary healthcare systems remain overstretched, and out-of-pocket health spending stays high. Preventable conditions continue to contribute to avoidable mortality, particularly in underserved regions.

7. **Persistent Insecurity in Pockets**: While the country does not descend into full national conflict, localized insecurity, banditry, cult violence, communal clashes, and criminal networks remains a persistent drag on development. Mobility, investment, and schooling are periodically disrupted in affected areas.
8. **Climate Stress Compounds Livelihood Fragility**: Flooding in southern regions and desertification in the north continue to affect agriculture, food prices, and rural livelihoods. Adaptation efforts exist but remain uneven and underfunded, increasing household vulnerability to shocks.
9. **Institutional Function Without Deep Reform**: Government structures remain in place, elections continue, and policies are announced regularly. However, implementation gaps persist. The system bends but does not fundamentally transform, reinforcing a cycle of partial progress and recurring setbacks.

Opportunities and Threats - Collapse Scenario

Opportunities	Threats
• Youth ingenuity and survival entrepreneurship remain active, with many young people continuing to create informal, low-cost, and adaptive livelihood strategies even in the absence of stable economic systems.	• Youth unemployment becomes structurally explosive, with millions locked out of meaningful livelihoods and increasingly pushed toward informal survival economies, illicit networks, and social unrest.
• Digital connectivity, where accessible, remains a crucial fallback infrastructure, enabling pockets of income generation, information access, remote work, and social coordination even as formal systems weaken.	• The digital economy fails to deliver broad-based inclusion, instead becoming a fragile and unequal survival space marked by platform volatility, exclusion, cyber exploitation, and concentration of opportunity among a shrinking few.
• Community-based solidarity mechanisms become more central to survival, with extended family networks, neighborhood associations, informal savings groups, and local support structures helping to cushion repeated shocks.	• Household and community resilience systems erode under cumulative stress, reducing the ability of families and informal networks to absorb shocks related to income loss, displacement, insecurity, and food scarcity.
• Diaspora engagement becomes a major stabilizing force, with remittances, skills transfer, informal sponsorship, and	• Accelerated outward migration drains the country of critical talent, weakening already overstretched systems and reducing

transnational support networks helping households and communities remain afloat.	Nigeria's ability to sustain service delivery, innovation, and public sector functionality.
• The retreat of the state creates openings for localized and non-state problem-solving, including humanitarian actors, grassroots organizations, social enterprises, and private providers stepping into critical service gaps.	• The retreat of the state from basic service provision becomes more visible, with education, health, safety, and welfare increasingly inaccessible to those without financial means or social connections.
• Youth frustration may also fuel stronger forms of civic consciousness and resistance, particularly in digital and grassroots spaces where young people continue to articulate demands, expose failures, and imagine alternatives	• Institutional legitimacy breaks down further, with widespread distrust, political fatigue, and weak accountability fuelling disengagement, parallel authority structures, and reduced confidence in formal reform pathways.
• Repeated crises may accelerate practical resilience innovation**,** especially in climate adaptation, food security, decentralized energy, informal learning, and low-cost service delivery models.	• **C**limate disruption becomes a multiplier of instability, intensifying displacement, local conflict, agricultural decline, infrastructure stress, and uneven humanitarian vulnerability across regions.
• Nigeria's demographic weight and regional significance still make it too important to ignore, meaning selective external investment, strategic partnerships, and crisis-response financing may continue to flow into key sectors and regions.	• Household survival becomes increasingly precarious, as inflation, food insecurity, and shrinking coping capacity push larger segments of the population into chronic deprivation and long-term insecurity.

How Children and Youth Development Programmes are Affected in the Collapse Scenario

- **From Systems Change to Emergency Response**: In the Collapse scenario, much of the children and youth sector shifts from long-term transformation work to continuous crisis management. Organizations that once focused on systemic reform increasingly find themselves responding to immediate needs school dropouts, youth unemployment, food stress, protection concerns, and rising mental health pressures. Strategic work does not disappear, but it is constantly interrupted by urgent realities on the ground.
- **Rising Demand, Shrinking Capacity**: As public systems weaken, more families turn to non-state actors for support. Civil society, community groups, and development

partners face mounting pressure to fill widening gaps in education support, livelihoods programming, child protection, and psychosocial services. However, funding volatility, workforce burnout, and operating constraints make it difficult for many organizations to scale at the pace of need.

- **Hard-to-Reach Youth Populations Expand**: Out-of-school children, underemployed youth, and those in informal urban settlements become more numerous and more difficult to engage through traditional programme models. Mobility challenges, insecurity in some regions, and digital access gaps complicate outreach. Programmes increasingly need to work outside formal institutional channels to reach the most vulnerable.
- **Digital Programming Grows, but So Do Exclusion Risks**: Many youth-focused interventions expand their digital components online learning, digital livelihoods, virtual case management in response to system pressures. However, uneven connectivity, device access, and digital literacy mean that the shift risks reinforcing existing inequalities. For some young people the digital door opens; for others it quietly closes.
- **Mental Health and Psychosocial Needs Move to the Centre**: Across the period, emotional distress among children and youth becomes more visible and more urgent. Organizations increasingly integrate mental health and psychosocial support into education, protection, and livelihoods programming. Demand, however, consistently outpaces available trained personnel and funding.
- **Trust-Building Becomes Core Programme Work**: With public trust in institutions remaining fragile, youth-facing organizations spend more time rebuilding confidence at community level. Young people are often skeptical of formal promises and programmes. Effective interventions increasingly depend on local credibility, peer networks, and community intermediaries.
- **Greater Reliance on Local and Community Actors**: In areas where formal systems are overstretched or intermittently disrupted, community-based organizations, faith groups, and informal youth networks play an expanded frontline role. While this strengthens local ownership, it also exposes uneven quality, coordination gaps, and sustainability risks.

Collapse Scenario Policy Recommendations for Children and Youth Programmes

In this Collapse pathway, the system does not fully break but pressure remains persistently high and uneven. Strategic responses therefore prioritize **resilience-building, targeted protection, and adaptive delivery models** that can function under prolonged stress.

1. **Shock-Responsive and Flexible Programming** - Organizations increasingly design programmes that can expand or pivot quickly in response to economic shocks,

displacement, school disruption, or local insecurity. Rigid multi-year models give way to more modular, adaptive approaches that recognize Nigeria's stop-start operating reality.

2. **Deepening Community-Anchored Delivery** - Given trust deficits and service gaps, effective actors invest more deliberately in community-embedded models working through local partners, youth champions, faith networks, and trusted intermediaries. The emphasis shifts from visibility alone to credibility and staying power at grassroots level.
3. **Hybrid Learning and Livelihood Pathways** -Recognizing that formal systems alone cannot absorb the youth population, programmes increasingly blend formal education support with vocational training, entrepreneurship pathways, and informal sector upgrading. The goal is to meet young people where the economy actually is, not only where policy hopes it will be.
4. **Targeted Digital Inclusion Efforts** - Rather than assuming universal digital access, forward-looking actors invest in closing the last-mile gap device access, affordable data, offline-to-online bridges, and digital safety. This helps prevent the digital expansion from quietly widening inequality.
5. **Scaling Mental Health Through Non-Specialist Models** - Because specialist capacity remains limited, organizations expand task-shifting approaches training teachers, youth leaders, and community workers in basic psychosocial support and referral pathways. Mental wellbeing becomes embedded across sectors rather than siloed in health alone.
6. **Strengthening Youth Agency Within Constraint** - Even in a stressed system, programmes deliberately create spaces for youth voice, peer organizing, and civic participation at local levels. The approach recognizes that while national transformation may be slow, local agency remains a critical protective factor for young people.
7. **Smarter Government Engagement (Where Possible)** - Rather than disengaging completely, effective actors maintain selective, pragmatic partnerships with government at federal and state levels, especially around data systems, service delivery improvements, and policy implementation support. The posture is realistic but not disengaged.

3.3 Scenario Three: Growth (Disciplined)

Steady Growth, Quiet Gaps: "The Giant Wakes Properly."

Guiding question: If Nigeria were to implement its 2050 vision and consistently do the right things, what would the country look like by 2050?

The Growth (or Discipline) archetype imagines a future shaped by strategic planning, policy consistency, and sustained investment in national development priorities. It assumes that

Nigeria effectively implements long-term development visions, strengthens institutions, improves governance accountability, and drives economic diversification. By 2050, the country experiences substantial economic expansion and improved service delivery.

Children and youth benefit from better education systems, expanded employment opportunities, technological innovation, and improved infrastructure. However, while overall development indicators improve significantly, structural inequalities are not fully eliminated. It is a world of structured progress and institutional stability, where disciplined implementation drives measurable advancement, though transformation remains incomplete.

Summary story of growth.

By 2050, Nigeria is no longer described as "potential." It is described as "proof."
The transformation did not come from magic. It came from a collective decision that enough was enough that systems had to work, not just exist. Governance shifted from noise to structure. Policies were not only announced; they were implemented and monitored. Fiscal discipline replaced reckless spending. Digital governance closed many corruption loopholes. Inflation stabilized. Planning became long-term.

Education changed fundamentally. Classrooms moved away from memorization and exam cramming into spaces of critical thinking, practical problem-solving, entrepreneurship, and indigenous knowledge integration. Students did not just graduate; they built. Universities began producing inventions, not just transcripts. ASUU strikes became rare headlines instead of seasonal rituals. Parents began saying proudly, "My pikin dey school for Nigeria," and meaning it.
Healthcare followed the same discipline. Teaching hospitals were upgraded. Specialists were retained. Indigenous medicine was researched and standardized. Preventive care became national culture. Telemedicine bridged distance. Nigeria evolved into West Africa's medical hub and eventually, a global one. World leaders flew in quietly for procedures. Nigerians simply said, "We been know."

Technology became an amplifier, not a threat. From digital procurement systems to solar-powered transport networks, battery valleys for electric vehicles, climate-smart agriculture, and innovation hubs across regions, technology strengthened institutions instead of replacing them. Connectivity expanded without leaving rural communities behind.

Regional strengths became national strategy; The North regained prominence as an agricultural powerhouse, the West dominated the creative economy, the East advanced healthcare innovation and the South deepened educational and maritime excellence.

The “japa” wave slowed, then reversed. Diaspora Nigerians returned with capital and expertise. Foreign professionals relocated for an opportunity. The green passport gained global respect. Nigeria hosted major global summits not for spectacle, but because it had become a serious economic and diplomatic actor.

Youth leadership normalized. A woman becoming president in her thirties did not shock the nation; it felt overdue. Local government chairpersons under 40 were common. Hustle became optional, not compulsory. Unemployment dropped dramatically. Young people complained about workload stress and not job scarcity.

Binta, once a child watching systems fail, became part of a generation that rebuilt them. Her rabbit, CHELSEA, once a small symbol of ecosystem balance became part of a much larger story: innovation rooted in local wisdom. By 2050, Nigeria performed groundbreaking veterinary neurosurgery in Udi Hills. It was symbolic: a country that once struggled to keep hospitals functional now exporting medical expertise.

And when Jaden, one of 20 UN Youth Ambassadors, toured Nigeria landing in modern airports, riding solar buses, visiting Battery Valleys, training centers, agricultural hubs, creative capitals, and world-class teaching hospitals he realized something simple: The future was not coming to Nigeria. It was already there.

How Did This Happen?

The Fracture and the Seed (2026–2030)

The turning point did not begin in celebration. It began in exhaustion.

After years of strikes, inflation spikes, governance gridlock, and public frustration, the system reached visible strain. Businesses felt the heat. Households felt it more. A new generation of political, business, and civic actors recognized that cosmetic reforms would no longer suffice.

A coalition of reform-minded leaders across regions and sectors began pushing structural change. Digital governance reforms tightened procurement systems. Fiscal discipline frameworks addressed inflation and leakages. Anti-corruption enforcement shifted from performative to procedural.

Education reform pilots were introduced: modernized curricula integrating entrepreneurship, digital literacy, civic responsibility, and technical skills. Teaching hospitals received targeted investment to halt specialist migration. The Central Bank adopted firm and steady monetary policy to stabilize inflation and restore investor confidence.

Civil society and religious leaders ran national campaigns reframing "discipline" not as punishment, but as shared responsibility. Gradually, citizens began to see governance as something that required participation and accountability. By 2030, early signs were visible: inflation stabilized, digital adoption expanded, diaspora return conversations began, and public trust though cautious started to rebuild.

The Mesh and the Mandate (2031–2040)

Reform moved from stabilization to structural transformation. Regional economic strategies were formalized. Northern agriculture received climate-smart investment and mechanization support. Agro-tech innovation reduced post-harvest losses. Food security improved. Farming regained prestige. The West accelerated creative and technology sectors, scaling local platforms into continental leaders. The East strengthened medical and manufacturing clusters. Southern states invested heavily in maritime trade and advanced education systems.

Universities became innovation centers. Research funding was performance-based. Students built start-ups directly from labs. NYSC was redesigned to link graduates with industries, SMEs, and remote global contracts. Diaspora integration policies incentivized returnees with tax breaks, infrastructure guarantees, and research grants. "Japa" gradually turned into "return."
Welfare systems matured. Social protection became structured and digitized. Environmental justice laws were enforced. Climate-resilient infrastructure reduced flood vulnerability. Anti-corruption systems became automated rather than personality-driven. Youth leadership expanded organically. A thirty-something female governor no longer triggered debate. It signaled continuity. By 2040, inequality had narrowed significantly. Youth unemployment had fallen. Nigeria was recognized regionally as both an agricultural and digital hub.

The Blossom and the Beacon (2041–2050)

Reforms matured into culture.
Disciplined fiscal management became political common sense. Public service delivery was fully digitized with accountability dashboards visible to citizens. Population planning and urban design reduced chaotic expansion. Healthcare achieved universal baseline coverage. Mental health systems were embedded in community structures. Nigeria's teaching hospitals ranked globally for specialized procedures. Foreign patients arrived without fanfare.

Education integrated indigenous knowledge with global science. Continuous mentorship pipelines linked secondary school students to industries. Universities ranked globally for practical innovation, not just citations. Green cities emerged. Solar-powered transport scaled. Battery Valleys produced Made-in-Nigeria electric vehicles. Rural broadband closed digital divides. The passport rose in value. The narrative shifted permanently. "Naija no dey carry last" stopped being motivational talk, it became observable reality. By 2050, Nigeria was self-sufficient in food, stable in governance, digitally advanced, environmentally conscious, culturally confident, and globally respected. Not perfect. But disciplined.

Emerging Headlines — Growth Scenario

- "Steady Growth, Quiet Gaps: Nigeria Moves, But Not for Everybody"
- "Urban Boom, Uneven Benefits"
- "Digital Nigeria Rising, Inclusion Still Pending"
- "Private Sector Leads, Public Systems Lag"
- "Youth Energy High, Quality Jobs Still Catching Up"
- "Food Systems Expanding Under Climate Pressure"

Key Characteristics - Growth Scenario

- **Broad-Based but Uneven Economic Expansion:** Nigeria experiences steady GDP growth driven by services, fintech, telecommunications, and agribusiness. However, growth benefits remain uneven across regions and income groups.
- **Urban Centers Consolidate Economic Power:** Lagos, Abuja, Kano, and Port Harcourt strengthen their dominance as engines of growth, attracting investment, talent, and infrastructure while many secondary cities and rural areas lag behind.
- **Digital Economy Accelerates Inclusion, Partially:** Mobile money, digital platforms, and e-commerce expand access to markets and financial services, especially for youth and SMEs, but digital divides persist in rural and low-income communities.
- **Private Sector Becomes the Primary Service Driver:** Due to persistent public sector constraints, private providers increasingly shape access to healthcare, education, logistics, and finance, improving efficiency for some while deepening affordability gaps for others.
- **Agriculture Modernizes in Pockets:** Commercial agriculture and value chains improve through mechanization, improved inputs, and better market linkages, but smallholder farmers face uneven access to finance, irrigation, and extension services.

- **Climate Stress Becomes a Structuring Risk:** Flooding in southern states and desertification in the north increasingly influence planning, food prices, and migration patterns, even as adaptation efforts gradually scale up.
- **Youth Demographics Remain a Double-Edged Sword:** Nigeria's large youth population fuels innovation and entrepreneurship, but the pace of formal job creation still struggles to fully absorb new labour market entrants.
- **Governance Improves Incrementally but Not Transformational:** Reforms in ease of doing business, digital government services, and revenue collection show progress, yet institutional trust and service delivery gaps remain persistent.

Opportunities and Threats

Opportunities	Threats
• Continued economic growth creates new markets for agribusiness, fintech, logistics, and food system investments.	• Growth remains uneven, risking deeper regional and income inequality if inclusion does not keep pace.
• Expansion of digital finance and e-commerce lowers entry barriers for youth and small businesses.	• Digital divides persist in rural and low-income areas, potentially excluding the most vulnerable from growth benefits.
• Urban economic expansion strengthens Nigeria's position as a regional commercial hub.	• Rapid urbanization strains housing, transport, water, and sanitation infrastructure in major cities.
• Increasing private sector participation improves efficiency and innovation in service delivery.	• Heavy reliance on private provision may widen affordability gaps in health, education, and other essential services.
• Agricultural modernization improves productivity and value chain development in high-potential zones.	• Smallholder farmers risk marginalization where they cannot access finance, irrigation, or improved inputs.
• Growing youth entrepreneurship ecosystem stimulates innovation and job creation.	• Formal employment growth may still lag behind population growth, sustaining youth underemployment pressures.
• Climate adaptation investments begin to strengthen resilience in vulnerable regions.	• Intensifying floods, heat stress, and desertification continue to disrupt food systems and rural livelihoods.

• Improved business environment attracts both domestic and foreign investment.	• Macroeconomic volatility (inflation, currency pressure, energy costs) continues to pose periodic shocks.

How Children and Youth Development Programmes are Affected -in the Growth Scenario

1. **Expanded Reach but Uneven Access:** As Nigeria's economy grows and digital systems expand, programmes targeting children and youth are able to reach more beneficiaries, particularly in urban and peri-urban areas. However, access remains uneven, with rural communities, informal settlements, and conflict-affected regions still underserved.
2. **Shift Toward Skills and Employability Programming:** With government and private sector focus on productivity and innovation, children and youth work increasingly prioritize digital skills, entrepreneurship, STEM education, and workforce readiness. While this improves future employability for many young people, foundational issues such as learning poverty and basic education quality remain insufficiently addressed in some regions.
3. **Private Sector Influence on Youth Programming:** The growing role of private actors in education, EdTech, and youth employment initiatives brings new resources and innovation into the sector. However, programme priorities may increasingly align with market needs rather than holistic child and youth development, potentially sidelining the most vulnerable groups.
4. **Urban Youth Opportunities Rise Faster than Rural Ones:** Young people in major cities benefit more from innovation hubs, training programmes, and employment pipelines linked to the digital economy. Meanwhile, rural youth especially in northern and climate-stressed areas continue to face limited access to quality services and decent work pathways.
5. **Persistent Vulnerability Among At-Risk Children:** Despite overall growth, children in poor households, informal settlements, and fragile regions remain exposed to child labour, school dropouts, early marriage (in some regions), and nutrition challenges. Progress is visible but not transformative.
6. **Digital Engagement Becomes Central to Youth Work:** Youth engagement, civic participation, mentorship, and learning increasingly move onto digital platforms. This expands voice and connectivity for many young Nigerians but also exposes gaps in digital literacy, online safety, and equitable access to devices and connectivity.

Growth Scenario Policy Recommendations for Children and Youth Programmes

In this growth pathway, Nigeria records steady economic progress but with persistent inclusion gaps. Children and youth programming, therefore shift toward **scaling impact while deliberately closing equity gaps**. Strategic responses are characterized by:

1. **Targeted Inclusion and Last-Mile Delivery:** Programmes increasingly prioritize hard-to-reach populations, rural youth, girls, children in informal settlements, and conflict-affected communities through mobile services, community partnerships, and localized delivery models to prevent widening inequality.
2. **Integrated Skills Pipelines from School to Work:** Stakeholders strengthen linkages between basic education, technical and vocational training, digital skills, and job placement to ensure young people transition more smoothly into the labour market rather than remaining stuck in cycles of underemployment.
3. **Blended Public–Private Youth Ecosystems:** Governments, NGOs, and private sector actors deepen collaboration to scale youth innovation hubs, apprenticeships, and entrepreneurship financing, while also advocating safeguards to ensure affordability and inclusion.
4. **Strengthening Foundational Learning and Well-Being:** Recognizing that growth alone does not solve structural vulnerabilities, programmes renew focus on early childhood development, foundational literacy and numeracy, nutrition, and psychosocial support especially for the most vulnerable children.
5. **Digital Equity and Online Safety Measures:** As youth engagement becomes increasingly digital, stakeholders invest in device access, affordable connectivity, digital literacy, and child online protection frameworks to ensure safe and equitable participation.
6. **Climate-Responsive Youth Programming:** Children and youth initiatives increasingly integrate climate resilience, green skills, and adaptive livelihoods, particularly in flood- and drought-prone regions to prepare young Nigerians for a more climate-uncertain future.

3.4 Scenario Four: Transformation

"Shock you! Cars in the sky!"

Guiding question: *If Nigeria were to fundamentally rethink and redesign its systems to better serve people, planet, and future generations, what might the country look like by 2050?*

The Transformation archetype imagines a future in which Nigeria does not simply improve existing systems, but reimagines and restructures them to become more inclusive, adaptive, equitable, and future-oriented. It assumes that the country moves beyond incremental reform

and instead embraces deeper shifts in governance, education, economic organization, technology, and social values. By 2050, Nigeria in this scenario is shaped not only by stronger institutions and economic progress, but by new ways of thinking, organizing, and solving problems. Development becomes more citizen-centred, collaborative, and innovation-driven, with greater emphasis on long-term wellbeing, environmental sustainability, and social inclusion. Children and youth are not only beneficiaries of change, but active participants in shaping it. Education becomes more relevant and creative, livelihoods more future-ready, and governance more responsive and participatory. This is a future of **systemic reinvention**, where transformation is not defined only by growth, but by the extent to which society becomes more just, resilient, and capable of meeting the needs of future generations.

Summary and evolution of transformation story

By 2050, Nigeria is no longer organized around the institutional boundaries that once defined how society functioned. Work is no longer structured around employment, learning is no longer confined to education systems, and governance is no longer exercised solely through centralized authority. These structures continue to exist, but they no longer determine access to opportunity, participation, or influence.

Instead, society operates through fluid, interconnected systems in which individuals engage directly with evolving networks of value creation, knowledge exchange, and decision-making. The distinction between formal and informal, local and global, state and society has become increasingly blurred. For children and young people, this represents a fundamental shift. They are no longer navigating predefined pathways, but actively shaping the systems themselves. Their participation is not mediated solely through institutions, but exercised in real time through the structures that now organize economic, social, and civic life.

Nigeria in this scenario is not defined by perfected systems, but by a reconfiguration of how systems relate to society. The most significant change is not what has improved, but what is no longer required.

How Did This Happen

When the System Stopped Keeping Up (2026–2030)

The transformation of Nigeria by 2050 cannot be traced to a single policy shift or technological breakthrough. It unfolded as a sequence of dislocations, moments when existing systems continued to operate but no longer produced outcomes aligned with the speed, scale, or nature of emerging realities.

In the late 2020s, Nigeria entered a period in which institutional continuity masked functional stagnation. Government processes remained intact, educational pathways expanded, and economic activity persisted. Yet beneath this surface continuity, the capacity of these systems to absorb demographic pressure, technological change, and environmental stress began to decline.

The youth population, which had long been described as a demographic advantage, increasingly experienced this period as one of deferred possibility. Access to education improved, but the translation of education into stable livelihoods remained uncertain. Digital connectivity expanded, but it exposed disparities in opportunity as much as it created them. Civic participation increased in visibility, yet its influence on structural outcomes remained limited.

What changed during this period was not simply dissatisfaction, but behaviour. Rather than intensifying engagement with existing systems, a growing proportion of young people began to reorganize their economic and social lives around alternatives that operated alongside or outside formal structures. These alternatives were not initially coherent or coordinated. They took the form of distributed work arrangements, informal knowledge networks, and digitally mediated forms of exchange that did not depend on national boundaries.

When Alternatives Became the System (2030–2040)

By the early 2030s, these parallel systems had reached a threshold of viability. For many, they offered faster, more reliable pathways to income, learning, and collaboration than formal institutions. At this point, the relationship between individuals and systems began to invert. Instead of systems structuring participation, participation began to select systems.
This inversion had cumulative effects.

Labour markets, as conventionally understood, became increasingly difficult to define. Employment ceased to be the dominant organizing principle of economic life. Instead, individuals navigated a portfolio of engagements, some local, some global, some temporary, some ongoing, enabled by digital infrastructures that matched capabilities to demand in real time. The distinction between formal and informal work lost analytical clarity, as both became embedded within broader networks of value exchange.

Education underwent a parallel shift. While formal institutions continued to exist, their role changed. They were no longer the primary sites of knowledge acquisition, but one of several

pathways through which individuals could access learning. The authority of credentials diminished relative to demonstrable capability, and learning became more continuous, iterative, and context-specific.

Governance experienced a more complex transformation. State institutions did not disappear, but their monopoly over coordination weakened. Advances in data systems, transparency tools, and participatory platforms increased the visibility of decision-making processes and enabled new forms of engagement. At the same time, communities and networks developed their own mechanisms for organizing resources, resolving disputes, and managing risk.

This did not result in a simple shift from centralized to decentralized governance. Rather, it produced a layered system in which authority was exercised across multiple scales simultaneously, sometimes in alignment, sometimes in tension. Technological change accelerated these dynamics but did not determine them. The integration of predictive systems into areas such as agriculture, health, and security altered the timing and nature of response. Risks that had previously escalated into crises could, in some cases, be anticipated and mitigated earlier. However, this also introduced new dependencies on systems that were not always fully understood or equally accessible. Environmental pressures, particularly related to climate variability, acted as a further catalyst. As traditional patterns of production and settlement became less reliable, adaptation required not only technical solutions but organizational flexibility. This reinforced the shift away from rigid, centralized systems toward more adaptive, networked forms of coordination.

When Society Rewrote Its Own Logic (2040–2050)

By the 2040s, the cumulative effect of these shifts had fundamentally reconfigured how Nigerian society functioned. Economic, social, and governance processes increasingly operated through interconnected systems capable of adapting in real time. Stability was no longer derived from fixed structures, but from the ability of these systems to respond dynamically to change. Technological integration deepened this transformation by enabling more immediate and predictive forms of coordination. In sectors such as health, agriculture, and security, responses were increasingly anticipatory rather than reactive, altering how risks were managed and experienced. For children and young people, this period marked a decisive shift from participation within systems to participation in shaping them. Their agency was exercised not only through formal representation, but through direct engagement with the networks that now structured daily life. By 2050, Nigeria had not simply improved its systems. It had redefined the logic through which society organizes itself.

Emerging Scenario Headlines – Transformed

- Pour me water – Humanoids take over military activities.
- Kwashiorkor don Japa! From Hunger to Health.
- Yahoo don kpai! Job opportunities springing up!
- Shock you! Cars in the sky!
- E don cast! Corruption crumbles as new era dawns.
- Nigeria Becomes Africa's Most Trusted Democracy as Youth and Technology Reshape Governance.
- From Brain Drain to Brain Gain: Global Talent Returns as Nigeria Enters the World's Top Productive Economies.
- A Nation Rebuilt: Peace, Prosperity, and Shared Values Drive Nigeria's Long-Awaited Transformation.
- From "Japa" to "Stay": Nigeria Ranks Top 10 in Global GDP Per Capita as Migration Trends Reverse.
- The Silicon Savannah Arrives: Digital Commerce Hits 30% of GDP Amidst Global Shift to Nigerian Data Sovereignty.
- A New Seat at the Table: Nigeria Secures Permanent UN Security Council Position and Global Visa-Free Access.

Characteristics of the Transform Scenario

The Transform scenario is defined by a set of structural characteristics that reflect not simply improved performance, but a reconfiguration of how Nigerian society is organized and experienced. By 2050, Nigeria operates through fluid, adaptive systems that reshape governance, economic life, learning, and social participation in fundamental ways:

- **Distributed and Layered Governance:** Governance is no longer exercised solely through centralized state institutions, but through a layered system of interacting actors, including digital platforms, community structures, and formal government entities. Decision-making is increasingly transparent, data-informed, and participatory, with citizens particularly young people engaging directly in shaping outcomes. Authority is not eliminated, but diffused across multiple levels, creating a system that is more adaptive, but also more complex than traditional hierarchical governance models.
- **Network-Based Economic Organization:** The economy is no longer anchored in stable employment structures, but in continuous participation across interconnected networks of value creation. Individuals engage in multiple streams of work, often across sectors and geographies, enabled by digital infrastructures that match skills to demand in real

time. The distinction between formal and informal economic activity has diminished, replaced by a more fluid system where access, adaptability, and connectivity determine opportunity.

- **Learning Without Institutional Boundaries:** Education is no longer confined to formal institutions or life stages. Learning is continuous, modular, and embedded within economic and social participation. While schools and universities persist, they operate alongside alternative systems of knowledge acquisition, including digital platforms, peer networks, and applied learning environments. Capability, rather than certification alone, becomes the primary measure of value, fundamentally altering how young people transition into economic and civic life.
- **Blurred Boundaries Between Systems and Spheres:** Traditional distinctions between formal and informal, local and global, public and private have become increasingly fluid. Economic, social, and governance processes operate across overlapping systems that are not easily categorized. Individuals navigate environments where participation is not limited by geography or institutional affiliation, creating expanded access while also requiring new forms of coordination and regulation.
- **Anticipatory and System-Responsive Infrastructure:** Technological integration enables a shift from reactive to anticipatory systems across key sectors. In areas such as health, agriculture, and security, predictive capabilities allow risks to be identified and managed before they escalate. Infrastructure is increasingly responsive and adaptive, shaping how services are delivered and how uncertainty is experienced. While this enhances resilience, it also introduces new dependencies on complex and interconnected systems.
- **Youth as Active System Shapers:** Children and young people are no longer positioned primarily as beneficiaries of development processes, but as active participants in shaping economic, social, and governance systems. Their engagement extends beyond formal representation into direct interaction with the networks that organize daily life. This shift expands agency and influence, while also requiring new capacities to navigate fluid and continuously evolving environments.

Opportunities and Threats

Opportunities	Threats
• The shift toward network-based economic participation expands access to livelihoods beyond the limits of geography and formal employment, enabling young people to engage in	• The erosion of stable employment structures introduces uncertainty in income security, with livelihoods becoming more fragmented

both local and global value creation without requiring migration.	and dependent on access to networks, platforms, and real-time demand.
• Continuous and embedded learning systems allow for faster, more relevant skill acquisition, enabling individuals, particularly youth to adapt quickly to changing economic and technological conditions.	• The decline of structured education pathways may disadvantage those without access to adaptive learning systems, creating new forms of exclusion based on digital access, guidance, and support systems.
• Distributed and participatory governance systems create new entry points for civic engagement, allowing young people and previously excluded groups to exert more direct influence over decision-making processes.	• The diffusion of authority across multiple actors may result in fragmented governance, making coordination, accountability, and long-term planning more difficult to sustain.
• The integration of anticipatory systems across sectors such as health, agriculture, and security improves the ability to manage risks proactively, reducing the frequency and severity of systemic shocks.	• Increased reliance on technologically mediated systems introduces systemic vulnerabilities, where failures or disruptions in key infrastructures could have widespread and cascading effects.
• The blurring of boundaries between formal and informal systems enables more flexible participation in economic and social life, allowing individuals to navigate multiple systems simultaneously and optimize opportunities.	• The fluidity of systems may create complexity and uncertainty, making it harder for individuals especially children and young people to navigate pathways without clear structures or safeguards.
• Reduced dependence on traditional institutions opens space for innovation in service delivery, community organization, and problem-solving, allowing solutions to emerge more organically and responsively.	• The weakening of institutional anchors may reduce the availability of structured protection systems, increasing exposure to risks for vulnerable populations if alternative safeguards are not sufficiently developed.
• Greater integration into global networks allows Nigeria to participate more actively in global knowledge, innovation, and economic systems without the same reliance on physical mobility.	• Unequal access to connectivity, data systems, and digital infrastructure may deepen disparities, with those excluded from these systems facing compounded disadvantages.
• Youth positioned as active system participants rather than beneficiaries enables earlier engagement in economic, social, and governance processes, strengthening agency and innovation capacity.	• Increased agency for young people may be accompanied by heightened pressure to navigate complex and uncertain environments without adequate support, guidance, or institutional stability.

How Children and Youth Development Programmes are Affected in the Transform Scenario

In the Transform scenario, the role, design, and delivery of children and youth development programmes undergo a fundamental shift. Programmes are no longer operating within stable, well-defined institutional systems, but within fluid, interconnected environments where traditional boundaries between sectors, actors, and service delivery models have blurred.

- **From service delivery to system navigation and enablement**: Programmes are no longer primarily focused on delivering services within predefined sectors such as education, employment, or health. Instead, they increasingly support children and young people to navigate complex, network-based systems. This includes building capacities such as adaptability, systems thinking, digital fluency, and the ability to engage across multiple platforms and opportunities simultaneously. The emphasis shifts from providing solutions to enabling young people to access and shape solutions themselves.
- **From linear pathways to non-linear and continuous engagement**: Traditional programme models based on linear transitions such as school-to-work or training-to-employment become less relevant. Children and young people move fluidly between learning, earning, and participation throughout their lives. As a result, programmes must adapt to provide continuous, modular, and on-demand support rather than time-bound interventions tied to specific life stages.
- **From institutional anchors to distributed delivery models**: With the weakening of centralized institutional control, programme delivery is no longer confined to formal settings such as schools, training centres, or government systems. Instead, programmes are delivered through a mix of digital platforms, community networks, and decentralized partnerships. This creates opportunities for wider reach, but also requires new approaches to coordination, quality assurance, and safeguarding.
- **From target beneficiaries to active co-creators**: Children and young people are no longer positioned primarily as recipients of programme interventions. They actively participate in shaping programme design, implementation, and evaluation. Their engagement is direct, continuous, and often mediated through the same networks that structure economic and social life. This increases relevance and responsiveness, but also requires programmes to manage more dynamic and less predictable forms of participation.
- **From protection within systems to protection across systems**: Child protection and safeguarding become more complex in a context where participation occurs across multiple, overlapping systems, including digital and informal spaces. Risks are no longer confined to specific environments such as schools or workplaces, but are distributed

across networks. Programmes must therefore adopt more integrated and adaptive approaches to protection that account for both physical and digital risks.

- **From scaling programmes to scaling access and inclusion**: Success is no longer defined primarily by the expansion of programme reach, but by the ability to ensure equitable access to the systems that enable participation. This includes access to digital infrastructure, learning platforms, economic networks, and governance processes. Programmes increasingly focus on reducing barriers to entry and ensuring that vulnerable groups are not excluded from these emerging systems.

Transformation Scenario Policy Recommendations for Children and Youth Programmes

In this transformed context, policy and programming responses must move beyond strengthening existing systems to actively engaging with the emerging dynamics that shape participation, opportunity, and risk. Key Responses include;

1. **Shift from Programme Delivery to System Enablement**: Policies should reposition children and youth programmes as enablers of participation within dynamic systems rather than as standalone service delivery mechanisms. This includes investing in foundational capabilities such as digital access, systems literacy, and adaptive skills that allow young people to navigate and shape evolving environments.
2. **Redesign Learning and Skills Systems for Continuous Engagement**: Education and training policies must move away from rigid, stage-based models toward flexible, lifelong learning systems. This requires integrating formal education with alternative learning pathways, recognizing diverse forms of knowledge acquisition, and ensuring that skills development is responsive to real-time economic and social needs.
3. **Strengthen Inclusive Access to Digital and Networked Systems**: Given the central role of digital and network-based participation, policies must prioritize universal and equitable access to connectivity, digital tools, and data systems. Without deliberate intervention, disparities in access risk reinforcing new forms of exclusion that are less visible but equally consequential.
4. **Develop Adaptive Governance and Coordination Mechanisms**: Governments and development actors should invest in governance models that can operate effectively within distributed and layered systems. This includes improving coordination across actors, enhancing data transparency, and creating mechanisms for meaningful participation that go beyond traditional consultation processes.
5. **Reframe Child Protection for Networked Environments**: Child protection frameworks must be expanded to address risks that emerge across digital, informal, and decentralized systems. This requires integrated approaches that combine technological

safeguards, community-based mechanisms, and policy frameworks capable of responding to rapidly evolving forms of risk.

6. **Support Youth as Co-Creators of Systems and Solutions**: Policies should institutionalize mechanisms that enable young people to actively shape programmes, policies, and systems. This includes supporting youth-led innovation, embedding participatory processes into decision-making, and recognizing young people as contributors to governance and development outcomes rather than passive beneficiaries.
7. **Ensure System-Level Inclusion and Equity**: As systems become more fluid and network-based, ensuring inclusion requires a shift from targeting individuals to addressing structural barriers. Policies should focus on enabling equitable participation across regions, genders, and socio-economic groups, particularly in access to emerging economic, learning, and governance systems.

These considered responses ensure that children and youth are not only beneficiaries of transformation but are empowered actors whose work, creativity, and leadership are central to achieving Nigeria's 2050 vision.

4. Nigeria 2050 at a Glance: How the Future Diverges Across Scenarios

4.1 Cross-Cutting Insights from the Scenarios

A critical outcome of the workshop was reframing the metaphors Nigerians use to describe their reality. Moving from fatalism to agency requires a shift in language. To realize the "Growth" or the "Transformation" scenario and avoid "Collapse," specific actions must be taken by stakeholders across society.

1. **The future is shaped by pressure, not a single crisis**

Across all scenarios, the future is not driven by one dominant issue, but by the accumulation and interaction of multiple pressures, economic, social, environmental, technological, and political. The difference between futures lies in how these pressures are managed, absorbed, or allowed to intensify.

2. **Youth experience sits at the centre of all futures**

Children and young people are not peripheral in these scenarios, they are at the core. Their experiences of education, employment, mobility, safety, and participation vary significantly across the scenarios, making youth outcomes one of the clearest indicators of how each future unfolds.

3. **Livelihoods are a defining fault line**

The nature of work shifts across all four futures, but remains uncertain in each. From informal "hustle" economies to structured employment systems, the scenarios highlight how access to stable, meaningful livelihoods shapes broader social and economic stability.

4. **Trust in institutions is a key differentiator**

A consistent distinction across the scenarios is the level of trust in public systems. In some futures, institutions remain functional but fragile; in others, they strengthen or weaken significantly. This variation influences how people engage with governance, services, and collective systems.

5. **Education remains important, but its meaning evolves**

Education appears in all scenarios as a central element of the future. However, its role shifts from a pathway to opportunity, to a system under strain, to a reimagined platform for skills, innovation, and adaptability.

6. **Technology is both enabling and destabilizing**

Technology plays a central role across all futures, but its impact is not uniform. It expands access, creates new opportunities, and reshapes livelihoods, while also introducing new risks related to exclusion, dependency, and control.

7. **Inequality persists, but takes different forms**

Inequality remains present across all scenarios, though its nature changes. In some futures, it deepens sharply; in others, it narrows but does not disappear. The scenarios highlight how disparities across regions, income groups, and access to services continue to shape outcomes.

8. **The futures are not fixed, they are interconnected**

The scenarios are not isolated endpoints, but pathways that share common starting points. Elements of each future can coexist or emerge simultaneously in different regions, sectors, or population groups.

4.2 Voices from the Future – 2050

- If we don't sit up, Nigeria will spoil in our hands
- With more workshops like these, Nigeria is no longer waiting for change makers but raising them
- Nigeria make us think a lot we have a 50:50 chance
- We are doubtful, thoughtful, worried, and weighing
- "We feel pressured but encouraged. Pressurized because of all the statistics of declining situations, but encouraged to work towards preventing or fixing the situation."
- Nigeria is in a state of emergency
- For those who are not Nigerians Welcome
- Nigeria is great to me and I'm proud of Nigerians

Next Steps

The scenarios-building report represents an important step in surfacing how children, youth, and professionals imagine the future of Nigeria and the forces likely to shape it over the coming decades. However, the scenarios presented here are not intended as end points. Rather, they provide a foundation for continued reflection, dialogue, and deeper exploration.

As a next step, the scenarios will be used to support further engagement with policymakers, practitioners, and other stakeholders to test assumptions, deepen understanding of the issues raised, and explore how current strategies and systems may perform under different future conditions while developing priority areas for policy implementation.

The workshop outputs also provide a basis for refining the drivers, signals of change, and scenario narratives over time as new evidence, perspectives, and contextual shifts emerge. In this sense, the report should be seen as a living contribution to a broader foresight process rather than a final or fixed statement about Nigeria's future.

Ultimately, the value of this work lies not only in the scenarios themselves, but in the conversations, they can continue to generate around children, intergenerational equity, and long-term thinking in Nigeria.

Glossary of Terms and Concepts

Anticipatory Governance: A governance approach that helps institutions prepare for and respond to long-term change, uncertainty, and emerging risks before they escalate into crises. It emphasizes foresight, preparedness, adaptability, and long-term decision-making.

Backcasting: A foresight method that starts with a preferred future and works backward to identify the steps, decisions, and actions needed in the present to move toward that future.

Business as Usual (BAU): A scenario archetype that assumes current trends, patterns, and systems continue with limited structural change. In this report, it reflects a future of continuity under strain rather than dramatic transformation or collapse.

Collapse Scenario: A scenario archetype in which existing vulnerabilities intensify and multiple crises converge, leading to systemic breakdown, weakened institutions, and reduced opportunities for children and youth.

Drivers of Change: The broad forces or conditions that shape how the future may unfold. In this report, these include social, technological, economic, environmental, and political dynamics.

Foresight: A structured process for exploring possible futures in order to better understand uncertainty, anticipate change, and improve present-day decision-making. Foresight does not predict the future, but helps people think more systematically about what could happen.

Growth (Disciplined) Scenario: A scenario archetype in which Nigeria makes substantial progress through stronger governance, policy consistency, institutional strengthening, and long-term planning. It reflects structured progress, though not necessarily deep systemic transformation.

Hustle Economy: A livelihood environment in which individuals rely on multiple informal, flexible, or side-income activities to survive or progress, often in response to limited formal employment opportunities.

Horizon Scanning: A foresight method used to identify emerging issues, trends, weak signals, and disruptions that may shape the future. It helps broaden awareness of what may be coming and what requires closer attention.

Intergenerational Equity: The principle that decisions made today should not undermine the wellbeing, opportunities, and rights of future generations. In this report, it emphasizes the need to consider how current choices affect children and youth over the long term.

Japa: A popular Nigerian expression used to describe the migration of young Nigerians, often skilled or educated, in search of better opportunities, security, or quality of life abroad. In the report, it is treated as both a social trend and a signal of deeper structural pressures.

Manoa Methodology: A participatory scenario-building approach used to develop multiple plausible futures by exploring how key drivers, uncertainties, and signals of change may

interact over time. It is designed to make long-term futures thinking accessible, imaginative, and grounded in lived realities.

Scenario Planning: A foresight method used to explore a range of plausible futures rather than predict a single outcome. Scenarios help participants understand uncertainty, test assumptions, and examine how different forces may shape future conditions.

Short-Termism: A tendency in governance and planning to focus on immediate pressures, crisis response, or electoral cycles at the expense of long-term thinking and preparedness.

Transformation Scenario: A scenario archetype in which Nigeria goes beyond incremental reform and fundamentally rethinks and redesigns systems to become more inclusive, adaptive, equitable, and future-oriented.

Signals of Change / Weak Signals: Early signs of emerging change that may not yet be widespread or fully visible, but could become more significant over time. These often point to possible future shifts in behaviour, systems, or social conditions.

Six Thinking Hats: A facilitation and reflection tool used to explore an issue from multiple perspectives, including facts, emotions, risks, opportunities, creativity, and priorities for action. In the workshops, it helped structure discussion and ensure balanced participation.

STEEP Framework: A foresight framework used to analyze the major categories of change shaping the future: **Social**, **Technological**, **Economic**, **Environmental**, **Political**

Yahoo Yahoo: A colloquial Nigerian term commonly used to refer to internet fraud or cyber-enabled scams, often associated with online financial deception. In the context of this report, it is used more broadly to describe concerns about cybercrime, digital fraud, and the possible evolution of criminal economies in a more technologically mediated future.

Annex A: Additional Analytical Notes and Interpretive Considerations

The table below captures additional analytical observations and interpretive questions that emerged during the review of the workshop outputs. These notes are included to provide further nuance to the scenario analysis and may inform future refinement of the foresight process.

Theme	Additional Analytical Note
Urban vulnerability and climate risk	Rapid urbanization and weak urban planning controls increase exposure to climate and environmental risks, particularly for internally displaced persons (IDPs), migrants, low-income households, and other vulnerable populations. In many contexts, settlement in flood-prone or environmentally fragile areas is shaped less by choice than by limited access to safe and affordable housing. This heightens vulnerability to flooding, displacement, infrastructure damage, and public health risks.
Drivers, trends, and downstream effects	An important analytical distinction emerged between upstream drivers of change**,** visible trends, and downstream consequences**.** Some issues identified in the workshops, such as demographic growth, urbanization, climate shocks, rapid technological change, and resource scarcity, function more clearly as structural drivers. Others, such as the rise of the digital economy, informal work, or "hustle" economies, may be better understood as responses or adaptations arising from those deeper forces.
Causality chains and systems interactions	Many of the issues surfaced in the workshops appear to be interconnected rather than isolated. For example, weak education systems may influence unemployment, which in turn affects migration, mental health, and civic trust. Similarly, climate stress may affect food systems, which then shape displacement, cost of living, and insecurity. This suggests value in more explicitly tracing the causal chains and interaction effects between pressures in future iterations of the foresight process.
Education as a downstream systems issue	The education crisis may not function solely as a standalone driver, but rather as a downstream expression of broader structural weaknesses, including underinvestment, weak institutions, poor governance, and economic instability. This distinction may help sharpen the causal logic of future scenario analysis.

Rise of informal and hustle economies	The expansion of informal and "hustle" economies may reflect both youth adaptability and structural exclusion from formal employment systems. This trend may be shaped by unequal access to formal work, rapid technological change, and the increasing fragmentation of labour markets.
Food systems as a weak signal	The signals identified around food systems may benefit from further interpretation. For example, it is not yet clear whether the growing visibility of processed food consumption in urban areas reflects a replacement of local and fresh food systems, a reversal of interest in urban agriculture, or the coexistence of multiple food pathways shaped by affordability, convenience, and shifting lifestyles.
Violence for profit	The signal described as "violence for profit" may require further unpacking. One open question is whether cyber fraud networks (including forms associated with "Yahoo Yahoo") are evolving into more organized and potentially more harmful digital or hybrid criminal systems, or whether these developments are occurring in parallel rather than as part of a single trajectory.
Cybercrime and criminal evolution	Relatedly, there may be value in exploring whether so-called "Yahoo Yahoo schools" are evolving into more sophisticated cybercrime ecosystems, including digital fraud training, organized extortion, or other forms of cyber-enabled criminality that may become more disruptive over time. This may represent an emerging signal worth monitoring.