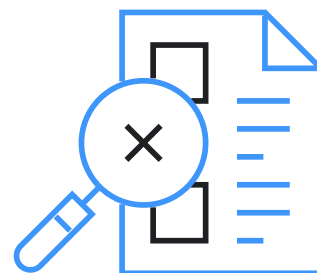
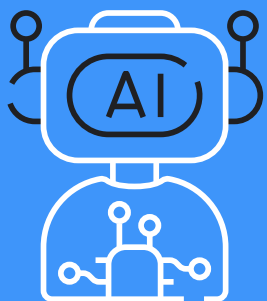


Manufactured Doubt: A Pre-Election Digital Threat Assessment for Nigeria's 2027 General Elections





Digital Democracy
Initiative

Manufactured Doubt: **A Pre-Election Digital Threat Assessment for Nigeria's 2027 General Elections**

A CONSORTIUM RESEARCH



Acknowledgements

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How to Cite

Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative & FactCheck Africa (2026). Prevalent Misinformation Patterns and AI Threats in Nigeria 2027: A Pre-Election Digital Threat Assessment. Ilorin, Nigeria.

DISCLAIMER

This report synthesises publicly available evidence current as of May 2026. The information environment is changing rapidly, and the patterns described should be re-tested against fresh data as the 2027 electoral cycle progresses, especially by paying attention to events and activities from July to December, 2026. This period constitutes a possible tense situation across the country. Views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Digital Democracy Initiative or CIVICUS. Any errors of interpretation are the consortium's own.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	6	The Data Void: Indigenous Languages and Marginalised Audiences	27
Introduction and Context	10		
Why this assessment, and why now	10	Why low-resource languages matter	27
Scope and definitions	11	Gendered disinformation	29
Methodology	12	Persons with disabilities and rural exclusion	30
The Nigerian Information Environment in 2026	13	Hotspot Mapping: Six States, Six Threat Profiles	32
Digital adoption: large but uneven	13		
Platform geography	13	Institutional and Regulatory Landscape	35
The trust deficit	15		
Prevalent Misinformation Patterns (2023 Baseline → 2026 Trajectory)	17	Recommendations and Policy Briefs	39
Volume, platforms, and content type	17		
The dominant narrative archetypes	18	Conclusion: A Narrowing Window	44
Paid influencers and coordinated inauthentic behaviour	20		
The AI Threat Landscape for 2027	21	Notes	45
From deepfakes to AI swarms: a typology	21		
Documented cases, 2024–2026	23		
The Liar's Dividend	25		

Image Sources: Unplash; Pexels

Foreword

In the months between Nigeria's 2023 general elections and the publication of this report, the production cost of a credible-looking lie has fallen close to zero. A photograph, a video, an audio recording; any of these can now be fabricated in minutes by a single operator with a laptop and an internet connection. The infrastructure that took an organised team to assemble in 2015, and that still required some craft in 2023, is now accessible to anyone with the will to use it.

That is the technological story. The political story is sharper. Nigeria's 2027 general elections will be the first national vote conducted in a country where this kind of fabrication is not an exotic threat but an ambient condition of public discourse. We will not be debating whether deepfakes can sway opinion; we will be debating, in real time, whether specific pieces of evidence are real at all. The corrosive doctrine that follows; what scholars have called the Liar's Dividend, and what we have chosen to name in this report's title, is already in operation against Nigerian journalists, activists, and political aspirants. We have seen it deployed against women in particular, whose testimony has long been treated as more contestable than men's, and who now find that authentic evidence of attacks against them can be quietly dissolved into "AI-generated" suspicion.

Against that backdrop, this report attempts something deliberately modest and deliberately ambitious at the same time. Modest, because we have set out to do one thing well: to map the digital threat surface that Nigerian voters and aspirants will encounter as the 2027 cycle begins, and to identify the hotspots where harm is concentrating. Ambitious, because we have tried to do so with a methodology adequate to the moment; one that treats coordinated disinformation networks as networks, drawing on Social Network Analysis, and that treats artificial intelligence tools, platform architectures, and human operators

as a single integrated system, drawing on Actor-Network Theory. The combination, we believe, produces a more honest picture of how harm now travels in Nigerian information space than any single-discipline frame could deliver alone.

The report has been written with three audiences in mind. The first is the Independent National Electoral Commission, whose newly-established AI Division will be carrying responsibilities for which no previous Nigerian electoral cycle has provided a precedent. The second is Nigerian civil society; journalists, fact-checkers, women's rights organisations, legal aid partners, and the broader community of advocates whose work will be tested in the coming months. The third is the platforms themselves, whose investment in indigenous-language content moderation remains far below what the 2027 cycle will demand of them. We hope each of these audiences will find, in the chapters that follow, something useful to their work.

A study of this scope is necessarily a collaborative effort. Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative is grateful to FactCheck Africa, our consortium partner, for the editorial discipline and fact-checking infrastructure that has shaped every chapter. We are grateful to the digital rights specialist who contributed to the threat database, to the researchers and analysts who reviewed early drafts, and to the network of Nigerian fact-checkers through the Nigerian Fact-Checkers' Coalition and beyond — whose published verdicts form much of the evidentiary backbone of this work. We thank, in particular, the women political aspirants, activists, and journalists who shared their experiences with us, often at personal cost, and who appear in this report where they have consented by name, or, where they have not, in the patterns that their accounts collectively describe.

We owe particular thanks to CIVICUS and to the Digital Democracy Initiative team. Their support has made this work possible in the most material sense, and their broader commitment to civic technology and information integrity in the Global South has provided the framework within which we have been able to undertake it. The Digital Democracy Initiative's willingness to fund the kind of long-form analytical work that does not always sit easily in shorter project cycles is a quiet but consequential discipline; this report would not exist without it. CIVICUS's standing as a global alliance for civil society participation continues to be the channel through which work like ours finds the audiences it needs. We are grateful to the DDI team for their trust in our consortium, for their substantive engagement with the design of this work, and

for their patience as the analytical scope expanded to meet what the evidence demanded. The Nigerian civil society space is materially stronger because both organisations choose to operate in it.

This report is offered in that spirit. It is one input into a much larger conversation that Nigerian civil society, government, platforms, and the public must conduct between now and February 2027 about the kind of election we want, the kind of information environment we are prepared to defend, and the kind of democratic participation we are willing to make safe for those who would step forward into it. Some of the findings in the chapters that follow will be uncomfortable. We have not softened them. We hope they are useful.



Olasupo Abideen Opeyemi

Global Director

Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative

Executive Summary

Nigeria approaches the 2027 General Elections in an information environment that has fundamentally changed since the 2023 cycle.

Nigeria approaches the 2027 General Elections in an information environment that has fundamentally changed since the 2023 cycle. The convergence of declining institutional trust, the rapid mainstreaming of generative artificial intelligence, and the migration of political discourse into encrypted, indigenous-language spaces has created a threat landscape to which the country's regulatory, civic, and platform-level defenses have yet to be

adequately adapted. This Pre-Election Digital Threat Assessment maps that threat surface. It is built on a synthesis of post-2023-election fact-checking data, peer-reviewed research on Nigerian information disorder, monitoring of the 2024–2026 pre-cycle period, and consultations with civil-society partners in the six hotspot states (Lagos, Rivers, Abia, Kano, Borno, and Kwara).

HEADLINE INDICATORS

26.7%

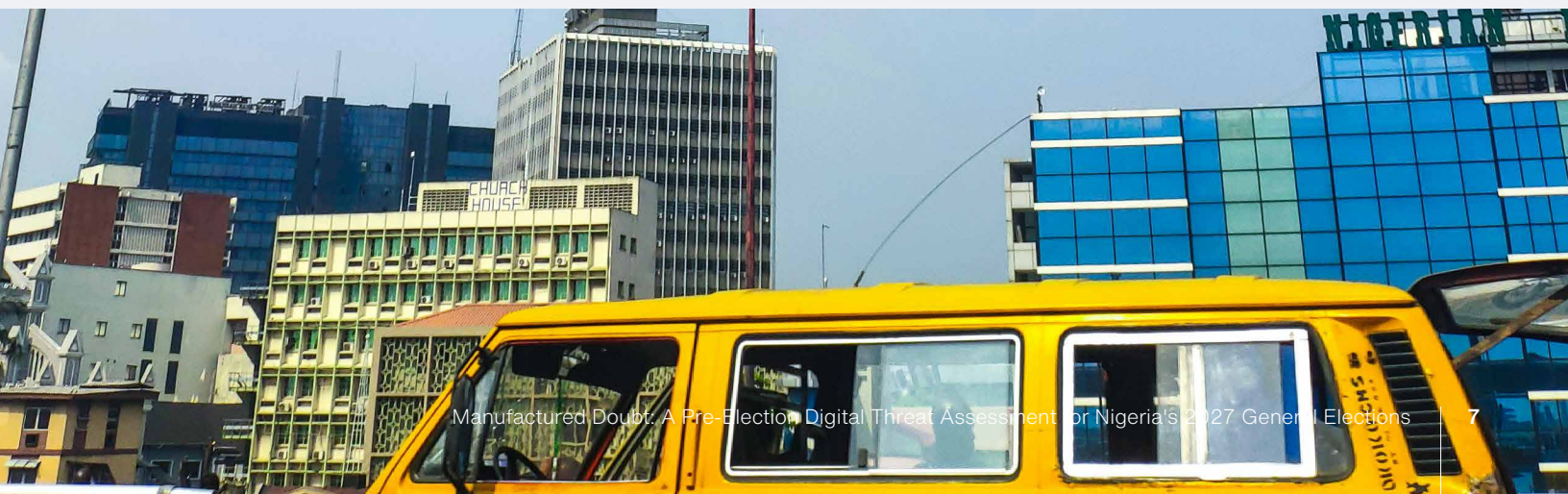
Voter turnout, 2023 general election

Lowest since 1999

109 million

Internet users by late 2025
107m in Jan 2025; DataReport 2026 update

- Rapid growth
- Deepfake and synthetic-media capacity
- Cheap generative-AI tools driving expansion



◆ FINDINGS 01

Nigeria's information ecosystem is large and concentrated.

As of January 2025, 107 million Nigerians used the internet, and 38.7 million held active social media identities; Facebook (47.4m users by December 2025), TikTok (37.4m, up 56.9% year-on-year), and WhatsApp dominate the political discourse.

38.7m

held active social
media identities

◆ FINDINGS 02

Trust in electoral institutions is at a multi-decade low.

The 2023 elections produced a 26.7% voter turnout, the lowest since the return to civilian rule in 1999, and fewer than 25% of voters reported that all parties were treated fairly by INEC.

26.7%

voter turnout in 2023
elections

◆ FINDINGS 03

The platform geography of misinformation shifted between 2019 and 2023.

Of 127 claims fact-checked by the Nigerian Fact-Checkers' Coalition during the 2023 elections, Twitter (now X) and Facebook accounted for the bulk of public-facing claims, while WhatsApp remained the dominant private channel and the hardest to investigate.

127

Twitter (now X) and
Facebook accounted
for the bulk of
public-facing claims

◆ FINDINGS 04

Video remains the dominant format of choice for political deception

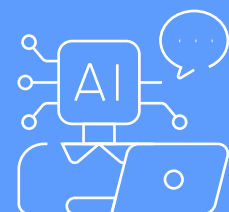
Specifically, analysis reveals that videos outnumbered images and text combined in fact-checked election content, exploiting users' tendency to trust moving imagery.



◆ FINDINGS 05

Generative AI has moved from novelty to weapon

Between 2024 and early 2026, fact-checkers documented deepfake videos of President Tinubu, fabricated Donald Trump endorsements, manipulated audio of Atiku Abubakar, AI-generated 'news anchors' inflaming Yelwata-Benue ethnic tensions, and Hausa- and Yoruba-language financial scams.



◆ FINDINGS 06

Indigenous-language content is the new soft target.

Artificial intelligence moderation systems trained on English fail to detect Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, and Kanuri disinformation. This, according to researchers, means 'low resource' in computational terms, despite the languages being spoken by tens of millions.



◆ FINDINGS 07

Coordinated influence operations are now industrialised.

A BBC Africa Eye investigation found Nigerian politicians paying social-media influencers up to ₦20 million (\$14,616) or offering government contracts to spread disinformation during 2023; the same infrastructure is likely to be available for mobilisation in 2027.



◆ FINDINGS 08

Gendered disinformation suppresses female political participation.

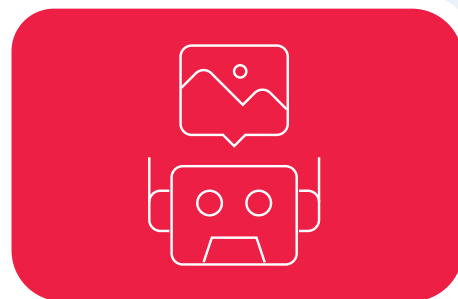
Women, who account for 47.5% of registered voters but won under 5% of contested seats in 2023, face coordinated sexualised attacks, doctored imagery, and ethno-religious dog-whistles designed to drive them out of public life.



◆ FINDINGS 09

The 'Liar's Dividend' has arrived in Nigerian politics.

Documented examples of genuine corruption evidence being dismissed by political actors as 'AI-generated' indicate the second-order effect of synthetic media. This implies not just false content but doubt about all content.



◆ FINDINGS 10

Institutional defences are nascent but real.

Independent National Electoral Commission's Artificial Intelligence Division (established May 2025) and pending legislation (the National AI Commission Bill 2025; the Nigeria Digital Sovereignty and Fair Data Compensation Bill 2025) point in the right direction, but capacity, public awareness, and cross-platform cooperation remain critical gaps.



The report concludes with eight prioritised recommendations for INEC, the National Assembly, platforms, civil society, and donors, organised into three policy briefs annexed to this report. Implementation in

the eighteen-month window before February 2027 is the difference between a managed and an unmanaged information crisis.



1

Introduction and Context

1.1 The Rationale

Nigeria's 2023 general elections, the country's seventh since the return to civilian rule in 1999, produced an outcome that almost every credible observer characterised as a crisis of confidence. INEC managed the largest electoral register in Africa (93.4 million registered voters), deployed significant technology and logistics infrastructure, including BVAS and IReV, and yet delivered the lowest recorded turnout in the country's democratic history at 26.7%, barely 12% of the country's 220 million population.¹ Independent post-election polling by GeoPoll found that 52% of respondents were 'very dissatisfied' with the way democracy works in Nigeria, and only 31% agreed that all parties and candidates were treated fairly during the election process.²

The 2023 cycle was also a watershed in the digital domain. According to the Nigerian Fact-Checkers' Coalition (NFC), 127 distinct claims required formal verification during the presidential, National Assembly, gubernatorial, and State House of Assembly elections. Dubawa, the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD-West Africa), the Integrity Institute, and academic researchers equally documented an unprecedented industrialisation of online disinformation paid influencers, ethno-religious incitement, and the first significant Nigerian deployments of deepfake and shallow fake media.³



1 Dataphyte (2023). "Nigeria records only 26.72% voter turnout in 2023 election." Available from: <https://elections.dataphyte.com/insights/nigeria-records-only-2672-voter-turnout-in-2023-election>

2 GeoPoll (2023). "Nigeria Elections 2023: GeoPoll Post-Election Survey." Available from: <https://www.geopoll.com/blog/nigeria-post-elections-survey/>

3 Dubawa & Nigerian Fact-Checkers' Coalition (2023). "Report shows prevalence of misinformation, disinformation during Nigeria 2023 elections." Available from: <https://dubawa.org/dubawa-nfc-report-shows-prevalence-of-misinformation-disinformation-during-nigeria-2023-elections/>; Al Jazeera (2023). "Nigeria election triggers deluge of 'fake news' on social media." Available from: <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2023/2/15/nigeria-election-triggers-deluge-of-fake-news-on-social-media>

The eighteen-month period between the 2023 verdict and mid-2026 has been a hinge point. Three developments raise the stakes for 2027:



- 1 Generative AI has crossed an inflection point. Tools that in 2023 required technical skill, such as face-swap video, voice cloning, and synthetic-anchor news clips, are now point-and-click. Fact-checkers documented over six discrete AI-driven deception campaigns affecting Nigerian political discourse in 2025 alone.⁴
- 2 Indigenous-language and encrypted-channel disinformation has become the soft underbelly of the information ecosystem. Researchers contend that the greater AI-related threat lies not in viral English-language deepfakes, but in the rapid proliferation of AI-generated propaganda in Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, and Kanuri, which is disseminated through WhatsApp and Telegram networks that remain difficult for fact-checkers to monitor and verify.
- 3 Institutional responses have lagged behind the evolving threat. Although the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) established its Artificial Intelligence Division in May 2025, and Nigeria has made progress in data protection through the Nigeria Data Protection Act (NDPA) 2023 while also introducing AI-related legislative bills, the country still lacks an enforceable legal framework to address the misuse of synthetic media as it enters the active election campaigning period.⁶

1.2 Scope and definitions

The assessment covers four domains:

- **Misinformation patterns:** the prevalent false narratives, content types, platforms, and amplification mechanisms documented in Nigerian elections from 2019 to 2026, with a focus on the 2023 baseline and the 2024–2026 inter-cycle period.
- **AI threats:** the typology, observed cases, and projected vectors of generative-AI-enabled disinformation, including deepfakes, shallowfakes, voice cloning, AI-driven persona networks ("swarms"), and the second-order effect known as the Liar's Dividend.
- **Data voids:** the languages, geographies, and demographic segments where the existing fact-checking infrastructure cannot effectively reach, with particular attention to indigenous-language information ecosystems and gendered disinformation.
- **Institutional and regulatory landscape:** the public, private, and civil-society response architecture as of mid-2026, including INEC, the National Assembly, the National Data Protection Commission (NDPC), social-media platforms, and the fact-checking ecosystem.

4 Dubawa (2026). "Six AI-generated deepfakes that deceived Nigerians in 2025." Available from: <https://dubawa.org/six-ai-generated-deepfakes-that-deceived-nigerians-in-2025/>

5 TheCable (2026). "The invisible AI threat to Nigeria's 2027 elections." Available from: <https://www.thecable.ng/the-invisible-ai-threat-to-nigerias-2027-elections/>

6 Punch Nigeria (2025). "INEC creates AI division to modernise electoral process." Available from:

<https://punchng.com/inec-creates-ai-division-to-modernise-electoral-process/>; TV360 Nigeria (2025). "2027 Elections: INEC Launches AI Division to Combat Disinformation, Boost Electoral Integrity." Available from: <https://www.tv360nigeria.com/2027-elections-inec-launches-ai-division-to-combat-disinformation-boost-electoral-integrity/>

For consistency, this report uses the following working definitions, drawn from the UNESCO Information Disorder framework and adapted for the Nigerian context:

WORKING DEFINITIONS

Misinformation: false or misleading information shared without intent to harm. Disinformation: deliberately false or misleading information created or shared with intent to deceive, harm, or achieve political, social, or economic gain. Malinformation: information that is genuine but shared out of context or with intent to harm (e.g., authentic but doxxed personal data).

Synthetic media: audio, video, image, or text content that has been generated or substantially altered by artificial intelligence, including deepfakes, voice clones, and AI-generated imagery.

Shallowfake: content manipulated using simple, non-AI techniques (selective editing, misleading captions, splicing) that produces a deceptive effect.

1.3 Methodology

This assessment is a desk-based synthesis supplemented by structured consultations. It draws on four source streams:

- Fact-check archives from FactCheck Africa, Dubawa, TheCable Fact-Check, AFP Fact Check, PRNigeria CableCheck, and the Nigerian Democratic Report (NDR) covering the 2023 election period and the 2024–2026 inter-cycle window.
- Empirical studies from academic publications, including studies by the Integrity Institute on misinformation amplification factors, CDD-West Africa on women in politics, the Institute for Security and Technology on AI in the 2023 election, Chatham House on the trust deficit, and the IDS African Digital Rights Network on

gendered disinformation.

- Public Data Sources were also consulted. These include official election reports from the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC); connectivity data from the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) and the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS); platform penetration data from DataReportal and Kepios; and electoral violence data from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED).
- Consortium-level consultation. This entailed structured discussions with BBYDI's YVoteNaija network, FactCheck Africa's research desk, and members of the Ballot Eyes Working Group across the six hotspot states.

The significance of information integrity and digital ecosystems should be evident to stakeholders, particularly given that the encrypted, closed-group architecture of WhatsApp and Telegram limits the investigation of threats on these platforms. Consequently, published estimates of misinformation volume on these platforms can only be regarded as approximations rather than precise measurements. Also, fact-check data is itself an imperfect proxy; it captures what fact-checkers chose to investigate, not the universe of claims circulating. The period since November 2025 has seen rapid changes in generative-AI capability that may render specific quantitative findings (e.g., deepfake detectability rates) out of date within months; readers should treat trend direction as more reliable than point estimates.

⁷ Integrity Institute (2023). "Misinformation Amplification in the Nigerian Election." Available from: <https://www.integrityinstitute.org/blog/misinformation-amplification-in-the-nigerian-election>

The Nigerian Information Environment in 2026

2.1 Digital adoption: large but uneven

... estimated **109 million** internet users and **47.8 million** social media user identities in Nigeria.

Nigeria entered 2025 with 107 million internet users, equivalent to 45.4% of the population, and 150 million active cellular connections. By late 2025, DataReportal's Digital 2026 Nigeria report estimated 109 million internet users and 47.8 million social media user identities. Internet adoption continues to grow, but more than half the population remains outside regular digital access and depends on radio, family networks, faith institutions, traditional institutions and offline community channels for political information.

Among internet users, social media audience figures should be interpreted with caution. Some of the figures

presented in this report are platform advertising audience estimates, others are DataReportal social media identity estimates, while some are derived from third-party audience tracking services. These metrics are not directly comparable and should not be interpreted as measures of active users. Although they are valuable for identifying trends, patterns, and relative importance, they should not be treated as precise census counts. More than 84% of internet traffic in Nigeria is generated through mobile devices, while the cost of mobile data, averaging approximately \$0.39 per gigabyte in 2023, remains a major barrier to digital adoption among low-income users.⁸

2.2 Platform geography

Different platforms serve as distinct conduits for information sharing among Nigerians on political issues, and conflating them obscures the specific sources and dynamics of emerging threats. The illustration below highlights the unique features of each platform and shows how these features have

increasingly converged since 2011, when social media became a significant tool in the hands of political actors and their supporters. This convergence has shaped political discussions and civic engagement in both positive and negative ways.

⁸ Statista (2025). "Internet usage in Nigeria — statistics & facts." Available from: <https://www.statista.com/topics/7199/internet-usage-in-nigeria/>

Platform	Users (Nigeria, latest)	Primary political role	Disinformation profile
Facebook	38.0m ad-reachable users (DataReportal late 2025); 47.4m third-party estimate (NapoleonCat Dec 2025)	Mass political discourse, party-affiliated groups, and paid advertising	Largest single repository of public-facing election misinformation; significant pages with millions of followers acting as partisan amplifiers
WhatsApp	~51 million (2023 govt estimate; widely understood to be higher now)	Closed-group political organising; family and community broadcast	Dominant 'dark social' channel; encryption prevents external investigation; primary vector for audio deepfakes; characterised as the platform 'where misinformation goes viral'
X (Twitter)	7.6 million (Jan 2025, +31.7% YoY)	Elite political debate, journalism, real-time mobilisation	Highest 'misinformation amplification factor' of any measured Nigerian platform; small user base but disproportionate elite/journalist reach
TikTok	47.8m ad-reachable users aged 18+ (late 2025); ad reach +43.4%	Youth political content; short-form video; emerging campaign tool	Fastest-growing surface for AI-generated political content; documented AI-anchor 'news clips'; particularly significant for under-25 voters
Instagram	~9.9–10.4 million (2025)	Candidate image management, lifestyle politics	Lower disinformation volume; significant vector for gendered attacks on female politicians (doctored imagery, body-shaming)
Telegram	Not separately disaggregated	Channels for partisan content distribution, dump sites for fact-checked claims	Largely unmeasured 'shadow network'; high-volume channel for redistributing content de-platformed elsewhere
YouTube	27.0 million (Jan 2025)	Long-form political content, town-hall recordings	Lower per-capita misinformation density is significant for archiving and re-spreading manipulated TV interviews

Two patterns stand out. First, the platform mix is unusually wide for an African country. For instance, Nigerian internet users aged 16+ now use an average of 7.09 social media platforms each month, up from 5.0 in 2024. This multi-homing means a single false narrative can be cross-posted across

seven channels in minutes. Second, WhatsApp's central role in private political discourse, combined with its end-to-end encryption, means that the most consequential information channel in the country is also the one external researcher cannot see into.

2.3 The trust deficit

The structural backdrop for everything that follows in this report is a collapse in institutional trust. In the lead-up to the 2023 election, only 23% of Nigerians expressed trust in INEC, according to a Chatham House analysis conducted around election day. GeoPoll also found that 63% of voters disagreed that the elections had been free of violence and intimidation, up from 33% pre-election. Subsequent post-election research indicates that fewer than one in four young Nigerians (under 35) report strong trust in INEC,

the judiciary, or political parties. The collapse is regional. Three of Nigeria's six geopolitical zones, South-East, South-South, and South-West, each recorded under 25% voter turnout in 2023. In South-East and South-South, where opposition Labour Party support was concentrated, observers documented systematic logistical disenfranchisement: by 9:30 am on election day, voting had commenced in only 10% of South-East polling units, compared with 31% in the North-West.

"When you have 1,000 registered voters and, hypothetically, 600 turn up and only 200 end up voting, you have less than 20% of voter turnout in that polling unit, even though in reality that could have been 60%. This sort of disenfranchisement is what we can term systematic disenfranchisement."

Ayantola Alayande, Dataphyte

Trust collapse is not just a democratic problem in its own right; it is the precondition under which information disorder thrives. Citizens who do not trust institutions are predisposed to believe sceptical and alternative narratives, including false ones and are

correspondingly less likely to act on official communications, fact-check verdicts, or platform warnings. The 2027 cycle will be contested in a population that has already been primed to disbelieve.

9 Krestel Digital (2025). "Social Media Statistics in Nigeria [2025 Data Report]." Available from: <https://kresteldigital.com/resources/social-media-statistics-in-nigeria-2025-data-report/>

10 Integrity Institute (2023). "Misinformation Amplification in the Nigerian Election." Available from: <https://www.integrityinstitute.org/blog/misinformation-amplification-in-the-nigerian-election>

11 Chatham House (2023). "Nigeria: Trust and turnout define 2023 elections." Available from: <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2023/03/nigeria-trust-and-turnout-define-2023-elections>

12 GeoPoll (2023). "Nigeria Elections 2023: GeoPoll Post-Election Survey." Available from: <https://www.geopoll.com/blog/nigeria-post-elections-survey/>

13 African Arguments (2023). "Nigeria's curious voter turnout problem." Available from: <https://africanarguments.org/2023/03/nigerias-curious-voter-turnout-problem/>

14 Ibid.



3

Prevalent Misinformation Patterns (2023 Baseline → 2026 Trajectory)

This section establishes the baseline of what Nigerian election misinformation looks like in content type, platform, and narrative, using the 2023 election cycle as a reference point, and then traces how those patterns have evolved through 2024–2026.

3.1 Volume, platforms, and content type

The Nigerian Fact-Checkers' Coalition (NFC), a consortium of Nigeria's signatory IFCN organisations, fact-checked 127 distinct claims during the combined 25 February presidential/National Assembly and 18 March gubernatorial/State House of Assembly elections.¹⁵ These claims are the most reliable sampled record of the public-facing misinformation environment in 2023.

Platform distribution

Of the 83 claims fact-checked during the presidential/National Assembly election, 62.7% (n=52) originated on Twitter (now X), 16 (19.3%) on Facebook, and the remainder were spread across other platforms.¹⁶ Analysis from the

engagement perspective indicates that Twitter generated 17,243 interactions on misinformation posts during the election (and 6,251 in the gubernatorial cycle), compared with Facebook's 4,454 and 3,332 respectively. The Integrity Institute confirms that Twitter's amplification of misinformation was significantly larger than Facebook's during the Nigerian cycle, comparable to U.S. patterns measured in 2022.¹⁷

As the Integrity Institute noted, the encrypted, closed-group architecture of WhatsApp prevented external estimation of its MAF, and 'many fact-checks there are focused on misinformation going viral through WhatsApp messages'.¹⁸ WhatsApp, which has over 51 million users in Nigeria according to government estimates, is the platform where fact-checkers

15 Dubawa & Nigerian Fact-Checkers' Coalition (2023). "Report shows prevalence of misinformation, disinformation during Nigeria 2023 elections." Available from: <https://dubawa.org/dubawa-nfc-report-shows-prevalence-of-misinformation-disinformation-during-nigeria-2023-elections/>

16 Dubawa & Nigerian Fact-Checkers' Coalition (2023). "Report shows prevalence of misinformation, disinformation during Nigeria 2023 elections." Available from: <https://dubawa.org/dubawa-nfc-report-shows-prevalence-of-misinformation-disinformation-during-nigeria-2023-elections/>

17 Integrity Institute (2023). "Misinformation Amplification Analysis for Nigerian Election." Available from: <https://www.integrityinstitute.org/news/institute-news/integrity-institute-releases-misinformation-amplification-analysis-for-nigerian-election>

18 Ibid.

routinely identify the highest-impact false claims even though the public dataset cannot reflect it.

Content type

Across both election rounds, video was the dominant content format. The NFC documented 46 video claims, 27 image claims, and 10 text

claims during the presidential/National Assembly election, and 23 video, 14 image, and 7 text in the gubernatorial cycle. This is consistent with Dubawa's analysis that video formats outperform static content because 'people tend to believe what they see in motion rather than static images or statements' and because verifying video at a glance is materially harder than verifying text.

127

Claims fact-checked,
NFC 2023

*Presidential +
Gubernatorial*

62.7%

Twitter share of
Presidential election claims

vs. 19.3% on Facebook

17,243

Twitter engagement,
presidential election

Misinformation interactions

3.2 The dominant narrative archetypes

Beyond format and platform, our assessment reveals eight recurring narrative archetypes that defined the 2023 misinformation cycle and are already re-emerging in the 2024–2026 inter-cycle period. These archetypes overlap. Across the eight archetypes, a broader transformation emerges in Nigeria's electoral information environment. Rather than representing isolated instances of misinformation, these narratives collectively indicate a shift toward a more systemic form of electoral influence aimed at shaping public trust, participation, and perceptions of legitimacy. The central challenge for the 2027 general elections may therefore extend beyond determining whether information is true or false to whether citizens can still identify credible political reality.

The documented patterns suggest a movement from persuasion to uncertainty production.

Ethno-religious incitement and gendered attacks exploit existing social divisions, while candidate credential inflation and crowd-size deception manufacture symbolic legitimacy and political momentum. Recycled media and procedural falsehoods undermine temporal and institutional certainty by creating confusion about events and electoral processes. More significantly, the emergence of the liar's dividend allows political actors to dismiss authentic evidence as manipulated or AI-generated, weakening accountability and public confidence. These dynamics suggest that electoral manipulation in 2027 may increasingly focus on overwhelming citizens' ability to verify information rather than convincing them of specific claims. The greatest democratic risk may therefore be epistemic fatigue, where uncertainty discourages participation and erodes trust in electoral institutions and outcomes.

19 Dubawa & Nigerian Fact-Checkers' Coalition (2023). "Report shows prevalence of misinformation, disinformation during Nigeria 2023 elections." Available from: <https://dubawa.org/dubawa-nfc-report-shows-prevalence-of-misinformation-disinformation-during-nigeria-2023-elections/>

20 Ibid.

S/N	Archetype	Pattern	2023–2026 documented example
1	Ethno-religious incitement	Narratives that mobilise existing ethnic, regional, or religious cleavages to suppress opposition turnout or provoke violence.	False claims linking Labour Party candidate Peter Obi to the proscribed Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) separatist movement; narratives surrounding <i>Oro cult</i> parades used to discourage women's participation in voting during the 2023 South-West elections.
2	Candidate credentials inflation	Candidates or their campaigns fabricate qualifications, achievements, or endorsements	Cases documented by ICFJ during the 2023 elections involving candidates falsely claiming academic qualifications (including fabricated PhDs) and exaggerated policy achievements; AI-generated deepfakes depicting Elon Musk and Donald Trump endorsing Peter Obi.
3	Crowd-size deception	Images of large gatherings (e.g., religious events or sporting occasions) are recaptioned and circulated as evidence of political support.	Documented by the ICFJ Global Crisis Reporting Forum: photographs from religious gatherings were repurposed and circulated as images of campaign rallies across multiple 2023 election campaigns.
4	Recycled/decontextualized media	Authentic footage from earlier events or other countries is recirculated and presented as current or locally relevant.	CNN footage on weapons smuggling, originally filmed in 2011 and aired in 2019, was later recirculated as contemporary content; a viral 2024 video allegedly showing a flyover collapse in Lafia, Nasarawa, was subsequently traced to AI-generated content.
5	Vote suppression through false procedural information	Fabricated claims about polling units, voter registration deadlines, or electoral procedures intended to discourage participation.	Recurring Facebook claims alleging that INEC had reassigned polling units; circulation of images showing alleged “INEC–Tinubu” branded caps to imply partisan capture of election officials.
6	Gendered character assassination	Sexualized, body-shaming, or marital-status attacks on female candidates and activists	Viral 2023 photo falsely identifying Labour Party Lagos deputy-gubernatorial nominee Abiodun Oyefusi as 'smoking hookah in club' see Section 5.2.
7	Liar's Dividend defence	Authentic damaging evidence dismissed by subjects as AI-generated or fabricated	A former state governor caught on video receiving bribes claimed the footage was manipulated; growing pattern as detection ambiguity expands.
8	Foreign-influence overlays	False claims of foreign leader endorsements or interventions, often timed to electoral or security crises	Fabricated Trump videos on Biafra and Kanu; AI-generated 'US soldier' content claiming a US takeover of anti-Boko Haram operations after Trump's November 2025 designation.

3.3 Paid influencers and coordinated inauthentic behaviour

Underpinning the narrative archetypes is an industrial infrastructure of **paid amplification**

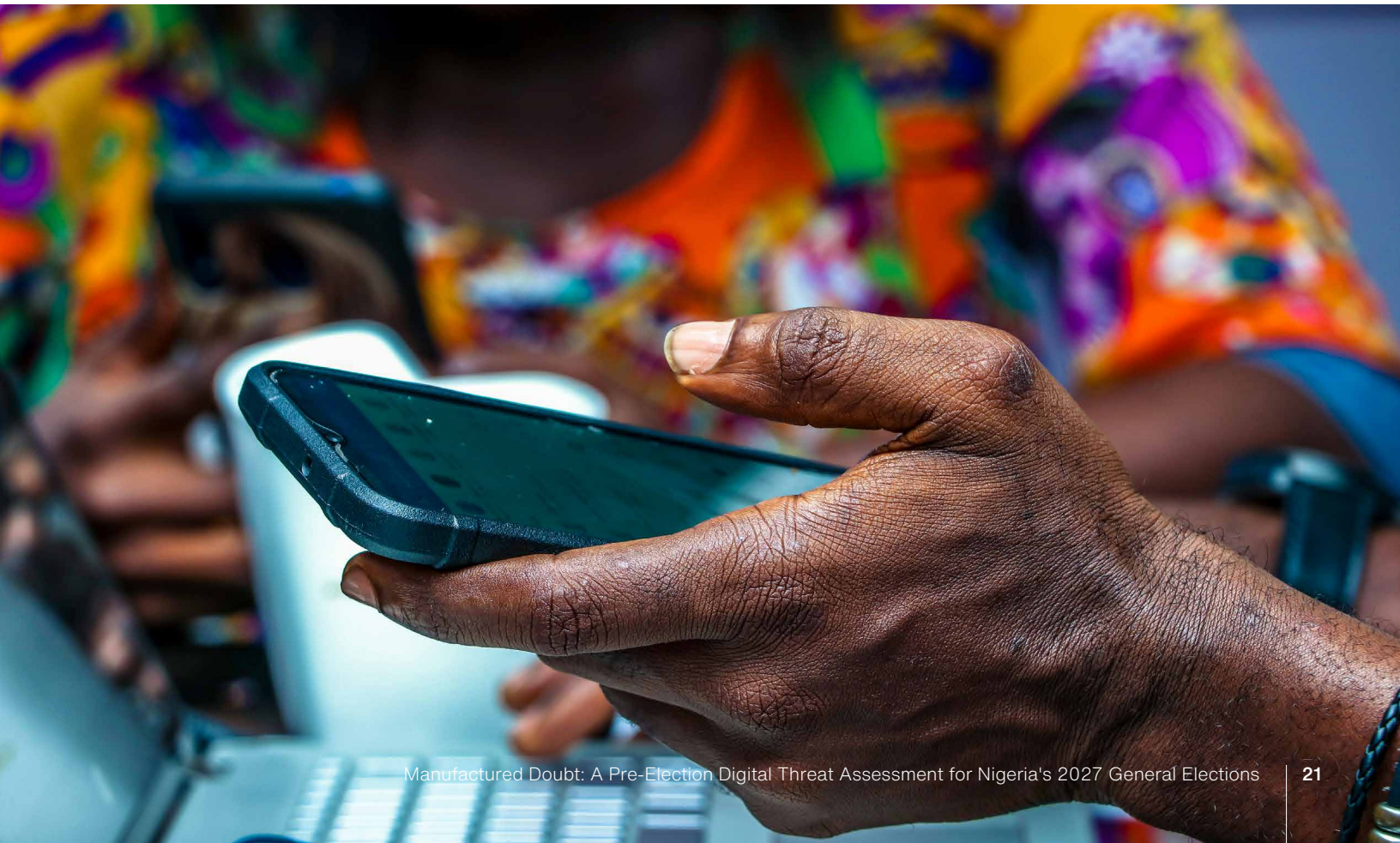
Underpinning the narrative archetypes is an industrial infrastructure of paid amplification. A 2023 BBC Africa Eye investigation found Nigerian politicians paying social-media influencers up to ₦20 million (approximately \$43,000) or offering government contracts and political appointments to spread coordinated disinformation, with the practice documented across the major parties.²¹ Hannah Ajakaiye, the journalist who founded FactsMatterNG, has confirmed that the 2019 federal administration ran an organised 'disinformation army' of paid digital foot soldiers, and that the 2023 cycle saw this infrastructure scaled and professionalised across both the ruling and opposition camps.²²

The hashtag-driven movements that defined 2023 'Obi-dients' (Peter Obi), 'Atikulated' (Atiku Abubakar), and 'BATified' (Bola Ahmed Tinubu) were a mixture of organic enthusiasm and paid coordination. As Ajakaiye observes: 'Obi had more young people and organic followers,' while the older candidate camps relied more heavily on commissioned content and trend manipulation.²³ As 2027 approaches, all surveyed civil society and platform observers expect this paid-influencer economy to be a baseline feature, with the marginal cost of AI-generated content driving it to be cheaper and faster than in 2023.

21 BBC News Africa Eye (2023). "How Influencers Are Paid by Political Parties to Promote Falsehood." Available from: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-63719505>

22 Institute for Security and Technology (2024). "Q&A: Hannah Ajakaiye on manipulated media in the 2023 Nigerian presidential elections, generative AI, and possible interventions." Available from: <https://securityandtechnology.org/blog/qa-hannah-ajakaiye/>

23 Ibid.



4

The AI Threat Landscape for 2027

2027 is likely to be the first Nigerian election in which AI-generated content becomes a routine feature of political communication and deception. This section maps the threat by type, documents observed cases from 2024–2026 and assesses second-order effects.

4.1 From deepfakes to AI swarms: a typology

AI-driven disinformation is not a single phenomenon. The typology suggests that the central challenge of AI-enabled electoral manipulation in Nigeria's 2027 elections is shifting from content falsification alone to the industrialisation of influence operations. Earlier disinformation relied largely on human networks and visible propaganda. Meanwhile, the emerging ecosystem which combines synthetic media, automated amplification, and behavioural targeting is at an unprecedented scale. The movement from shallowfakes to high-quality video and audio deepfakes lowers verification capacity among ordinary citizens and weakens trust in authentic political communication. Once voters become uncertain whether any content is genuine, informational disorder may produce

generalised cynicism rather than informed democratic participation.

Synthetic-anchor news and AI persona networks indicate a transition from isolated misinformation to manufactured information environments that imitate institutional credibility and grassroots legitimacy simultaneously. This raises the risk of agenda manipulation, emotional polarization, and accelerated diffusion of rumours across encrypted platforms. Hyper-personalized micro-targeting introduces unequal exposure to political narratives, fragmenting the public sphere into invisible informational enclaves. Different groups may experience entirely different election realities shaped by language, identity, and local grievances.

S/N	Vector	Description	2027 risk assessment
1	Video deepfakes	AI-generated video showing public figures saying or doing things they did not	HIGH documented use against Tinubu, Obi, and Trump references in 2024–2026; quality already past most untrained observer detection thresholds.
2	Audio deepfakes / voice clones	Synthetic audio mimicking a politician's voice; producible from seconds of source audio	CRITICAL , described by Ajakaiye as 'the number one platform issue for distribution' via WhatsApp in 2023; near-undetectable without specialized forensic tools.
3	Shallowfakes	Non-AI manipulation (selective edits, doctored images, misleading captions, speed/slowed video)	HIGH lower production cost than full deepfakes and historically the bulk of 2023 manipulations; Reuters debunked a notable Tinubu shallowfake during 2023.
4	Synthetic-anchor news clips	AI-generated 'broadcast news' segments with fabricated anchors and fake station branding	HIGH documented June 2025 deepfake 'broadcast' falsely claiming the Nigerian Army was 'guarding cattle' in Yelwata after the Benue massacre; designed to stoke ethnic violence.
5	AI persona networks ('swarms')	Coordinated networks of AI-generated personas that simulate organic grassroots opinion	EMERGING described by digital-rights advocate Wale Bakare as 'tailored disinformation simultaneously, Hausa content stoking tension in Kaduna while Yoruba content fuels unrest in Ibadan, all from a single coordinated command.'
6	Hyper-personalised micro-targeting	AI generates personalised disinformation tailored to local grievance, ethnicity, religion, and age	EMERGING TheCable warns of AI-generated propaganda 'in local languages,' targeting young voters with employment anxieties and religious groups with values-based threats.

4.2 Documented cases, 2024–2026

The inter-cycle period has produced enough documented Nigerian deepfake and AI-manipulation cases to establish patterns. Five clusters illustrate the threat:



CASE - 01

The Tinubu Chelsea deepfake (2024)

A 2024 AI-generated video showed President Bola Ahmed Tinubu addressing a microphone and declaring he was 'a fan of Chelsea' and planning to buy the club. The video was non-political in content but a landmark in form. It demonstrates that face-and-voice synthesis of a sitting Nigerian president was now within reach of casual content creators. The clip reveals just how easily AI tools can fabricate a politician's words, and how quickly such fabrications can spread'.²⁴



CASE - 02

Trump-on-Biafra fabrications (2024–2025)

Multiple AI-generated videos of Donald Trump speaking about Nnamdi Kanu, Biafra, and Nigerian sovereignty have circulated since 2024. One fabricated clip 'set a fictitious deadline of November 31, 2024' and threatened to slash US aid; another, surfacing in May 2024, claimed to reveal Kanu's release date and was traced via reverse image-search to the original (a 28 May 2024 Federal Ministry of Information video of Tinubu inaugurating the Southern Parkway project in FCT).²⁵ These cases sit at the intersection of foreign-influence overlay (archetype 8) and the Liar's Dividend, because they prime audiences to disbelieve both genuine and fabricated Trump statements about Nigeria.



CASE - 03

The Yelwata-Benue ethnic-tension deepfake (June 2025)

On 18 June 2025, days after an overnight attack in Yelwata, Benue State, left over 100 people dead, a deepfake video styled as a broadcast-news segment circulated online claiming 'the Nigerian Army was guarding cattle in VIP fashion in Yelwata'.²⁶ The caption implied preferential treatment of livestock over human lives; PRNigeria debunked the clip. The case is significant because it shows AI-generated 'news' being weaponised to exploit a real, fresh tragedy and stoke ethnic violence between Fulani pastoralists and Tiv farmers — exactly the kind of payload the Bakare-described 'AI swarm' is designed to deliver.²⁷



CASE - 04

Indigenous-language financial scams (2025)

Multiple Yoruba- and Hausa-language sponsored videos featuring AI-animated characters circulated on TikTok and Facebook promising 'easy loans' and government aid, mimicking the branding of Opay and other Nigerian fintechs.²⁸ Some TikTok users were observed sharing sensitive account details in response. Although primarily commercial fraud, the cases prove the production pipeline for AI content in Nigerian indigenous languages exists and can be repurposed for political messaging a critical and under-discussed risk for 2027.



CASE - 05

Tinubu hospital-bed deepfake (July 2025)

In the aftermath of former President Muhammadu Buhari's death on 13 July 2025, a TikTok post showed President Tinubu apparently 'sick and gasping for breath in a hospital bed.'²⁹ Tinubu's public appearance at Buhari's burial ceremonies debunked the video within hours, but only after sustained viral spread. This case illustrates the 'absence creates rumour' pattern: any unexplained gap in a head of state's public appearances is fertile ground for synthetic-media exploitation.

These cases establish three pre-2027 trends: (i) AI political content is being produced at growing frequency by Nigerian actors rather than just imported; (ii) the production cost is low enough that minor public figures and obscure issues now warrant the effort; and (iii) the verification ecosystem Dubawa, FactCheckAfrica, TheCable, PRNigeria CableCheck, the NDR is detecting and publishing, but turnaround time remains slower than viral spread.

24 TechCabal (2025). "Preparing for Nigerian elections in a world of AI deepfakes." Available from: <https://techcabal.com/2025/08/28/ai-deepfakes-nigeria-2027-elections/>

25 Nigerian Democratic Report (2026). "Fact-Check: The Tinubu Video Claiming to Reveal Nnamdi Kanu's Release Date is a Deepfake." Available from: <https://www.ndr.org.ng/fact-check-the-tinubu-video-claiming-to-reveal-nnamdi-kanus-release-date-is-a-deepfake/>

26 Dubawa (2026). "Six AI-generated deepfakes that deceived Nigerians in 2025." Available from: <https://dubawa.org/six-ai-generated-deepfakes-that-deceived-nigerians-in-2025/>

27 Legit.ng (2026). "How Malicious AI Networks Will Threaten Nigeria's 2027 Elections" (interview with Wale Bakare). Available from: <https://www.legit.ng/editorial/opinion/1700342-how-malicious-ai-swarms-threaten-nigerias-2027-elections/>

28 Dubawa (2026). "Six AI-generated deepfakes that deceived Nigerians in 2025." Available from: <https://dubawa.org/six-ai-generated-deepfakes-that-deceived-nigerians-in-2025/>

29 Ibid.

4.3 The Liar's Dividend

The most insidious effect of generative AI in elections is not the deepfakes themselves but the doubt their existence sows about all media. When everything could be a deepfake, audiences default to scepticism, and

bad actors exploit that scepticism to dismiss authentic damaging evidence as fabricated. The Institute for Security and Technology has explicitly documented Nigerian cases:

"We are seeing cases of Liar's Dividend. There was a corruption case where a former state governor was captured on video receiving bribes; he denied the action, saying the video was manipulated."

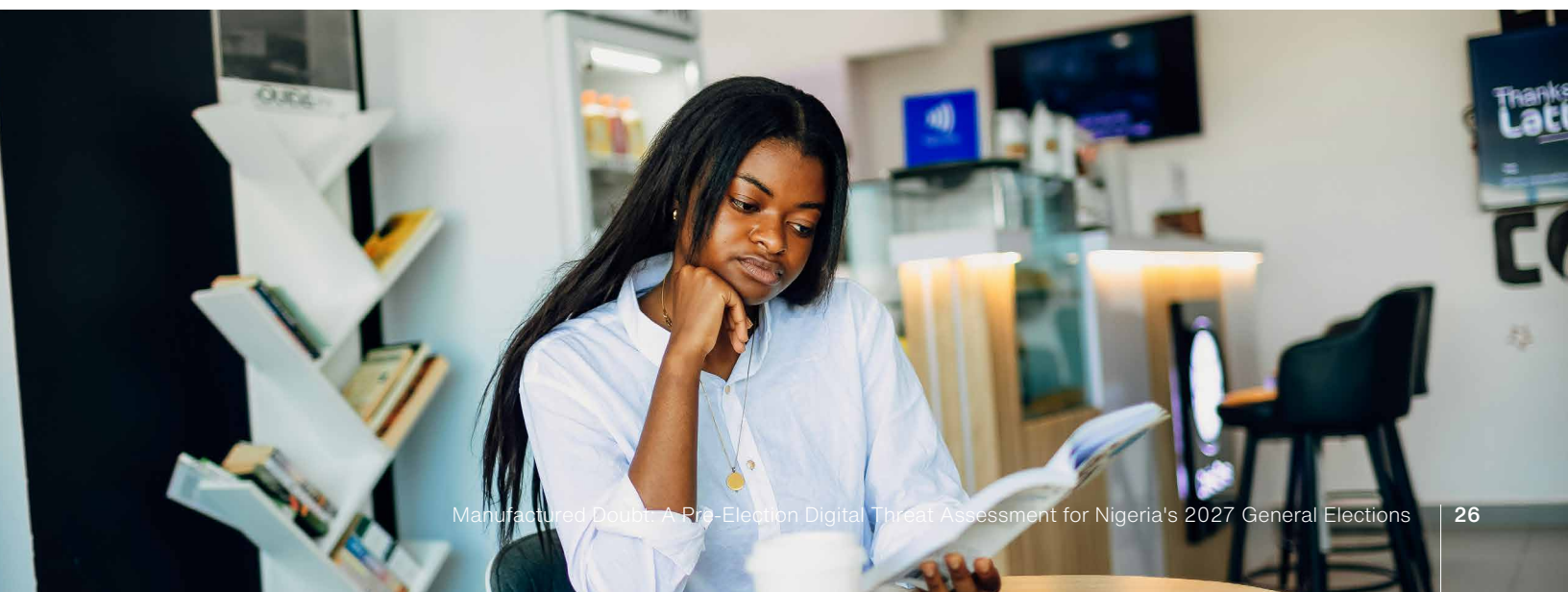
Hannah Ajakaiye, FactsMatterNG

A second example concerns President Tinubu himself. During the 2023 campaign, an authentic video showed him 'making an incoherent statement at a town hall meeting where he was struggling to mutter a word that appeared like hullabaloo.'³⁰ Supporters and surrogates subsequently claimed the video was AI-manipulated. The very existence of demonstrable deepfakes makes such defences increasingly plausible to neutral observers, regardless of the underlying truth.

The Liar's Dividend is not symmetric. It principally benefits incumbents and well-resourced campaigns that can

flood the information space with the suggestion that everything is contested. It harms journalists, fact-checkers, and oversight institutions whose credibility depends on the audience accepting authentic evidence as authentic. Without strengthened forensic chains of custody provenance metadata, content credentials, watermarking the 2027 cycle risks an information environment in which no political claim, true or false, can be settled.

30 Institute for Security and Technology (2024). "Q&A: Hannah Ajakaiye on manipulated media in the 2023 Nigerian presidential elections, generative AI, and possible interventions." Available from: <https://securityandtechnology.org/blog/qa-hannah-ajakaiye/>





5

The Data Void: Indigenous Languages and Marginalized Audiences

The bulk of academic, platform, and donor attention to election misinformation focuses on English-language content circulating in major social media. This is where the threat is visible. It is not where the threat is necessarily most effective. The 'data void' the set of languages, geographies, and demographic segments where neither platform AI moderation nor fact-checking infrastructure can effectively reach is where the 2027 cycle's most consequential information shaping will happen.

5.1 Why low-resource languages matter

Nigeria has between **520** and **530** indigenous languages

Nigeria has between 520 and 530 indigenous languages.³¹ Three of them Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo are spoken by over 175 million people, accounting for roughly 60% of the linguistic population.³² Researchers nonetheless classify all three as 'low-resource languages' in the natural language

processing (NLP) sense: they have limited digital text and audio corpora available to train large language models or content-moderation systems.³³

31 AIBase Nigeria (2026). "AI and Language Diversity in Nigeria." Available from: <https://aibase.ng/ai-analysis/ai-and-language-diversity-in-nigeria/>

32 Inuwa-Dutse, I. (2025). "NaijaNLP: A Survey of Nigerian Low-Resource Languages." arXiv preprint. Available from: <https://arxiv.org/pdf/2502.19784>

33 Ibid.

The implication for misinformation is structural. As Global Voices Advox summarized in April 2026: 'Researchers have documented the same dynamic repeatedly. Swahili hates speech goes undetected. Moderation gaps in low-resource languages such as Hausa. Local language posts are misclassified by systems trained primarily on

English.'³⁴ Across Africa, AI content moderation systems can effectively process fewer than 20 of the continent's roughly 2,000 languages meaning the overwhelming majority of African-language political content moves through major platforms with effectively no automated safety layer.

THE ASYMMETRY THAT DEFINES THE THREAT

Generative AI models are now capable of producing fluent, persuasive content in Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo (researchers cite NaijaVoices), with 1,800 hours of recordings from 5,000 native speakers, and Awarri's Nigerian indigenous-language LLM with five supported languages. But content-moderation systems on the platforms where this content circulates are not capable of detecting harm in those same languages. The production side has caught up with English; the safety side has not.

This asymmetry has three immediate consequences for the 2027 cycle:



- 1 Indigenous-language deepfakes will spread faster. The Hausa and Yoruba financial-scam cases documented by Dubawa in 2025 prove the production pipeline exists. We expect political deployment to be the next step.
- 2 Fact-checkers operating in English will systematically under-document indigenous-language misinformation. The 127-claim NFC corpus from 2023 is almost entirely English-language, meaning the most-cited baseline for Nigerian election misinformation under-represents the actual landscape.
- 3 'Junk news' branded as credible journalism reaches grassroots audiences in their own language with minimal counter-narrative. The most under-reported AI risk for 2027 'may not necessarily be viral videos but the ones that are not so obvious but are already in place: the proliferation of AI-generated propaganda in local languages.'³⁵

34 Global Voices Advox (2026). "Africa has 2,000 languages. AI content moderation knows fewer than 20." Available from: <https://advox.globalvoices.org/2026/04/20/africa-has-2000-languages-ai-content-moderation-knows-fewer-than-20/>

35 TheCable (2026). "The invisible AI threat to Nigeria's 2027 elections." Available from: <https://www.thecable.ng/the-invisible-ai-threat-to-nigerias-2027-elections/>

5.2 Gendered disinformation

Women in Nigerian politics face a distinct information threat. Across the 2023 cycle, female candidates and activists were the targets of coordinated sexualised attacks, marriage-status

shaming, body imagery manipulation, and ethno-religious dog-whistles designed not just to discredit them individually but to discourage all women from entering public political life.

The Oyefusi case as archetype

In the build-up to the 2023 Lagos State governorship election, a photo of a woman smoking shisha in a club circulated virally on social media, falsely identified as Abiodun Islamiyat Oyefusi, the running mate to Labour Party's gubernatorial candidate.³⁶ Multiple fact-check organizations debunked the image and the Labour Party formally refuted the identification, but the original post outpaced the corrections by orders of magnitude. The case illustrates the standard playbook: an image that exploits Lagos-specific class and religious sensitivities (shisha-smoking, club attendance, female candidacy) is matched to a real candidate's name in a way calculated to mobilize both ethno-religious and patriarchal disapproval.

The Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD-West Africa) catalogues this pattern as 'gendered information disorder' encompassing 'sexualized contents, sexist and misogynistic content, and posting of doctored images and videos aimed at ridiculing based on their gender'.³⁷ These attacks are not incidental campaign noise; they are a structural cost of being a politically active woman in Nigeria.

Structural representation effects

The 2023 cycle saw women account for 47.5% of registered voters but win under 5% of contested seats. President Tinubu's first ministerial nomination list included only 7 women out of 47 nominees. Female politicians are not only targeted disproportionately but also subjected to different forms of harassment and abuse. Attacks targeting male politicians mostly relate to their professional duties, whereas online harassment directed at female politicians is more likely to focus on their physical appearance and sexuality and include threats of sexual violence and humiliating or sexualized imagery.³⁸ Generative AI accelerates this. The 2020 Wilson Center 'Monetizing Misogyny' study found that during the U.S. 2020 election, false claims about Vice President Kamala Harris were shared at a peak rate of 3,000 times per hour on Twitter a volume only achievable with coordinated, semi-automated production. Nigeria has not yet seen activity at that scale, but the same tools that enabled it are now available to Nigerian political operatives, and female aspirants for 2027 should be expected to face attacks at materially higher volume and velocity than the 2023 cohort.

Gendered disinformation as voter suppression

Online attacks against women in politics have offline consequences that compound across the female electorate. Gendered disinformation can intersect with identity-based attacks (allegations of sexual orientation, in countries where same-sex relations carry severe legal penalties) to silence critics and consolidate power.³⁹ In Nigeria specifically, the documented use of 'Oro Cult' parades to physically prevent women from reaching polling units in 2023 mirrors the digital harassment infrastructure: the goal of both is to drive women out of the civic space.

36 FactCheckHub (2023). "Analysing the influence of gendered disinformation in Nigeria." Available from: <https://factcheckhub.com/analysing-the-influence-of-gendered-disinformation-in-nigeria/>

37 Ibid.

38 Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (2020). "Tackling Online Abuse and Disinformation Targeting Women in Politics." Available from: <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2020/11/tackling-online-abuse-and-disinformation-targeting-women-in-politics>

39 Institute of Development Studies / Agunwa, N. (2024). "Weaponising gendered disinformation across Africa." African Digital Rights Network. Available from: <https://www.ids.ac.uk/news/weaponising-gendered-disinformation-across-africa/>

5.3 Persons with disabilities and rural exclusion

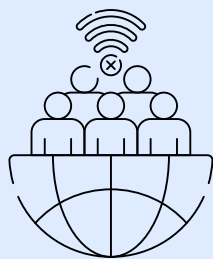
Two further data voids complete the picture of marginalized exposure:

Persons with disabilities (PWDs)



→ Nigeria's roughly 30 million PWDs (per disability-rights coalition estimates) face systemic exclusion from both fact-check content and corrective interventions. Most fact-check articles are produced in dense English text, without screen-reader optimization, sign-language explainers, or audio alternatives. JONAPWD state chapters report that members rely heavily on community intermediaries many of whom themselves consume English-language social media indirectly. This means PWDs are typically two intermediaries removed from any verified content, and any layer of decay in transmission disproportionately affects them.

Rural and low-connectivity populations



→ The 128 million Nigerians not online at the start of 2025 are concentrated in rural areas, the North-East and parts of the Middle Belt, and among older and female populations.⁴⁰ These citizens receive political information through radio (the FRCN network reaches over 100 million people in 15 languages), faith institutions, traditional rulers, and family networks. They are largely outside both the misinformation reach measured by fact-checkers and the corrective reach of digital interventions. Our assessment suggests that the rural information ecosystem will remain harder to monitor and influence than the digital one throughout the 2027 cycle.

40 DataReportal / Kepios (2025). "Digital 2025: Nigeria." Available from: <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2025-nigeria>



6

Hotspot Mapping: Six States, Six Threat Profiles

In this section, hotspot states are mapped with attention on one from each geopolitical zone: Lagos (South-West), Rivers (South-South), Abia (South-East), Kano (North-West), Borno (North-East), and Kwara (North-Central). Each state presents a distinct combination of digital intensity, historical voter-suppression patterns, linguistic profile, and platform mix. The hotspots imply that safeguarding Nigeria's 2027 elections requires moving beyond national counter-disinformation frameworks towards state-specific resilience strategies that combine multilingual fact-checking, locally embedded civic verification networks, rapid-response election communication, and targeted digital literacy interventions.

Lagos

South-West



• KEY INDICATORS

Highest social-media density in Nigeria; 2023 turnout around 18%; documented voter suppression in Oshodi-Isolo, Kosofe, Ikorodu; highest active-voice subscribers in Q1 2024 (25.96m, NCC).

• DOMINANT NARRATIVE THREATS

Ethno-religious incitement (Igbo–Yoruba); gendered disinformation against female aspirants (Oyefusi case archetype); shallowfake video manipulation of candidate statements.

• LANGUAGE PROFILE

English, Yoruba, Pidgin, Igbo (diaspora communities); high English-language deepfake exposure.

Rivers

South-South



• KEY INDICATORS

Bottom-five state for 2023 turnout (~18%); high electoral-violence incident rate; significant 2024–2026 political instability around state assembly; Obio/Akpor and Port Harcourt City as 2027 flashpoints.

• DOMINANT NARRATIVE THREATS

Vote-suppression-via-false-procedure narratives; ethno-political incitement (Ijaw–Ikwerre and other intra-state cleavages); recycled-media claims about polling-unit changes.

• LANGUAGE PROFILE

English, Pidgin (dominant), Ikwerre, Ijaw varieties; very high Pidgin radio reception.

Abia

South-East



• KEY INDICATORS

Documented 2023 systemic disenfranchisement (under 21% regional turnout); highest WhatsApp 'Shadow Network' political activity per CDD/Dubawa case studies; Aba North and Aba South commercial hubs.

• DOMINANT NARRATIVE THREATS

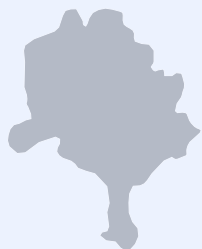
IPOB-linked smear narratives (recurring archetype 1); foreign-influence overlays (Trump–Biafra fabrications); Liar's Dividend defences by local incumbents.

• LANGUAGE PROFILE

English, Igbo (primary), Pidgin.

Kano

North-West



• KEY INDICATORS

Third-highest active-voice subscriber base in Nigeria (11.9m, Q1 2024 NCC); high youth population and rising internet penetration; Dala, Nasarawa, and Fagge LGAs noted as 2023 polling-unit disruption sites.

• DOMINANT NARRATIVE THREATS

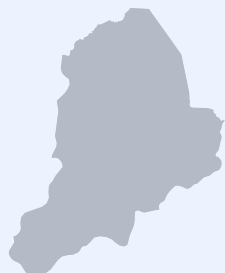
Religious-themed propaganda (archetype 1, Muslim-majority audiences); Hausa-language AI swarms (Bakare scenario); credential inflation by political aspirants; foreign-influence overlays around US-Nigeria security narratives.

• LANGUAGE PROFILE

Hausa (dominant), English, Fulfulde.

Borno

North-East



• KEY INDICATORS

Insurgency-affected; the most acute 'data void' state for indigenous language verification (Kanuri); restrictive security environment in non-capital LGAs; Maiduguri MC and Jere as primary safe-access points.

• DOMINANT NARRATIVE THREATS

AI-generated 'foreign intervention' content (the 2025 'US soldier' Boko Haram videos); Kanuri-language rumour networks; security-themed shallowfakes around military operations and IDP camps.

• LANGUAGE PROFILE

Kanuri (substantial), Hausa, English; near-total exclusion from English-language fact-check reach.

Kwara

North-Central



• KEY INDICATORS

Consortium headquarters (BBYDI HQ, Ilorin); 2023 SBM Intelligence flagged Kwara and Ogun as the only states projected under 30% turnout; high student/digital-native concentration (KWASU, UNILORIN, Federal Polytechnic Offa, Al-Hikmah).

• DOMINANT NARRATIVE THREATS

Inter-ethnic narratives (Yoruba/Fulani/Nupe); 'crowd-size deception' archetype in gubernatorial-cycle imagery; gendered attacks on the small number of high-profile female political figures.

• LANGUAGE PROFILE

Yoruba, English, Hausa, Nupe, Fulfulde, Baruba.

7

Institutional and Regulatory Landscape

Nigeria's institutional and regulatory response to AI-driven election disinformation is at an early but accelerating stage. This section maps the actors and instruments that civil-society interventions must engage with, complement, or pressure during the 2027 cycle.

7.1 INEC and the Artificial Intelligence Division

On 22 May 2025, the Independent National Electoral Commission approved the creation of a dedicated Artificial Intelligence Division within its Information and Communications Technology Department.⁴¹ The division's mandate is dual: to harness AI for electoral efficiency (voter-service automation, geo-spatial intelligence, risk detection) and to defend electoral integrity against AI-enabled disinformation. INEC framed the move as a response to engagements with other African electoral commissions and a recognition of 'AI's potential to both disrupt and improve electoral systems'.⁴²

The division's creation is the right direction. Three caveats apply. An

organisational unit is not the same as institutional capability: 'There is a need to invest in training electoral officials, cybersecurity experts, and fact-checkers. Educating the electorate about AI disinformation is crucial'.⁴³ The division's relationship with platforms remains under-specified: takedown protocols, escalation pathways, and content-credentials adoption have not been publicly detailed as of May 2026. Given the BVAS and IReV technical-credibility crisis of 2023, INEC operates with depleted trust capital; its AI Division will need transparent governance to avoid further trust erosion.

41 Punch Nigeria (2025). "INEC creates AI division to modernise electoral process." Available from: <https://punchng.com/inec-creates-ai-division-to-modernise-electoral-process/>; TV360 Nigeria (2025). "2027 Elections: INEC Launches AI Division to Combat Disinformation, Boost Electoral Integrity." Available from: <https://www.tv360nigeria.com/2027-elections-inec-launches-ai-division-to-combat-disinformation-boost-electoral-integrity/>

42 TV360 Nigeria (2025). "2027 Elections: INEC Launches AI Division to Combat Disinformation, Boost Electoral Integrity." Available from: <https://www.tv360nigeria.com/2027-elections-inec-launches-ai-division-to-combat-disinformation-boost-electoral-integrity/>

43 TechCabal (2025). "Preparing for Nigerian elections in a world of AI deepfakes." Available from: <https://techcabal.com/2025/08/28/ai-deepfakes-nigeria-2027-elections/>

7.2 Legislative and policy instruments

Nigeria's broader AI and information-disorder legal framework is in motion but not yet operational. The illustration indicates that no instrument currently in force directly addresses election-specific AI misuse. Therefore, the

2027 cycle will be contested under a legal regime that relies on general data-protection law, platform self-regulation, and pre-AI-era electoral and cybercrime statutes.

Instrument	Status (mid-2026)	Relevance to election disinformation
Nigeria Data Protection Act (NDPA) 2023	In force; NDPC operational	Governs handling of voter and stakeholder PII; underpins data-protection requirements for fact-checkers and incident platforms like EVIT.
National Artificial Intelligence Strategy (NAIS)	Published September 2025	Foundational blueprint for responsible and ethical AI development and AI governance; not itself an election-specific enforcement mechanism.
National AI Commission (Establishment) Bill 2025	Tabled, under review	Proposes a dedicated AI Commission with oversight of AI development; would centralize AI governance currently fragmented across NITDA, NDPC, NCC, CBN.
Nigeria Digital Sovereignty and Fair Data Compensation Bill 2025	Tabled	Indirectly relevant; framework for data rights but limited disinformation-specific provisions.
HB 942 (Control of Usage of AI Technology Bill)	Introduced in November 2023; status to be verified before final publication	Proposes criminal liability for malicious AI use in spreading disinformation or compromising national security; has not yet passed second reading as of mid-2026.
Protection from Internet Falsehood and Manipulation Bill	Passed Senate 2019, dormant	Earlier attempts to address online disinformation; widely criticized on free-expression grounds; periodically resurfaces in National Assembly.
Paris Charter on AI in the Public Interest	Endorsed Feb 2025	Soft-law international commitment; Nigeria's endorsement establishes diplomatic posture but creates no domestic enforcement.

7.3 Platform self-regulation

The major platforms have made varying commitments. The 2024 Tech Accord provides a global template for platform cooperation on election integrity, and individual companies have rolled out tools: Google's SynthID watermarking for AI-generated content, TikTok's auto-labels for synthetic media, Meta's collaborations with fact-checking partners and INEC.⁴⁴ Adoption in Nigeria specifically remains uneven. WhatsApp's design provides effectively no public-facing moderation; Meta (Facebook and Instagram) maintains regional partnerships but has historically been criticised for under-investing in

Nigerian content moderation; X, under current ownership, has reduced its civic-integrity capabilities globally. The FCCPC–NDPC \$220 million fine against Meta in July 2024 is the most significant Nigerian regulatory action against a major platform to date, but it concerned data-protection violations rather than disinformation directly. The 2027 cycle will be the first in which Nigerian regulators have meaningful financial leverage over platform behaviour; whether they apply it to disinformation specifically is the political question of the next eighteen months.

7.4 Civil-society fact-checking ecosystem

The Nigerian Fact-Checkers' Coalition (NFC) is the primary civic infrastructure responding to election misinformation. Its current member organisations include Dubawa, FactCheck Africa, AFP Fact Check, TheCable Fact-Check, the Nigerian Democratic Report (NDR), PRNigeria CableCheck, CDD-West Africa's CDDFactCheck, and FactCheckHub. The International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN) provides external accreditation, methodology standards, and access to platform partnership programmes (notably Meta's Third-Party Fact-Checking

programme). The Africa Facts Network and the IFCN Code of Principles provide regional and global anchoring.

This ecosystem is operationally significant but resource-constrained. Most member organisations operate with small staff (10–30 full-time equivalents), election-period surge capacity is built on volunteers and short-term grants, and turnaround time on individual claims (typically 24–72 hours) remains slower than the viral half-life of misinformation on most platforms.

44 TechCabal (2025). "Preparing for Nigerian elections in a world of AI deepfakes." Available from: <https://techcabal.com/2025/08/28/ai-deepfakes-nigeria-2027-elections/>







Recommendations and Policy Briefs

The assessment generates eight prioritised recommendations across five categories. Three of the recommendations are developed into self-contained policy briefs (Annexes A–C) suitable for separate dissemination to INEC, the National Assembly Committee on Electoral Matters, and platform regulators.

8.1 Summary of recommendations

S/N	Audience	Recommendation	Owner / partners
R1	Operationalize the AI Division as a Synthetic-Media Crisis Cell using a minimum viable model: core INEC team plus vetted external surge roster, language capacity, evidence-preservation standards, escalation protocols, and appeal/correction mechanisms.	INEC AI Division; ICT Department; NFC; vetted external rapid-response roster; platform liaisons	INEC AI Division; ICT Department; ICCES (Inter-Agency Consultative Committee on Election Security)
R2	National Assembly	Pass the National AI Commission Bill 2025 in a form that includes explicit election-period synthetic-media provisions; do not delay election-AI rulemaking pending fuller AI law.	Committees on ICT, Electoral Matters, Judiciary, civil-society coalitions

S/N	Audience	Recommendation	Owner / partners
R3	Separate public-platform obligations from encrypted/private-channel interventions: public platforms should prioritise labelling, escalation and transparency; encrypted/private channels should prioritise tip lines, prebunking, community reporting and media-literacy campaigns.	Issue a binding Election-Period Code of Practice requiring platforms to label AI-generated political content, provide real-time data-access to accredited Nigerian fact-checkers, and publish weekly transparency reports.	NCC; NITDA; NDPC; civil-society monitors
R4	Establish a Women in Politics Digital Defence Helpline using a realistic case-management model: intake, triage, evidence preservation, platform escalation, legal referral, psychosocial referral, and anonymized reporting.	Allocate Nigeria-specific content-moderation capacity proportional to election risk; invest in Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, and Kanuri detection models; and adopt Content Credentials (C2PA) for political advertising.	Meta; Google; TikTok; X; Telegram
R5	Civil society	Scale indigenous-language factchecking through coordinated investment in the Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, and Pidgin pipelines of NFC member organizations; pool prebunking content via shared editorial calendar.	NFC; BBYDI / FactCheck Africa; Dubawa; AFP Fact Check; CDD; international donors
R6	Civil society	Establish a Nigerian Women in Politics Digital Defence Helpline by Q3 2026, providing female aspirants and activists with security audits, OGBV documentation, takedown advocacy, and SGBV referral pathways.	BBYDI; FactCheck Africa; CDD-West Africa; FIDA Nigeria; NAWOJ; The Initiative for the Advancement and Development of Women & Youth Leadership
R7	Donors	Fund a Nigeria 2027 Information Integrity Pooled Fund with rapid-disbursement micro-grants (N2m-N10m) to indigenous-language and PWD-led organizations.	DDI/CIVICUS; Open Society Foundations; Ford Foundation; MacArthur; FCDO; USAID; Luminate; US Embassy; European Union and other Diplomatic Mission in Nigeria - equivalent successor mechanisms
R8	All actors	Adopt a public commitment to evidence-based, non-partisan post-election information integrity review, with a planned national press conference and recommendations communiqué.	Consortium-led; INEC; National Assembly; IEOMs; media coalition

Operationalising INEC's AI Division for 2027

The problem

This section establishes the baseline of what Nigerian election misinformation looks like in content type, platform, and narrative, using the 2023 election cycle as a reference point, and then traces how those patterns have evolved through 2024–2026.

What we recommend



Designate the AI Division as INEC's Synthetic-Media Crisis Cell with 24/7 staffing from 1 November 2026 to 28 February 2027.



Publish, by Q3 2026, a public Synthetic-Media Response Protocol setting out: how the division receives reports; expected verification turnaround (proposed: 24 hours for time-sensitive content); communication channels with platforms; legal escalation thresholds; and public-disclosure rules.



Sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the Nigerian Fact-Checkers' Coalition and platforms for real-time data sharing during the peak window.



Commit to weekly public transparency reports (a Trust Dashboard) during the peak window: number of synthetic-media incidents received; mean response time; platforms engaged; outcomes.



Allocate visible budget, not just an organisational chart line, sufficient to retain forensic-analysis staff and tooling.

Why this matters

Trust in INEC was at 23% going into 2023 and has not recovered. The simplest way for INEC to rebuild trust is to demonstrate visibly competent management of the issue voters now most associate with electoral fraud. A well-publicised AI Division operating to documented standards is a counter-disinformation measure. Conversely, an under-resourced or opaque AI Division will be perceived as window-dressing and may accelerate trust collapse.

A Nigerian Women in Politics Digital Defence Helpline

The problem

Women in Nigerian politics face gendered disinformation, online gender-based violence (OGBV), and sexualised attacks. The 2023 cycle saw recurring viral campaigns of this kind (the Oyefusi photo, the Patience Jonathan paternity claim, multiple aspirant attacks). Generative AI lowers the cost of producing such content to near-zero. Without a coordinated response, the 2027 cycle is expected to produce attacks at materially higher volume, and the consequences measured in withdrawn candidacies, exited activists, and suppressed female-voter participation will compound.

What we recommend



Establish a Nigerian Women in Politics Digital Defence Helpline, operational by 1 October 2026 and through 28 February 2027.



Service offer: (a) high-intensity security audits for female aspirants for federal, state, and LGA office; (b) OGBV documentation and evidence preservation; (c) platform takedown advocacy through partner relationships; (d) referral to SGBV legal aid and psychosocial support providers.



Operate via a consortium model: BBYDI and FactCheck Africa as anchor, with case-handling capacity drawn from CDD-West Africa, FIDA Nigeria, NAWOJ, and the Initiative for the Advancement and Development of Women & Youth Leadership.



Maintain strict victim-confidentiality protocols, with PII held only by the case-handler and aggregated reporting at platform/regulator levels only.



Publish a quarterly Digital Safety Index showing the volume and severity of attacks against female political actors, anonymised at the individual level, to establish the baseline against which 2027 outcomes are measured.

Why this matters

The single most leveraged intervention any project can make to increase female political representation in 2027 is to make it physically and digitally safer to participate. Every female aspirant who withdraws under the weight of online attacks is a representation loss measurable in decades.

Closing the Indigenous-Language Detection Gap

The problem

Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, and Kanuri, spoken collectively by over 175 million Nigerians, are 'low-resource languages' in the natural language processing sense. AI-driven content moderation on the major platforms is dramatically less effective in these languages than in English. Global Voices Advox documented in 2026 that automated systems handle fewer than 20 of Africa's roughly 2,000 languages.⁴⁵ At the same time, AI-content production in these languages is already commercially viable, as evidenced by the 2025 Yoruba and Hausa AI-character financial scams documented by Dubawa. The result is a structural mismatch: production has caught up with English, detection has not. For the 2027 cycle, the most dangerous content will be in the languages we are least equipped to monitor.

What we recommend



Platforms (Meta, TikTok, Google, X) commit to dedicated Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, and Pidgin moderation capacity for the November 2026 – February 2027 peak window, sized proportionally to the documented user base in each language.



Adopt and disclose the use of Content Credentials (C2PA standard) and SynthID-equivalent watermarking on all political advertising, regardless of language.



Civil-society fact-checkers coordinate to produce a shared, multilingual prebunking content library covering the eight narrative archetypes in Section 3.2, in English, Pidgin, Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, and Kanuri.



Donors fund the scaled multilingual fine-tuning of fact-checking tools, including MyAIFactChecker's planned Pidgin, Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo upgrades, the NaijaVoices speech-recognition dataset, and Awarri's indigenous-language LLM.



NCC and NITDA jointly issue guidance establishing a Nigerian floor on platform indigenous-language moderation capacity, with election-period reporting requirements.

Why this matters

The 2027 cycle will be the first in which AI-generated indigenous-language political content is widely deployed. If the response is led by English-language fact-checkers operating on platforms that cannot moderate the relevant languages, the verification ecosystem will be measuring the wrong universe of content. Closing the indigenous-language gap is not just an inclusion question; it is a question of whether the misinformation we know about is the misinformation that moves Nigerian voters.

⁴⁵ Global Voices Advox (2026). "Africa has 2,000 languages. AI content moderation knows fewer than 20." Available from: <https://advox.globalvoices.org/2026/04/20/africa-has-2000-languages-ai-content-moderation-knows-fewer-than-20/>

Conclusion: A Narrowing Window

This assessment has documented a Nigerian information environment in which the production capabilities available to bad actors are expanding faster than the detection capabilities of platforms, regulators, and fact-checkers. The country enters its 2027 electoral cycle with a large and growing online population, widening encrypted-channel activity, persistent institutional distrust, and increasingly accessible AI tools. The most responsible conclusion is risk-based rather than deterministic. Therefore, Nigeria faces a credible, high-impact threat that can still be managed if institutions act early.

These conditions are not destiny. The same eighteen-month window that allows the threats to scale also allows the response to scale. INEC's AI Division can become operationally effective. The National Assembly can pass enforceable election-period synthetic-media provisions. Platforms can be regulated for adequate indigenous-language moderation. Civil-society fact-checking can move from reactive debunking to systematic prebunking. Female aspirants and activists can be

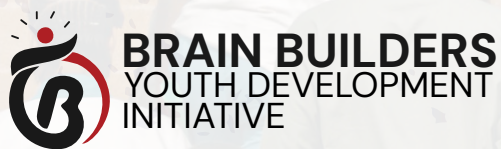
defended with structured digital safety services. None of these is impossible. None is automatic.

What is required is the explicit recognition that the information environment is not a side issue alongside the 'real' electoral questions of candidates, parties, and policies. In 2027, the information environment is the electoral question. Whether the 2027 elections produce a legitimacy crisis larger than 2023 or a recovery will be decided in significant part by what is built in the eighteen months that begin now.

The Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative and FactCheck Africa consortium offer this assessment as their contribution to that recognition and as the analytical foundation for monitoring and assessing the information ecosystem towards the 2027 general elections. The work is one part of a broader response, much of which is outside our remit. But the part we own will deliver with the rigour, partnerships, and accountability the moment requires.

Notes

All sources accessed between March and July 2026.
URLs preserved for verification.



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