

LOCAL ACCOUNTABILITY WATCH REPORT NOVEMBER 2025.

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Table of Contents

Table of Content.....	1
Acronyms.....	2
Acknowledgment	3
Introduction	4
YAPD4Africa organizational background	5
Project Context	6
LAF 2025: overview and strategic importance	7
Fellowship Training Structure	8
Strategic Role Of Law Drivers in the Project	9
Stakeholder and Advocacy Engagement	10
Key Engagements Image-based Representation	11
Outcomes of Stakeholder and Advocacy Engagement	12
Outline of key activities	13
Attendance and Stakeholder Representation	14
Onboarding Session for LAF Fellows	15
Fellowship Training Sessions: key highlights and learning outcomes	16
Fellowship Training Facilitators	17
Fellowship Training Outcomes	18 - 19
Community Outreach: Citizen Engagement and Sensitization Event	20
Outreach Location and Community Profile	21 - 22
Establishment of the Community Accountability Structure (Birrin Kudu)	23
Strengthened Access to Civic Tools through the Sensitization ToolKit	24
Public Reach and Visibility Impact	25
Challenges Encountered	26
Lessons Learned	27
Fellow's Testimonial	28

Acronyms

LAW - Local Accountability Watch.

WYDE - Women and Youth in Democratic Engagement.

ALDA - European Association for Local Democracy.

M & E - Monitoring and Evaluation.

LAF - Local Accountability Fellowship.

FOI - Freedom of Information.

YAPD4Africa - Connected Youth for Accountability, Peace and Development Initiative.

LGA - Local Government Area

ACDEG - African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The successful implementation of the Local Accountability Watch (LAW) Project was made possible through the collective efforts, guidance and dedication of numerous individuals and institutions. YAPD4Africa expresses profound gratitude to all stakeholders whose contributions fueled the impact of this initiative.

We extend our deepest appreciation to the Board of Trustees of YAPD4Africa, whose leadership, encouragement and governance provided the strategic foundation that guided this project from inception to completion. Our heartfelt thanks also go to our staff, project team and the Jigawa State Project Lead for their unwavering commitment, tireless work, and resilience throughout the implementation period.

We are especially grateful to the distinguished facilitators and speakers who enriched the Local Accountability Fellowship (LAF 2025) with their expertise, insights and mentorship. Their contributions strengthened the capacity of our fellows and deepened the quality of our engagements.

We acknowledge the generous support and hospitality of His Royal Highness, Alhaji Mohammad Hamim Nuhu Sanusi, CFR, the Emir of Dutse, whose endorsement, guidance and prayers amplified the project's credibility within the state. We also appreciate Professor Ahmed Gumel, Deputy Vice Chancellor (Central Administration) of Federal University Dutse, for providing academic support, institutional partnerships and continuous encouragement.

Our sincere recognition goes to Honourable Balarabe Alhassan, Special Assistant to the Governor of Jigawa State on Youth Mobilization, whose collaboration strengthened youth engagement and broadened the project's community reach.

We acknowledge our implementing partners and supporters: WYDE Civic Engagement, ALDA – European Association for Local Democracy, People in Need, Elbarlament the European Commission, and the European Partnership for Democracy. Their financial support, technical guidance and shared commitment to promoting civic participation and democratic governance were instrumental in bringing the LAW Project to life.

To the community members, youth groups, women leaders, civil society organizations, traditional institutions and government officials who participated in advocacy meetings, fellowship sessions and community outreaches, thank you. Your voices, experiences and engagement enriched this initiative and brought relevance to every activity conducted.

Finally, we recognize the dedication and passion of the LAW Drivers (fellows of LAF 2025). Their enthusiasm, initiative, and commitment to strengthening local governance across Jigawa State reflect the true spirit of civic responsibility and community-driven accountability.

This report is a testament to the power of collaboration. We remain grateful to everyone who contributed to its success.

Executive Summary: By Idris Bilyaminu Ndasadu'Lau, YAPD4Africa



The Local Accountability Watch Project, implemented by YAPD4Africa with support from WYDE Civic Engagement, through ALDA, People in Need, Elbarlament and the European Commission, was designed to strengthen transparency, accountability and citizen participation in local governance across Jigawa State. As the tier of government closest to citizens, local governments play a vital role in service delivery; yet persistent challenges such as weak accountability systems, limited civic awareness, corruption and restricted access to information continue to hinder development outcomes. This report presents the key interventions, achievements, lessons learned, monitoring results and recommendations from the 2025 implementation cycle.

The project began with strategic advocacy engagements across Jigawa State, aimed at encouraging government institutions to adopt more transparent practices, strengthen the implementation of the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act, and improve citizen inclusion in decision-making. YAPD4Africa also convened partnerships with youth-led organizations, traditional leaders, academic institutions and the media, creating a multi-stakeholder ecosystem committed to enhancing community oversight and open governance.

A centerpiece of the initiative was the Local Accountability Fellowship (LAF 2025), which attracted over 400 applicants from 23 states and one other African country, signaling a strong national demand for accountable leadership. 20 exceptional participants, known as LAW Drivers, were selected and trained through an intensive residency program covering local governance, transparency and accountability principles, digital communication for advocacy, budget tracking, community scorecards and monitoring and evaluation for civic projects.

To measure project effectiveness, a comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) process was conducted. Pre-test and post-test assessments revealed a measurable improvement in participants' knowledge, with the average training score increasing from 12.95 to 14.12, reflecting a 1.18-point gain across the cohort. Gender, age and geographic distribution analyses showed diverse participation, particularly from young people across 10 LGAs of Jigawa State.

Beyond training, LAW Drivers applied their knowledge through citizen engagement and sensitization outreaches in three communities; Disina, Sasarai and Birnin Kudu, reaching over 200 citizens. These engagements, conducted in Hausa for inclusivity, improved citizens' understanding of governance processes, their rights under the FOI Act, and their role in demanding transparency. The project successfully established a community governance structure in Birnin Kudu LGA, strengthening pathways for sustained civic action and public accountability.

The project also exposed critical gaps hindering effective local governance, including weak stakeholder commitment, low civic awareness in rural communities, literacy barriers and logistical challenges in reaching remote areas. However, these gaps highlighted significant opportunities: when equipped with knowledge, tools and support, citizens, especially women and youth, can drive transformative change at the grassroots level.

Through this report, YAPD4Africa underscores the urgent need to institutionalize accountability frameworks, expand civic education, strengthen community-based monitoring structures, and increase women's voice in local decision-making processes. The successes and lessons from the LAW Project provide a practical roadmap for governments, civil society, and development partners committed to deepening democratic governance in Nigeria.

Local governance is the backbone of democracy. When it is transparent, inclusive, and accountable, communities thrive. The LAW Project demonstrates that meaningful progress is possible, when citizens are informed, institutions are responsive and leaders rise to the responsibility of serving with integrity.

INTRODUCTION

Local governance forms the foundation of democratic development in Nigeria, serving as the level of government closest to citizens and responsible for the delivery of essential public services such as basic education, primary healthcare, rural infrastructure and community development. When local governance systems function effectively, they strengthen public trust, promote equitable development and enable citizens to hold leaders accountable. However, across many states, including Jigawa State, local governments continue to face persistent challenges that limit their ability to fulfill these mandates.

Weak accountability mechanisms, opaque budget processes, limited civic participation, widespread corruption and inadequate institutional capacity have collectively eroded public confidence in local governance. Structural barriers, such as low civic awareness, limited access to information, literacy gaps and patriarchal norms limiting women's participation, further restrict citizens from exercising their rights and engaging meaningfully in decision-making. These systemic realities not only impede service delivery but also undermine democratic values at the grassroots level.

It is within this context that the Local Accountability Watch (LAW) Project was conceptualised and implemented by YAPD4Africa. Grounded in the belief that accountable governance begins with informed citizens and responsive institutions, the project seeks to strengthen transparency, enhance civic participation and promote a culture of open and inclusive governance in Jigawa State. By equipping individuals, particularly youth and women, with knowledge, tools and platforms to engage constructively with local authorities, the LAW Project aims to bridge the longstanding gap between citizens and the institutions that serve them.

The initiative aligns with global and national frameworks promoting accountability, including the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG) and Nigeria's own democratic commitments. It also responds to the urgent need for community-driven oversight mechanisms, as highlighted by development research and governance assessments across the country.

The 2025 implementation of the LAW Project brought together a diverse coalition of stakeholders, government institutions, traditional leaders, academic bodies, civil society organisations, the media and community groups, to deepen collaborative action around transparency and accountability. Through the Local Accountability Fellowship (LAF 2025), citizen sensitisation outreaches, stakeholder engagements and a structured Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) process, the project demonstrated that empowered citizens are essential drivers of sustainable local development.

This report documents the journey, interventions, achievements, challenges and lessons that emerged from the LAW Project in Jigawa State. It provides evidence-based insights, community perspectives and actionable recommendations for strengthening local governance and advancing accountability across Nigeria.

YAPD4AFRICA: ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND

Founded in 2017, Connected Youth for Accountability, Peace and Development Initiative (YAPD4Africa) is a Pan-Africa youth-led civil society organization, whose dedicated mission is to build strong people and sustainable communities in Africa. Our primary focus is to empower people with the accurate knowledge and skills to advocate for their rights and community development across the continent through our various homegrown initiatives and social impact projects.

YAPD4Africa designs and implements sustainable, home-grown initiatives that advance democratic governance, human rights, gender equality, peacebuilding and social justice. The organization has a strong track record of promoting meaningful youth participation in civic processes, strengthening community systems and improving access to essential public services such as education, healthcare and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) facilities in underserved grassroots communities.

Central to YAPD4Africa's methodology is its Community Action-Led (CAL) approach, which prioritizes civic education, community ownership, participatory dialogue, and locally-driven problem solving. Through this model, the organization facilitates grassroots organizing, strengthens community structures and enables citizens to advocate for their needs using evidence-based civic tools and accountability mechanisms.

Leveraging its expertise in community engagement, research, policy advocacy and digital mobilization, YAPD4Africa has implemented numerous social impact projects that advance civic education, promote inclusion and inspire active citizenship across Nigeria and beyond. Through capacity-building programs, leadership development initiatives, digital campaigns and partnership-building, the organization nurtures a new generation of civic actors equipped to champion transparent and responsive governance.



PROJECT CONTEXT

Local governments in Nigeria are constitutionally positioned as the closest tier of governance to the people, responsible for delivering essential public services, promoting grassroots development and ensuring responsive administration. However, decades of weak institutional capacity, opaque financial systems, political interference, limited citizen engagement and widespread corruption have significantly hindered the effectiveness of local governance across the country. These challenges are especially visible in rural and underserved communities, where service delivery gaps are most profound.

In Jigawa State, as in many parts of Nigeria, insufficient transparency in budget processes, low awareness of civic rights and inadequate channels for citizen participation continue to constrain democratic accountability. Research and assessments by national and international development institutions consistently highlight that without strong accountability mechanisms, citizens lack the leverage needed to demand quality services or influence decision-making processes. As a result, communities often remain disconnected from governance structures that directly impact their welfare.

The Local Accountability Watch (LAW) Project was established by YAPD4Africa to address these systemic governance challenges by creating a model for citizen-driven accountability in Jigawa State. The project seeks to bridge longstanding gaps between citizens and government institutions by equipping communities with the tools, knowledge and confidence needed to engage local authorities constructively. By promoting open government principles, civic education and participatory governance, the LAW Project contributes to a more transparent and inclusive local governance ecosystem.

A key component of this initiative is the Local Accountability Fellowship (LAF 2025), which is designed to develop a cadre of informed, skilled and motivated young leaders, referred to as LAW Drivers, who serve as accountability champions within their communities. The fellowship received over 400 applications from 23 states and 1 other African country, reflecting the national appetite for improved local governance and accountability mechanisms. 20 fellows were selected and trained through an intensive residency program covering governance systems, transparency tools, digital advocacy, social accountability instruments, monitoring and evaluation and community mobilization.

The project also integrated extensive community engagement efforts, multi-stakeholder dialogues and media outreach to expand awareness, promote civic participation, and encourage collaboration between citizens and local decision-makers. Through these activities, LAW established a practical framework for grassroots monitoring, community feedback, and sustained citizen participation in governance.

By situating accountability at the community level and strengthening citizens' ability to demand transparent services, the LAW Project contributes to broader state and national efforts aimed at deepening democratic governance, promoting social justice and improving service delivery. This section provides the foundation for understanding the interventions that follow in later chapters of this report.

Local Accountability Fellowship 2025: Overview and Strategic Importance

The LAF 2025 represents the flagship capacity-building component of the LAW Project. Designed to cultivate a new generation of civic actors committed to strengthening transparency and citizen participation in Jigawa State, the fellowship serves as the engine that drives community-level impact throughout the project cycle.

Fellowship Rationale

Across Nigeria, young people constitute a significant portion of the population yet remain under-represented in governance and accountability efforts. At the local government level, where service delivery and civic engagement should be most visible, youth often lack access to the skills, platforms and institutional linkages necessary to influence policy processes.

The fellowship was therefore conceived to:

- Equip emerging civic leaders with practical knowledge of local governance systems.
- Strengthen their capacity to demand accountability responsibly and peacefully.
- Provide tools for monitoring public services, budgets, and community needs.
- Connect youth with institutional actors, traditional rulers, government officials, civil society leaders and the media.

Through this approach, the fellowship builds a pipeline of informed actors able to sustain accountability efforts beyond the project's lifespan.

Fellowship Application and Selection Process

The call for applications generated an unprecedented level of interest, with over 400 applicants responding within 2 weeks. Applicants represented 23 states across Nigeria and one additional African country, demonstrating widespread recognition of the relevance and urgency of local governance reform.

A rigorous, transparent selection process was used to identify the top 20 participants, now known as LAW Drivers, based on:

- Demonstrated passion for civic engagement.
- Experience in community leadership or advocacy.
- Commitment to serving their local communities.
- Strong communication and problem-solving abilities
- Gender and geographic diversity considerations.

This competitive process ensured that only highly motivated and capable young leaders were selected.



Fellowship Training Structure



The fellowship was delivered through a 2-day intensive training, supplemented by virtual sessions and personalized mentorship. The curriculum combined theoretical grounding with practical tools, community-focused methodologies and hands-on exercises.

1. Understanding Local Governance and the Role of Citizens:

Structure and mandate of LGAs, inter-governmental relationships, civic rights, and responsibilities.

2. Principles and Practices of Transparency, Accountability and Good Governance:

Open government standards, anti-corruption mechanisms, FOI Act implementation and ethical leadership.

3. Communication for Change:

Media engagement, digital advocacy, content creation, storytelling and citizen-mobilization strategies.

4. Social Accountability Tools:

Budget tracking, community scorecards, public hearing frameworks, participatory monitoring and community needs assessments.

5. Monitoring & Evaluation for Accountability Projects:

Data collection, community feedback loops, performance indicators and documentation for civic interventions.

6. Leadership, Facilitation & Community Organizing:

Grassroots mobilization, power-mapping, conflict-sensitive approaches and building community coalitions.

The training was facilitated by governance experts, practitioners and thought leaders, supported by YAPD4Africa staff.

Strategic Role of LAW Drivers in the Project

LAW Drivers transitioned from trainees to frontline accountability actors. After their training:

- They led community sensitization and civic education outreaches
- Mobilized local stakeholders and youth groups.
- Facilitated FOI awareness sessions.
- Supported data collection and community feedback processes.
- Activated local governance structures, particularly in Birnin Kudu LGA.

Their involvement strengthened community ownership and enhanced the sustainability of project interventions.

Fellowship Contribution to the LAW Project Vision

The LAF 2025 fellowship directly contributes to the broader goal of institutionalizing accountability in Jigawa State by:

- Building a cadre of skilled grassroots monitors.
- Increasing civic literacy across communities.
- Creating networks of young leaders capable of influencing governance.
- Enhancing trust and dialogue between citizens and local authorities.

Through the fellowship, accountability is no longer an abstract concept, it is now a community-anchored practice with active champions ready to uphold it.

Stakeholder and Advocacy Engagements

Stakeholder engagement is a cornerstone of the Local Accountability Watch Project. Strengthening local governance requires not only informed citizens but also responsive institutions, committed leaders, and collaborative structures that enable shared accountability. Throughout the project period, YAPD4Africa conducted a series of targeted advocacy visits and stakeholder dialogues across Jigawa State to foster institutional support, deepen collaboration and create an enabling environment for citizen-driven accountability.

These engagements connected YAPD4Africa and the LAW Drivers with key state actors, including traditional institutions, government officials, academic leaders, civil society partners and media outlets, ensuring that the project received both local legitimacy and broad-based institutional buy-in.



Objectives of the Stakeholder Engagements

The advocacy visits and engagements were designed to:

- Introduce the LAW Project and its goals to key stakeholders.
- Promote transparency, open governance, and participatory decision-making.
- Strengthen partnerships with institutions capable of supporting community accountability.
- Encourage leaders to adopt or reinforce accountability frameworks, including FOI compliance.
- Integrate project tools (such as the Citizen Toolkit for Accountability) into existing community structures.
- Mobilize support for the Local Accountability Fellowship and community sensitization activities.

Through these goals, the project aimed to create a shared governance ecosystem where citizens and institutions collaborate for improved public service delivery.

Key Engagements Image-based Representation



Engagement with the Emirate Council, His Royal Highness, the Emir of Dutse YAPD4Africa, together with partners from TurnUp Jigawa and BudgIT Nigeria, paid a high-level advocacy visit to His Royal Highness, Alhaji Mohammad Hamim Nuhu Sanusi, CFR, the Emir of Dutse.



Engagement with Academic Institutions — Federal University Dutse (FUD)

A strategic meeting was held with Professor Ahmed Gumel, Deputy Vice Chancellor (Central Administration) of Federal University Dutse.



Engagement with the Jigawa State Government — Office of the Special Assistant on Youth Mobilization

The project team also met with Honourable Balarabe Alhassan, the Special Assistant to the Governor of Jigawa State on Youth Mobilization.

Outcomes of Stakeholder and Advocacy Engagements

The engagements generated significant impacts:

- Institutional buy-in from traditional rulers, government actors, academia, and CSOs.
- Improved community acceptance of civic education activities and FOI sensitization.
- Expanded youth participation, encouraged by government and university actors.
- Strengthened legitimacy of LAW Drivers as accountability champions.
- Increased public awareness through widespread media coverage reaching millions.
- Enhanced support networks for project sustainability and scale-up.



These outcomes formed the foundation for successful outreach activities and the wider adoption of project tools and accountability practices.

OUTLINE OF KEY ACTIVITIES

Press Briefing and Launch of the Local Accountability Watch Project

The formal launch of the Local Accountability Watch Project marked a pivotal moment in YAPD4Africa's efforts to promote citizen-driven accountability and transparent governance in Jigawa State. The press briefing not only introduced the initiative to key stakeholders but also amplified public awareness, mobilized community interest, and reinforced institutional legitimacy for the project's implementation.

The event brought together an influential mix of development partners, media institutions, civil society representatives, youth advocates, and governance actors. This strategic convergence ensured that the LAW Project began with visibility, credibility and multi-stakeholder support, an essential foundation for the success of accountability-focused interventions.

Key Messages Delivered:

During the briefing, Idris Bilyaminu Ndasadu'Lau, Chief Executive of YAPD4Africa, highlighted the urgent need for strengthened accountability systems at the local level. He emphasized:

- The central role of local government in service delivery.
- Persistent gaps in transparency and citizen inclusion.
- The importance of empowering communities with civic knowledge.
- The role of youth and women in driving governance reforms.
- The potential of the LAW Project to bridge institutional and community gaps.

His remarks set the tone for the project's vision: a model of governance where transparency is institutionalized and citizens actively participate in shaping decisions that affect them.

Purpose of the Press Briefing and Launch:

The launch event was designed to:

- Officially introduce the LAW Project to the public and key stakeholders.
- Present the Citizen Toolkit for Accountability Manual for the first time.
- Emphasize the importance of transparency and participatory governance.
- Inspire public commitment toward strengthening local accountability.
- Create media momentum that would sustain visibility throughout the project cycle.
- Demonstrate YAPD4Africa's leadership in advancing accountability initiatives in Nigeria.

The event ensured that the project began with strong public engagement and clear messaging around its objectives and expected outcomes.

Attendance and Stakeholder Representation



The press briefing convened stakeholders from diverse sectors whose roles are critical to advancing grassroots accountability. Notable attendees included:

- Salamatu Ilyasu – Curator, Kaduna Global Shapers Hub.
- Ismail Gwarzo – Executive Director, CRED Africa.
- Sarah Nathaniel – Snart Foundation.

Media crews from:

- NTA News.
- Channels Television.
- Liberty TV and Radio (Kaduna).

The presence of major national and regional media houses significantly expanded the reach of the project's core messages.

Fellowship Training Sessions: Key Highlights and Learning Outcomes

The Local Accountability Fellowship 2025 training served as the central capacity-building component of the LAW Project. Delivered through a rigorous two-day residential training, the sessions equipped LAW Drivers with the knowledge, tools and values required championing transparency and accountability in their communities. The training methodology combined expert-led presentations, interactive exercises, group discussions, case studies and practical simulations, ensuring an immersive and impactful learning experience.



Training Objectives

The training was designed to:

- Strengthen fellows' understanding of local governance systems and civic rights.
- Equip participants with practical tools for promoting transparency and accountability.
- Build digital communication and advocacy competencies.
- Introduce Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) principles for community projects.
- Enhance fellows' capacity for grassroots organizing and citizen engagement.
- Prepare participants for field-based activities, sensitization sessions, and advocacy efforts.

These objectives aligned directly with the LAW Project's mission to bridge the gap between citizens and institutions in Jigawa State.

Overall Impact of the Training

The training significantly enhanced the fellows' readiness to serve as accountability champions.

Participants emerged:

- More knowledgeable.
- More confident.
- Better equipped with practical tools.
- More prepared for community outreach.
- Strongly aligned with the goals of the LAW Project.

This training phase formed the backbone of the fellowship and directly contributed to the successful implementation of outreach and advocacy activities that followed.

Onboarding Session for LAF Fellows

The Onboarding Session served as the official entry point for the 20 selected Local Accountability Fellowship (LAF 2025) participants, hereafter referred to as LAW Drivers. This session laid the foundation for their journey, establishing expectations, clarifying responsibilities, and creating a shared understanding of the fellowship's purpose and methodology. It was designed to introduce fellows to the broader accountability ecosystem in Jigawa State and prepare them mentally and professionally for the intensive training that followed.



Confirmed Speakers and Facilitators

The session was led by members of the YAPD4Africa team and partners, including:

- Rachida El Rhdioui (Tunisia/Turkiye), Global Citizen.
- Sir Val Okafor (Nigeria), Social Innovator.
- Idris Bilyaminu Ndasadu'Lau (Nigeria), Chief Executive, YAPD4Africa.
- Project Team Lead from the Jigawa State implementation unit.
- Associate facilitators supporting the fellowship curriculum.

Their contributions helped fellows grasp the depth and seriousness of the project.

Significance of the Onboarding Session:

The onboarding was critical to the project's success because it:

- Provided clear direction and expectations.
- Strengthened fellows' understanding of accountability issues.
- Positioned LAW Drivers as key actors in the project ecosystem.
- Established a disciplined and committed learning environment.
- Built a community of practice that would sustain collaboration throughout the project.

By the end of the session, participants felt fully prepared for the training ahead and aligned with the project's vision of promoting accountable, inclusive local governance in Jigawa State.

Fellowship Training Facilitators

The sessions were led by a diverse pool of experts including:

- Governance and public-sector specialists.
- Accountability and transparency advocates.
- Civic leadership trainers.
- Digital communication professionals.
- M&E practitioners.
- YAPD4Africa senior staff and project leads.

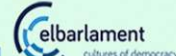
Their combined expertise provided a comprehensive and multidisciplinary learning experience.

Local Accountability Fellowship

Introducing Our Facilitators



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Fellowship Training Outcomes (Integrated with M&E Findings)

The Monitoring and Evaluation assessment demonstrated clear learning gains among fellows:

- Average pre-test score: 12.95.
- Average post-test score: 14.12.
- Overall improvement: 1.18 points.

This measurable increase reflects strengthened comprehension of accountability principles, governance systems, and practical civic tools.

Demographic insights from the M&E report include:

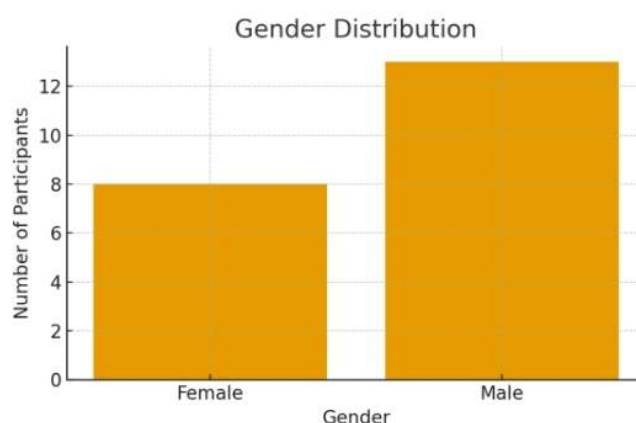
Age Distribution:

- 18–24 years: 7 participants.
- 25–30 years: 10 participants.
- 31–35 years: 3 participants.

This highlights the program's strong youth engagement.

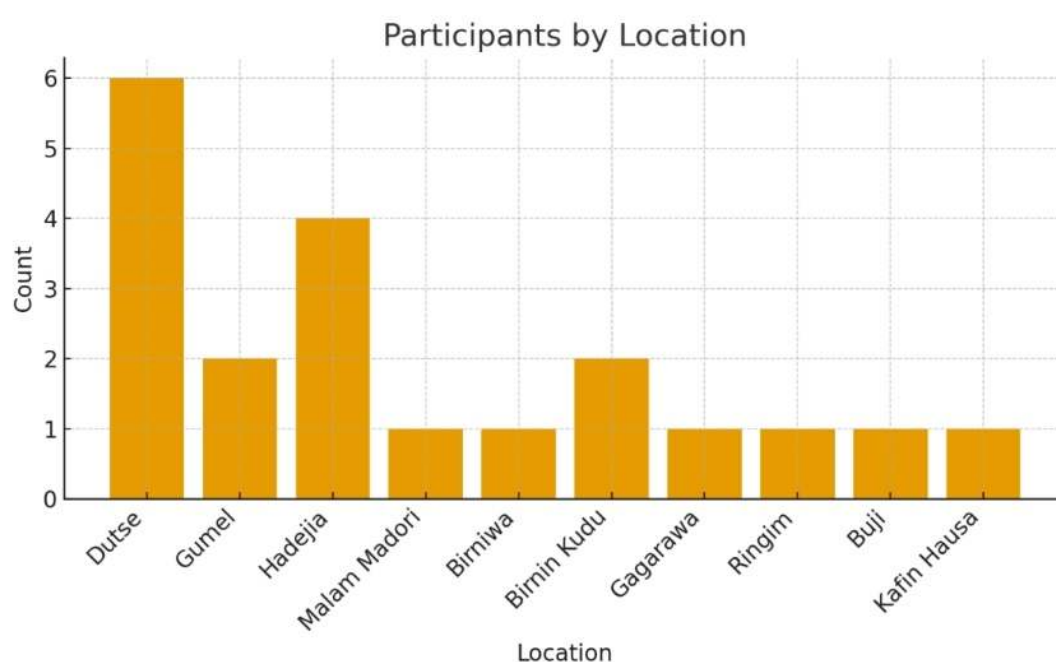
Gender Breakdown:

- Male: 13 participants (62%)
- Female: 8 participants (38%)



Geographic Coverage:

Participants represented 10 Local Government Areas in Jigawa State, with Dutse and Hadejia having the largest representation. These results affirm that the fellowship reached a diverse group reflective of Jigawa's socio-civic landscape.

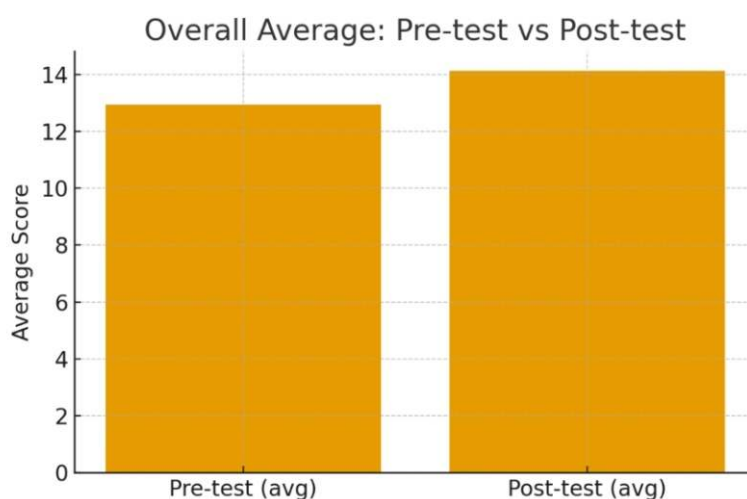




The Monitoring & Evaluation assessment demonstrated clear learning gains among fellows:

Assessment Results (Pre-test and Post-test):

Below are the visual summaries of the baseline (pre-test) and endline (post-test) assessment scores collected during the training. The charts show overall average improvements and individual participant improvements.

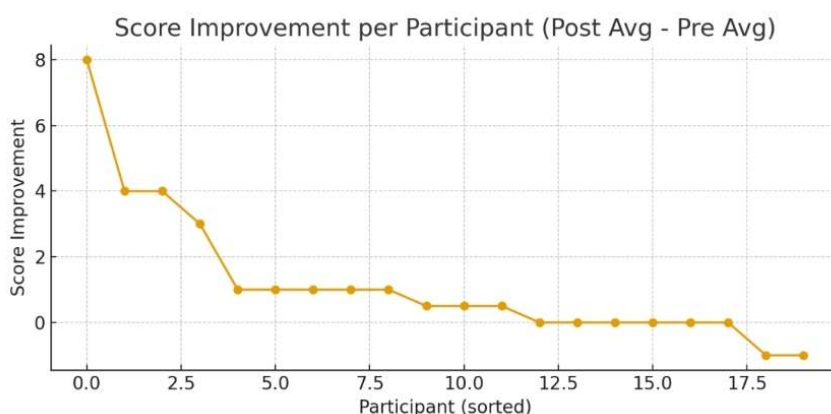


The below line chart above shows the score improvement (post avg - pre avg) for each participant, sorted from highest to lowest improvement. This measurable increase reflects strengthened comprehension of accountability principles, governance systems and practical civic tools.

Average pre-test score: 12.95.

Average post-test score: 14.12.

Overall improvement: 1.18 points.



Community Outreach: Citizen Engagement and Sensitization Event

Community engagement formed the most visible and citizen-centered component of the Local Accountability Watch Project. Following the intensive fellowship training, LAW Drivers were deployed to three communities, Disina, Sasarai and Birnin Kudu, to conduct civic education sessions tailored to grassroots realities. These outreaches were designed to bridge the persistent information gap between citizens and their local government authorities by providing accessible knowledge on rights, responsibilities and accountability mechanisms. To achieve this, we developed a bilingual (English and Hausa) Citizen Engagement and Sensitization Toolkit.

The sensitization activities were also conducted in Hausa language to ensure inclusivity and eliminate literacy barriers, particularly among women, low-income groups and citizens with limited access to formal education. Across the three communities, over 200 citizens were directly engaged, with several more reached through indirect means such as community mobilization, youth clusters and household discussions initiated by participants.



Impact:

- LAW Drivers applied their training by leading outreach sessions in their communities, educating citizens on governance and accountability.
- A community governance structure was established, enabling youth and local groups to collaborate on civic actions and development projects.
- Participants were encouraged to sustain engagement efforts, fostering a culture of accountability.

This initiative provided a platform for LAW Drivers to give back to their communities, reinforcing their role as change agents. YAPD4Africa remains committed to empowering citizens and promoting transparency at the local level through continued education and community-driven solutions.

Outreach Location and Community Profile



Disina Community:

A rural, densely populated community with limited civic awareness and low access to public information channels.

- Beneficiaries: 100 community members.
- The outreach included interactive sessions on the roles of local government, the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act, and community-led development. Participants were encouraged to join local governance structures to advocate for improved service delivery.

Priority issues identified:

- Poor knowledge of local government structures.
- Limited awareness of FOI Act provisions.
- Minimal engagement in decision-making processes.

Outreach Location and Community Profile



Sasarai Community:

A mid-sized settlement with a mix of farmers, traders and youth groups.

- Beneficiaries: 64 community members.
- The team emphasized the importance of inclusive decision-making and equipped beneficiaries with tools to hold leaders accountable. A community action plan was developed to address local challenges.

Priority issues identified:

- Requests for more representation in local policymaking.
- Low understanding of open governance tools.
- High interest in youth-led accountability initiatives.

Outreach Location and Community Profile



Birnin Kudu Community:

A politically active community with strong traditional leadership structures.

- Beneficiaries: 40 community leaders and youth.
- Focus: Strengthening community governance and sustainability of engagement efforts.
- The session highlighted the role of citizens in local governance, budget monitoring and resource allocation. Participants were trained to establish a local accountability committee to ensure continuous advocacy.

Priority issues identified:

- Concern over lack of transparency in local budgeting.
- Frequent service delivery complaints.
- Strong community willingness to establish monitoring systems.

This community later hosted the formation of a sustainable community accountability structure, one of the project's notable impacts.

Outcomes of the Sensitization Activities

Immediate Outcomes:

- Increased citizen awareness of local government responsibilities.
- Improved understanding of civic rights and tools for demanding accountability.
- Enhanced confidence to engage local authorities.
- Immediate interest in adoption of the sensitization Toolkit.
- Creation of a community accountability structure in Birnin Kudu.
- Strengthened relationship between LAW Drivers and traditional institutions.
- Increased demand for follow-up training on community scorecards.

The outreach activities successfully catalyzed a culture of citizen awareness and interest in participatory governance.

Establishment of the Community Accountability Structure (Birnin Kudu)

One of the most significant outcomes of the Local Accountability Watch (LAW) Project was the establishment of a Community Accountability Structure in Birnin Kudu Local Government Area. This structure represents an important milestone toward fostering grassroots-led monitoring of public services and institutionalizing accountability practices within the community. It is a strategic achievement that extends the project's life beyond its implementation period by creating a local mechanism to sustain engagement, advocacy and oversight.

Purpose of the Community Accountability Structure

The structure was established to:

- Create a localized, self-sustained mechanism for citizen oversight.
- Strengthen the community's ability to monitor service delivery projects.
- Provide a collective platform for youth to document and report governance issues.
- Empower citizens to engage constructively with their local government.
- Promote continuity of the LAW Project's objectives after the fellowship and outreach phases.
- Foster collaboration between youth, women, traditional institutions and community leaders.

This aligns with the LAW Project's belief that accountability is most effective when anchored in community ownership.



Strengthened Access to Civic Tools through the sensitization Toolkit



The launch and distribution of the sensitization Toolkit (English & Hausa) resulted in:

- Increased use of FOI templates.
- Better understanding of governance processes.
- Simplified methods for reporting community issues.
- A practical guide for LAW Drivers and community members.

The toolkit is now a long-term resource for citizen empowerment.

Expanded Youth Participation in Governance Conversations

Through training, media engagement and community activities:

- Youth demonstrated increased interest in civic processes.
- Young women became more vocal in discussions about governance.
- LAW Drivers initiated local-level discussions on service delivery and transparency.

Youth inclusion remains one of the project's most impressive outcomes.



Public Reach and Visibility Impact

The exact viewership data was not collected, the combined reach of NTA, Channels TV and Liberty TV/Radio is estimated to be more than 5 million across the northern region. While across our social media post insights report estimated more than 20 thousands viewers reached globally. These platforms serve diverse audiences, including:

- Rural households.
- Urban youth.
- Market communities.
- Civil servants.
- Women's groups.
- Religious and traditional institutions.

Visibility Outcomes:

- Increased recognition of the LAW Project.
- Enhanced legitimacy of LAW Drivers.
- Improved trust between communities and the project team.
- Wider awareness of the FOI Act and civic rights.
- Greater state-level recognition of YAPD4Africa's accountability work.
- Strengthened advocacy voice of the project.



Media coverage acted as a multiplier, amplifying every activity undertaken.

Contribution to the Project's Overall Impact

Media engagement contributed to the LAW Project in several strategic ways:

- Deepened public discourse on accountability across Jigawa State.
- Expanded reach beyond physical beneficiaries, ensuring statewide impact.
- Reinforced institutional support by showcasing project relevance.
- Encouraged youth participation, as many young people learned of the project through broadcasts.
- Created a lasting digital footprint, supporting long-term visibility and replication.

Media appearances also strengthened the narrative that accountability is not only a civic duty but a shared community responsibility.

Challenges Encountered

Despite the project's overall success, the LAW Project encountered several challenges that shaped implementation and provided valuable insights for future interventions. These challenges were both structural and contextual, reflecting the realities of grassroots civic engagement in northern Nigeria.

1. Low Civic Awareness and Literacy Barriers: Many community members, particularly in rural areas, had limited knowledge of basic governance concepts, civic rights, and public accountability mechanisms.

- This required facilitators to simplify content significantly.
- Sessions had to be delivered entirely in Hausa to ensure comprehension.
- Low literacy levels constrained the use of written materials like FOI templates.

2. Cultural and Gender Norms Affecting Participation: In some communities, societal norms limited women's ability to participate actively in public gatherings. Although women's attendance was higher than expected (35%), achieving gender-balanced participation remained challenging.

3. Logistical Constraints:

- Accessing remote communities increased transportation costs and time requirements.
- Some outreach locations lacked adequate venues or necessary seating, requiring improvisation by team.
- The time-frame for community sensitization was long not as plan.

4. Community Expectations of Financial Incentives:

A few participants expected financial or material incentives, common in development interventions in the region. This had to be carefully managed to preserve the integrity of the project.

5. Variations in Fellows' Technical Capacities: Although highly motivated, some fellows required additional support with:

- Digital advocacy skills.
- M&E documentation.
- Budget tracking tools.
- Complex governance analysis.

6. Inconsistent Government Responsiveness: Some local officials demonstrated hesitation or slow response to accountability issues, especially regarding FOI processes. This reflects broader systemic weaknesses in institutional transparency.



Lessons Learned



The LAW Project generated important lessons that provide guidance for future initiatives focused on local governance, transparency and youth empowerment.

- 1. Youth Are Powerful Drivers of Accountability:** Young people demonstrated strong motivation and adaptability when given the right tools and support. Their energy amplified outreach and strengthened community trust.
- 2. Language Accessibility Is Essential:** Delivering sessions in Hausa significantly increased community comprehension and engagement. Future projects should prioritize vernacular translations for all civic tools.
- 3. Community Trust Must Be Earned Through Local Structures:** Engaging traditional leaders early creates legitimacy and smooth the way for successful program.
- 4. Multi-Stakeholder Engagement Enhances Legitimacy:** Partnerships with academia, government, traditional authorities and media strengthened credibility and expanded influence beyond immediate beneficiaries.
- 5. FOI Awareness Is a High-Impact Entry Point:** Communities were particularly responsive when learning about their right to request information. This demonstrates that FOI is a potent tool for catalyzing accountability at the grassroots level.
- 6. Continued Mentorship Makes a Difference:** LAW Drivers benefited from ongoing engagement with the project team. Mentorship ensures consistency, reinforces learning and supports community-level implementation.
- 7. Media Engagement Multiplies Impact:** Television and radio appearances significantly expanded the reach of the project. Media should be integrated from the beginning in future cycles.

Recommendations

Based on the project's experience, M&E findings and community feedback, the following actionable recommendations are proposed:

1. For YAPD4Africa and Project Implementers

- a. Extend Fellowship Duration:** A longer training period would allow deeper exploration of budget tracking, FOI processes and hands-on community monitoring.
- b. Provide Continuous Mentorship:** Structured monthly check-ins and follow-up learning sessions will maintain momentum among LAW Drivers.
- c. Strengthen Digital Literacy Training:** Equip fellows with practical tools for:
 - Social media advocacy.
 - Graphic communication.
 - Data visualization.
 - Online community engagement.
- d. Scale the Community Accountability Structures:** Replicate the Birnin Kudu model in more LGAs to promote statewide accountability networks.

2. For Local Government Authorities (LGAs)

- a. Improve Transparency Practices:** LGAs should regularly publish:
 - Budget documents.
 - Expenditure reports.
 - Project timelines.
 - Procurement notices.
- b. Facilitate FOI Compliance:** Designate FOI desk officers and ensure timely responses to citizen requests.
- c. Strengthen Citizen Dialogue Platforms:** Establish town hall meetings, community advisory groups, and feedback mechanisms.

3. For Development Partners and Donors

- a. Invest in Long-Term Accountability Programming:** Short-term projects cannot fully address systemic governance issues; multi-year investments are recommended.
- b. Support Rural Civic Education:** Expand funding for outreach programs in low-literacy communities.
- c. Fund Digital Engagement Tools:** Support youth-led digital accountability campaigns and platforms.

4. For Community Actors

- a. Adopt Community Scorecards:** Local groups should begin monitoring schools, water projects, clinics and other services.
- b. Continue Using the Citizen Toolkit:** Encourage routine use of FOI templates and community monitoring checklists.

Fellow's Testimonial

The LAW Project has been a profoundly transformative experience. It deepened my understanding of community-centered advocacy and equipped me with practical, actionable tools to advance justice and inclusive development.

More than enhancing my skills, the fellowship strengthened my commitment to driving meaningful and lasting change within my community.



Hauwa Sulaiman.
Malam Madori LGA,
Jigawa State.

You don't own your government until you realize that true accountability, transparency and inclusion begin with the one closest to you, the local government.



Nura Yusuf
Gumel LGA,
Jigawa State.

The LAW Project fellowship has been a transformative experience for me. Through this fellowship, I've gained valuable insights and knowledge that have helped me to improve my public speaking skills and confidence. I've been able to share my experiences and learning with others, and it's inspiring to see the impact it's had on them. The program has also provided me with a platform to connect with like-minded individuals and organizations, which has been incredibly enriching.

I'm grateful to YAPD4Africa for this opportunity, and I'm excited to continue contributing to the growth and development of my community.



Amina Abdullahi
Dutse LGA,
Jigawa State

Participating in the LAW Project helped me develop stronger leadership, communication, and problem-solving skills. It inspired me to continue serving vulnerable groups and to believe more in my ability to create change.



Zaliha Muhammad Rabi,
Hadejia LGA,
Jigawa State.

Conclusion



The Local Accountability Watch Project demonstrated that meaningful progress in governance begins at the grassroots, when citizens are informed, institutions are engaged and youth are empowered to lead. By equipping 20 young leaders with essential governance tools, facilitating community outreach in 3 localities, establishing community accountability structure and amplifying public awareness through media, the project contributed to a more informed and participatory civic environment across Jigawa State.

The project's impact extended beyond immediate beneficiaries, it ignited conversations, inspired civic action, strengthened community structures and affirmed that accountability thrives when people understand their rights and responsibilities. While systemic challenges remain, such as weak FOI compliance and low civic awareness, the accomplishments of the LAW Project provide a solid foundation for continued progress.

The collaboration between YAPD4Africa, development partners, traditional institutions, government actors, civil society, media and community members shows that collective action can reshape governance outcomes. The LAW Project serves as a replicable model for driving transparency across Nigeria and reinforces the belief that sustainable development is only possible when citizens are empowered to participate in governance processes.

YAPD4Africa remains committed to advancing accountability, supporting youth leadership, and strengthening the capacity of communities to demand transparency. The work continues, and the foundation laid by this project will inspire future interventions aimed at building an open, just and inclusive society for all.

This document was designed and produced by
Connected Youth for Accountability,
Peace and Development Initiative (YAPD4Africa)
as output material under the
Local Accountability Watch Project.

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