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***Democracy is not a spectator sport it belongs to every Nigeria and every voice matters!
.....As the House of Representatives celebrates NASS Open Week 2026***

“Nigerians have a unique opportunity to move from being observers of democracy to active participants in shaping the nation's future. Democracy thrives when the National Assembly opens its doors, citizens engage with their elected representatives, and public institutions remain transparent, responsible, accountable, and inclusive. The call is clear: seize this moment and make your voice count”.

From **14 to 16 July 2026**, the **House of Representatives** will host **NASS Open Week 2026** at the National Assembly Complex, Abuja, under the theme **"Advancing Transparency, Inclusion, and Reform."** Initiative for Research, Innovation and Advocacy in Development (IRIAD) notes from the programme agenda, which contains legislative scorecards, thematic dialogues, and public engagements on governance, security, and democratic reforms, that this three-day programme is designed to deepen democratic transparency, strengthen legislative accountability, and enhance citizens inclusion in governance by creating a direct platform for Nigerians to engage with their elected representatives.

This is a laudable initiative, and demonstrates a good practice in legislative openness, inclusion, and citizens participation in public affairs.

NASS Open Week is more than an institutional initiative; by opening legislative processes to public scrutiny and encouraging direct engagement with citizens, the House of Representatives is not only exemplifying good practice but reinforcing its commitment to transparency, accountability, inclusion, and citizens' participation. It sends a powerful message that democracy works best when citizens are informed, involved, and empowered to contribute to national decision-making. And that democracy is strongest when institutions are open, governance is responsive, and citizens are active participants in public affairs.

At a time when Nigerians continue to demand greater openness in governance, stronger legislative oversight, and more inclusive policymaking, NASS Open Week provides a vital bridge between Nigerians and the Legislature. It also promotes trust in democratic institutions while fostering a culture of accountability and shared responsibility between government and the people.

One of the defining moments of this year's programme is the **National Dialogue on Reserved Seats for Women and Persons with Disabilities**, themed **"Expanding Inclusive Representation."** Nigeria continues to record one of the lowest levels of women's political representation in Africa, while persons with disabilities remain significantly underrepresented in public decision-making. This democratic imbalance weakens representative governance and limits the diversity of voices that shape national policies. The dialogue, therefore, presents the National Assembly with a historic opportunity to pass the **Special Seats Bill for Women**, a landmark reform that would expand women's representation, strengthen democratic governance, and advance more inclusive decision-making. Passing the Bill during NASS Open Week would demonstrate the House of Representatives' commitment to translating the principles of transparency, inclusion, and reform into meaningful legislative action.

Equally important is the **Youth Town Hall**, which underscores the indispensable role of young Nigerians in shaping the country's democratic future. As preparations continue towards the **2027 General Elections**, young people must be equipped with the knowledge, civic values, and critical thinking skills required to participate peacefully in elections, reject misinformation and political violence, and engage constructively in governance. Building a stronger democracy requires an informed, active, and responsible generation committed to protecting democratic values.

At **IRIAD**, we believe democracy thrives when citizens are informed, institutions are responsible and accountable, and governance is inclusive. NASS Open Week is not only an invitation for citizens and civil society organisations to engage with Parliament; it is also a platform for the National Assembly to demonstrate leadership through meaningful reforms and actions. The passage of the **Special Seats Bill for Women** during this period would reaffirm Nigeria's commitment to advancing transparency, inclusion, and reform while strengthening democratic representation for present and future generations.

Call to Action

IRIAD urges

- **National Assembly:** Deepen legislative openness, strengthen oversight, and advance reforms that build public confidence in democratic institutions. Most importantly, legislators should seize the opportunity presented by the National Dialogue on Reserved Seats for Women and Persons with Disabilities to pass the **Special Seats Bill for Women**, taking a historic step towards inclusive representation, gender equity, and a democracy that reflects the voices and aspirations of all Nigerians.
- **Civil Society:** Participate actively throughout NASS Open Week by providing evidence-based recommendations, mobilising citizens to engage constructively with Parliament, and sustaining advocacy for reforms that strengthen democratic governance. Civil society should, as an imperative, continue promoting civic education, monitoring legislative performance, and ensuring that the voices of women, young people, persons with disabilities, and other marginalised groups remain central to policymaking.
- **Citizens:** Embrace NASS Open Week as an opportunity to participate in the legislative and public policy process, and in democracy. Citizens should engage their representatives, ask informed questions, and demand accountability. As the 2027 General Elections approach, every Nigerian must reject misinformation, violence, hate speech, and apathy, while promoting peaceful participation, respect for human rights, and democratic values. **Democracy is not a spectator sport; it belongs to every Nigerian, and every voice matters.**

NASS Open Week 2026 reminds us that democracy is strongest when institutions remain open, citizens remain engaged, and leaders remain accountable. It offers an opportunity to strengthen the relationship between Parliament and the people, promote inclusive governance, and advance reforms that will shape Nigeria's democratic future.

As the House of Representatives opens its doors to Nigerians, let us all step forward with a shared commitment to transparency, accountability, inclusion, and active citizenship. Let us seize this

moment to support reforms that strengthen our democracy, including the passage of the **Special Seats Bill for Women**, which has the potential to transform political representation in Nigeria.

Be present. Speak up. Engage. Hold power to account. Together, let us build a Nigeria where every citizen has a voice, every voice counts, and democracy truly belongs to the people.

#NASSOpenWeek2026 #EngageYourNASS #CitizenCentricNASS
#LegislativeTransparencyAndAccountability #PublicGovernanceAndAccountability

Signed

Princess Hamman-Obels, **Director | IRIAD-The Electoral Hub**

Phone: +234 908 6998 850 +234 704 7998 525

Twitter: @electoralhub and @iriadev

Instagram: @electoralhub, @theelectoralforum, and @iriadev

Facebook: @electoralhubng, @electoralforum, and @iriadev LinkedIn:

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/the-electoral-hub/>

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/iriadev/>; <https://www.linkedin.com/company/the-electoral-forum/>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@electoralhub1196>;

<https://www.youtube.com/@IRIADEV>;

<https://www.youtube.com/@ElectoralAccountabilityWatchNG>;

<https://www.youtube.com/@TheElectoralForum>

Website: <https://www.electoralhub.org>, <https://www.iriadng.org> and

<https://www.electoralforum.electoralhub.org>

ABOUT IRIAD

The **Initiative for Research, Innovation, and Advocacy in Development (IRIAD)** is an interdisciplinary knowledge, policy, and advocacy hub committed to developing a critical understanding of governance processes and regimes through research, documentation, policy engagement, public education, and impact advocacy to inform policies, advocacies, and other forms of interventions. Whilst promoting and encouraging active citizenship through citizens' engagement, participation, and representation in democratic governance.

IRIAD is committed to strengthening democratic governance by advancing public accountability, citizens' participation, women's rights and gender justice, and strengthening the capacities of governance institutions to be responsive, responsible, accountable, effective, and ethical

Knowledge | Innovation | Inclusion | Impact
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