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Civic Talks

SECOND
EDITION

Theme:

From Fear to Safety:
Rethinking Security and Civic
Responsibility in Nigeria

EVENT
REPORT



**18 June 2026****DATE**

Thursday

60**ATTENDANCE**

In-room participants

7**SPEAKERS****60****DURATION**

The Meeting Point, Gudu

Executive Summary

On 18 June 2026, the Centre for Inclusive Social Development (CISD) convened the second edition of Civic Talks at The Meeting Point, Gudu, Abuja, under the theme “From Fear to Safety: Rethinking Security and Civic Responsibility in Nigeria.” The dialogue brought together security institutions, government representatives, civil society, technology innovators, journalists, and citizens directly affected by insecurity to examine Nigeria’s security crisis not as an abstract policy question, but as a lived and urgent reality.

The conversation moved from data to testimony to expert response, culminating in a candid exchange between citizens and the institutions responsible for their safety. This report summarises the key data presented, the testimonies shared, the perspectives offered by speakers, and the recommendations that emerged for citizens, communities, government, security institutions, and civil society.



The Scale of the Crisis

The dialogue opened with a framing address by Folahan Johnson, Executive Director of CISED, grounding the conversation in current data on insecurity in Nigeria:



Mr. Johnson closed his address with a question that anchored the rest of the dialogue: “If a community has information about an attack but does not respond, who is to take responsibility? Whose responsibility is safety, government, citizens, or both?”



Voices from the Ground

The dialogue's most powerful moments came from citizens with direct, lived experience of insecurity in Bassa Local Government Area, Plateau State, a community that has endured sustained attacks for over two decades.

Nuhu Bitrus Nga, a youth leader from the affected community, presented documentation of the scale of harm: since the year 2000, Bassa LGA has recorded 2,730 attacks affecting 23,804 people, with 2,150 confirmed deaths. Seven communities have been displaced, 444 people have been injured, and over 21,000 rooms have been destroyed alongside the deliberate destruction of farms and food stores intended to cripple survivors economically.

“We don’t sleep at night. Some boys come and break into our house. If they don’t find anything, they use their cutlass on us.”

— Moses Kwa, Pastor, Bassa LGA

“There have been signals before attacks, but there is no proper reporting mechanism. Before the information can get to the necessary authorities, it is already late.”

— Nuhu Bitrus Nga, Youth Leader, Bassa LGA

Moses Kwa recounted a direct attack on his community in which security personnel gathered 58 residents into a room for protection, then left after which 37 people were killed. This experience, he noted, has eroded community trust in security forces





Expert Perspectives

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Speaker	Key Position
Alex Annagu FCT Police Command	Identified leadership failure and neglect of “the least amongst us” as a root cause. Called for citizen-led security initiatives alongside formal policing.
Kelechi Ukanwa Wing Commander (Rtd)	Argued Nigeria’s security architecture has become top-heavy and elitist, prioritising the protection of “big men” while leaving citizens exposed, creating a deep trust gap. Called for citizen-led intelligence.
Ternenge Ikpaahindi Founder/CEO, Yawa Technologies	Presented YAWA, a real-time situational awareness platform for citizens and law enforcement. Noted: “If you don’t trust your government, you can’t use what your government has built.”
Prof. Adedeji Oyenuga Criminology, LASU	Offered a behavioural lens: “Poverty is not a condition for criminality it creates a condition that makes it difficult to resist temptation.”
Yakubu Mohammed Premium Times	Linked insecurity in the Middle Belt to climate change and farmland loss. Called for an intelligence-led police system and greater interoperability between security agencies.



Citizen Engagement & Recurring Themes

Citizens including a vigilante group representative, a journalist, and community members questioned experts directly on police capacity, command structures, and the trust deficit between communities and security agencies.

Four themes recurred throughout the dialogue:

1. Distrust between citizens and security institutions, rooted in unanswered reports and unaccounted-for arrests.
2. The psychology and socioeconomic drivers of criminality, including the role of poverty and desperation.
3. Lived testimony of sustained, unaddressed attacks in Plateau State and similar communities.
4. Security as a shared responsibility between citizens, communities, and government not government's alone.

Beyond the expert's opening remarks, the question-and-answer exchange surfaced sharper, more specific positions. Captured below as additional context for institutional follow-up.

On police capacity and citizen-led security

Responding to a direct question on the security architecture protecting over 220 million Nigerians, CP Ahmed Muhammed Sanusi acknowledged that failures often originate in leadership and the neglect of "the least amongst us," warning that what is not done for the most vulnerable "will come back to attack everybody." He called for citizens to organise their own protective initiatives including community podcasts

and structured local networks to complement formal policing rather than wait on it.

On the psychology of perpetrators

Asked how citizens might better understand the people behind these attacks, Prof. Adedeji Oyenuga distinguished between psychological, sociological, and biological drivers of criminal behaviour, noting that motivations are rarely singular. He maintained that "even thieves have a conscience" and reiterated that poverty does not cause criminality outright it narrows the space in which temptation can be resisted.

On military command culture

Responding to a question on whether rank-and-file soldiers can challenge a superior's directive, Ternenge Ikpaahindi argued that Nigeria must "deliberately create a leadership process that allows the best to get there", professionals with both competence and courage acknowledging this is a long-term institutional challenge rather than a quick fix.



On security as a social contract

“The journey from fear to safety begins with understanding that security is not a favour but a social contract between government and citizens. We have collectively agreed to surrender our security and safety to the government, and in turn, they protect us.”

— AD. Annagu, FCT Police

Mr. Annagu also cautioned against the narrative that Abuja is broadly unsafe, noting that the ability of citizens to move freely, work, worship, and send children to school remains a sign of relative stability while acknowledging the city is not yet where it needs to be.

From the floor: a citizen’s challenge

“The primary responsibility of the government is to protect lives and property, and if they fail to do that, it means the government has failed totally. Most people think the FCT is safe, but it is not.”

— Wilson Tom, Taxi Driver

On community-level security practice

Michael Orji, representing a vigilante group, offered practical detail on what community security can look like in practice: deliberately building a security-conscious mindset, maintaining open communication with neighbours, organising local groups, and establishing stress call signals for emergency measures that require no government resourcing to begin implementing.



Calls To Action

1. Citizens

Share information promptly with vigilante groups and police. Treat local security as a shared civic duty, not solely a government obligation.

2. Communities

Provide financial and logistical support to vigilante groups, who frequently serve as first responders ahead of formal security forces.

3. Government & Lawmakers:

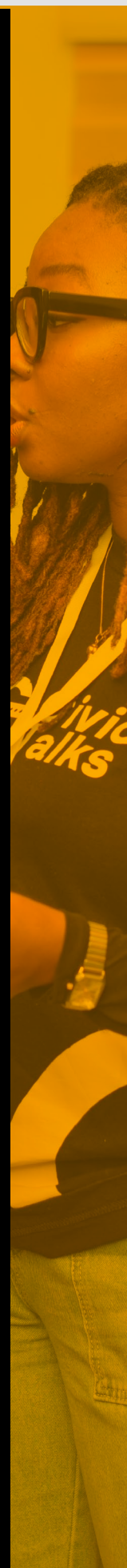
Enforce existing security policies, ensure interoperability between security agencies, and deploy the National Orientation Agency for sustained public security education.

4. Media

Continue conflict reporting with nuance, avoiding narratives that generalise blame across ethnic or religious lines.

5. Law Enforcement

Build on confirmed progress including recent arrests via digital tracking and communicate incremental wins to rebuild public trust.



Closing & Next Steps

Civic Talks Second Edition affirmed that Nigeria's security crisis demands a response that is both institutional and civic. CISD will publish a full policy brief and citizen summary drawing on the insights captured in this report, and will track commitments made by speakers and institutional participants over the coming 30 days.

CISD extends its sincere appreciation to all speakers, government representatives, and citizens who contributed to this dialogue. We look forward to continued partnership as we work toward a safer, more accountable Nigeria.



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discussions.

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understand how public
decisions affect everyday
life.

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Work with us to build
stronger institutions and
more informed
communities.

Read Our Research

Explore evidence that
informs better
governance.



**Together, we can make governance more
transparent, inclusive, and accountable.**

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