

ifa ECP Monitor Country Report

Nigeria

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1. External cultural policy objectives in geopolitical context

Nigeria is the most populous country on the African continent and currently the seventh most populous in the world. In 2014, Nigeria rebased its GDP, and this led to an 89 percent increase in the size of the economy as new sectors of its economy were measured. With its GDP rising from 300 billion to 510 billion dollars, Nigeria surpassed South Africa and became Africa's largest economy. Now representing roughly 70% of the 15-country Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) GDP, Nigeria plays an important leadership role in both West Africa and on the African continent.

Since its independence from British colonial rule in 1960 and the civil war in 1967, Nigeria has been looking for a political approach to unite its people and guide its further development as a nation. After all, it is a country made up of at least 200 ethnic groups that speak 500 indigenous languages and practice two major religions – Islam and Christianity.¹ However, religious and ethnic conflicts, poor governance, and high levels of corruption have contributed to Nigeria's continued political instability and poor economic performance. For most of the last 72 years since gaining independence, coups, frequent changes of governments and domestic policy failures along with rampant corruption have held Nigeria back despite vast oil revenues.

Table 1: Key statistics on Nigeria

	2019	2015
Population (millions) / ranking	201 / 7 th	181,1 / 7 th
GDP number (ranking)	26 th	23 rd
GDP per capita \$	2,230	2,688
Cultural economy (%GDP)	0.035	n/a
Education economy (%GDP)	0.43	0.51
R&D economy (%GDP)	0.046	0.031
Media economy (%GDP)	n/a	0.025

Sources: World Bank, National Bureau of Statistics, Budget Office of the Federation

¹ Despite the profession of Christianity and Islam, many Nigerians are involved in syncretism; they outwardly display Islam or Christianity while they are inwardly deeply entrenched in traditional religion.

Geopolitical position	2019	2015
Hard power rank	35 th (2021)	n/a
World trade indicators / ranking (\$ million)	4,485 (exports) 51,029 (imports)	2,742 (exports) 48,000 (imports)
Soft power rank	n/a	n/a
Diplomacy rank	n/a	n/a

The country's cultural policies, both domestic and abroad, also suffered. Nigeria's last cultural policy was released more than 30 years ago and lost its guiding significance to today's Nigerian society (Toyo, 2015; see also Anyanwu, 2019). The nation lacks a relevant and practical cultural policy and the necessary cultural infrastructure in terms of institutions and organizations. Culture is a secondary concern, subsumed under other state departments, with socio-economic interests taking a clear lead. Nigeria's external cultural policy (ECP) largely depends on the private sector, including Nollywood (the film industry based in Lagos) and Afrobeats (the Nigerian music industry), which the government intends to harness as its soft power foundation in recent years. Both Nollywood and Afrobeats are significant cultural features not only across Africa and the Global South but also in the Western world (Osiebe, 2022; Ojo, 2016). What is more, Nigeria's creative and cultural industries are not entirely private as public-private partnerships are becoming more important – albeit without a relevant policy framework.

Furthermore, Nigeria has made African integration and unity a central feature of its foreign policy. For this purpose, it tries to build a credible image on an international level by actively maintaining relationships with international organizations like the United Nations and playing a leading role in regional affairs through ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) and the African Union. The promotion of democracy, technical aid, peacemaking and peacekeeping are also crucial components of Nigeria's soft power. For example, the Nigeria Technical Aid Corps (TAC), a voluntary international service scheme, has been an exemplar of Afrocentric peacebuilding initiatives in Africa (Nwachinemere & Ogunnubi, 2018).²

Nigeria's economy is heavily dependent on oil. In the first quarter of 2021, oil accounted for about 9.25% of its gross domestic product (GDP), contributing approximately 85% of export earnings and around 50% of total government revenues (International Trade Administration, 2021a). Virtually all extracted crude oil is exported and refined abroad, leaving a relatively small supply chain within the country itself. As a result, Nigeria is import-dependent when it comes to fossil-based energy such as petrol.³

² Established in 1987, the Technical Aid Corps Scheme has channeled its technical assistance in critical sectors like engineering, teaching, and health to various African, Caribbean and Pacific countries.

³ For the reasons above, Nigeria also faces a fuel crisis. For more information, see also Nigeria Fuels Imports by country 2019 | WITS Data (worldbank.org).

Nigeria is trying to diversify with a greater emphasis on information and communications technology (ICT) and, by implication, the creative industry. In 2013, when Nigeria recalculated its GDP, the increase of about 90% was attributed to new sectors like the films, music, and telecommunication industries (Cosgrave, 2014). One official press statement confirms Nigeria's goal to move toward a more service-oriented economy (NBS, n.d.; see also PwC, n.d.-a). As of 2020, the contribution of Nigeria's creative and information industry amounted to 10.7 trillion Naira (€ 23.1 billion), which is 15.28% of its overall GDP (*Share of Nigeria's creative industry, 2022*; see also *Contribution of Nigeria's creative industry to GDP, 2022*). Notably, the strong growth of Nigeria's ICT is also due to the increasing migration of existing 2G subscribers to higher bandwidths, which is also a trend observed in other African countries (Nigerian Communications Commission, 2020; see also Global Monitor, n.d.).

Table 2: Government spending on ECP fields as a percentage of total outlays

	2019	2015
Culture	0.58	n/a
Education	7.02	11.08
R & D	0.76	0.68
Media	n/a	0.55

Sources: Budget Office of the Federation

Nigeria's budget allocated to education was 634.6 billion Naira (about \$1.86 billion) in 2019. It is about 7% of the national budget, far below 15% to 26% recommended by UNESCO. This figure lowers to 6.3% in 2021, the sector's lowest allocation in the past ten years, posing a huge setback to the growth of the education industry (International Trade Administration, 2022). While the country's education is already ridden with challenges like infrastructural decay and constant strikes, its attempt to solve funding issues by privatizing state-owned universities only led to poorer outcomes (Ekundayo, 2019).

In the field of media, Nigeria has a limited central budget for broadcasting, and this budget mostly goes to state agencies like the Nigerian Television Authority and the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria. In the private sector, Nigeria has one of the fastest-growing media industries in the world (PwC, n.d.-b).⁴ In 2020, Nigeria's television and video market grew by 7.49% to \$806 million, up from \$732 million in 2018. In particular, subscription-based movie streaming is very popular in Nigeria, attracting players like Netflix, IROKOTV, and Startimes (International Trade Administration, 2021b).

⁴ See PwC. (n.d.-b), Nigeria will be the world's fastest-growing E&M market over the coming five years while the slowest-growing will be Japan.

Nigeria, despite its thriving industries of Nollywood and Afrobeats, shows similar potential for soft power to other African countries. These include a fast-growing ICT sector in pushing developments in audiovisual media, digital and diaspora diplomacy (UNESCO, 2021; Bernal, 2020). As of 2021, Nigeria is regarded as Africa's largest ICT market, with 82% of the continent's telecom subscribers and 29% of internet usage (International Trade Administration, 2021b).

2. External cultural policy: an overview

The management and promotion of Nigeria's national image from 1960 to 2010 was not particularly successful because of the misguided assumption that no dedicated institution was needed. Although the situation has improved with successful collaborations like that between the Nigeria Embassy in Washington and the Center for Black and African Arts and Civilization (CBAAC), Nigeria's ECP still faces many constraints (Benjamin, 2015). For one, Nigeria cannot be considered an authentically integrated society but rather a nation-state still in the making (Ogunnubi & Okeke-Uzodike, 2016).

While Nigeria's ECP fields such as arts and culture still lack guiding policies, other fields like education and science and technology are struggling with the discrepancy between policy ambition and institutional reality (Fosci et al., 2019). The absence of federal planning and implementation has resulted in Nigeria's insufficient and inconsistent engagement in ECP. The lucrative creative industries have thus become one of the most crucial venues for the country to exercise its soft power.

Table 3: Key ECP statistics for Nigeria

	2019
Number of countries with ECP activities	over 15
Total number of institutions abroad	Nigerian Cultural Centers: 2 Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) bureaus: 7
Total number of FTE staff engaged in ECP activities	n/a
ECP freelance and local contract staff	n/a
Government financial support (€ million)	n/a
Financial scale of all ECP activities	-
Comparative ECP ranking	minor

At the federal level, diplomacy has been carried out mostly within West Africa and with Nigeria's most important diplomatic partners, including the US, South Africa, UK, Germany, and China. Within the West African region, Nigeria projects its power mainly through

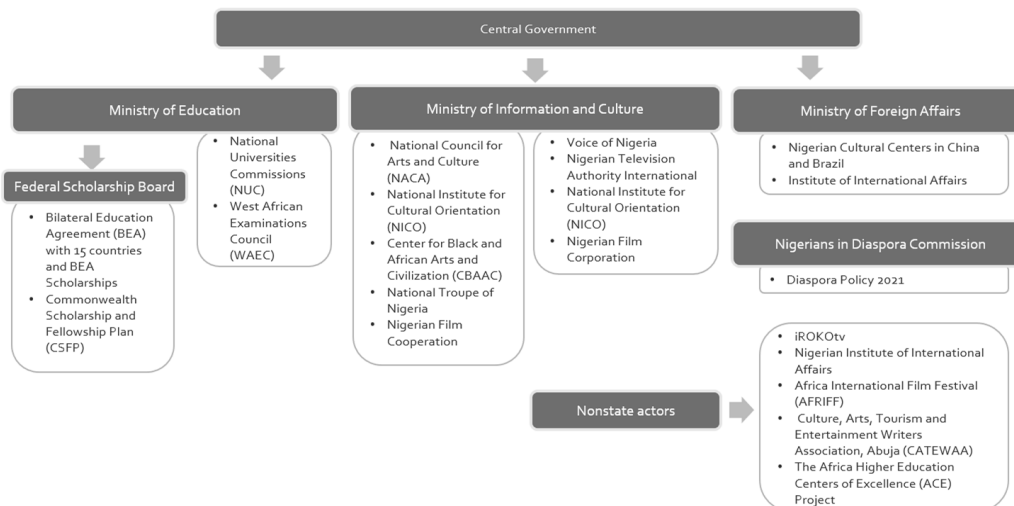
economic and peace diplomacy. In bilateral exchange, Nigeria maintains an active educational exchange with the British Council through Commonwealth networks, for example. In 2021, Germany returned the Benin Bronzes as a gesture to strengthen its relationship with Nigeria (Adeyemi, 2021).⁵

Next to the private sector, non-state actors like diaspora communities and civil society organizations play an important role in advancing Nigeria’s cultural diplomacy. In 2019, Nigeria’s diaspora remittances amounted to US\$25 billion, 6% of its GDP. Nigeria’s National Institute for Cultural Orientation has also called out to the Nigerian diaspora to consciously promote Nigeria’s dress and food culture, festivals, and indigenous languages (Ayakoroma, 2013; see also Migration Policy Institute, 2015).

In Germany, for example, there were 90 active Nigerian diaspora organizations as of 2015, 63 of which are cultural organizations that focus on cultural, language, and educational exchange (Marchand et al., 2015). In 2021, the Nigerian government introduced the National Diaspora Policy and showed a commitment to creating platforms to “Engage”, “Enable” and “Empower” Nigerians in diaspora towards national development, and these include Students Exchange and Internships (SEI) and Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) (NiDCOM, 2021).

3. Fields of ECP

Figure 1: Institutional map of Nigerian ECP



At the center of Nigeria’s public diplomacy are the ministries of Information and Culture, Foreign Affairs, and Education. Others include affiliated institutions like cultural centers in China and Brazil, the National Council for Arts and Culture, the Nigerian Television Authority International, the Voice of Nigeria, etc. Although Nigeria has a limited number of brick-and-mortar institutions overseas, it has many outward-facing entities that engage in cultural promotion and exchange at a Pan-African and international level.

⁵ For more information about the exchange between Germany and Nigeria/Africa, refer to *The African Courier – Educational Opportunities*, <https://www.theafricancourier.de/category/special/educational-opportunities/>.

3.1. Culture and the arts

Table 4: Key statistics on culture and the arts

	2019	2015
Number of countries present	15	n/a
Number of institutes	Nigerian Cultural Centers: 2	Nigerian Cultural Centers: 2
Number of cultural agreements	n/a	70 ⁽²⁰¹²⁾

As mentioned, Nigeria has no overall cultural policy. Nigeria's cultural promotion is conducted with a very limited central budget. In November 2015, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism was merged with the Ministry of Information, which is now known as the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism. Cultural relations are handled by various stakeholders in Nigeria, with economic interests taking a clear lead in formulating and implementing laws and policies (CSIS, 2012).

Nigeria's promotion of culture and arts is discussed at three levels – central, periphery, and private (Nollywood and Afrobeats). At the state level, festivals are the foremost form the Nigerian government adopts to promote its culture. One of the most popular ones is the Abuja Carnival, which attracted 200,000 local and international participants in 2021 (Budget Office of the Federation, 2019, p.178).⁶ Through the National Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC), Nigeria has held a number of cultural events at moderate scales, including the African Arts and Crafts (AFAC) Expo and National Festival of Arts and Culture (NAFEST). The council is also in cooperation with many international and non-governmental organizations.⁷

Nigeria's lack of a central cultural policy has resulted in cultural industries guided by a scene of independent cultural practitioners and activists. According to a report by the British Council, 47% of Nigeria's festivals identified were produced (run and managed) by an independent body (British Council, n.d.-a). However, due to Nigeria's sheer ethnic diversity, arts and cultural activities are very localized (Toyo, 2015). So far, there is no decentralized model for conducting cultural events in Nigeria because many culture-related organizations rely heavily on limited state funds.

Commercialized film and music industries are the most important part of Nigeria's arts and cultural promotion. Today, Nigeria's film industry contributes 2.3 percent (\$600 million) to the nation's GDP ("Film industry," 2021). According to the National Bureau of Statistics, in 2019, there were 700 movies produced (NBS, 2021). In 2020, Netflix announced its arrival in Nigeria by launching Netflix Naija. While Nollywood has increased Nigeria's global visibility, how far it has enhanced and communicated a strong and distinct national image remains in doubt (Odigwe, 2017-present).

⁶ The Ministry of Culture and Information allocated a budget of 240,656 euros to Abuja Carnival and a budget of 81,607 euros for collaboration with the British Council for festivals and carnival managers in 2019.

⁷ The list can be found at <https://www.ncac.gov.ng/programmes/>.

The funds that support Nigeria's film industry come from private equity and grants/loans from government and private institutions. In 2021, the Minister of Information announced that the Central Bank of Nigeria in collaboration with the Banker's Committee initiated a plan to grant a loan of 500 million Naira (€1.09 million) with a 9% interest rate to support the entertainment industry (S.P.A. Ajibade & Co., 2020; see also Mustapha, 2021). The Bank of Industry also established the Nollyfund in 2015, which is a loan to Nigeria's leading movie producers (The Bank of Industry, Nigeria, 2015; see also Adeleye, 2021).

Despite Nollywood's size and popularity, it remains a largely informal industry and faces challenges such as privacy and lack of branding, transparency, and sustainable structure (Oyekanmi, 2017). The government's participation in Nollywood is insufficient, like in other sub-sectors of arts and culture in Nigeria. In recent years, Nigeria's government agencies have attempted to regulate and structure its cultural and creative industries. For example, in 2016, Nigeria put forward three bills – the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), MOPICON (Motion Picture Council of Nigeria), and the Establishment of the Tourism Development Fund (“Creative Industries Bills,” 2016).

3.2. Language

English is the only official language in Nigeria, and French enjoys the second official language status as it is a compulsory subject in primary and junior secondary schools. Since its independence in 1960, Nigeria has been promoting its three major Nigerian languages – Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba – as national languages in addition to official languages (NICO, 2017; see also Dagbo, 2020). However, this indigenous language policy has yielded poor results and faced many obstacles, including ethnolinguistic tensions, insufficient infrastructure, lack of qualified teachers, etc.

Some authors have suggested that Nigeria could learn from India, also a former British colony with a rather diverse linguistic landscape, in formulating its language policy. However, unlike India, Nigeria failed to promote its local languages to the extent that a majority of its population can get involved in national development, for example, by granting national languages co-official status with English in different states to encourage citizenry participation (Akinpelu, 2018). Today, Nigerian Pidgin English, a combination of English and indigenous languages, is commonly spoken in informal and formal settings (Danladi, 2013).

Nigeria does not have language institutes overseas to promote its national languages. However, some diaspora and cultural organizations have been offering courses in the Nigerian languages in countries where a sizeable diaspora lives, like the US and the UK. However, it should also be noted that Nigerian languages like Pidgin English and Yoruba have gained more recognition with growing entertainment industries like Nollywood. Nigerian-language films are the majority of the films being made in Nigeria, and films made in indigenous languages also seem to be favored over those in English in international markets (McCain, 2013).

3.3. Primary and secondary education⁸

Table 5: Key figures on primary and secondary education

	2019	2015
Number of countries	1	1
Number of schools	1	1
Number of students	459 (2021)	n/a

Nigeria has one international school abroad, the Nigerian International School, Cotonou (NIS) in Benin. Like domestic schools, the NIS prepares its students for certificate examinations organized by the National Examinations Council (NECO) and West Africa Examinations Council (WAEC). The latter covers five West African countries – Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Gambia – and introduces a common Anglophone curriculum across West Africa as an alternative to UK assessment systems (WENR, 2015).

Nigeria is the recipient of multiple donor-funded programs. These include the Northern Education Initiative Plus (NEI+) initiated by the USAID,⁹ Better Education Service Delivery for All (BESDA) by the World Bank,¹⁰ Nigeria Partnership for Education Project (NIPEP),¹¹ Partnership for Learning for All in Nigerian Education (PLANE) by the UK,¹² Reading and Numeracy Activity (RANA) by UNICEF,¹³ and Revitalizing Adult and Youth Literacy (RAYL) by UNESCO (USAID, 2021).

As of January 2015, the International Schools Consultancy (ISC) listed Nigeria as having 129 international schools. Some of the notable ones include the British International School and the American International School of Lagos (U.S. Department of State, 2021). They serve the country's elite and sizable expat community.

⁸ See World Education News and Review (2017) for more information about Nigeria's education system, <https://wenr.wes.org/2017/03/education-in-nigeria>.

⁹ The NEI+ is a five-year (2015–2020) activity aimed at improving access to educational opportunities in Bauchi and Sokoto states and improving the reading skills of more than one million children and youth.

¹⁰ The BESDA is a five-year (2017–2022), \$611 million initiative that aims to improve access to education for out-of-school children, improve literacy, and strengthen accountability for results in the education sector in Nigeria.

¹¹ The NIPEP was a five-year (2015–2020), \$100 million initiative of the Global Partnership for Education and the World Bank to improve access and quality of basic education in five states across Nigeria.

¹² The PLANE is an eight-year (2019 – 2027) program of the U.K. Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) that aims to improve teaching, school quality, education management, and the efficient delivery of education across Nigeria.

¹³ RANA is a five-year (2015–2020) pilot project funded by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), aimed to improve the quality of literacy and numeracy instruction in Grades 1–3 in 200 schools across Katsina and Zamfara states in northern Nigeria.

3.4. Tertiary education and science

Table 6: Key figures on tertiary education and science

	2019	2015
Number of countries	15	n/a
Number of domestic universities	172	142
Number of students		
Number of foreign students ¹⁴	Inbound: 1,856 Outbound: 71,133	n/a

In recent years, Nigeria's number of private universities boomed, accounting for 49% of the total number of domestic universities in 2021. However, the high tuition fees and incommensurate education quality at these private institutions have not met the need of the country's growing youth population, especially those growing up in poverty. The government's funding for education varied between 6 and 9 percent of the national budget. This is lower than most other African countries which range between 11 and 30 percent (Adeyemi, 2019).

Currently, 15 countries hold bilateral education agreements (BEA) with Nigeria. However, Nigeria does not seem to offer scholarships to international students. In 2019, it offered 272 scholarships of 257.9 million NGN (€0.76 million) to Nigerians to study in countries with BEA with Nigeria (Budget Office of the Federation, 2019, p.918-919). Over 800 Nigerians receive Commonwealth Scholarships and Fellowships to undertake their postgraduate degree in UK universities every year (British Council, n.d.-b).

At the same time, Nigerians increasingly favor foreign education due to the inadequacies in the Nigerian educational system. Nigeria has long been the largest exporter of international students from the African continent. Nigeria sends one-third of all sub-Saharan Africans to the United States and ranks 11th in the world as a sending country, according to Education USA's *Global Guide*, outpacing Africa's second-largest exporter, Ghana, threefold (EducationUSA, n.d.; see also Tobenkin, 2019). Other popular destinations include the UK, Canada, and Malaysia. According to the balance of payment statistics of the Central Bank of Nigeria, Nigerians have spent a hefty sum of \$28.65 billion on foreign education in the past 10 years (2010 to 2020) (Oyekanmi, 2021).

Science and Research

In 2019, the Nigerian government's allocation to the Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST) accounted for 0.76 percent of its federal budget and 0.046 percent of its overall GDP (Budget Office of the Federation, 2019). The World Economic Forum ranks the average quality of research institutions in Nigeria 116th out of 141 countries globally in 2019 and 12th out of 34 Sub-Saharan African countries (Schwab, 2019). In Nigeria's latest 2012 National

¹⁴ Data based on Global Flow of Tertiary-Level Students | UNESCO UIS. (2020). Retrieved 2 September 2020, from <http://uis.unesco.org/en/uis-student-flow>.

Science, Technology and Innovation Policy, Nigeria set the ambitious strategy to establish a National Research and Innovation Fund (NRIF), with a minimum of 1% of GDP and not less than 5% strategically sourced from the public, private and international organizations (FMST, 2012).¹⁵

As estimated in the National Science, Technology, and Innovation Roadmap 2030 (NSTIR), the total funding for research and innovation needed to meet the goal is NGN 180 billion for the short term (2017-2020), averaging NGN 60 billion (€135 million) a year (FMST, 2017). However, the funding in 2019 was only NGN 35 billion (€ 79 million) (Fosci et al., 2019).

Nigeria has a complex research and science network with many active research stakeholders. Policies are formulated and implemented by MOST, sectoral ministries, NRIC (National Research and Innovation Council), and NCSTI (National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation). Funding is provided from the central budgets through several Ministry departments and international sources. For example, the National Research Fund (NRF), a major funding instrument for research, is administered by the Tertiary Education Fund (TETFund). In 2019, the TETFund received NGN 3.9 billion to support 128 projects.

Since 2014, the World Bank has funded a network of African Centers of Excellence (ACE) aiming to create an enabling environment for research through improved R&D infrastructure, research capacity, and international collaborations. As of 2022, there are 17 ACE Impact Centers in Nigeria that encourage collaboration across Nigerian institutions.¹⁶ However, international cooperation does not seem to strengthen Nigeria's research capacity because Nigerian researchers and institutions often take a junior role in the projects (Fosci et al., 2019).

Nigeria's science and technology, like other ECP fields, faces a widening gap between policy and practice resulting from a lack of funding. Insufficient central funding has also increased Nigerian researchers' reliance on international research funding and researchers' responsiveness to international agendas rather than national priorities (Fosci et al., 2019). According to Scimago, in 2018, 45.87% of Nigeria's research outputs were a result of international collaboration. This proportion has risen steadily over the last ten years (2009-2018). Nigeria's international research collaborations are primarily with research institutions based in the US, South Africa, the UK, Germany, and China.

¹⁵ The government's own target (as set in NSTIR 2030) is to achieve the following funding mix: 15% of funding through a National Development Fund; 50% through government allocations, 15% via public-private partnerships, 10% from international sources and 10% from venture capital funds.

¹⁶ <https://ace.aau.org/ace-impact-centers/>

3.5. Foreign Media

Table 7: Key figures on foreign media

	2019	2015
TV: Nigerian Television Authority		
Number of languages	1	1
Number of channels	International channel: 1	International channel: 1
Digital & social media audience	1.1 million (Twitter) 179,000 (Youtube) 498,000 (Facebook)	n/a
Budget (€ million)	19.84	32.12
Radio: Voice of Nigeria		
Number of languages	8	n/a
Number of frequency bands	4	n/a
Digital & social media audience	23,200 (Twitter)	n/a
Budget (€ million)	8.13	10.43

At the federal level, the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) is the mouthpiece of the government. Its international channel, NTA International (NTAi), is also a tool for the promulgation of the government's viewpoints and ideology. The NTA presently has bureaus in 7 countries of the world, including the UK, Washington DC, Ottawa (Canada), Accra (Ghana), Cairo (Egypt), Germany, and China.¹⁷ Privately owned broadcasters like African Independent Television (AIT), Silverbird Television (STV), Channels Television, and Television Continental (TVC International) are also well received abroad and among diaspora groups.

Voice of Nigeria (VON) is another important instrument for presenting Nigeria's image overseas; it is regarded as the true global media brand of Nigeria. With offices in 17 states of Nigeria and a staff size of 1,200, the VON transmits on 4 bands globally in 8 languages.¹⁸ As of 2022, the VON is fully digitalized and broadcasts through the Digital Radio Mundial (DRM), which is a global standardized digital radio standard for all frequency bands and used by other international broadcasters like Voice of America, BBC World Service, Deutsche Welle, and other similar stations (Enekwechi, 2022). In 2021, the VON signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Tanzanian Broadcasting Corporation to promote an African news perspective (News Agency of Nigeria, 2021).

¹⁷ <https://www.nta.ng/about-us/>

¹⁸ <https://www.abu.org.my/portfolio-item/voice-of-nigeria/>

Nigeria's media landscape was dominated by print, radio, and television, but it is experiencing a disruption by digital platforms. The rising popularity of Nollywood has given rise to the success of Over-The-Top (OTT) platforms like iROKOTv and iBAKAtv that provide access to Nollywood film and television to viewers over the internet. For example, as a major producer of Nollywood films, iROKOTv has produced 200 movies and 30 TV series by 2017, and it enjoys a wide viewership in 178 countries with more than 5 million subscribers (Jewell, 2017).

With the advent of digital technology and increasing usage of mobile phones, traditional media no longer enjoy a predominant status as they used to in Nigeria. Even political leaders and ministries have started communicating official messages on social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter. The NTA and VON have also sought to expand into similar channels.

4. Challenges and Future Outlook

Nigeria is a country still in the making, especially without an up-to-date federal cultural policy. Despite plans and promises to increase funding in ECP fields, the country is struggling with the discrepancy between policy ambition and institutional reality due to a myriad of causes, including corruption, neglect of infrastructure, domestic terrorism (Boko Haram),¹⁹ poor planning and leadership, and lack of accountability. In 2021, Nigeria was ranked 154th out of 180 countries in the Corruption Perceptions Index.²⁰ As a democratic country in practice, Nigeria also faces a democracy deficit and does not score well on major indices such as the Democracy Index and Freedom House score (Freedom House, 2021; Economist Intelligence Unit, 2022).

However, Nigeria's ECP has opportunities to develop its digital diplomacy and utilize its strong diaspora resources. Nigeria has Africa's largest ICT (Information and Communication Technology) market, accounting for 29% of internet usage in Africa. The country's leaders, ministries, and agencies are increasingly using ICT and social media tools to deliver government services. For instance, President Muhammadu Buhari and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are both extremely active on Twitter. The president has 4 million followers on his @MBuhari account (Adesina, 2018).

In 2018, Nigeria's diaspora remittances were translated to 83% of the Federal Government budget (PwC, 2019). Nigerian diaspora has actively participated in Nigeria's fields of ECP by contributing to its language promotion, online citizen journalism, higher education, etc. (Kperogi, 2020). In 2019, the Nigerian government created a platform, the Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (NIDCOM), to mediate relations with Nigerians in the diaspora.

Without a doubt, Nigeria has admirable soft power potential in its cultural industries, diaspora networks, and ICT. To further advance its external cultural policy, however, Nigeria will have to work on improving its domestic situation and revising its central cultural policy to meet the acute needs of cultural sectors and practitioners. A national identity rooted in democracy and African solidarity would enable Nigeria to exercise greater influence regionally and globally.

¹⁹ See Ogunnubi, 2016, Boko Haram is arguably a consequence of poor governance.

²⁰ <https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/nigeria>

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