

REDUCING INEQUALITIES BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH NIGERIA

A. Political and Structural Measures

- **Presidential Rotation (Zoning):** An informal, yet heavily influential, agreement exists to rotate the presidency between the north and south to foster national cohesion.
- **Regional Representation:** The constitution mandates that federal cabinet appointments reflect regional balance, a practice intended to ensure equitable input in governance.

B. Economic and Developmental Initiatives

- **Northern Infrastructure Focus:** Development strategies often prioritise increased federal allocations and infrastructure funding to attract foreign investment to the North, aimed at reducing regional poverty.
- **Oil Exploration in the North:** The government is aggressively pursuing oil exploration in the Northern region, hoping to replicate the economic impact that oil has had on Southern development. (Growth Pole development and Multiplier)
- **Educational Development:** Focus on increasing female literacy in the North is considered critical, as education is linked to better healthcare uptake and higher living standards.

C. Challenges and Current Context

- **Security Concerns:** Ongoing insecurity in the North, including terrorism and banditry, has crippled local economies and hindered developmental efforts.
- **Political Tensions:** Despite these initiatives, recent political appointments have triggered criticism of a potential imbalance in top positions, raising concerns among some northern stakeholders about their continued, fair representation at the federal level.
- **Social Disunity:** Misuse of ethnic and religious fault lines continues to create challenges for national unity.

D. Key National Initiatives for 2026

- **Renewed Hope Ward Development Programme (RHWDP):** A major 2026 initiative designed to bypass centralised systems and deliver support directly to the ward level. It aims to empower 1,000 individuals in each of Nigeria's 8,800+ wards with financial support and training, specifically targeting underserved northern regions.
- **National Development Plan 2026–2030:** A new economic framework that targets a \$1 trillion GDP by 2030. It prioritises poverty reduction through job creation in sectors like agriculture and digital technology, which are vital for the North's economic recovery.
- **Massive Infrastructure Investment:** The government has partnered with China on **\$24 billion in projects** under the Belt and Road Initiative, focusing on transportation and energy to improve connectivity between northern production hubs and southern ports.

E. Persistent Challenges

- **Security Concerns:** Despite increased spending, worsening insecurity in northern food-producing states remains a significant barrier to investment and long-term development.
- **Political Tensions:** Proclamations of a "two-state solution" have been reported in some circles, reflecting deep-seated regional frustrations that these developmental efforts aim to soothe.

F. POPULATION POLICIES

Population policies in Northern Nigeria, aligned with the [National Policy on Population for Sustainable Development \(2021\)](#), focus on reducing high fertility rates (aiming for 4 children per woman) and slowing population growth to ease pressure on social services. Key strategies include increasing modern contraceptive prevalence, improving reproductive health, and promoting girls' education.

Key aspects of population policies in Northern Nigeria include:

- **Contextual Challenges:** Northern Nigeria faces high fertility rates and rapid population growth, which puts significant strain on resources and infrastructure.
- **Targeted Goals:** Policies aim to reduce the total fertility rate (TFR) from over 5 children per woman to four, encourage child-spacing, and suggest a minimum age for marriage (18 for women, 24 for men).
- **Regional Initiatives:** Specific states like Kano have launched [family planning strategic plans](#) aiming to increase modern contraceptive prevalence rates (mCPR) (e.g., aiming for 27.2% by 2030 in Kano).
- **Key Strategies:**
 - **Family Planning/Reproductive Health:** Promotion of maternal and child health and expansion of contraceptive access.
 - **Education:** Prioritising girls' education, which is proven to reduce fertility rates and drive community development.
 - **MAMII Initiative:** The Maternal and Newborn Mortality Reduction Innovation Initiative (MAMII) was launched to combat high mortality rates, acting as a channel for family planning services.

G. COMBATTING DESERTIFICATION IN THE NORTH

1. **Afforestation & Shelter belts:** Planting drought-resistant native tree species, such as acacia, creates windbreaks that protect soil, reduce evaporation, and slow desert advancement, with success reported in areas like Yobe.
2. The **Great Green Wall (GGW)** in Nigeria is a strategic effort to combat desertification and land degradation across 11 frontline states in the north. Managed by the [National Agency for the Great Green Wall \(NAGGW\)](#), the project aims to create a **1,500km long and 15km wide** corridor of restored land to protect against the encroaching Sahara Desert.
3. **Water Management (Half-Moons):** Constructing half-moon water harvesting structures allows soil to retain water, enabling the cultivation of sorghum and millet, even in arid conditions.
4. **NAGGW Initiatives:** The National Agency for the Great Green Wall has intensified efforts by focusing on planting 50 million date palm trees to foster resilience and sustainability in northern regions.
5. **Sustainable Agriculture:** Utilising agroforestry, improving soil management, and introducing technologies like specialised soil-moisture gels (High Gel 23) help enhance crop yields, reduce soil erosion, and boost food security.
6. **Community Involvement:** Education and involvement of local communities are vital, ensuring they play a key role in maintaining tree belts and utilising sustainable practices.