

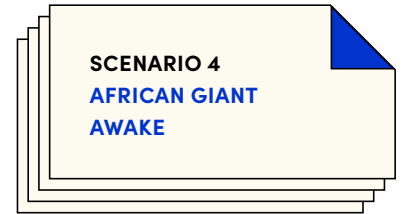
Scenario 4  
**African Giant  
Awake**



A renewed Nigeria that gets  
governance and leadership right



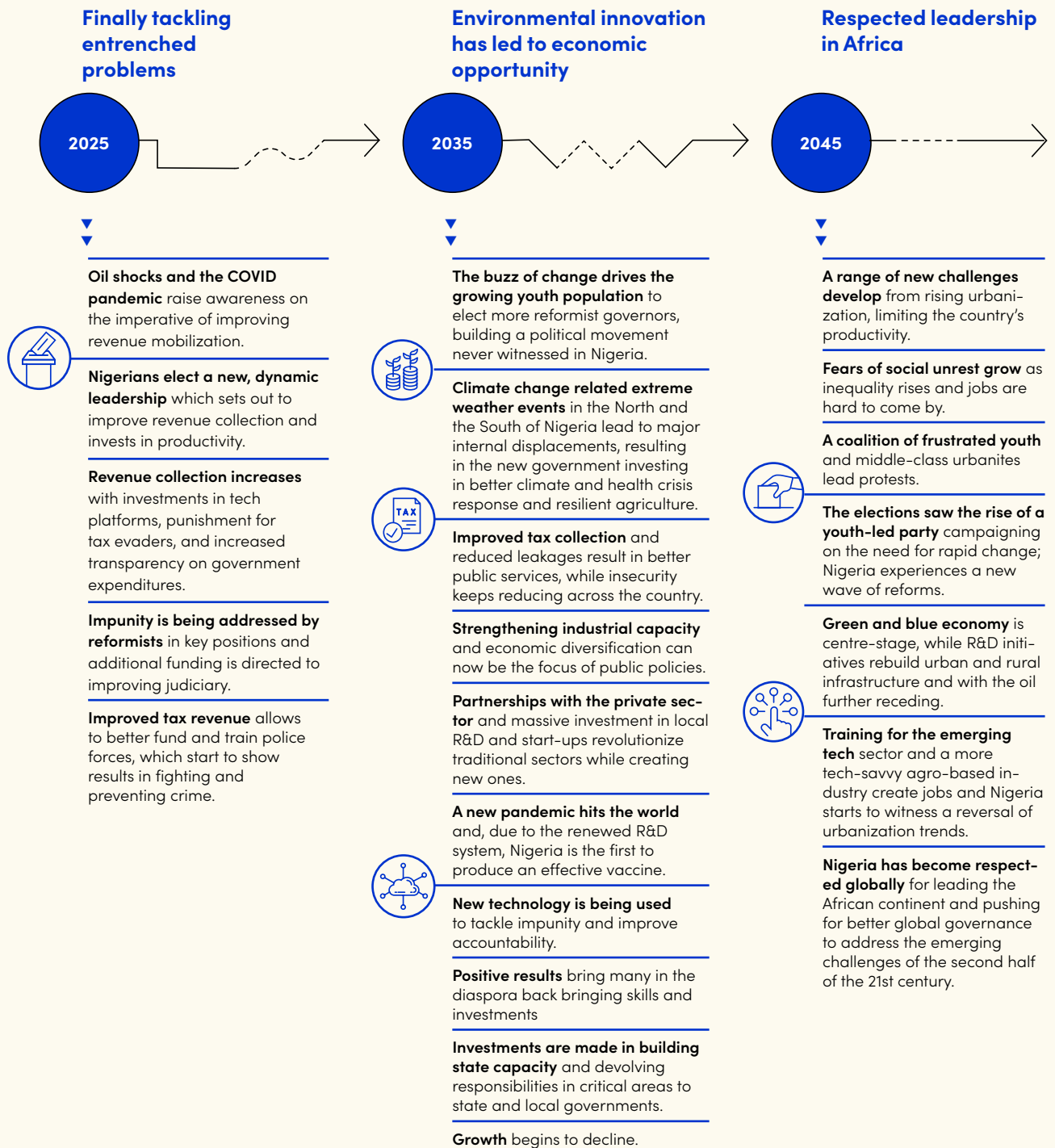
Imagine Futures: Four Scenarios For Nigeria  
is a section from the main report **Imagine Nigeria**



→ **African Giant Awake!**  
**is a scenario of a renewed Nigeria that gets governance and leadership right while diversifying its economy.**

The title for this scenario alludes to the fact that Nigeria is often referred to as the “Giant of Africa” owing to its size. But it has been a “sleeping giant” with latent, untapped, strengths and opportunities.

## Timeline African Giant Awake



## 2025

### Finally tackling entrenched problems

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It is 2025 and following two recessions within 4 years (2016 and 2020) as a result of two oil shocks and the havoc wreaked by the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a heightened sense of awareness about fiscal crisis and the imperative of improving revenue mobilisation.

In 2023, the Nigerian president who was not seen as a threat by the power brokers turns out differently and he amassed reformist elites in the Cabinet. There is tangible domestic and international excitement over a new, more dynamic, leadership in the world's largest black nation, which has immediately set out to improve revenue collection and invest in productivity.

New technology platforms have been built, some in partnership with local private sector, to make it easy for everyone to pay their taxes, and the government has begun to crack down on prominent politicians and businesspeople who evade them. All government officials are obliged to declare their assets and tax payments on a routine basis as a pre-requisite for holding government office. Citizens are now required to show proof of tax payment prior to receiving key government services.

When some “political godfathers”, previously considered untouchable, are put on trial for tax evasion, people expected a major backlash from vested interests but the president and his reformist cabinet are standing firm, even in the face of opposition's claims that the government is trying to exploit Nigerians.

To counter this narrative, the government has launched a campaign to explain how taxpayer funds are being spent, including town hall meetings broadcast live on major media platforms. A hotline has been established to answer questions. Revenue collection data and project implementation updates are available online.

Government has also begun to address impunity, placing reformists in key positions. Funding for judicial services is increased (using higher tax revenue). With better

funding and equipment, police investigations are beginning to improve. Officials have been directed to prosecute all known cases of police brutality and the presidency invests time in communicating those efforts and engaging with the citizens.

Last year a case caught national attention when an army general and his security detail attacked a group of people for not getting out of the way in traffic. The general and his men were arrested and publicly tried and although the general got off with a fine, it was an indication that the administration would get tough, even on prominent individuals.

At the same time, the administration is seen to be urgently focusing on the security threat. Better funded police are recording wins, even apprehending criminals prior to crimes being committed – from cattle rustlers to kidnapers. These wins systematically communicated by the government is increasing trust in the government. Truly overhauling the security services will take several years, but Nigerians feel encouraged by a decisive focus and evident success.

## 2035

### Environmental innovation has led to economic opportunity

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The buzz of change (and the fear of falling backwards again) drove the growing youth population to rally around the President and elect more reformist governors building a political movement never before witnessed in Nigeria. The 2027 election is won by a landslide giving a mandate to continue reforms.

Although tax reforms have led to a much higher tax-to-GDP ratio of about 20%, exceeding most African peers, it is still lower than the OECD average leaving room for further improvement. Leakage is down, as it becomes more difficult to hide proceeds of corruption, and citizens have begun to see improvements in critical public services like power and security. There is a sense that insecurity has also reduced across the country.

The government has now decided to focus on strengthening industrial capacity and economic diversification. In partnership with the private sector, big bets have been made on developing new and climate-compatible economic activities in technology, agriculture, and green economy as well as deepening the creative economy (design, fashion, movies, music).

As part of this effort, government has set aside 50% of the education tax (2% of company profit) to fund R&D, and company spend on R&D gets matching government funds or a tax write-off. Nigerian “policy banks” help promote national objectives of improving productivity and expanding exports.

## Agriculture is a key target: expanding food production, adding value, and ensuring that emerging Nigerian agribusiness can enhance processing and exports.

Agricultural productivity has been improved through state-provided financing, expanding irrigation and access to technology, and addressing storage, processing and transport. Rural roads have been built and improved.

Government has set a target for boosting Nigeria’s domestic automobile and steel industries, building on existing local capacities, helping – with significant public investment – to establish entrepreneurs to produce automobiles (electric vehicles) and products for the African market. Tax/finance incentives and tariffs on imported vehicles have been paired with an aggressive requirement to export. Firms report quarterly export revenues to a new government agency. This focus on exports forces higher productivity, allowing Nigeria to tap other African markets.

Government is also seeking to scale up 1 million start-ups in a decade, bringing together government, policy banks, industry and international DFIs such as the AfDB. The focus is on light and green manufacturing, digital economy, soft-

ware, agriculture and health. A \$5 billion “Nigeria Start-up” fund has been launched and after only a few years, Nigeria has begun to witness the rise of new entrepreneurs and firms. Many in the diaspora witnessing a change, and with targeted incentives and policies, have begun to return home to create businesses or partner with Nigerian firms. Exports have exploded.

As the next stage in tackling impunity and improving accountability, new technology is being used to monitor the police and other security agents, enabling citizens to report public officials breaking the law. Those caught are severely punished.

### Further, faster

With greater state intervention in the economy, lack of state capacity has been highlighted: poor services and ineffective oversight. Progress is being made, but people are asking for more! A new program of state reform has been launched, focused on building state capacity to implement Nigeria’s ambitious agenda.

Elements of the reform include restructuring public administration, creating islands of excellence and experimentation, merit-based recruitment, and new independent agencies to drive implementation.

Recognising the challenge of transforming the country from the centre alone, the federal government – in partnership with states – has begun a significant devolution of responsibilities to state level in critical areas such as education, health and security. States have also been given the power to manage the business environment including corporate registration, regulation and taxes. These reforms have given states more power to drive their own development agenda. Competition among states has meant spectacular results for the leading states, while the others begin to copy their example.

Today, in 2035, exports are growing, significantly easing pressure on the Naira and expanding revenue for the country. Success is driving new measures including the launch of a program to promote exports by Nigeria’s

creative industries. This includes the first ‘Nigeria Towns’ – think Chinatown – launched in Atlanta (Georgia) and Brooklyn (New York). The concept is licensed to private sector investors hoping to launch similar concepts in major cities in Europe and elsewhere. People from all over the world come to enjoy Nigerian movies, music, dance, food and fashion.

## 2045 Respected leadership in Africa

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In 2036, Nigeria suffered two extreme weather events: excessive rains in the South and prolonged drought in the North. These led to major internal displacements and migration and provided fuel for naysayers to challenge the government on the lack of adequate disaster prevention. The ruling party won the election but by a diminished margin.

## A newly elected president took the vote as a call to drive change even faster than the previous government.

The first decision was to create a think tank linked to the Presidency focused on environmental scanning to help the government put in place a national disaster and recovery strategy. The think tank is working with existing agricultural institutions – national and state – to adopt new approaches to farming which rely less on rain.

The government has also put in place programs to anticipate and address health crises, leading to the revamping of research and development in the biomedical and health fields with links to key medical schools and private sector investors. In a few years, Nigeria is back to producing vaccines and developing new medical products to address health challenges facing the developing world.

With increasing confidence in its locally developed products, government is strategically using its purchasing power

to promote national industrial development, launching a “Proudly Nigeria” trademark to brand high quality products for the local and export markets.

When a new global pandemic rapidly spread around the world in 2038, Nigerian biomedical institutions were at the forefront of producing the vaccines. Astonishingly, a Nigerian vaccine was the first to be approved by many countries around the world. This was a game changer for the Nigerian health industry. It drove investment in the sector and attracted international firms coming to locate their R&D and manufacturing in Nigeria.

A new Nigeria was emerging. With improved economic performance, citizens feel dignity and a sense of national belonging. This virtual circle is attracting investors and skilled experts, boosting confidence, and raising domestic savings and investment.

## Managing setbacks

Despite the progress, growth began to decrease in 2039 as a result of many factors, including rising inflation due to increasing food prices and the inability to continue to ramp up civil service reforms. As growth slowed, political bickering intensified, and the middle class grew increasingly restive. Major controversies emerged over who receives government support, threatening progress in improving industrial productivity. There were also still large numbers of youth unable to participate in the economy, given low levels of education and lack of skills. A sizable share of the population had not fully benefited from the growth.

Meanwhile rising urbanisation has caused a range of new challenges. Growing urban centres mean people can organise better to hold governments to account; elected officials are voted out more often. While this volatility endangers policy continuity and hampers investment, it does provide a basis for incremental progress in governance. However, years of planning failures and a backlog in investment meant infrastructure has not expanded to meet the need causing traffic jams and limiting productivity.

## Will Nigerians and their leadership rise to the occasion? Time will tell.

Fears of social unrest grow as inequality rises and jobs are hard to come by. A coalition of frustrated working-class youth and unemployable middle-class urbanites seeking more lead protests.

The 2039 elections saw a landslide victory by a youth-led party campaigning on the need for rapid change, skills-based education, adoption of technology, radical reduction in population growth, radical decentralisation, leading Africa and transforming the economy. They argue that previous reforms were not consistent, and the pace was too slow and embarked immediately on reforms to promote efficiency and effectiveness, transferring more power to states and speeding up online government.

### Today, in 2045, green and blue economy is centre-stage, with major R&D initiatives and rebuilding urban and rural infrastructure.

Nigeria is rallying African nations to work together on the global stage as a bloc, building on its youthful, dynamic population and a sizeable market. The oil economy is now almost a memory.

A national industrial apprenticeship program is helping millions of unemployed or underemployed youths with training for the emerging tech sector and a more tech-savvy agro-based industry. With growth and infrastructure development in rural and semi-urban areas, Nigeria is beginning to witness a reversal of urbanisation trends. The government has built coalitions with civil society on the human challenges arising from rapid growth focusing on fair access to resources and opportunities.

Nigeria has become respected globally for driving a distinctively African agenda, promoting continental integration, from open movement of labour, goods and capital to cooperation on major issues such as innovation, education and continental infrastructure. The new Nigeria is leading the African continent pushing for better global governance, global citizenship and evermore global inter-

connectedness to address the emerging challenges of the second half of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Nigeria will have to be ingenious, mobilize all its citizenry and harness a broad-based leadership if it is to achieve the African Giant Awakes scenario. It has all the currency it needs in terms of size, cultural and soft power, a perceived leadership role in Africa, and the market power to carve opportunities for itself in an increasingly competitive global environment.

But it will not come on a silver platter; the scramble for Africa continues whether by the old actors or newly emerging powers. Nigeria will have to work for its right to lead and use its position within the region to rally the continent for a common purpose and agenda. The challenge for Nigeria, as the Analysis section showed, is to ride its opportunities, while mitigating threats to progress.

Will Nigerians and their leadership rise to the occasion? Time will tell.

## Imagining Futures: Four Scenarios For Nigeria

Scenario-building processes focus on the long term. Scenarios are a creative way of shining a light on the critical factors that will drive countries in one direction or the other. They don't make predictions, nor even explore which future is most likely. They help decision makers think through how to better manage uncertainty and complexity, the only constants in today's world.

In imagining alternative futures for Nigeria, four (4) scenarios were developed. They include Fire On The Mountain, One Chance, Which Way Nigeria? and African Giant Awake. The scenarios visualise Nigeria over a 25-year period (2025 - 2050) under varying conditions of technology and governance.

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