

Nigerian Deliberative Town Hall Analysis for the Hon. Benjamin Kalu

April 1, 2024

Introduction

This report is based on the first-ever Deliberative Town Hall conducted with citizens of Nigeria and their elected representative in the National Assembly on January 27. The Deliberative Town Hall was organized by scholar Marco Castrodori (Princeton University), NOIPolls (a Nigeria-based non-governmental research organization), and the Institute for Democratic Engagement and Accountability (IDEA) at the Ohio State University in collaboration with the Hon. Benjamin Kalu. The goal of this initiative was to bring deliberative constituent engagement to a constituency that had not experienced it before and assess whether participation in policy-focused deliberative town halls (DTH) with Nigerian National Assembly members boosts civic orientation and democratic engagement.

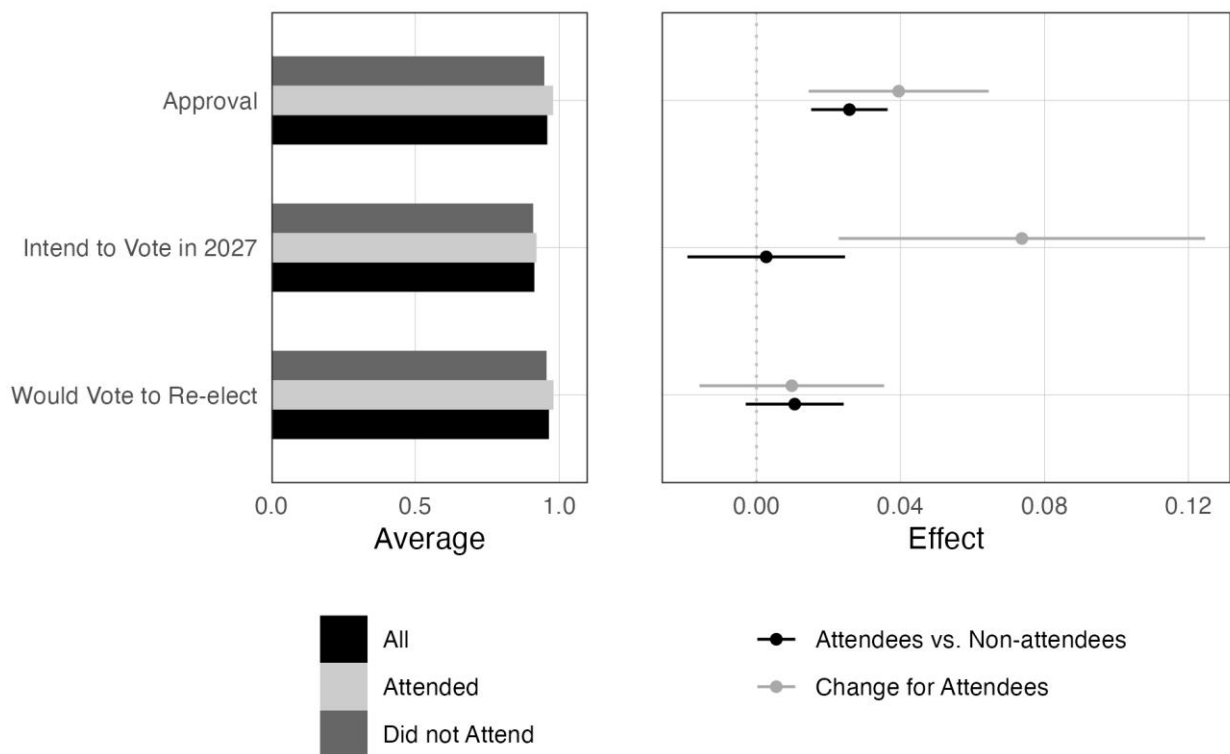
The Hon. Benjamin Kalu, Deputy Speaker of the Federal House of Representatives in Nigeria, participated in a DTH with citizens from his constituency in Bende. The town hall was focused on constituents' perspectives and opinions on the member, the Nigerian government, and democracy, as well as their priorities on infrastructure. Constituents invited to attend the session received non-partisan background materials beforehand.

In this report, we present analysis of this survey data. The report will highlight how constituents' views both shifted and stayed the same after participating in the town hall. In many cases, we noticed that changes in responses by attendees were mirrored by changes for non-attendees. We are eagerly investigating many possibilities for what might have caused these changes. Currently, our leading explanation is that there were "spillovers" from these events, meaning that the effects of attending a DTH spread through social connections, likely through word of mouth.

Approval and Voting Intentions

In this section, we examine the survey responses to questions on trust and approval. This includes questions on approval of their member, voting plans for 2027, and opinions on Hon. Kalu. We present visualizations on both the difference between attendees and non-attendees, and changes from the pre-survey to the post-survey for attendees, highlighting how constituents felt after the town hall.

Approval and Likelihood to Re-elect Rep. Kalu Increased

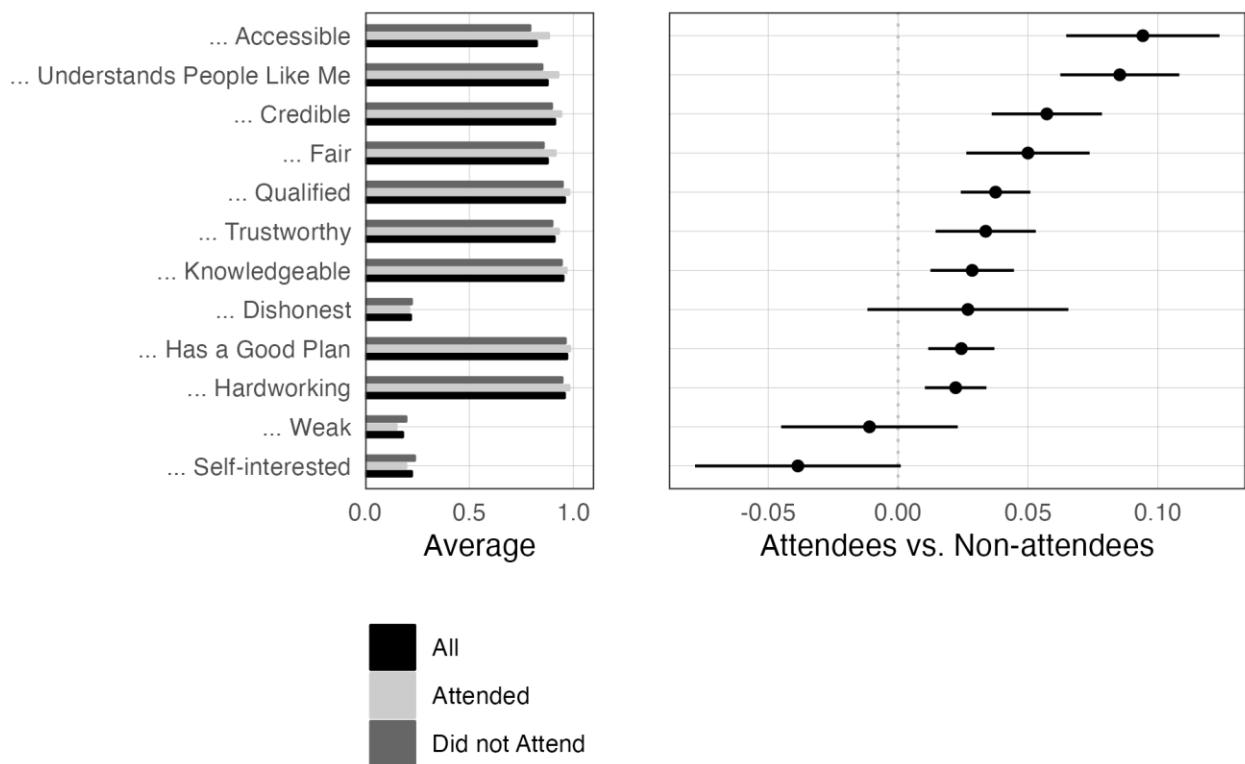


When constituents were asked if they approve of the way Hon. Kalu is handling his job, there was strong support from both attendees and non-attendees. When looking at the impact of the town hall, Hon. Kalu saw a small bump in approval from both groups.

Constituents were then asked how likely they are to vote in 2027 and if they planned to re-elect Hon. Kalu. There was an increase in those who said that they planned on voting in the 2027 elections with a greater increase amongst attendees. A large majority of both attendees and non-attendees indicated that they would re-elect Hon. Kalu.

With both approval and voting intentions, we saw similar effects on attendees and non-attendees. As stated, we believe this could be the result of word of mouth and social connections between attendees and non-attendees.

Positive Impressions of Rep. Kalu Increased



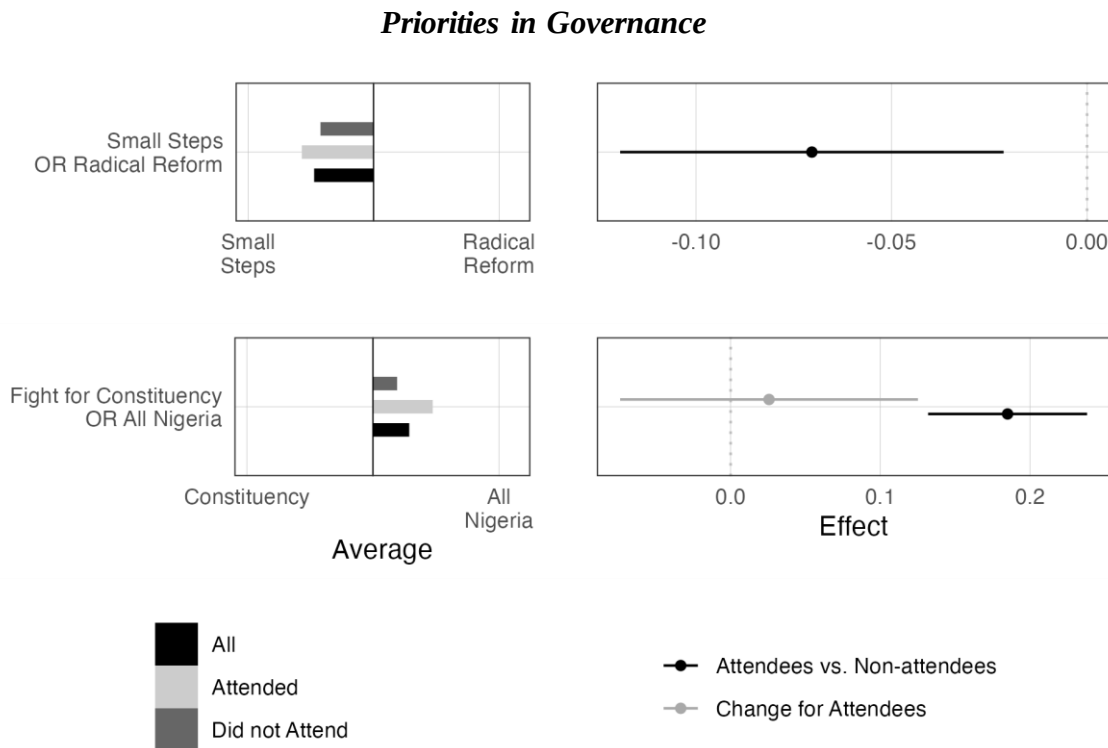
Further, we queried respondents on how well they thought certain words represented Hon. Kalu. Respondents largely identified him with positive traits such as being fair, trustworthy, hardworking, and qualified. Individuals that attended the town hall were more likely to identify him with these positive traits. Attendees were also more likely to find him to be accessible, credible, and understanding of people like themselves, showing the potential impact that events like this can have on constituents and their perception of their member.

Very few respondents identified Hon. Kalu with negative traits such as dishonesty, weakness, or self-interestedness. Those who did not attend were more likely to identify him with these traits.

What Do Citizens Want Rep. Kalu to Prioritize?

This section provides analysis for what respondents believe Hon. Kalu should prioritize in the National Assembly generally and for infrastructure specifically.

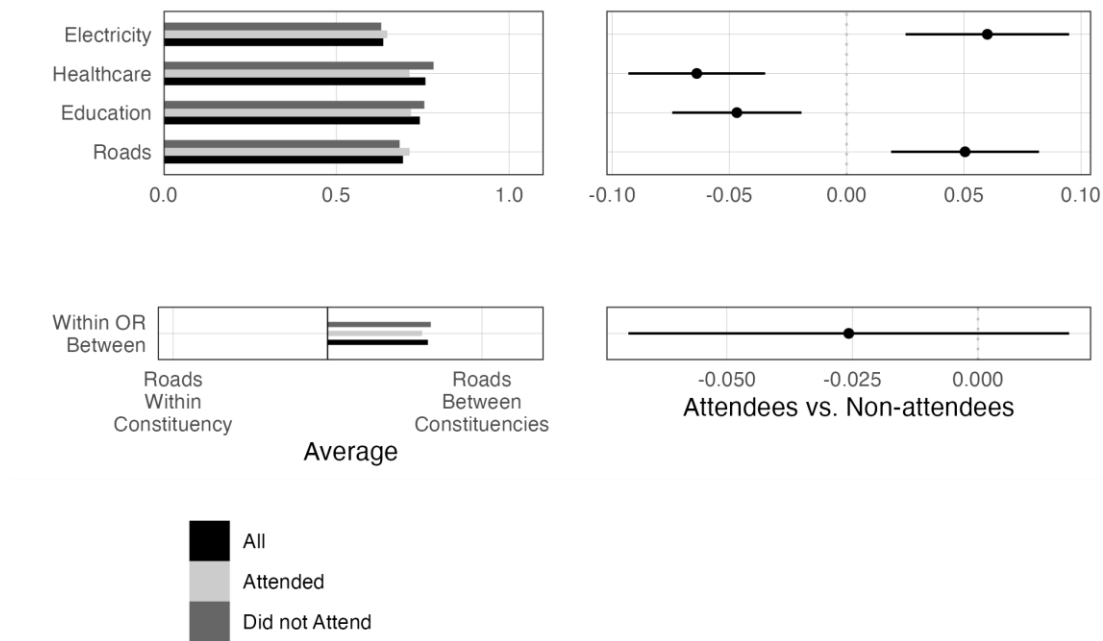
For the following, respondents were asked which of two statements they agreed with more: (1) Each small step toward improving Nigerian democracy makes it easier to take the next step, or (2) Only radical reform can improve Nigerian democracy.



Respondents largely supported the first option that small steps, like Hon. Kalu's participation in this town hall, are important for improving Nigerian democracy. Those who attended the town hall were slightly more likely to select small steps over radical reform.

Respondents were then asked if it was more important for Hon. Kalu to fight for their constituency or all of Nigeria. Although a portion of respondents believed Hon. Kalu should prioritize Bende in his work, attendees and non-attendees thought it was more important for Hon. Kalu to fight for all of Nigeria.

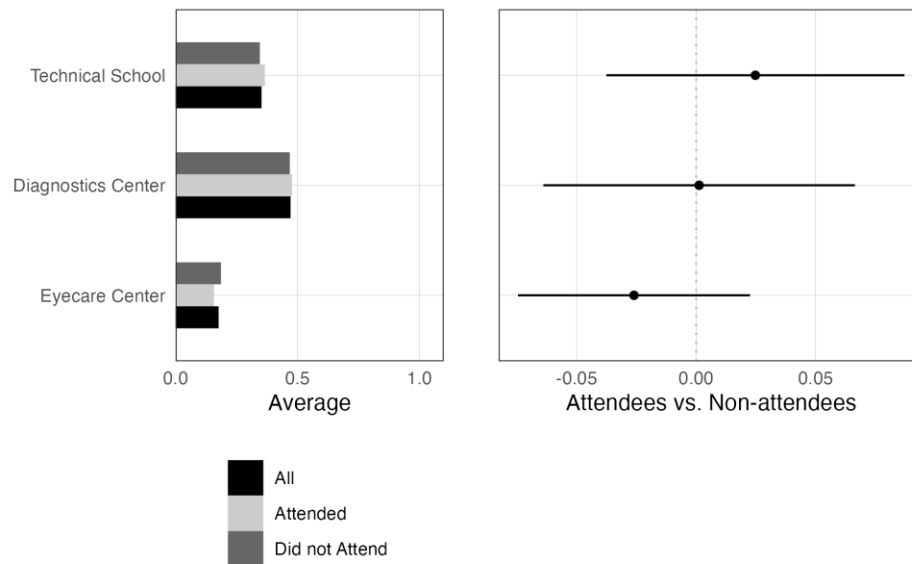
Infrastructure Priorities



To gain greater insight into policy preferences, we asked how highly their member should prioritize infrastructure spending for electricity, healthcare, education, and roads. For these policies, there was not tremendous difference between the four. However, respondents did prioritize healthcare and education investments over roads and electricity. We did not see any significant changes in preferences after the town hall.

When asked if Hon. Kalu should prioritize improving roads with Bende or between different constituencies, respondents were more likely to emphasize the importance of building roads that connect different constituencies.

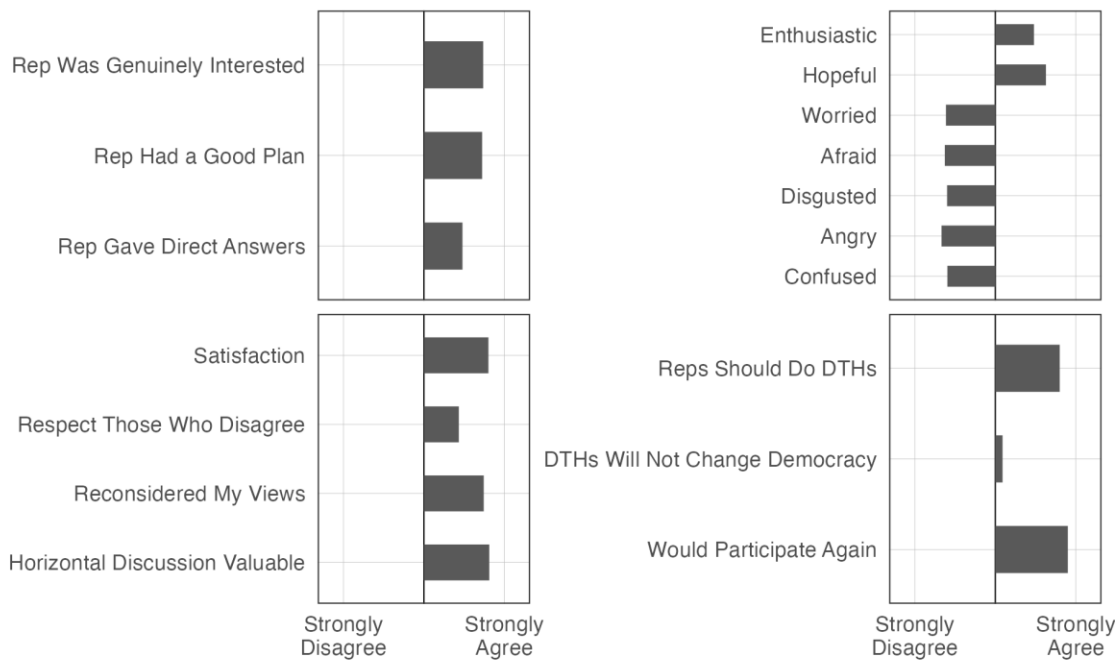
Infrastructure Priorities within Bende



With the National Assembly considering several bills that would help establish or fix new health and education facilities in the Bende constituency, we asked respondents to rank three potential projects from most important to least important. The projects were a new diagnostics center, a new eyecare center, and renovations to the Umuimenyi Technical School. Attendees and non-attendees prioritized the diagnostics center over the technical school and the eyecare center.

Constituents Want More Deliberative Town Halls

Experiences at DTH



First, we asked attendees about Hon. Kalu and his participation in the DTH. Most attendees strongly agreed that he was genuinely interested in the event and hearing from them. They also believed that he had a good plan for making infrastructure improvements in Bende and that he gave direct answers to most questions throughout the town hall. These all demonstrate the positive impact this event had on constituents' perception of Hon. Kalu.

Next, we asked how often attendees felt certain emotions during the DTH. Attendees reported feeling enthusiastic and hopeful throughout the event, showing the positive impact that forums like this can have on constituents. Hardly any attendees felt worried, afraid, disgusted, angry, or confused. Overall, attendees were incredibly satisfied with their experience and found discussion amongst other attendees to be a valuable component of the event. Attendees also reported being more respectful of those with different views and reconsidering their own views on issues that were discussed.

Finally, we asked attendees how they felt about the utility of town halls on important issues in general with a solid majority agreeing that members of the National Assembly should do more DTHs. Attendees were largely split on if they believe that DTHs had the potential to change democracy in Nigeria with slightly more believing that they would not evoke change. However, nearly all attendees agreed that they would be willing to participate in another DTH.

Who Participated

This section provides a breakdown of the demographics for the total sample and for those who attended the DTH. This includes demographics on age, profession, education, rural vs. urban, and political party.

Most of the respondents in the total sample were middle-aged (66.7%), but there was still substantial participation from constituents who were younger (21.5%) and those who were older (11.4%). There was slightly more participation from the middle-aged and older group in the actual DTH.

There was robust participation from both blue collar (39.9%) and white collar (41.4%) workers amongst the total sample. In the DTH, there was higher participation from white collar workers. We saw similar participation rates for subsistence and unemployed workers in both the total sample and attendees.

While most respondents live in villages (64.4%), there was substantial participation from those who reside in cities/towns (34.9%) in the total sample. Amongst attendees, there was higher participation amongst those who live in villages compared to the total sample.

We also looked at political identity among respondents. For this, we asked respondents which specific political party they belonged to and found that a majority (54.3%) of participants in the total sample did not identify with any political party. A considerable number of those sampled identified with the All Progressives Congress (17.2%) and the Labour Party (14.7%) with several identifying with the Peoples Democratic Party (5.5%). The total sample percentages were reflective of the attendees with slightly more participation from those who identified with the APC in the DTH.

The full breakdown for demographics can be found on the next page.

Demographics for DTH with Hon. Kalu

Variable	Percentage of Sample	Percentage of Attendees
Age 18-35	21.5%	17.3%
Age 36-60	66.7%	69.2%
Age 60+	11.4%	13.5%
Woman	42.4%	50.0%
Less than Secondary Education	7.8%	7.1%
Secondary Education Grad	30.5%	28.2%
Some College or Post-secondary	15.6%	14.7%
College Grad	45.0%	50.0%
White Collar	41.4%	47.4%
Blue Collar/Housewife	39.9%	34.6%
Subsistence	9.3%	9.6%
Does Not Work	8.9%	8.3%
Village	64.4%	73.7%
City/Town	34.9%	25.6%
APC	17.2%	22.4%
PDP	5.5%	5.1%
LP	14.7%	16.0%
No party	54.3%	52.6%

Conclusion

Although we did not see similar treatment effects compared to other DTHs we have held in the past, we believe there is great value in these results. Throughout this report, we found that the effect of the town hall for non-attendees mirrored that of attendees. This has led us to the belief that the attendees were incredibly excited about the DTH and shared their experience with those in their network, leading to positive spillover effects for non-attendees.

These spillover effects point to huge potential for Nigerian democracy and creating stronger connections between constituents and members of the National Assembly. Given the positive impact that this event had for attendees and the potential reach to those in their network, we believe DTHs could be replicated across Nigeria to improve relations and understanding of priorities between citizens and their government.