



WORLD DAY OF PRAYER
“I Will Give You Rest: Come” – Matthew 11:28-30
Prepared by WDP Nigeria
March 6, 2026

Country Background Script

Geography	
Nigeria is located on the western coast of Africa, boasting a diverse geography that spans 910,770 km ² of land and 853 km of coastline. The country's climate ranges from equatorial in the south to arid in the north, with a tropical climate in the central regions. Nigeria experiences two major seasons: dry and rainy (wet), contributing to its rich agricultural potential.	1
The nation's landscape is abundant, offering ample space for agricultural, industrial, and commercial activities. Nigeria's natural resources are vast and varied, including oil, natural gas, and a wealth of solid minerals.	2 3 4
People & Language	
The three largest ethnic groups in Nigeria are the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo. The Hausa-Fulani predominantly reside in the northern region, the Yoruba are concentrated in the southwestern region, and the Igbo occupy the southeastern part of Nigeria.	5
The diversity is reflected in Nigeria's linguistic landscape, which boasts over 500 indigenous languages. Among these, Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba stand out as the major local languages, while English serves as the official language, bridging communication across this multifaceted nation.	6
History	
Nigeria's history is a rich tapestry woven from ancient civilizations, diverse migrations, and colonial influences. One of the earliest known civilizations in the area was the Nok culture, which flourished between 1000 BC and 500 AD. The Nok people, renowned for their terracotta sculptures, laid the foundation for iron smelting in West Africa.	7
The transatlantic slave trade significantly impacted Nigeria's population composition. Millions of individuals from various ethnic groups were forcibly taken from Nigeria and transported to different parts of the Americas, resulting in the African diaspora.	8
The pivotal year of 1914 saw the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates by British colonial administrator Lord Frederick Lugard, creating the entity known as Nigeria.	9
Religion	
Religion plays a significant role in shaping the cultural and social fabric of Nigeria. The country is known for its religious diversity, with various religions coexisting and influencing the lives of its people. The major religions in Nigeria include Christianity, Islam, traditional African religions, and a small percentage of adherents to other faiths	10 11

Christianity, introduced through European missionaries during the colonial era, has grown to become a major religious influence across Nigeria. Christian denominations, including Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Pentecostal, and various independent churches, have established a significant presence.	12
The impact of Christianity extends beyond spiritual practices, playing a vital role in the development of education and healthcare infrastructure through missionary schools and hospitals. Christian values have also influenced societal norms, family structures, and moral frameworks in many Nigerian communities.	13
Islam, particularly prevalent in the northern regions of Nigeria, was introduced through trade and cultural interactions with Arab and North African merchants. The majority of Nigerian Muslims are Sunni, though they belong to various Islamic sects and organizations.	14
Politics	
Nigeria's political landscape has evolved significantly since gaining its independence from British colonial rule on October 1, 1960. The road to independence was paved by nationalist movements and political activism led by prominent figures such as Nnamdi	15 16

Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo, and Ahmadu Bello.	17
Prior to independence, Nigeria experienced a complex history of regionalism, colonial administration, and ethnic tensions. The country was divided into three major regions: Northern, Western, and Eastern, each with its own distinctive political, economic, and cultural characteristics.	18
Education & Healthcare	
Education plays a vital role in shaping Nigeria's social landscape. Access to quality education equips individuals with knowledge, critical thinking skills, and a better understanding of their rights and responsibilities as citizens. Nigeria has made progress in increasing access to education, with efforts focused on achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal of providing inclusive and equitable education for all.	19
In Nigeria, several health issues require political attention and action. One of the primary concerns is the high burden of communicable diseases, including malaria, tuberculosis, and HIV/AIDS.	20
Maternal and child health is another significant area where political commitment is crucial. Nigeria has one of the highest maternal and child mortality rates globally.	21

Arts & Culture	
Nigeria's rich cultural tapestry is woven from the traditions of over 250 ethnic groups, each contributing unique elements to the nation's vibrant arts scene. This diversity is reflected in Nigeria's music, dance, visual arts, and theatre, which have evolved over centuries and continue to influence global culture today.	22

Nigerian music reflects the country's ethnic diversity, with each group contributing unique styles and instruments. The Yoruba are known for their talking drums, the Hausa and Fulani for the goje lute, and the Igbo for the ekwe wooden slit drum.	23
Dance in Nigeria is closely tied to music and often serves ritualistic or ceremonial purposes. Each ethnic group has its own traditional dances, such as the Yoruba Bata dance, the Hausa Koroso, or the Igbo Aladinma. These dances often tell stories, celebrate harvests, or mark important life events.	24
Nigeria is renowned for its bronze and terracotta sculptures, particularly those from the ancient kingdom of Benin, dating back to the 13th century. The Nok culture, which flourished between 1000 BC and 500 AD, produced some of Africa's oldest known terracotta sculptures.	25
Women & Girls	
Women and girls in Nigeria face numerous challenges that stem from deeply rooted gender discrimination and inequality.	26
Gender discrimination affects education and employment, and political representation. Girls often receive fewer educational opportunities than boys, leading to lower literacy rates and limited career prospects. In the workplace, women face discrimination in hiring, promotion, and pay, despite laws prohibiting such practices.	27
Early marriage, particularly in rural and northern areas, forces girls as young as 12 or 13 into marriages that cut short their education and expose them to health risks.	28
Economy	
Nigeria, while maintaining Africa's largest economy, faces complex economic challenges. Though oil exports have traditionally driven growth, this dependence has created vulnerability to global price fluctuations.	29
The nation actively works to diversify its economy through agriculture, services, and manufacturing, while addressing significant infrastructure deficits in transportation and power supply.	30
History	
The World Day of Prayer movement in Nigeria began in 1961, introduced by Lady Eudora Olayinka Akanu-Ibiam of the Presbyterian Church. In 1962, the Interdenominational Christian Women (ICW) organization was formed in Lagos, which later became known as the Interdenominational Christian Women Association (ICWA). This organization played a crucial role in the early development of the WDP movement in Nigeria	31
Today	

In August 2017, at the WDPIC International Meeting in Brazil, WDP Nigeria was selected to be the Writer Committee for 2026, with the theme, <i>I Will Give You Rest: Come</i> (Matthew 11:28).	32 33
In May 2019, under the leadership of Mrs. Adejoke Backo (Mama Backo), a national committee for WDP Nigeria was formed. On May 28, 2019, representatives from various Christian denominations gathered to elect national officers, with Evang. Dame Florence Nnenna Uche elected as the first National Chairperson.	34
From April 28 to May 5, 2022, Ms. Reimer and Mrs. Queen Chisha (the WDP African Regional Representative) visited Lagos to conduct a workshop on writing materials for the 2026 observance. The visit was marked by warm hospitality, and a highlight was the thanksgiving service held on April 30, 2022, at the Methodist Church of the Trinity in Lagos, presided over by His Eminence Dr. Samuel Chukwuemeka Uche and other prominent church leaders.	35 36 37 38 39
The Artwork & Artist	
My artwork depicts the daily reality of rural Nigerian women, whose lives are marked by endless labour from sunrise to sunset. These women traverse treacherous paths to their farms, often carrying both their harvest and their children The artwork also shows three women sitting together, their different traditional attire representing Nigeria's diverse cultures. Though they come from different ethnic groups, their shared experiences unite them.	40
Gift Amarachi Ottah, a final-year Mass Communication student at Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu-Alike in Ebonyi State, draws inspiration from her home state of Abia in Nigeria. She was motivated to design this artwork for the 2026 World Day of Prayer program because of the burdens that Nigerian women are facing. She hopes that her art will help to amplify their voices.	41