

FIXING NIGERIA: A NATIONAL DISCOURSE ON YOUTH IN NATION BUILDING & PATRIOTISM

Organiser: ERNEST & IBRAHIM FOUNDATION

Date: Monday, May 29th 2017

Time: 9:00am

Venue: Shehu Musa Yar'adua Centre

GENERAL SUMMARY

The place of youth in nation building cannot be over-emphasized, as the youth are either the greatest asset or liability any nation can have. History has it that most first world countries of today were changed by their youth. Take for example: Mao Tse-Tung of China (26years), Nelson Mandela of South Africa (25), Mahatma Ghandi of India (31), Angela Merkel of Germany (33), John F. Kennedy of USA (44), and Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore (36). Jerry Rawlings of Ghana, Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya, Martin Luther King of USA, Sheikh Mohammed B.R. Al Maktoum of Dubai, Napoleon Bonaparte of France and Alexander Macron, etc, all fought to change the narrative in their home countries, why not the youth in Nigeria? With about 70% of the Nigerian population as young people, why does the youth appear to be voiceless? This and more are some of the critical questions and challenges that the Fixing Nigeria Conference converged to address.

The One day National Discourse on Youth in Nation Building and Patriotism held at the Shehu Musa Yar'adua Centre, Abuja on the 29th of May, 2017 provided a platform and opportunity for high level dialogue with policy makers, development partners, civil society, Nigerian youth and other social actors / agents of change etc. The overall purpose of the conference was to ***“To Create a hub for youth, social actors/agents of change and***

policy makers to dialogue and analyse national issues bothering on youth participation in Nation building, increase active citizenship participation to 70% by 2019 and prepare the youths for leadership and governance”.

The conference is the brainchild of the Ernest and Ibrahim Foundation as part of its “Advocacy for Citizens Power” project. The conference was funded by the foundation and also in partnership with the European Union, Golden Heart Foundation, Centre for Crisis Communications, Alpha reach, Premium Times, Emerald TV, Scam Alert and Kiss FM had the theme: **“FIXING NIGERIA”**

The event recorded over 500 participants drawn from various states and all walks of life, and graced by our Speakers, Arc. Walter Okoye, Mr Richard Young (EU Delegation), Mr Elenwo Ihua (FCA, FCCA), Bldr. Shamsudeen Yusuf (Jagaban Matasan Arewa), Barr Ibrahim Abdullahi, and Mr Dapo Olorunyomi (Publisher, Premium Times) duly represented by Mr Idris Akibanjo and also our panellists, Gimba Kakanda, Rukayat Ibrahim, Farida Kabiru, Josie Itoyah, Kalada Hart (CEO Scam Alert), whose invaluable contributions made for a successful deliberation.

The opening session started with the National Anthem and a Prayer, followed by the participants being thrilled by the 30 minutes documentary on the Nigeria flag (the meaning and what it symbolizes) which took us straight to a thought provoking lecture from Arc. Walter Okoye titled ***“Building a Rock Solid Foundation - The Imperatives of Visionary Leadership”***, in which he stated that Nigeria is not destroyed but in need of repair and management. This was followed by another presentation by Bldr. Shamsudeen Yusuf which he titled ***“Fixing Nigeria – The Dynamics of Youthful Leadership and Active Citizenship”*** who challenged the youth to channel the same energies they push with in their various careers to politics to push for the change they want to see. This was followed by a Plenary Discussion anchored by Barr Ibrahim Abdullahi where the panellist discussed extensively on **“Youth, Leadership and Politics”** which gave rise to Questions and contributions from the participants.

The Second session kicked off with a presentation by the Deputy Head, EU Delegation Mr Richard Young who spoke on the “Imperatives of Good Governance & Sustainable Democracy” and clearly stated that only Nigerian’s can solve the Nation’s Problems and called on the youth, stressing that they have an important part to play. The welcome address / opening remarks were taken by the Convener Mr Ernest Nwosu who welcomed the delegates and also shared the vision of the FIXING NIGERIA project and also shared the Long Term and Short Term goals and the strategies employed to achieve those goals. He also introduced the Power Card campaign.

The keynote speaker Mr Elenwor Ihua spoke on “***The Bedrock of a Strong Nation: The Issues of Values and Integrity***” where he expressed that the greatness of a nation is seen in the values the nation portrays. The second plenary discussion was an Intergenerational Panel that looked at “The Character that transforms” which gave the audience the opportunity to ask questions, make contributions as well as recommendations.

Participants were entertained with comedy as well as spoken word artiste. The closing remark was taken by the Convener Mr Ernest Nwosu, who thanked all the participants and urged all to join in the fight to change the narrative and shape the future of Nigeria.

Event Theme: FIXING NIGERIA

General Summary

The purpose of this conference is primarily “***To Create a hub for youth, social actors/agents of change and policy makers to dialogue and analyse national issues bothering on youth participation in Nation building, increase active citizenship participation to 70% by 2019 and prepare the youths for leadership and governance***”

Opening Session

The event was flagged off with the National Anthem and followed by a 30 minutes thought provoking documentary on Nigeria Flag (The meaning and what it symbolizes).

The first speaker Arc. Walter Okoye (Executive Director, Access Enterprise & International Services) took the podium, and commended the organizers of the Fixing Nigeria Initiative. In his lecture titled ***“Building a Rock Solid Foundation - The Imperatives of Visionary Leadership”***, he stated that Nigeria isn’t destroyed, it is just in need of repair and management. He also stated that the youth taking over leadership isn’t just ideological but indeed logical as 70% of our population is composed of youth between the ages of 0 – 35years as same can be said for other developing nations. Making reference to first world nations, Arc. Walter also noted that at the stage of underdevelopment in 1st world nations of today, that these nations had 60 – 70% of young people. Still citing examples of the impact of youth in nation building, he referenced certain individual youth in various nations who fought for change in their countries against the odds amongst which include: Mao Tse-Tung of China (26years), Nelson Mandela of South Africa (25), Mahatma Ghandi of India (31), Angela Merkel of Germany (33), John F. Kennedy of USA (44), and Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore (36). Jerry Rawlings of Ghana, Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya, Martin Luther King of USA, Sheikh Mohammed B.R. Al Maktoum of Dubai, Napoleon Bonaparte of France and Alexander Macron etc. He urged the youth to take charge of their future as “nothing is handed over to you, you must fight for your right”.

Backing up the story of youth emerging to take their country, Arc. Walter stated that first, there must be:

- i. An existing nation
- ii. A particular problem
- iii. A young person leader

And as with the case with other nations where young people fixed their country, he is optimistic that the youth in Nigeria can and will fix Nigeria.

Speaking on what the above young leaders have in common, he also stressed that these qualities are not exclusive to politics but also to every other aspects of life, which are:

- They are Eccentrics – they believe in the impossible and have a strong willingness to against the norm
- They have a keen preparation mentality – hey are groomed, have pedigree and experience and come from the “not urgent but important” quadrant
- They value details
- They have a daily routine
- They are extremely hardworking
- They are die hard posterity thinkers – see the big picture
- They are passionate about the welfare of the weak of the society (poor, sick, women, children, etc)
- They have an excellent lifestyle
- They develop the ability to positively influence others

Arc. Walter notes that any nation where the weak are not encouraged to become their best cannot make a great nation. He further stated that, no one person can fix Nigeria, and admonished the youth to work together as a team, and the team must be made up of:

- i. The Bourgeois – these ones will lead, and mobilize the funds needed.
- ii. The Foot Soldiers –
- iii. The Intelligential, and
- iv. The protector

He recommended that the youth read vastly, “You can’t be a leader without being a reader”. Study how youth have positively contributed to seeing lasting change in other Climes.

Understand the power of Advocacy and Lobbying, form strong alliances across various divides and with similar minded groups. Move from social media to the National Assembly. Draft and push bills.

Giving the second Lecture, Bldr Shamsudeen Yusuf in a topic titled ***“Fixing Nigeria – The Dynamics of Youthful Leadership and Active Citizenship”*** stated that no government can afford to neglect the youth and that the youth are the leaders of today not tomorrow. He asked, “How can a large number of youth be voiceless and no active citizenship”? He further listed some challenges the youth of today are faced with some of which includes, Limited support for creativity, lack of lasting and sustainable peace and security, and lack of Education. He also mentioned that wherever there is Success or failure, people made the decision one way or another.

He praised the Nigerian youth saying that they excel in various walks of life, but why not in politics? We have brilliant minds that can handle leadership position. There is a need to re-build Nigeria, and the time NOW and it is our collective responsibility.

As part of his recommendation, he urged the youth to take active role / leadership seriously. Hard work and good education gives you a better chance of succeeding. He also asked that the Convener and his team should nominate a think-tank that can draft policies, and push for change in the corridors of power.

First Plenary Session

The first plenary session was moderated by Barr Ibrahim Abdullahi and amongst the panellist were Bldr. Shamsudeen Yusuf, Arc. Walter Okoye, Farida Kabiru, Kalada Hart, and Josie Itoyah where they discussed the topic ***“Youth, Leadership & Politics”***. In this segments, the following questions were asked:

1. What is the place of politics and youth engagement in fixing Nigeria?

Arc. Walter responded to this by saying “Everyone needs to be involved in politics regardless of what profession you have. For as long as you pay taxes and you vote, you need to be involved. He also stated that 70% of Nigerian Population comprise of young

people and are either the greatest asset or liability in the country. He also pointed out that the dependency ratio in Nigeria is high due to the fact the young people depend on the older people to do things for them, and until this mentality is changed it will affect the way the youth are looked upon. Young people are the ones to make changes politically in the country.

2. What is the place of young people in present day Nigerian Politics?

Josie Itoyah responded by saying how excited she is about the number of youth that were present and it means we can really fix Nigeria, before taking us back to the beginning. She asked, "How did we get here, the present day Nigeria? What cracked Nigeria? How many young people know the history of Nigeria? Do we truly understand what it means to be made a state / country? Because what I see is different kingdoms forcefully fused together to become a union. She called for a thorough prognosis into the country's problems.

3. What really is good governance to the Nigerian youth?

Kalada Hart responded by saying it depends on which side of the divide the Nigerian youth is seated. He mentioned 2 types of youth, "the Political youth; and the Social media youth"

4. Should young professionals take active part in politics?

Bldr. Shamsudeen Yusuf answered by saying the youth should not just sit back and be comfortable in their profession making money but also channel the same energy and passion to politics to make our country better. He urged the youth to seek out leadership positions and play active roles.

5. How hard is it to be a young person & a female trying to shape the conversation or take place in active politics?

Farida responded by saying it's not about asking what the country can do for you, but what you can do for your country. Regardless of how the society views women, we must push and remain active in politics.

The interactive session with the audience brought about some observations, recommendations, Inputs, as well as questions for the panellists.

The first responder from the audience Mr Nnamdi pointed out the first two speakers may not have really dealt with the topic of the day but it was quite enlightening. He said he needed more detailed issues such as the causes of factions, abnormalities, dissolving conflicts etc to be discussed.

A second response from the audience talked about how sustainable development does not come from the top to the grassroots but from the grassroots to the top.

The third response said the problem with the youth is our inability to take actions. She said, before you fix Nigeria, you must first fix yourself. You must first become the change you want to see.

And the fourth responder advised that in whatever we as youth does, that we should put away ethnic, tribal and religious sentiments and think Nigeria first.

6. Where do we go from here and what are we doing?

Kalada Hart: The only way to change is to use your Voter's card. He said, the first step is to register to vote. But the challenge with registration is that it starts from 9am – 3pm hence the working urban populace don't even find the time to go and register, that is why we have a lot of the un-educated people voting en-masse.

Farida Kabiru: The time to act is NOW. The change we want to see begins now.

Josie Itoyah: Nigerians vote based on sentiments, and barely ever ask, can the person we are voting have the capacity to do the job? To get it right this time, there is a great need for voter's education.

Arc Walter: Nations built by strong systems are run better. We must push for strong working systems

Bldr. Shamsudeen: charged youth on personal development in terms of character and education as well as capacity building and also encouraged them to aspire to run for public offices and demand transparency and accountability in government.

Break: Spoken Word poetry by Chukwuka Chukwumerije

Session Two

The second session began with the Speech by the Deputy Head, EU Delegation Mr Richard Young who spoke on the Topic ***“Imperatives of Good Governance and Sustainable Democracy”***. In his speech, he clearly stated that only Nigerian’s can solve the Nation’s Problems and called on the youth, stressing that they have an important role to play by becoming active citizens discharging their civic duties. He said that the Western Nations can only make suggestions but the solution to fixing Nigeria’s problems can only be done by Nigerians. Speaking on Democracy, he said for the West, the definition of democracy Citing Fareed Zakaria of CNN, is called Liberal Democracy which is characterized by free and fair elections, Separation of Powers, rule of law, and a bundle of rights (constitutional democracy)and this is not like what we have in Nigeria. A successful democracy depends on the increase in the supply of responsible leaders. He urged youth to use the elections to remove compromised leaders.

The convener Mr Ernest Nwosu took the podium to address the audience and talk about the Fixing Nigeria Project which he stated was born out of the need for more active youth participation in governance in the country. He shared the vision and long and short term goals of the project. In the short term he hopes to change the narratives come 29th May, 2019 with increased active citizenship participation by 70% while the long-term goal is for Nigeria to be among the top 10 countries of the world.

He also launched the power card project which aims at taking civic / voter education to the grassroots in all 774 local government areas of the country. He expressed optimism that with the number of youth hungry for good governance, that these goals will be met in no time. He also called for volunteers to sign up on the website www.powerfulcitizen.org and even become ambassadors for the Fixing Nigeria Initiative.

The next speaker Mr Elenwor Ihua in a topic titled ***“The bedrock of a Strong Nation: The Issues of Values and Integrity”*** stated that now is a defining moment for the country. The issue of value and integrity comes to play as we try to fix Nigeria, and where a nation lacks values, no matter the ideas and laws, it is programmed to fail. He also said that the greatest strengths of our country is in our diversity and that Nigeria has a destination. He further states that Nigeria is operating at 10% below its potential due to erosion of our values and that less than 10% of the population controls 90% of the country’s wealth. Still laying emphasis on values, Mr Ihua notes that the greatness of a nation is seen in the values the nation portrays and that leaders are often products of their values. Values are a major influence on a person’s attitude.

Second Plenary Session

The second plenary session was moderated by Barr Ibrahim Abdullahi. It was an Intergenerational panel Discussion and amongst the panellist was the Deputy Head EU Delegation Mr Richard Young, Mr Elenwor Ihua, Gimba Kakanda, Rukayat Ibrahim and Mr Akinbajo Idris (Premium Times) who gave a key note speech on behalf of Mr Dapo Olorunyomi, the publisher of Premium Times. In his speech, he expressed gratitude to the Convener and the members of the Fixing Nigeria team for the great work toward nation building. He urged that the youth must stand for the truth and demand justice for every misconduct towards silencing the masses, for no nation can survive under injustice.

Moving ahead, the moderator Barr Ibrahim, posed some questions to the panellist in bid to address some concerns:

- 1. What can we do to get young people into leadership position in Government?**

Mr Elenwor Ihua responded by saying “look at leadership from a different perspective”. Look away from political leadership. Leadership is beyond politics. Yes it is the young people that will drive the change in Nigeria, but leadership is influence and there are two ingredients that make a good leader, Character and Competence. So he urged youth to build their character and have a reputable/sound character that can be well spoken of and also for them to gather competence.

2. What can you say to young people in Nigeria on electing young people in Office?

Mr Richard Young in his response said leadership is based on competence. He stressed the need that as a young person your communication must be effective and sound. You must prove that you have the required capability to run for office. Have the knowledge of your conviction and convey your message. He pointed out that there are more young leaders in Europe and it was based on their competence rather than sentiments. If you can prove yourself as a young person, you can and should be given a chance to run.

Coming in on the question, Mr Akinbajo of premium times asked “Is the problem of Nigeria really lack of young people in power”? I don’t think so, he said, and he further explains that it’s not about having a young person in office as we have had in the past but they still failed, rather it is to have competent young people and also strengthen our public institutions to hold officials accountable. No one individual should be above the law.

Mr Gimba Kakanda also reiterated the need for strong institutions saying words alone cannot change the country, only strong institutions can. He also stated that one of the major problems the country is faced with is the amount of money spent on public office holders. He said, if we can push to make the public offices financially un-attractive, and ensure that our elected officials use same facilities as the masses, that will be a step in the right direction towards reclaiming our country. Citing examples with the state house clinic which has a budget of N4b yet our Presidents seeks medical attention abroad.

Nigeria is set up in a way that victimizes public office holders who try to do the right thing.

3. What is the place of women in the political space?

Rukayat Ibrahim tackled the issue of women in the political space by explaining the difference between gender equality and gender equity. She was of the opinion that what we should push for is gender equity. Citing as an example how a woman's education and career means nothing in northern Nigeria where a woman's success is measured by her marital status and having children. She decried the need for cultural and social barriers to be broken.

Moving on to the audience, the interactive session brought forth questions for the panellist as well as suggestions and even recommendations.

The first responder posed a question to Mr Young saying "What do we do when those we vote in Power, abuse the position?"

Answer:

Richard Young: In the next election, ensure you change the government. Exercise your civic duties and vote right.

Anene Benard asked "what youth should do in checking the amount of money floating in the elective positions?"

Gimba Kakanda: when you have strong independent institutions, then any public office holder can be summoned and probed and if found guilty must be made to face the full wrath of the law. No one should be above the law.

Mohammed Sani suggested that political parties' internal institutions should be weakened to allow for card carrying members to participate regardless of how much he/she has.

Dr Ike commented by first asking that the term "Youth" must be defined. Then he urged the youth to fight to take over as Power is never dashed. He also recommended that the Fixing Nigeria team should mandate delegates to INEC Nigeria to address the issue of voter registration.

Chris Adebayor in his question directed at Mr Elenwor Ihua asked “Is there a way of getting Public Office holders out of office before their 4 year term?”

Answer:

Mr Elenwor Ihua: The only way is to ensure that they do not continue for a second term by exercising your right to vote.

Another participant suggested that the Web page should be more interactive, whilst Mr Akinbajo of the premium times recommended the ability to run as an individual candidate (not belonging to any Party)

At the end of the panel discussions, Barr Ibrahim encouraged youth to equip themselves on personal development and capacity building such that when there’s an opportunity you can’t be caught not prepared.

The Convener, Mr Nwosu, gave his closing remarks and thanked everyone who took part in making the conference a success.

RECOMMENDATIONS

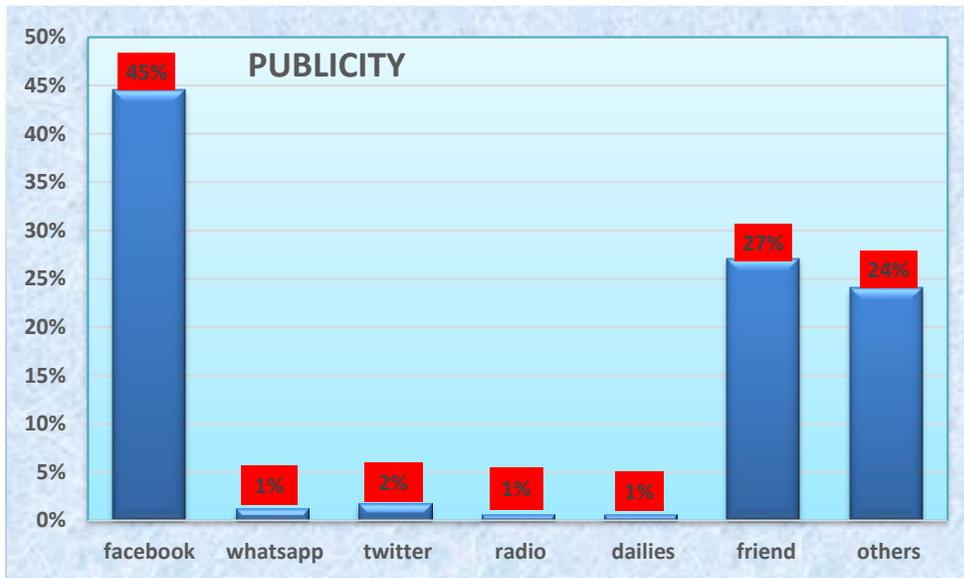
1. Push for the ability to run as an individual candidate
2. Push for stronger institutions using the power of Advocacy and Lobbying
3. Send a delegation to INEC to address the issue of voter registration and seek partnership on the power card project.
4. Take the conversation beyond the venue. Build teams and partnerships with other advocacy groups.
5. Propose, Draft and push for bills to passed at the National Assembly

PARTICIPANTS EVALUATION DATA ANALYSIS

As part of our strategy to enable us rate the performance and impact of the event, we designed evaluation forms for the participants and the data collated is interpreted below based on the number of feedback we received from 168 respondents.

1. How did you hear about the event?

Fig 1:



The above data shows that majority of the respondents (74 participants) representing 45% of the respondents heard about the event on Facebook. 27% (45 participants) heard from a friend, and 24% (40 participants) heard from other means mostly via email.

2. Overall satisfaction of the event

64% (105) of the respondents rated the event as being **good** whereas 26% (42) rated the event **excellent**.

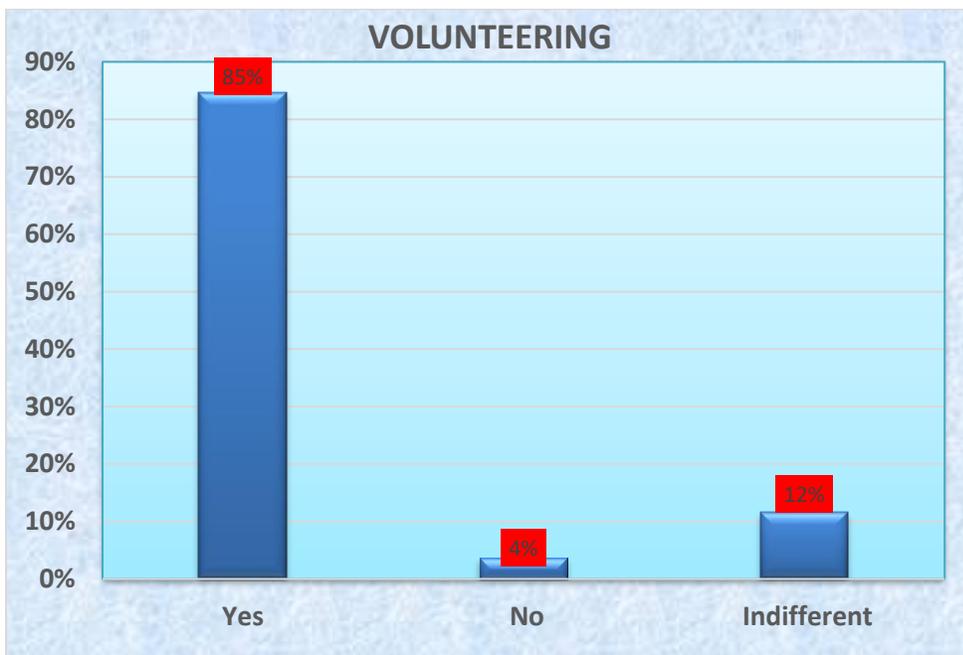
Fig 2:



3. Volunteering

85% (139) of the respondents signed up to be volunteers, whereas 12% (19) were indifferent.

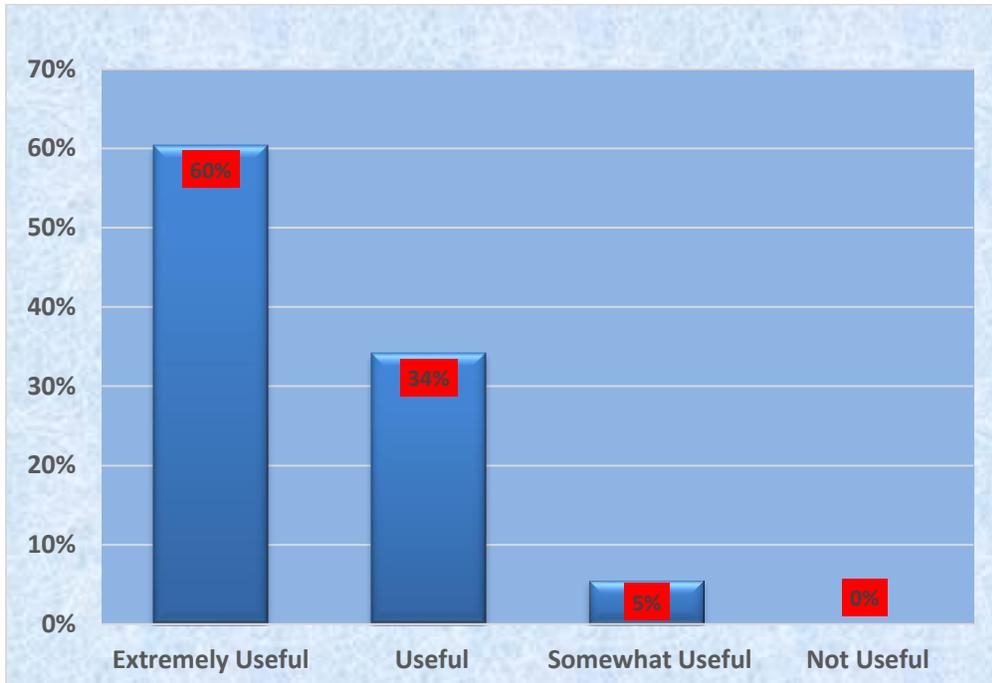
Fig 3:



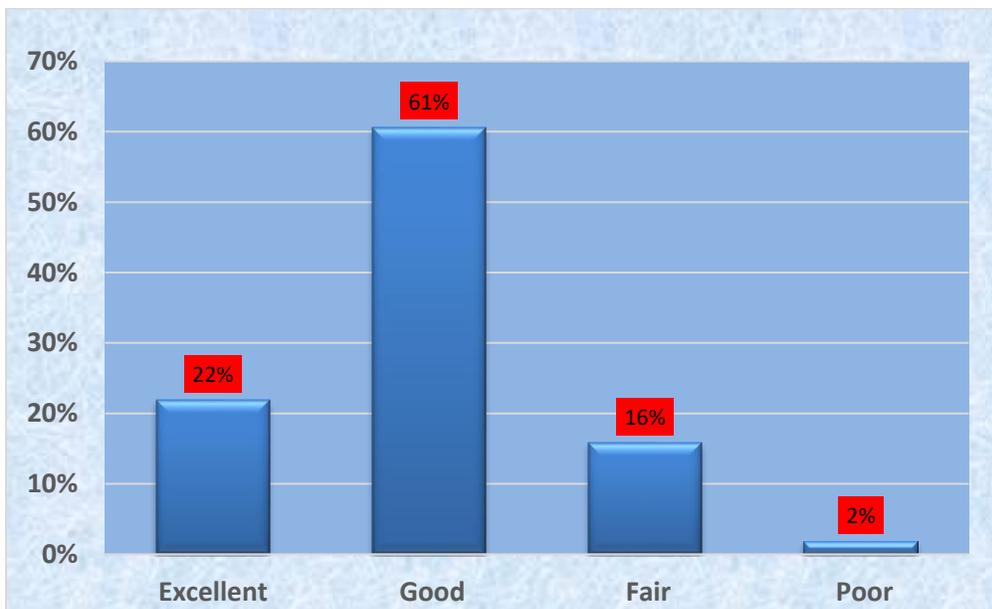
4. The benefit of networking the event provided

60% (99) of the respondents found the event as Extremely Useful to them for the purpose of networking.

Fig 4:



5. Quality of discussions / Dialogue: 22% (36) rated the quality of discussions as Excellent, whereas 61% (100) rated it good.



6. Interaction (Question & Answer)

23% (36) rated the quality of discussions as Excellent, whereas 53% (85) rated it good and 22% (35) rated Fair.

Fig 6:



7. Time allotted each speaker / other interactive activities

19% (32) rated the quality of discussions as Excellent, whereas 61% (101) rated it good and 19% (32) rated Fair.



8. Overall Administration

33% (55) rated the quality of discussions as Excellent, whereas 55% (91) rated it good and 10% (16) rated Fair.



9. The quality of pre-event administration

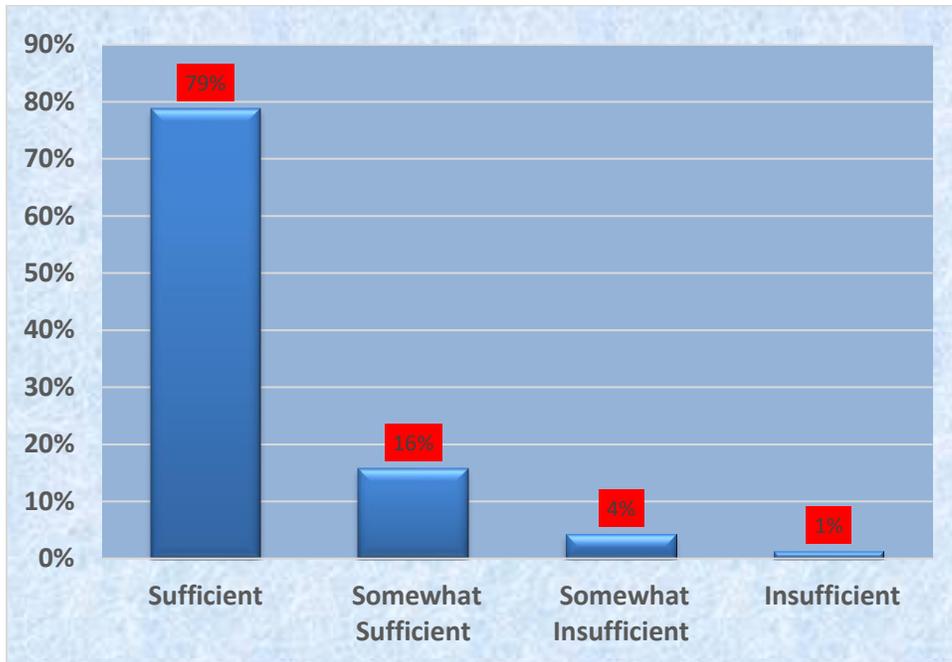
34% (55) rated the quality of discussions as Excellent, whereas 60% (98) rated it good and 7% (11) rated Fair.



10. Information about the event

79% (130) said they received information in Sufficient time, whereas 16% (26) reported the timing as Somewhat Sufficient and 4% (7) Somewhat Insufficient, and 1% (2) said Insufficient.

Fig 10:



11. Usefulness of Information Received

55% (91) rated the quality of discussions as Excellent, whereas 42% (69) rated it good and 3% (5) rated Fair.



12. Quality of the Facility (Hall, Sitting Arrangement, etc)

36% (60) rated the quality of discussions as Excellent, whereas 46% (76) rated it good and 15% (25) rated Fair.

Fig 12:



13. Quality of Administration (Staff Responsiveness, etc)

32% (53) rated the quality of discussions as Excellent, whereas 58% (97) rated it good and 10% (16) rated Fair.

