

# Enhancing Economic Equity: Unionization's Role in Nigeria's Oil and Gas Workforce

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## ABSTRACT

The Nigerian Oil and Gas Industry Content Development Act 2010, aims to promote the patronage of Nigerian products and services by industry operators. The NUPENG and PENGASSAN oil unions in Nigeria have an impact on labour regimes and union power. Local employees in the oil and gas sector are heavily supported by unions. This study investigates the impact of unionization on economic equity within Nigeria's oil and gas workforce. Qualitative research design was adopted. The result of the findings show that Higher Wages and Better Benefits and Improved Working Conditions are among the leading benefits of unionization with mean values of 4.9 and 4.8 respectively. A positive correlation relationship exists between union and wages of labourers/staff, with result of coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) given as 0.622983 which implies that 62.37% of the stability of labourers' wages is explained as a result of union strength. An authoritarian work environment and "Right-to-work" laws are among the barriers of joining unions by staff members of organizations. The research recommends strengthening union capacity, promoting collaboration, policy reforms, and local content in Nigeria's oil and gas industry, improving legislation, supporting SMEs, and promoting transparency and accountability.

**Keywords:** Gas Industry, Industry operators, Oil and Gas workforce, Nigeria Oil, Unionization

## INTRODUCTION

Nigeria's oil and gas industry is a vital part of the country's economy, accounting for over 90% of exports and 80% of the Federal Government's revenue. The industry is regulated by various agencies and is subject to various legislation and fiscal provisions. Since the discovery of crude oil in 1956, it has been dominated by multinational corporations. Local participation has been boosted by the implementation of Nigerian Content Directives and the Nigerian Oil and Gas Industry Content Development Act. The global commodities boom has prompted discussions on the role of natural resources in promoting economic development. Oil, diamonds, and copper have long dominated African economies, with petroleum being a major revenue stream for countries like Angola, Gabon, and Equatorial Guinea. However, commodity extraction alone cannot fuel economic development [1]. To foster diversification, linkages, and spillover effects, countries are implementing local content policies (LCPs) that require foreign or domestic investors to source a

certain percentage of intermediate goods or inputs from local producers. Oil and gas are crucial for African development, as they are price-competitive with shale oil. The oil and gas industry are one of the largest and most important sectors in Nigeria, playing a significant role in shaping the country's economic landscape for decades. Nigeria's abundant oil and natural gas resources, particularly in the Niger Delta region, make it one of the top oil-producing countries in Africa and a key player in the global oil market. The oil and gas sector contributes a significant portion of Nigeria's GDP and government revenue, with oil exports generating the majority of Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings [2]. However, the sector's contribution to employment has been somewhat limited compared to its overall economic impact. To address the sector's challenges and diversify the economy, the Nigerian government has implemented various policy reforms aimed at attracting investments, enhancing transparency and accountability, improving the regulatory framework,

and promoting local content development in the oil and gas industry. The aim of this study is to investigate the impact of unionization on economic equity within Nigeria's oil and gas workforce,

examining how collective bargaining and representation influence wages, working conditions, and opportunities for career advancement among employees in the sector [3].

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Nigerian Oil and Gas Industry Content Development Act, 2010, aims to increase the participation of Nigerian companies and workforce in the sector. The Act mandates indigenous companies to be given priority in contracts and services, with specific targets for the use of Nigerian materials, workforce, and services. The Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB) oversees the implementation and enforcement of the Act, promoting capacity building among local businesses. The Act also requires the establishment of a Project Office, personnel for local offices, and training of Nigerians. It also includes provisions for

succession plans, allowance for expatriates, labor clauses, compliance by operators, research and development regulations, and the submission of the Rand D Plan [4]. To further enhance local content in Nigeria's oil and gas industry, strategies could include strengthening legislation, improving monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, supporting SMEs, encouraging public-private partnerships, and promoting transparency and accountability. In conclusion, local content in Nigeria's oil and gas industry has made significant strides in enhancing the involvement of Nigerian companies and workforce.

### Promotion of local content participation in the oil and gas industry

Promoting local content participation in the oil and gas industry is crucial for ensuring sustainable development by integrating local businesses and workforce, enhancing economic growth, reducing poverty, and building local capacities. Key aspects of local content participation include local employment, procurement of goods and services, and the development of local skills and technology transfer. Regulatory frameworks such as policies, legislation, contracts, agreements, and capacity building initiatives are essential for promoting local content participation in the industry [5]. Countries like Nigeria have introduced local content laws and policies mandating a certain percentage of local involvement, such as Nigeria's Oil and Gas Industry Content Development Act. Government initiatives such as legislation, policy frameworks, incentives, penalties, and robust local content laws can help address these challenges. In Ghana, a local content regulation was introduced in 2013 to promote local

participation in its oil and gas sector and create synergies with the broader economy. Challenges identified include non-transparent and inaccurate contractual and employment data, limited partnerships and institutional support for local companies, certification challenges, and business fronting. Promoting local content participation is essential for several reasons, including economic development, cultural preservation, and community empowerment. Encouraging local content participation stimulates economic growth, preserves cultural heritage, empowers communities, and offers high-quality content that resonates with their lived experiences [6]. The Oil and Gas Local Content Development Strategy (OLCDS) is a crucial approach to improve the utilization of natural resources and the environment, even in cases where national oil companies face structural challenges like limited government independence [7].

### Unionization in Nigeria's Oil and Gas Sector

Nigeria's oil and gas sector is a vital part of the country's economy, contributing significantly to government revenues, foreign exchange earnings, and employment. Unions in Nigeria are urging oil and gas companies to avoid using the Covid-19 pandemic as an excuse to retrench workers and promote precarious working conditions [8, 9]. The Nigeria Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers (NUPENG) and the Natural Gas Senior Staff Association of Nigeria (PENGASSAN) are organizing in the sector, emphasizing that downsizing, arbitrary dismissals, termination of workers contracts, introducing precarious working conditions, and reducing salaries and allowances should be avoided at all costs. They are appealing to

the Federal Government of Nigeria to ensure multinational and national oil companies follow laws and regulations [10]. The growth in precarious work in the Nigerian petroleum sector over the last three decades is causing concern for workers, trade unions, and national and international labour organizations. Employment relations in organizations in the petroleum sector are on a downward trajectory, with some categories of employees being completely cut off from affiliating with labor organizations due to their status of employment. The Covid-19 pandemic has heavily impacted the oil and gas industry globally, with less mobility due to coronavirus-induced lockdowns, decreased demand, and crashed oil prices [11, 12].

### The role of unions in achieving promotion of local content participation

Unions are essential in promoting local content participation in various sectors like manufacturing,

mining, oil and gas, and construction. They advocate for policies that encourage the use of local labor and

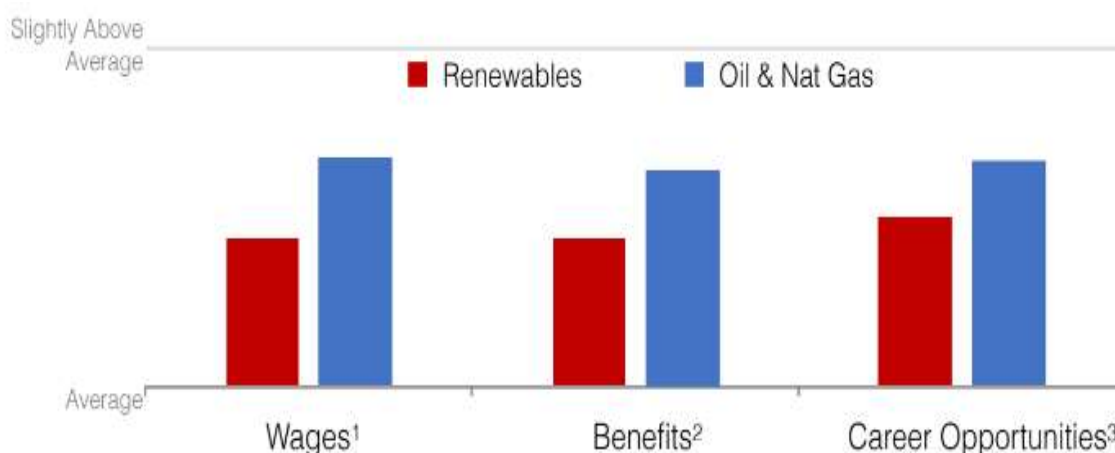
materials, negotiate employment terms, and run training and apprenticeship programs to enhance local workers' skills. Unions also monitor compliance with local content requirements, ensuring benefits are realized by the local community [13]. They help stabilize and grow the local economy by increasing local employment, leading to higher incomes and supporting the broader economic ecosystem. Labor unions play a crucial role in creating working conditions that promote public health, encouraging democratic participation and a sense of community among workers [14]. To play a full and informed role in supporting sustainable development, governments and employers should promote workers' rights to freedom of association and the protection of their right to organize. They should also strengthen participation and consultation in decisions on national and international policies and programs on environment and development. Unions are key in promoting local content participation, advocating for creator rights, negotiating wages, ensuring fair treatment, and fostering a thriving content ecosystem [15]. They enforce health and safety standards, protect job security, invest in training, and advocate for local hiring policies. Unions also engage in political advocacy to influence legislation and government policies and maintain productive labor-management relations through collective bargaining agreements. Labor unions in Nigeria, such as NUPENG and PENGASSAN, have historically advocated for better wages, improved working conditions, and job security in the oil and gas sector. They have been instrumental in negotiating collective bargaining agreements with employers and the government, securing better wages, improved benefits, and safer working conditions for their members. Historical strikes have been organized by these unions, such as the 1994 nationwide strike and the 2012 protests against the removal of fuel subsidies. These strikes often involve halting the production and distribution of petroleum products, putting significant pressure on the government and oil companies to address workers' demands [16]. Labor unions have also utilized legal channels to

address workers' grievances, filing lawsuits against oil companies for unfair labor practices, wrongful terminations, and non-compliance with labor laws. They have also lobbied for labor-friendly policies and legislation, such as the Nigerian Oil and Gas Industry Content Development Act, 2010. Collaborations with civil society and international bodies have been instrumental in amplifying their demands. Beyond workplace issues, these unions have also addressed broader concerns related to the oil and gas sector, such as environmental degradation and community development [17]. The Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) has been a platform for the Nigerian people to question government policies, actions, and inaction since Nigeria's return to democracy in 1999. This paper investigates the activities of the NLC as a credible opposition to the ruling party in Nigeria and examines the conditions that necessitated this additional responsibility on the NLC. Trade unions have come to assume roles that transcend the traditional role of protecting workers' welfare and class liberation in contemporary times, especially in developing countries. The overall situation of the oil industry in Nigeria is one of the most strategically important countries in Africa but also one of Africa's poorest, with a long legacy of corruption, weak institutions, and poor economic management. To combat these problems, President Olusegun Obasanjo launched the comprehensive programme of reform to boost growth and reduce poverty in 2003-the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) [14]. This thesis consists of three articles: the first article examines the trade unions' contested positions and actions during the 2012 fuel subsidy protests, the second article explores the opportunities and constraints of organized oil workers' actions in the Niger Delta, and the third article explores the popular idea that cheap fuel is an economic right for Nigerian citizens and part of a social contract [18]. Trade unions have strategic powers in relation to state, market, and society, allowing them to play a far greater role than their relative size suggests.

#### **Benefits of Unionization**

Unionization in the oil and gas industry offers numerous benefits to workers, including improved wages and benefits, job security, safer working conditions, access to training and development, voice in decision-making processes, legal support and

representation, solidarity and support, and broader social and community impacts as reflected in fig 1. Unionized workers have a collective voice in workplaces, participating in discussions about policies, practices, and changes that affect their jobs.



**Fig. 1- Oil and gas wage benefits. Source: NABTU Construction Job Quality Across the US Energy Industries**

Unions provide legal support and representation to their members in case of disputes with employers, such as assistance with grievances, disciplinary actions, and negotiations during collective bargaining [19]. They also benefit from the solidarity and support of their fellow members, allowing them to address common concerns and challenges, such as unfair treatment, discrimination, or unsafe working conditions. Unionization can have broader social and community impacts beyond the workplace, advocating for policies and initiatives that benefit not only their members but also the wider community, such as environmental protections, supporting local economic development, and promoting social justice initiatives. However, unions can be damaging if they run closed-shop policies, are interested in short-term gain, and have functionaries that consolidate their power. The job of a union is to bring negotiating power to the table when dealing with employers. A strong union represents its fellow workforce, providing strength in numbers and a bargaining committee with a legal right to improve wages and benefits [20]. Two recent studies by the North America Building Trades Unions (NABTU) have found that oil and natural gas industry construction jobs provide higher pay, health, and pension benefits compared to other industries, especially for Americans without a college degree. The study revealed important career benefits and advantages provided by the oil and natural gas industry, especially in comparison to renewable energy positions. The UK government is introducing a new anti-strike law, undermining workers' rights and aiming to silence those who challenge the government's economic policies. Unions enable workers to come together as a powerful collective voice to communicate with management about their working terms and conditions, pushing for safe, fair,

and decent work. They have won the right for workers to have paid holidays, with the average trade union member in the UK getting over 25% more annual leave a year than a non-unionized worker. Union members in the UK earn on average 10% more than non-unionized members, demonstrating the power of collective bargaining [21]. Nigerian oil and gas unions, NUPENG and PENGASSAN, have organized around 7,500 contract and casual workers in the country's oil and gas supply chain over the past 18 months to combat casualization and contract work, leading to job loss and increased impoverishment. They have created a joint platform called NUPENGASSAN to organize agency and outsourced workers into union branches and established multi-employer collective bargaining with multinational contractors. United Steelworkers (USW) has successfully negotiated a new labor contract covering workers at several major oil companies, covering issues such as wages, benefits, and health and safety standards [22]. The resulting contract provided stability for workers while addressing their concerns regarding job security and working conditions. Unite, a major union representing workers in the UK oil and gas industry, has been involved in successful negotiations with North Sea operators, securing improved pay and conditions for its members through collective bargaining with companies operating in the North Sea. Oil Workers Union in Nigeria (PENGASSAN) has been involved in successful negotiations with oil companies operating in Nigeria, negotiating improved wages and working conditions for its members, as well as ensuring that companies comply with labor laws and safety regulations. These negotiations have helped to improve the livelihoods of oil workers in Nigeria while also promoting stability in the industry [23-28]. Collaboration between government, industry, and unions in the oil

and gas industry is essential for fostering sustainable development, promoting fair labor practices, and ensuring the industry's long-term viability. Each stakeholder can contribute to effective collaboration:

1. Government: Policy and regulation should promote transparency, accountability, and environmental sustainability while creating an enabling environment for investment and growth.
2. Industry: Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) should be implemented by oil and gas companies to identify and address social and environmental concerns, implement sustainable practices, and support local development initiatives.

3. Unions: Advocacy: Labor unions play a crucial role in advocating for workers' rights, fair wages, and safe working conditions in the oil and gas industry.

4. Partnership: Collaborating with government agencies and industry stakeholders, unions can work towards common goals such as promoting job creation, supporting local content initiatives, and advancing sustainable development in the oil and gas sector.

Furthermore, collaboration between government, industry, and unions is essential for promoting social responsibility, ensuring fair labor practices, and driving sustainable development in the oil and gas industry.

#### METHODOLOGY

The study aims to assess the impact of unionization on wage levels, income distribution, working conditions, career advancement, and overcoming barriers in Nigeria's oil and gas industry. Methods include quantitative analysis, qualitative research, comparative analysis, and stakeholder engagement. Quantitative analysis involves surveys or datasets to gather data on wage levels and income distribution among unionized and non-unionized workers. Qualitative research involves interviews, focus groups, and case studies to understand the impact of

union representation on working conditions. Longitudinal studies include tracking changes in wage levels, income distribution, working conditions, and career advancement opportunities over time. A comparative analysis compares unionized workers' experiences with those in other industries or regions with different unionization levels. Stakeholder engagement helps understand barriers to effective unionization and strategies for overcoming them. Higher wages and better benefits, improved working conditions.

**DATA ANALYSIS**  
**Benefits of Unionization**

**Table 1: Ranking of Benefits of unionization.**

S/N	Benefits of unionization		SA	A	D	SD	$\sum FX$	$\bar{X}$	Rank	DECISION
			W	4	3	2	1			
1	Higher Wages and Better Benefits	F	108	4	-	-	-	112	4.9	ACCEPT
		WF	540	16	0	0	0	556		
2	Improved Working Conditions	F	100	12	-	-	-	112	4.8	ACCEPT
		WF	500	48	0	0	0	548		
3	Job Security	F	88	20	4	-	-	112	4.7	ACCEPT
		WF	440	80	12	0	0	532		
4	Access to Grievance Procedures	F	84	20	8	-	-	112	4.6	ACCEPT
		WF	420	80	24	0	0	524		
5	Legal Protection	F	80	20	8	4	-	112	4.5	ACCEPT
		WF	400	80	24	8	0	512		
6	Voice in the Workplace	F	76	16	12	8	-	112	4.4	ACCEPT
		WF	380	64	36	16	0	496		
7	Training and Professional Development	F	80	4	16	12	-	112	4.3	ACCEPT
		WF	400	16	48	24	0	488		
8	Solidarity and Support	F	76	4	12	16	4	112	4.1	ACCEPT
		WF	380	16	36	32	4	468		
9	Social and Political Advocacy:	F	68	8	8	16	12	112	3.9	ACCEPT
		WF	340	32	24	32	12	440		

All the benefits shown in Table 1 were accepted because they all were above the average mean of 2.5. This shows a high acceptance rate indicating the importance of unions. Thus agreed with previous

work by [24]. *What is the relationship between unionization and wage of labourers*

**Table 2 Analyses of the descriptive statistics**  
**Descriptive Statistics**

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Unionization	133797770.0070	85197615.39475	10
Wage	138593227.1280	85357518.48791	10

The result of the descriptive statistics above shows that the mean value of the unionization is 133797770.0070 whereas the standard deviation is

85197615.39475. Finally, the result further reveals that the mean value of wage is 138593227.1280 whereas the standard deviation is 85357518.48791.



This asserts the work of [25] that shows a negative relationship, stronger with union membership shift

duration, and its impact depends on collective agreement.

**Table 3 Correlation Analyses**

		Unionization	Wage
Unionization	Pearson Correlation	1	0.044**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.903
	N	9	9
Wage	Pearson Correlation	0.044**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.903	
	N	9	9

From the result of the correlation analysis above, the result indicates that unions have positive relationship on wages of labourers such that an increase in the strength of the union will lead to 0.903 increase in

the wage appropriation of labourers. The relationship between unions and labour is essential as stated by [26, 27] which is essential for productivity and efficiency.

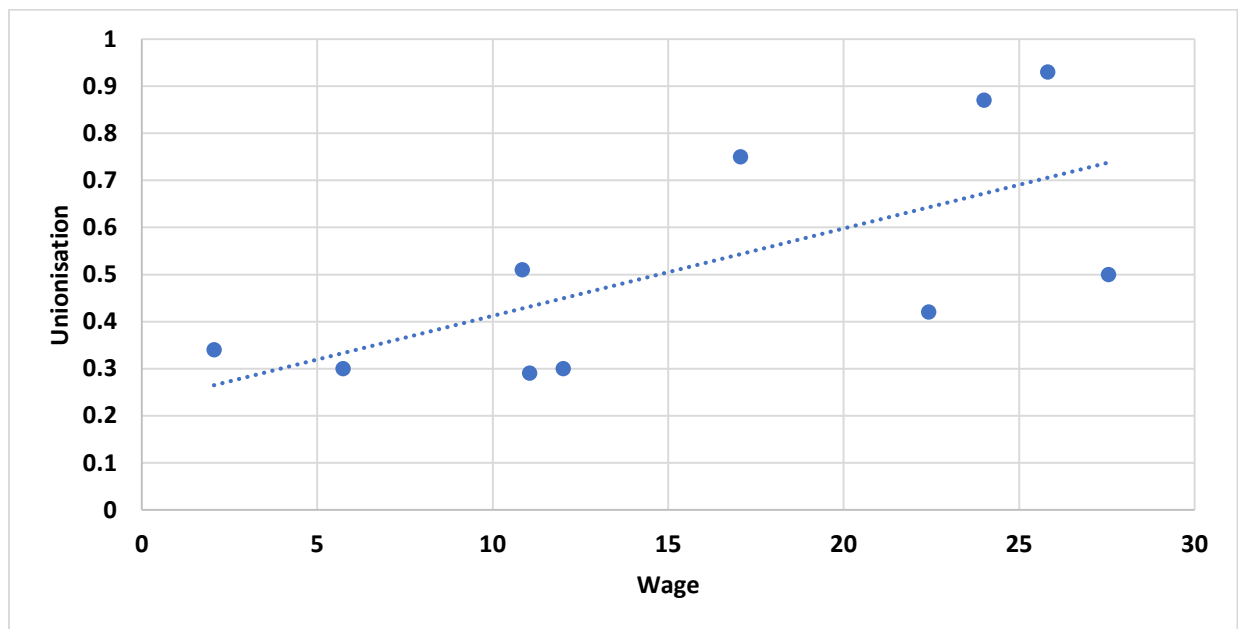


Fig 2: scatter graph showing the relationship between Unionization strength and wage Improvement. A scatter plot in figure 2 is a useful graphical representation to have some approximate idea of relationship between two variables. Scatter plot is obtained by plotting the pairs of observations taking one variable on x-axis and the other on y-axis. When the two variables change values in the opposite

direction, we have negative correlation. When they change values in the same direction, they said to be positively correlated. In this case the relationship is a positive correlation because they change value in the same direction.

**Table 4: Regression analyses aimed at estimating the impact of Union on Wages of Labourers**

$$Y = a + bX$$

$$W = a + bU$$

Dependent Variable: W

Method: Least Squares

Date: 28/05/24 Time: 18:17

Sample: 1 9

Included observations: 9

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
W	61717943	1.70E+08	0.333723	0.7472
U	0.147699	0.947145	0.154808	0.6808
R-squared	0.622987	3	Mean dependent uni	59979176
Adjusted R-squared	0.591940		S.D. dependent uni	2.17E+08
S.E. of regression	2.51E+08		Akaike info criterion	61.69779
Sum squared resid	5.05E+17		Schwarz criterion	61.45831
Log likelihood	-204.4889		Hannan-Quinn criter.	61.33140
F-statistic	0.093966		Durbin-Watson stat	2.103105
Prob(F-statistic)	0.580897			

Source: Eviews Computation

**Where,**

X= U = Unionization (Independent variable)

Y= W = Wage (dependent variable)

**Evaluation of Regression Results**

The result of coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) is stability of labourers wages is explained as a result of union strength. given as 0.622983. This implies that 62.37% of the

**Table 5: Barriers affecting the joining of Unions**

S/N	Barriers To Unions	Number	Of	Total	Percentage	Remark
		Acceptance			(%)	
1	"Right-to-work" laws	110		112	98	Good
2	An authoritarian work environment	111		112	99	Good
3	Disorganized work lives	98		112	88	Good
4	An anti-union political climate	102		112	91	Good
5	Fear of job loss	109		112	97	Good
6	Strikes,	87		112	78	Good
7	Management retaliation,	99		112	88	Good
8	Conflict generated during the organizing process,	92		112	82	Good
	<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>112</b>	<b>100</b>	

From table 5 above, all the factors were seen to be strong barriers to the joining of unions by staff of organizations with all having a percentage above

average of 50. The finding of [28] asserted that the government's latest data shows that despite a surge in labor actions, unionization rates have not increased,



with 16.2 million workers represented by a union in 2023.

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Nigeria's oil and gas industry is a significant part of the country's economy, accounting for over 90% of exports and 80% of the Federal Government's revenue. However, its employment contribution is limited compared to its overall economic impact. To address this, the Nigerian government should implement policy reforms to attract investments, enhance transparency, encourage laborers to join unions, improve the regulatory framework, and promote local content development. The Nigerian Oil and Gas Industry Content Development Act, enacted in 2010, aims to increase the participation of Nigerian companies and workforce in the sector. Unionization in the sector impacts labor regimes and union power, with unions like NUPENG and PENGASSAN playing a significant role in promoting local content participation, advocating for creator rights, negotiating wages, ensuring fair treatment, and

fostering a thriving content ecosystem. The research suggests strengthening union capacity building programs, promoting collaboration among unions, advocating for policy reforms to enforce labor laws, and strengthening local content in Nigeria's oil and gas industry. It also suggests strengthening legislation, improving monitoring mechanisms, supporting SMEs, encouraging public-private partnerships, and promoting transparency and accountability.

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