

HEINRICH BÖLL STIFTUNG
ABUJA
Nigeria



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Envisioning Challenge

"Transforming Lagos Abandoned
Buildings into Spaces for Vibrant
Low-Income Housing"

Why this Challenge



A great percentage of the population in Lagos lives on one or two dollars a day. Their small income is further decreased due to high inflation and soaring prices for consumer goods, including construction materials such as cement, wood, and steel. Uncertainties over land ownership, often followed by demolitions and evictions, do not encourage them to invest any of their meagre finances into building safe shelters. None of past and present government housing policies and programs had been directed towards these citizens.

With this challenge, we call on urban designers, architects, developers, housing rights activists and artists from all disciplines and backgrounds to reflect how existing but abandoned buildings could contribute to create safe, conducive and affordable shelter for the majority of Lagos residents who live along the poverty line. Applications from multidisciplinary teams are strongly encouraged.

Imagine the Federal Secretariat sheltering a vibrant community

The Federal Secretariat at Alagbon, Ikoyi, Lagos, once served as the epicenter of Nigeria's governance, symbolizing the country's aspirations during the oil boom era. However, the relocation of the federal capital to Abuja in 1991 left this monumental structure abandoned, eventually turning it into an eyesore rather than a testament to national pride. It reflects how such opportunities are often overlooked, despite the growing demand for accessible and affordable living spaces.

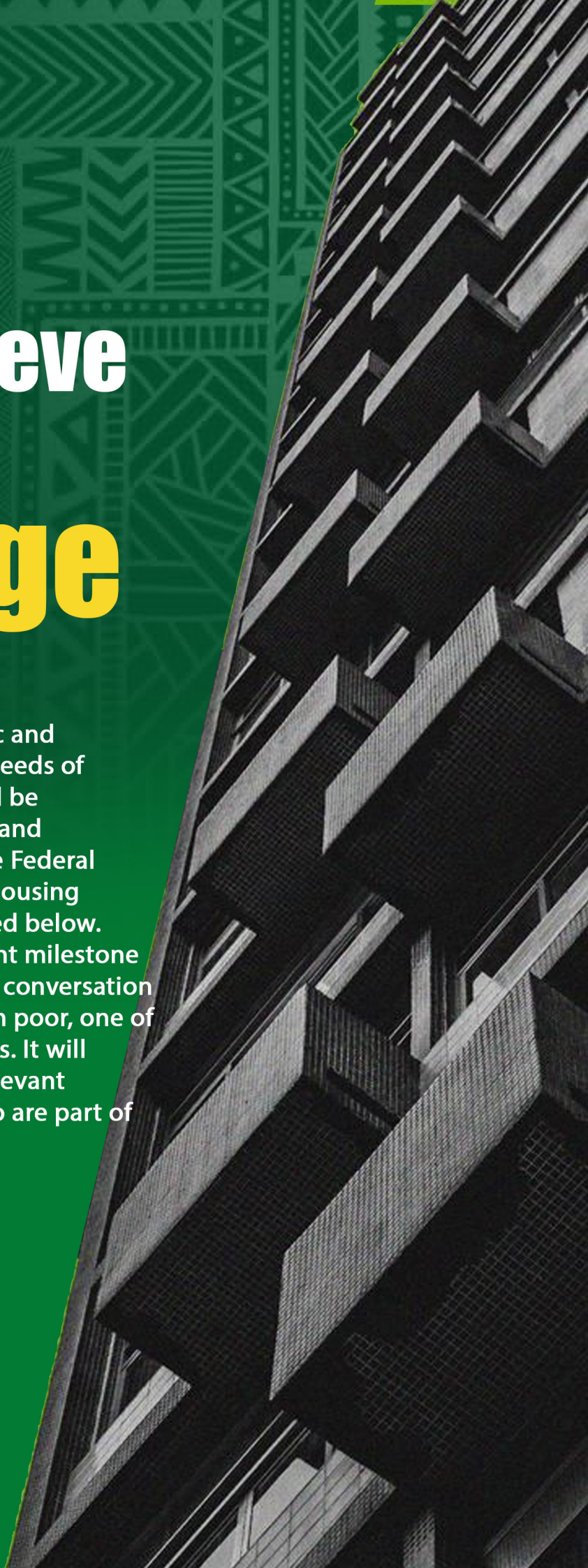
Recently, Federal and Lagos state government signed an MOU formalizing a partnership to transform Federal Government of Nigeria's abandoned properties across Lagos. We do not know yet what the plans are but imagine how a re-envisioned building and symbol of national unity could offer shelter to a vibrant community of women, children, elderly, families or artisans sprawling in the midst of a fast developing gentrified area.

By repurposing this iconic but unutilized structure, we can demonstrate how adaptive reuse can meet pressing urban needs while preserving its heritage.



What we want to achieve through the **Challenge**

This initiative aims to change the public and professional conversation on how the needs of un- and underserved populations could be addressed. It specifically seeks creative and practical ideas on how to repurpose the Federal Secretariat into innovative, affordable housing units suitable for potential users detailed below. The ideas presented will be an important milestone towards changing current thinking and conversation about shelter and housing for the urban poor, one of the most pressing needs in African cities. It will contribute to engagements with the relevant agencies at Federal and State level, who are part of the current MOU negotiations.



The idea is to redesign the building for living space and needs of the following residents

- **Low-income families:** Families living below current minimum wage and struggling to find affordable living spaces in urban Lagos.
- Single mothers with children who are sole breadwinner.
- **Students:** Young adults seeking budget-friendly accommodations near educational institutions in the city.
- **The elderly:** Seniors looking for safe, affordable housing options with necessary amenities. Artisans and small
- **Business owners:** Individuals who require affordable housing that also accommodates small-scale commercial activities.

Principles to consider in your submission

Needs-orientation/Informality: The proposal has to be based on the informality that dominates everyday life of the potential users and reflect their needs;

Gender-responsiveness: Single mothers and young women without bankable credentials are mostly left out of the real estate market in Lagos thus finding it impossible to gain access to safe and livable shelter. They are often dependent of male benevolents and easily fall victim of rape and domestic violence as a result;

Affordability: Always keep in mind the financial capacity of the beneficiaries and what they can afford to pay, and outline your ideas about funding mechanisms for service charges, use of communal ground etc.;

Sustainability: Environmental sustainability should be a core part of the designs, incorporating renewable energy solutions, waste recycling, and reuse of materials considering the cost implication and ensuring affordability of the units for the urban poor at the same time. Maintenance aspects need to be considered and explain to ensure that the state of the building and its environment do not deteriorate;

Community Integration: The proposed solutions should reflect community needs and encourage social cohesion. If possible, engage potential beneficiaries among the urban poor in the design process to ensure that the housing units promote a sense of belonging.

Cultural Sensitivity: The design and renovation of the Federal Secretariat should honor its historical significance. Proposals should highlight ways to preserve the heritage of the building while integrating modern living spaces;

Accessibility: Housing solutions must consider accessibility for all members of the community, including those with disabilities.



Who can participate

We invite architects, urbanists, engineers, artists from all disciplines and backgrounds and housing rights activists to participate at this envisioning challenge looking for transformative ideas that could convert this abandoned Federal Secretariat into a vibrant building giving comfort to the urban poor. All participants who submitted will become part of ongoing conversations with stakeholders from government, public and community sectors about reimagining the use of abandoned (public) building for the benefit of the poor.



watch a video of the old federal secretariat Ikoyi here: <https://shorturl.at/6sOck>

Timeline

Feb 15, 2025: *Submission Opens to all: **Urban designers, architects, artists, Housing rights activists and all others** with or without the capacity to develop visual design*

Feb 25, 2025: *Submission Closes to **Housing rights activists and all others***

without the capacity to develop visual design but with the right ideas for the target groups submit a narrative document of not more than 2000 words addressing the 7 criteria named above, suitable proposals will be selected for support by designers/architects to prepare the visual design

March 31, 2025: *Submission Closes to Urban designers, architects, and artists to submit*

Master Plan: Based on the information given in the link, sketch out a layout of the site, including residential units, shared spaces, and green areas.

Detailed Design: Focus on a segment of the building to illustrate housing unit designs, sustainability features, and cultural elements.

Narrative: A 500-word description explaining the concept, design rationale, sustainability features, and impact on target groups.

Visuals: High-quality sketches, renders, or models showcasing the proposed transformation.

April 2025: *A panel of experts will review submissions on the basis of the evaluation criteria outlined below.*

May 1-3, 2025

The first 5 finalists will be invited to a 2-3 days design residency where they will have opportunities to meet with members of the potential user groups to refine their ideas before presenting them to a panel of judges during a public event, where feedback will be provided.

All entries should be submitted to
lagoshousingchallenge@gmail.com

Criteria for selection

Submissions will be assessed based on:

Understanding and responsiveness to the needs of the potential users

25%

Affordability for the potential users

25%

Relevance to development issues of the city

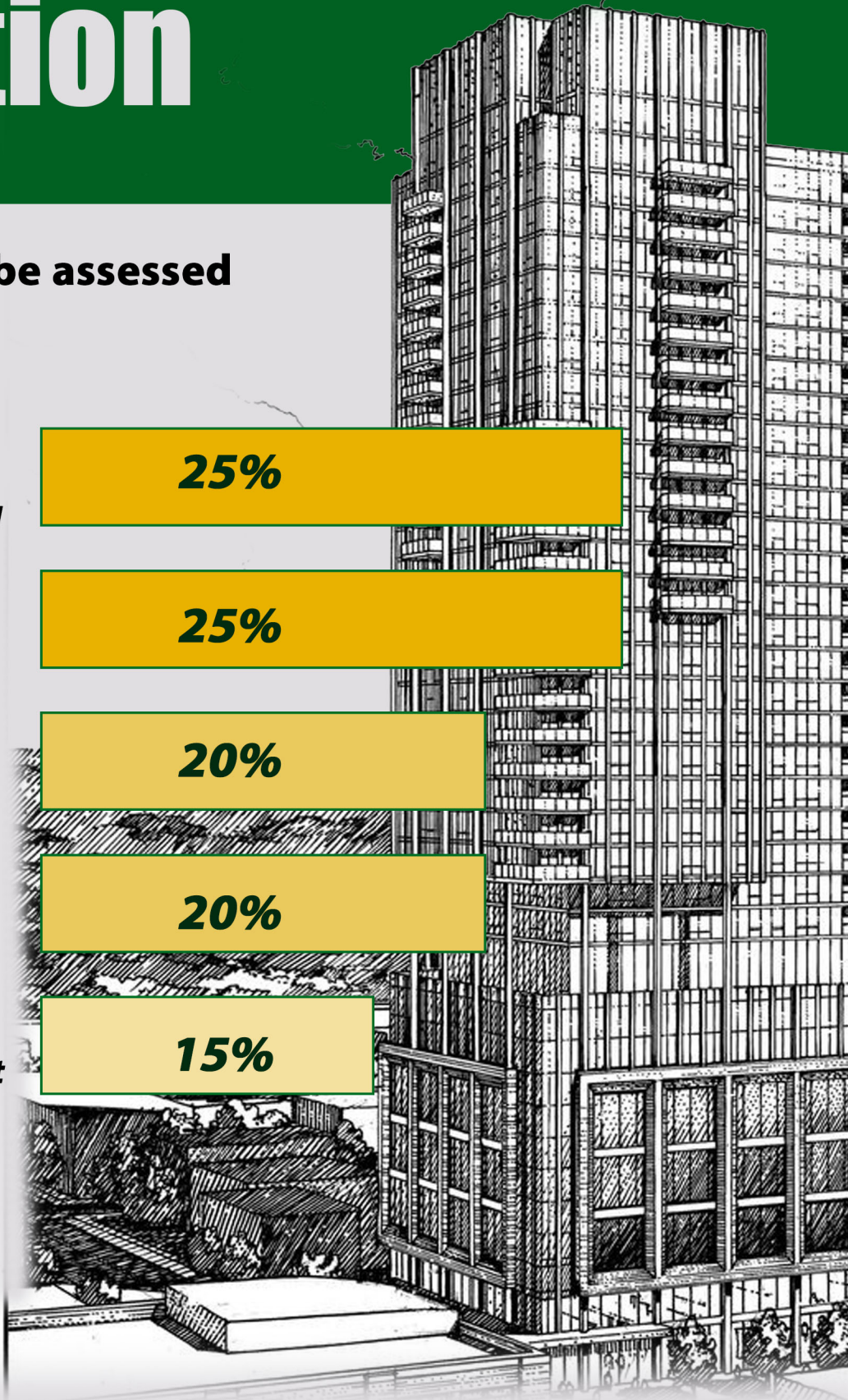
20%

Innovation and Creativity

20%

Sustainability and Environmental Impact

15%



Prices to be won

All 5 finalists will be invited to present their ideas and designs at a 2 days public exhibition, which will hold in Lagos at a yet to be determined date. During the event, housing documentaries from Lagos, Brazil and South Africa will be screened with panel discussions.

The winners will be selected during the public exhibition by a renowned jury.

1st Prize N2,000,000

2nd Prize N1,500,000

3rd Prize N1,000,000

We look forward to your creative responses and innovative ideas that will breathe new life into the Federal Secretariat, turning it into a beacon of affordable shelter and community revitalization in Lagos.



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Photo Credit: Pictures of old federal secretariat Ikoyi by
MOE+ Art Architecture