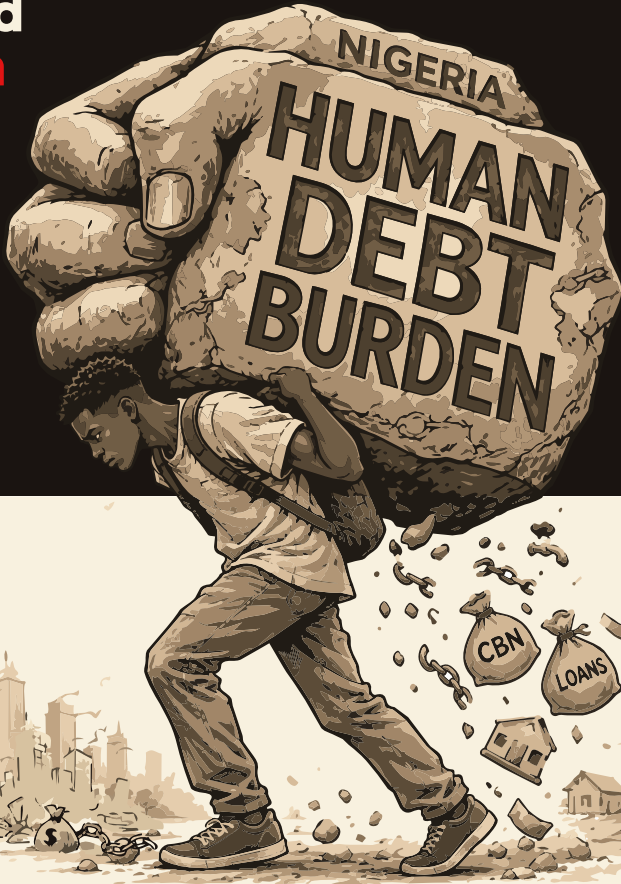


Nigeria's debt bill has climbed to **N17.4 trillion** a year and it keeps rising

That is money spent purely on paying back loans and their interest, year after year, before a single naira reaches a classroom, a clinic, or a tap. It is now the single biggest line in the federal government's own books.



N17.4tn
paid to service Nigeria's debt in 2026
— equal to N4.35 trillion every quarter

N29.2tn
Nigeria's total planned new borrowing for 2026 (Budget Office) — see what it's really for, next page

+10.1%
up from N15.8tn in 2025 (DMO) — debt service is growing faster than most citizens' incomes.

53.7%
of every naira in federal government revenue goes straight to interest alone (IMF Article IV, June 2026).

When more than half of every revenue naira is committed to interest before anything else is spent, there is less room for the budget choices that shape everyday life: teacher salaries, drug supplies, road maintenance, and social support.

Why this matters:

The Debt Trap

Nearly six of every ten naira Nigeria borrows in 2026 will go straight back out to pay old debt



Nigeria plans to borrow **N29.2tn**

this year. Most of that new borrowing will not build a single new road, school or hospital: it is already spoken for.

59.6%

N17.4tn

Goes straight to servicing existing debt

40.4%

N11.8tn

Left for roads, salaries, schools & everything else

N29.2tn

Nigeria's 2026 gross borrowing plan (Punch/Budget Office).

N17.4tn

of every new naira borrowed, committed to old debt before it is even spent.

N11.8tn

what's actually left over for new development spending this year.

Why this matters:

Borrowing to repay old borrowing, rather than to fund something new, is a sign of a debt burden that is starting to feed itself. It does not mean Nigeria should stop paying what it owes but citizens deserve to know how much of "new money" is really just recycling old obligations.

How Far One Quarter Goes

In just the first three months of debt payments, Nigeria spends enough to close 13 of the 15 gaps in this guide

Split the **N17.4 trillion** into quarters and the trade-off becomes even sharper: one quarter alone is N4.35 trillion more than the full annual cost of nearly every social investment costed here.



N4.35tn

what Nigeria pays in debt service every single quarter.

N3.83tn

Build 255,000 primary classrooms for every out-of-school child

N3.65tn

Build 202,500 secondary classrooms for every out-of-school teen

N996bn

Give 83 million vulnerable Nigerians a year of health insurance

N1.9tn

Close the entire clean-water gap for 113 million people

N996bn

Build or repair 14,300 primary health centres nationwide

N3.15tn

Capitalise an enterprise fund reaching 5 million women

Imagine The Choice

For 1.4 years of debt payments, Nigeria could reach almost every vulnerable citizen at once

Put schools, clinics, clean water, cash support and business finance together, and here is what **N24.2 trillion** — everything in this guide except electricity — would deliver:



15 million

poorest households given a monthly cash lifeline



5m+15m

women and smallholder farmers helped to grow a business or farm



18.3 million

children back in the classroom, primary and secondary



14,300

health centres built or repaired across the country



83 million

people given a year of health insurance



4.4 million

women given a safe, skilled birth every year



5.3 million

children treated for malnutrition or fully immunised



113 million

people reached with clean water

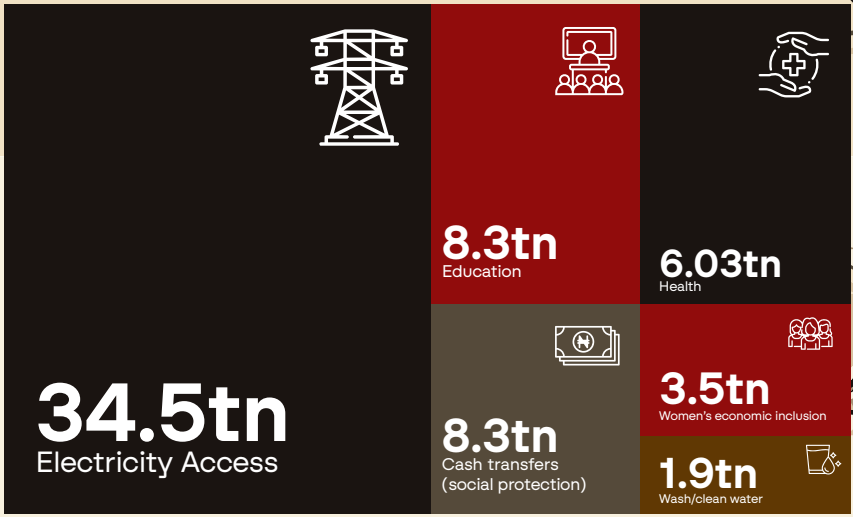
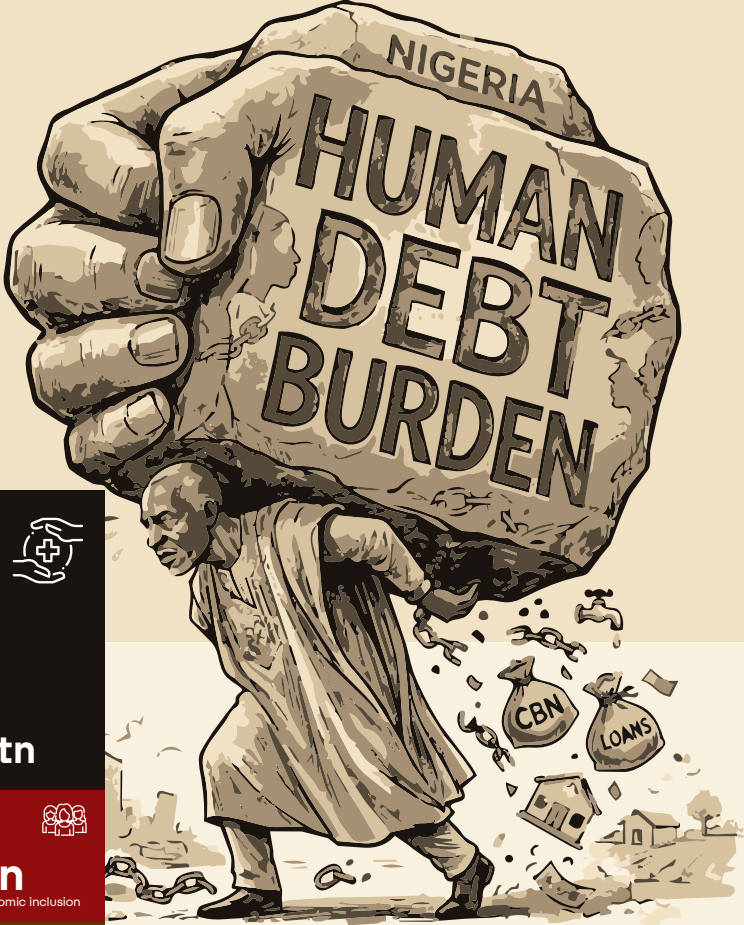


Sector by Sector

Spread across sectors, one year of debt payments would touch every corner of national life.

Here is how the full **N58.7 trillion**

price tag of every gap in this guide breaks down by sector.



Unit in NGN

Why this matters:

Borrowing to repay old borrowing, rather than to fund something new, is a sign of a debt burden that is starting to feed itself. It does not mean Nigeria should stop paying what it owes but citizens deserve to know how much of "new money" is really just recycling old obligations.

Water and Energy

Clean water is one of the cheapest gaps to close. Electricity is by far the most expensive

Clean Water Sanitation reaches 113 million people currently without safe water about **N16,800 per person.**

N1.9tn

N34.5tn

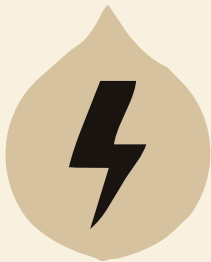
Universal electricity access reaches 86 million people currently without power about **N401,000 per person.**

24x

Connecting one Nigerian to the national grid costs about 24 times more than reaching one person with clean water and about 33 times more than a year of health insurance for one person.

Why this matters:

This is not an argument against investing in power reliable electricity underpins almost every other service in this guide. But it does explain



Livelihood

N8.0tn

would put cash directly into the hands of the poorest, and capital behind women's businesses and farms N58.7 trillion

N4.5tn

Cash transfers

N25,000/month to 15 million of Nigeria's poorest households. 94% of NASSP recipients are women (World Bank).

Women's enterprise finance

250,000 in revolving capital to 5 million women-owned businesses. Only 23% of women-owned MSMEs currently have formal credit.

N1.25tn

Smallholder farmer support

150,000 in inputs and finance to 15 million farmers. Women make up about 40% of Nigeria's farm labour force but under 5% hold crop insurance.

N2.25tn

Why this matters:

Unlike classrooms or clinics, this money goes directly into household pockets and small businesses the fastest route from a national budget line to a family's dinner table.

The Bigger Picture

N58.7tn

The full price of every gap identified in this report equal to 3.4 years of Nigeria's current debt service.

N33.0tn

of that total (56%) would reach women and girls directly.

15%

distinct gaps costed across education, health, water, energy, social protection and livelihoods.

3.4 years

vs an indefinite, recurring debt service bill that repeats every single year.

Why this matters:

This is not a call to stop repaying what Nigeria owes debt service is a contractual obligation, not a costless choice to walk away from. It is a call for transparency about scale the entire development financing gap this guide identifies costs a little over three years of debt service a bill Nigeria pays, unchanged, every single year regardless.

What It Means For You

Every naira spent servicing debt is a naira not spent on your school, your clinic, your family.

“

Nigeria must still pay what it owes. But citizens should be able to see clearly what that costs and who pays the price. Too often, as this guide shows, that price falls hardest on women and girls.

1

Ask where your local and national budget money actually goes and how much never leaves the debt service line.

2

Follow how much is spent on debt versus schools, clinics and clean water each budget cycle.

3

Ask whether new borrowing is funding new development or simply paying off old debt.

4

Demand a budget that puts people especially women and girls first