

# THE COUNTRY OF GARINJA AND THE MOLUE-ISM OF NIGERIA'S NATIONAL GRID

## Prologue: The Bus Called Nigeria

In the heart of Africa, lies a nation whose soul rides daily in a rattling, overburdened relic—the *molue*. Once yellow and bright symbolising newness and progress, but now mostly dusty brown and weary like a fallen hero. This bus called “molue” carries dreams, bodies, and burdens. Its wheels screech like a tired hymn; its engine groans like a prophet warning of doom— yet ignored.

To have been born in Lagos Nigeria, in the 1980s or earlier, is to have once been a passenger on a molue—jostled, squashed, sweating, surviving while forcefully learning resilience. It is to understand that speed and safety are luxury dreams in a bus that was built for motion, not for meaning.

And thus, we arrive at the metaphor: the **National Grid**, our very own molue of electricity—a structure long overdue for retirement but somehow still moving, swerving through decades of dysfunction, with little to no hope of sustainable functionality.

Mr. Leke Alder, in a stirring satire at the Daystar ELC 2024, christened this chaotic nation “Garinja”, drawing parallels between our national ethos and the molue’s tragic ballet. This paper, like an observer gripping the handrail in that bus, explores those haunting parallels—the *Molue-ism of Nigeria’s National Grid*.

## The Eleven Commandments of Molue-ism

### 1 History is a Waste of Time

In Garinja, history is dust — immaterial, inconvenient and best left undisturbed. Who cares how we got here? The past is buried, unreconciled.

But beneath our feet and in the deep part of our slumbers lie the bones of the National Electric Power Authority (“NEPA”), broken and renamed Power Holding Company of Nigeria (“PHCN”). It was President Obasanjo’s dream to bring light, and thus the Electric Power Sector Reform Act of 2005 (“EPSRA”) split NEPA into eighteen (18) fragments— six (6) Generation Companies, one (1) Transmission Company and eleven (11) Distribution Companies.

Yet, from this noble surgery was born a ghost: the **Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN)**—tasked with wheeling power through eighteen thousand (18,000) kilometres of fragile veins, threading power from twenty-nine (29) generation stations to nation of millions. A massive task, carried out with minimal memory and fading purpose.

How can a nation fix what it refuses to remember?

### 2. Metrics Are for The Birds

In Garinja, the numbers don’t matter. Whether it’s population or power, why count what you cannot control? We haven’t held a national census since 2006 —nineteen (19) years of guessing, hoping, estimating, praying. At what point do we stop lighting candles?

In a land where demand is a mystery and supply is a prayer, the grid chokes under uncertainty. Metrics are not just numbers; they are mirrors—and no one in Garinja wants to look too long into one.

### 3. The Driver’s Licence Is Useless

Like molue drivers who navigate chaos with crooked mirrors and instincts,



the captains of our grid steer with worn-out tools and broken gauges. No matter the rust, no matter the rot, the goal is to move—**by any means.**

Power lines sag from overload and burden, substations groan, and vast regions depend on a single, fragile and vulnerable wire to provide light that lasts the blink of an eye. If one line falters, millions fall into darkness. Our grid has become a tightrope stretched across a canyon of mismanagement.

#### 4. Impunity is the Law of the Land

In Garinja, no one is truly to blame. Vandalism? Sabotage? Energy theft? Just another Tuesday. The molue is dented, yet no mechanic is summoned. Wires are stripped in the night; transmission towers fall like weary giants. And still, there are no consequences. The nation sleeps in darkness, yet no one wakes in power.

#### 5. Hardship is a Badge of Honour

In Garinja, struggle is tradition. To suffer is to belong. The molue is not built for comfort—it is built for endurance. Pushed, shoved, trampled... and still we board it again tomorrow, ready for the challenge!

Between 2010 and 2022, Nigeria's grid collapsed two hundred and **twenty-two (222) times**. In 2024, we had **ten (10) collapses** and in 2025, we have already had **three (3) grid collapses**. Backup generators hum like lullabies in the background, feeding a fossil-fueled addiction that scorches both wallet and planet. We treat pain not as a problem but as a rite of passage.

#### 6. Loss is Personal, Not National

In Garinja, it is the market woman who loses her goods when the fridge fails. It is the tailor who loses clients when the machine won't sew. The losses are never mourned as one, it is each man for his own head.

In June 2024, Distribution Companies (Discos) hemorrhaged over Twenty-Five Billion, Seven Hundred and Ten Million Naira (N25,700,000,000) in revenue due to inefficiency in collection of electricity bill. Still, bills go ignored and unpaid. The World Bank says Nigeria loses Twenty-Nine Billion United States Dollars (US\$29,000,000,000) annually to power failures, but that number falls on deaf ears. In Garinja, we cry alone.

#### 7. Vision Is a Luxury

We speak of reforms. We enact Acts. But beyond the ink and applause, the grid remains a molue—shaking, shivering, smoking.

The Electricity Act 2023 brings hope, but without maintenance, hope rusts and fade like everything else.

What good is renewable energy when the structures built to carry it collapse under their own weight?

#### 8. Image Is Cosmetic

To the molue driver, peeling paint is not a problem. The bus still moves.

Nigeria, the "*Giant of Africa*", limps beneath this illusion. A nation of poets, tech geniuses and heavy dreams trapped in a blackout. We speak in conferences and smile in boardrooms while investors peer into our dim corridors and walk away.

Branding means nothing when the lights are out.

#### 9. Budgets, Not Repairs

In Garinja, there's always money for maintenance—just never maintenance itself. Like molue drivers postponing repairs for "*one more trip*", the grid sputters until it dies again. Every year, the same budget. Every year, the same collapse.

And yet, no plan. No deadline. Just dust, duct tape, and despair.

#### 10. Power Belongs to the Connected

In Garinja, "*leg*" matters more than logic. Connections, not competence. Influence, not integrity. Projects are awarded not to those who can, but those who know who.

Electricity reform becomes another campaign shield—a slogan recycled every four (4) years, not a national imperative. Corruption signs the contract, stalls the project, feeds the pocket and most importantly, keeps the lights off.

#### 11. Prayer Will Fix It

When all else fails, we pray. But even heaven waits for action.

"*God listens,*" they say, "*when you start making the right moves.*"

#### The Way Forward: Fixing the Bus Before It Burns

Garinja doesn't need more passengers. It needs a new vehicle, a new driver. The following are the tools that might build a better one:

##### 1. Decentralise the Grid

A single, monolithic grid is a molue with too many people and one brake. We must break it down—region by region.



Create independent systems with localized control. Unbundle TCN and give birth to an Independent System Operator (ISO) that works without bias or bloat. This action is now being taken but should be well implemented, if we are to see results.

## 2. Attract Real Investment

The grid is hungry. Feed it not with slogans but with funds—and accountability. Encourage Public Private Partnerships. Use those international loans for infrastructure, not press releases.

Nigeria has continued to receive international funding whilst executing collaborative agreements, for instance, the Five Hundred Million United States Dollar (US\$500,000,000) loan from African Development Bank, the One Billion United States Dollar (US\$1,000,000,000) funds received from the World Bank, the funding from Afreximbank, amongst others should be properly utilised.

## 3. Go Green

The sun shines generously over Garinja. Let solar and wind step in where diesel has failed. Resilience begins with diversity.

By integrating renewable sources, the energy supply becomes more resilient and less reliant on traditional methods, helping to meet growing demand and reducing the risk of imbalances that lead to grid instability.

## 4. Build With Brains and Wires

Infrastructure must be intelligent. Finalize the Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition ("SCADA"), train operators, use local talent, and invest in technologies that prevent failure instead of reacting to it.

The expansion of the grid should be accelerated where feasible with public-private partnership arrangements and grid extensions for economic load centres should be prioritized. TCN should engage States to discuss expansion and upgrades to transmission assets that cut across their States with a view to partnerships and collaborations that can potentially finance the relevant projects that will spur or unlock more generation capacity into respective States.

## 5. Localise Power

Thanks to the Electricity Act 2023, States can now chart their own electrical destinies. Lagos, Enugu, Oyo, Abia, Ogun and others are already writing their stories. Each State must craft its energy laws, attract investors, and tailor solutions to its peculiar terrain.

But they must do it smartly—with **data, tech,** and a **firm grasp of their citizens' needs.**

## Conclusion: Reimagining the Ride

The molue has become our metaphor for madness—a relic still running, not because it works, but because there's nothing else. The national grid reflects the same: an aging system bearing a modern nation it can no longer carry.

But here's the truth: Garinja doesn't have to remain a tragic play. The bus can be rebuilt. The wheels can be changed. The journey can be made smooth.

But only if we start listening—not just to prophets and pundits, but to the passengers who ride this broken ride every day.

Let us build a new vehicle. Not just to move, but to matter.

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