



## **CENTRE LSD INTERIM REPORT OF THE BAYELSA STATE GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION HELD FEBRUARY 11, 2012**



### **Introduction:**

The increasing relevance of election observation in curtailing election irregularities has gained ascendancy and recognition all over the world. Its potency and recognition has inspired civil society activist to brace up to the challenge of rigging and all other vices that characterize elections, which is a major component of any democratic process. The place of observation also is underscored by the all important role the political leadership of any nation, decided through elections has to play in the determination of the political and socio-economic progress of any nation. Elections are conceptualized to allow people or citizens make choices among the contesting parties and candidates, and by it freely choose those who will represent them. To make sure this process runs seamlessly, respective countries globally have steadily enunciated laws to guide the process. In Nigeria, since the coming of the fourth republic, the country has come up with three sets of electoral Act (2001, 2006 and 2010) to guide its electoral processes irrespective of the existence of the 1999 constitution. State level

elections in Nigeria are usually prone to strife and disputations because of factors that border majorly on proximity to the people, which as it were births irregularities and other forms of vices that tend to undermine the election processes and procedure. The African Centre for Leadership, Strategy & Development (Centre LSD) being one of the organisations accredited by the Independent National Electoral Commission to observe elections in Nigeria, in a bid to contributing to the achievement of free, fair and credible election, collaborated with Stakeholders Democracy Network (SDN) and deployed 16 observers to observe the Bayelsa State gubernatorial election held February 11, 2012.



### **General Participation:**

Participation in the gubernatorial election in Bayelsa State was not impressive. Though it was peaceful, the level of voter apathy was overwhelming, perhaps because of the mistrust and distrust that have been entrenched in the Nigeria political system by politicians. In Fameme Town Hall, there were 1,116 registered voters but only 330 were accredited. In Fakolu Primary School, 1,136 people registered but on completion of accreditation, only 136 were accredited. In Fakuku Health Centre, the number of registered voters was 872 but only 96 were accredited. In some of the voting points, there were visible demands for money before any ballot could be cast. This arguably could be a demonstration to the disappointment the people have had to grapple with over the years because of the attitude of politicians. In PU/015 in Ekumoku town hall, PU/008 in Balawae Secondary School, all in ward 13 of Adagbabiri, there was massive vote buying. The same situation played out in PU/001 at Oporoma, PU/014 Oyinki Community Square in Southern Ijaw and PU/008 in Amakiri Ebiama village of Kolokuma/Opokuma Local Government Area. In terms of security, the Nigeria Army, Police, Civil Defence, Federal Road personnel were very visible. Except in some places though isolated, their presence was nothing to write home about. Suffice it to say that where they were present, they displayed some form of professionalism that also accounted for the peaceful conduct of the election.

**Logistics:**

The logistics arrangement on the part of INEC witnessed a major improvement. The early set up and commencement of voting indeed was a function of material availability. Set up was early with no shortage of materials witnessed. In PU/007, PU/008, PU/009, PU/010, PU/011, PU/012 and PU/015 all in ward 13 Adagbabiri, material and election personnel got to these places as early as 8.00am. In Talawari Town Hall and Amakiri Ebiama village materials and election officials arrived 8.10am. There was late arrival of materials at Poroma Open Space PU/001, Abiede Community Square PU/013 and Oyinki Community square PU/014. Materials did not get to these places until about 11.20am.

**Start of Elections:**

Set up for election at the different polling units was quick. Voters obviously for time, helped in the process of set up by providing tables and seats to the officials for accreditation to commence, the low turn-out notwithstanding. The accreditation processes was smooth and orderly in all the places observed, except for few areas where it was done along side voting. The low turn-out delayed accreditation and subsequently the commencement of voting. In Tungbo Community in Adagbabiri ward 13 of Sagbama Local Government Area, youths were seen mobilizing the electorates using public address system to remind them about the commencement of voting. The patrol embarked upon during accreditation and voting by security personnel also was commendable. It paved way for a violent free election. Voting commenced after accreditation and signing of the ballot papers by the Presiding Officers in the different polling units.

**Sufficiency of materials and officials:**

Electoral materials were adequate. In some of the units, materials were in excess. The materials to the different units were sent based on the number of persons in the register of the unit. During accreditation in most cases, not up to half of the people as mentioned earlier were available for accreditation; this of course explains the excess materials in the different units. There were also the presence of a Presiding Officer, one polling Clerk and one Police except in the case of PU/015 in Ekumoku Town Hall in Adagbabiri ward 13 where only one Police man was provided and one election official. However at ward 9 and polling unit PU/001 in Oporoma open space in Amasoma, the Presiding Officer was manhandled by the youths for setting up when what the elders promised them has not been redeemed. This delayed the commencement of accreditation and voting. The situation normalised after some time but not without the intervention of the elders.

**Ballot Papers:**

Ballot papers in all the places observed were adequate as the numbers provided were in tandem with the number of registered voters as reflected on the voters register. Voters now have improved understanding on how to thumb print. This led to a reduction in the number of invalid votes at the polling units.

**Voters Register:**

There were no issues with the voters register. Some who lost their cards, but have their names and photograph on the register, were accredited to vote.

**Coordination:**

There was a major improvement on the part of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in the distribution of election materials. Apart from few isolated cases of late arrival of materials and personnel, with politicians now made to offer logistics assistance, overall INEC efforts in this direction is salutary. The security co-ordination was commendable especially with the joint roving patrols introduced by security operatives.

### **Reports of incidents:**

There was no incident whatsoever, apart from what transpired at ward 9 at polling unit PU/001 in Oporoma open space in Amasoma, where the Presiding Officer was manhandled by the youths, which was later resolved.

### **Violence**

The election was generally very peaceful throughout the state. There was no case of intimidation.

### **Rigging**

The election was relatively free and fair. The counting was participatory and open. There was buying of votes and some measure of compromise on the part of the election officials as observed in Amakiri Ebiama Village ward 1 in PU/008. Observers at the level of the polling units and some collation centres were given copies of the results.



### **Non-observance of the Election Procedures:**

All procedures as indicated in the INEC guidelines were followed except for the incidences of vote buying.

### **Security:**

The security presence promised by the Police authority did not quite reflect the over ten thousand they promised they were going to deploy. Their presence was visible in some of the polling stations and at the same time not found in so many places. Where they are found, they displayed professionalism and were approachable and impartial. Apart from the police, there were men of the Nigerian Army, Civil Defence and officers of the Federal Road Safety Corps.

### **Our General Perceptions:**

- a. The Adequacy and early arrival of materials was a major and marked improvement on the part of INEC.

- b. The counting process was publicly done.
- c. Physically challenged persons were allowed to vote.
- d. There was real secrecy of ballot.

### **Challenges**

Some of the key challenges observed during the Bayelsa Gubernatorial elections included:

- a. Collusion of polling agents with party officials.
- b. High rate of voters apathy
- c. Inadequate security
- d. Vote buying by political party agents.

### **Recommendations**

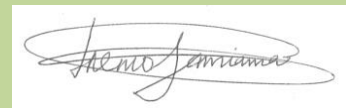
1. INEC should improve more on its logistics arrangement to avoid situations where politicians would want to offer some help.
2. INEC, Political Parties and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) should step up civic education.
3. INEC should review its polling stations location and relocate those in private residences.
4. INEC should determine a time where figures of accredited voters are sent to its office before voting commences.
5. Police should be more systematic in deployment to ensure that there is even distribution of personnel in subsequent elections.

### **CONCLUSION**

The election was generally peaceful. The early arrival and adequacy of materials are commendable. It showed real improvement on the part of the electoral body. Again, the change of attitude by politicians in terms of ballot box snatching, gun running and the likes to non-violence is worthy of commendation. There is need to continue in this direction, and this obviously reinforces the need for civic education both on the part of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Politicians and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). While security is critical to election, the evolution of a virile strategy to curb uneven deployment is imperative to ensure optimum performance in subsequent election.



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