

**Report of Christian Aid and Centre LSD Governorship and State House of Assembly  
Elections Observation and Analysis Centre**

**Introduction**

In continuation of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, the Governorship and state assembly elections was held in 29 states, including the six FCT area council elections. The election like the presidential and National assembly election also suffered postponement from March 02 to March 09, 2019 due to logistic challenges from the election management body, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

The African Centre for Leadership, Strategy & Development (Centre LSD), one of the INEC accredited observer organization, deployed 419 observers across the country with 26 of these observers deployed to the Christian Aid Startfund focal states of Benue and Kaduna. The general impression about the observation is as captured below:

**a) INEC logistics and arrival of materials:**

Unlike the presidential and NASS elections, INEC staff and election materials arrived polling units across the country early. They were there in majority of the polling stations before 8.00am. Setup in several polling station started immediately and was closely followed by accreditation and voting.

In Benue state, at North bank St. Mary primary school, PU010/13, INEC officials and materials arrived before 8.00am. At North Bank 2, HUDCO quarters 2, PU007/10, INEC staff and materials arrived at 8.05am. At North Bank, PU003, INEC staff and materials arrived before 8.00am. At North Bank PU009, materials and INEC officials arrived 8.00am. At PU010 North Bank Market 2, Materials arrived at 7.55am. At North Bank Ward 1, PU019, materials arrived at 9am. At Modern market by Hotel de success PU007, INEC staff and materials arrived before 8.00am. At Mammy market ward PU017, INEC staff and materials arrived before 8.00am. At Makurdi Atiisa ward, PU008, INEC and materials arrived at 7.00am. At Igumale ward 1 in Ado LGA PU010, INEC staff and materials arrived at 8.10am. In Ankpa quarters under Ankpa/Wadata ward, PU008, INEC staff and materials arrived at 7.55am.

In Kaduna state, the situation was the same. In Igabi LGA, at Afaka ward, Makarata 1, PU014, INEC staff and materials arrived by 7.45am. At Agwan Sarki ward PU025, INEC staff and materials arrived after 8.00am. At Kaura LGA, Techira ward, INEC staff and materials started after 8.00am. In Zaria, at Kusena ward, in Dan magaji PU013, materials and INEC arrived at 8.00am. The same was the case at Agwan Metiri in Zangon Kataf.

**b) Turnout of voters:**

Across the federation, voter's turnout was abysmally low relative to the level of turnout during the presidential and NASS elections. In majority of places, there is unrestricted movement, including vehicular and free movement of persons. Youths rather than participate in the elections, used the opportunity for extra-curricular activities, including playing football, getting engrossed in political analysis and socializing as a way of venting their anger against the electoral process.

In Benue and Kaduna states, as at 1.00pm, the turnout was low. The turnout, though improved marginally in Kaduna state, the improvement was really nothing to cheer about. During the

presidential and NASS elections, in places where 200 out of 500 voted, total number of voters in the Governorship and State Assembly elections increased to 230.

c) **Secrecy of the ballot:**

Secrecy of the ballot was observed as spelt out by the law. In all the polling stations observed, there were voting cubicles positioned to ensure secrecy.

In Benue state, voting cubicles were provided in all the polling units observed, including at North bank St. Mary primary school, PU010/13; North Bank 2, HUDCO quarters 2, PU007/10; North Bank, PU003; North Bank PU009; PU010 North Bank Market 2; North Bank Ward 1, PU019; Modern market by Hotel de success PU007; Mammy market ward PU017; Makurdi Atiisa ward, PU008; Igumale ward 1 in Ado LGA PU010; and Ankpa quarters under Ankpa/Wadata ward, PU008. In Kaduna state, voting cubicles were also provided for PU014 in Igabi LGA, Afaka ward, Makarata 1; PU025 in Angwan Sarki ward; PU013 In Zaria, at Kusena ward, Dan Magaji, and at Angwan Metiri in Zangon-Kataf.

d) **Security of the election:**

Learning from the presidential and NASS elections, security provisions for the Gubernatorial and House of Assembly elections were quite impressive. In the different units observed, they were at least three security personnel made up of the Police, civil defence and immigration. In some isolated polling units, the number of security personnel were 4, made up of police, civil defence, immigration road safety. The military this time were much more professional and were seen at strategic locations. This was the case in the polling units mentioned above.

e) **Location of polling units:** Unlike the challenge of people not being able to locate their polling units in the presidential and NASS elections, locating the polling units around was easy. The last election was indeed a learning in this respect both for the voters, INEC and other electoral stakeholders. The locations were accessible even to physically challenged persons and the locations also paved way for improved security arrangement as majority of the polling units and indeed the voting environment were confined within the precinct of primary schools. This was observed in the two focal states of Benue and Kaduna.

f) **Capability of INEC staff:**

INEC staff attended to the few persons that turned out. Their capacity and staying power were therefore not tested as to whether they have mastery of the processes in terms of conduct of free, fair and credible elections. The usual delay associated with accreditation including finger print verification by the card reader were not noticed. Sensitization of the electorates during setup was done, the ballot boxes were displayed to ensure nothing is inside, so also were the number of ballot papers. Though, these are not test of competent or capacity.

### **Challenges**

The challenges that characterized the Gubernatorial and State House of Assembly elections include the following;

1. Voter apathy
2. Vote buying (In isolated locations in Benue state)
3. Non-enforcement/adherence to restriction of movement
4. Non-display/pasting of list of registered voters at the different polling units

5. Unwillingness of INEC Adhoc staff in providing election information to observers particularly in Benue.
6. Inability of electorates to really recognize party logos.
7. The non-existence of a law that addresses the menace of vote buying

### **Recommendations**

Based on the issues highlighted above, the underlisted recommendations are critical for consideration;

- 1) INEC should improve the credibility and outcome of elections in order to restore the confidence of Nigerians in the electoral process.
- 2) INEC should collaborate with the National Orientation Agency (NOA), Political parties and Civil Society Organizations to intensify and deepen civic and voter education to improve voter turnout and participation of citizens in the electoral process.
- 3) INEC should forward an executive bill through the presidency to the NASS for enactment of a law to address the menace of vote buying
- 4) INEC should work closely with security agencies to ensure and enforce strict adherence to restriction of movement order for all elections to be organized in the country.
- 5) INEC should maintain the culture of pasting of list of registered voters in each polling unit for every election.
- 6) INEC should ensure production of accurate number of kits for all accredited election observers and include in their training to Adhoc staff the need to cooperate with accredited election observers.
- 7) INEC should review and toughen its political party's registration criteria so as to limit the number of political parties that will come on the ballot.

### **Conclusion**

The exercise was generally peaceful, and the turnout of voters was abysmally low. There is voter apathy, and citizens are increasingly losing faith in the electoral process. The non-existence of a law to deal with the challenge of vote buying, the absence of a strict regulation to guide political party registration and deregistration, has remained problematic. INEC, therefore, should brace up and take the recommendations above into focus and improve its processes and procedure in future elections to encourage increased citizen participation in elections.