

African Centre for Leadership, Strategy and Development (Centre LSD)

in Collaboration with

Priests Peace and Justice Initiative (PPJ).

Interim Report of the 2019 Presidential and National Assembly Elections, February 23, 2019.

The Africa Centre for Leadership Strategy and Development (Centre LSD) in collaboration with Priests Peace and Justice Initiative (PPJ) trained and deployed 419 domestic observers to 14 states (Akwa Ibom, Benue, Borno, Delta, Edo, Imo, Enugu, Kogi, Lagos, Niger, Kano, Oyo, Rivers,) of the federation and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). The observers engaged the highest number of Pentecostals to serve in election observation in the history of elections in Nigeria.

Reports from observers across 14 states and the FCT show that there were incidences of either late arrival of election officials or late commencement of voting. Confusion by some voters of their polling units, PVC validation error, and faulty card readers were some of the issues observed by our team.

Serious delays of arrival of voting materials were reported in several polling units in Kaduna (Gonigora 1 & 2), Benue, Enugu and certain parts of Akwa Ibom state. The reasons adduced for the delay ranges from non-availability of transportation facilities from where materials were collected to making the polling area conducive for personnel to set up voting structures. In some instances, there were equipment problems and procedural challenges (such as card readers having difficulty reading voters finger prints). However, observer reports also indicate that INEC personnel were on site to address issues with card readers at Area 8 Abuja.

During the voting process, considerable number of voters could not vote because the card readers was unable to read some of the PVCs presented at the polling units. It appeared that some of the PVCs were damaged or compromised and could not be used for voting. There was no provision in some polling units for voting without the card reader while in some other units the presiding officers used their discretion to apply the option of the Tender Ballot to collect the ballot paper.

There were other noticeable deficiencies in the INEC deployment of materials and the logistics used by INEC. There were ballot paper shortfalls in the ballot booklet in some polling units, absence of observer and media registers and even in the time that voting closed. There was a strategic disconnect in the INEC channel of communication. It was highly flawed as instructions that were meant for presiding officers were either wrongly delivered or were not delivered on time. Specifically, the additional time given for voting to continue in order to cover the earlier delay in the morning preparations were not duly delivered.

Overall, observation report suggest that INEC has a lot of intervention to make within the window provided before the governorship election. Specifically, INEC must improve its communication channels in order to create uniformity in the flow of information from the

Commission to the field and from the field to the Commission. It is with such information that the public will be able to meaningfully engage the democratic process and achieve the overall success the voting exercise required.

Finally, Nigerian citizens ought to be congratulated for the orderly conduct and massive turnout in many of the states as observers reported. There were a few reported incidences of vote buying in Kano, Port Harcourt and Benin as well as some pockets of violence in parts of Abuja; Idu and Kurudu near the Army Housing Estate, Lagos and Rivers but it is not enough to diminish the overall success of the process.