



## **INTERIM REPORT OF CENTRE LSD OBSERVATION OF THE GOVERNORSHIP, STATE ASSEMBLY AND FCT AREA COUNCIL ELECTIONS HELD ON MARCH 9, 2019.**

### **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. 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, observed the election with the Priests Peace and Justice Initiative (PPJ), the social arm of Palace of Priests Assembly (PPA) – a Pentecostal organization based in Abuja. The organizations deployed a total of 420 observers across the six geopolitical zones and the FCT. 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 Delta state, PU013 and 014 at Emonu-Orogun, and PU012 in Aragba-Orogun, INEC staff and materials arrived at 8.00am. In Kaduna state, the situation was the same. In Igabi LGA, at Afaka ward, Makanrata 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 arrived after 8.00am. In Zaria, at

Kusena ward, in Dan magaji PU013, materials and INEC officials arrived at 8.00am. The same was the case at Agwan Metiri in Zangon Kataf. In the FCT, Parks & Garden, Ward 01 unit 005; amusement park ward 01 unit 11; City Centre ward 01 unit 007; National Library ward 01 unit 08; Karu site Ilb near area court, PU010; Efab Lokogoma Ward 001 PU001a; INEC personnel and materials arrived before 8.00am. In Sokoto state, Bodinga Kaura Minyo PU001a; Bodinga low cost area PU014; INEC staff and materials arrived by 7.00am. In Jigawa state, Malamadori LGA, Audu Attah PU004 Ward 7, materials arrived by 8.00am.

In, PU 017, Ezimgbu Hall Space II, Port-Harcourt, Rivers State, Registration Area 01, materials arrived as early as 7.35 am. In PU 4 Ward 5 Lagelu LGA, Oyo state, material arrived at 7.30 am. Also, in PU 010, Ward 2, Oredo, Edo state, materials arrived at 7.44 am.

#### **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 were unrestricted movement, including vehicular and 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. In Ward 01, Area 2, Amusement Park, FCT where there were 1873 registered voters, only 108 voted. In PU 067 Ward Maisandari 13 in Maiduguri, Bornu State, the registered number of voters were 905 and only 309 voted

#### **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, Mankanranta 1; PU025 in Angwan Sarki ward; PU013 In Zaria, at Kusena ward, Dan Magaji, and at Angwan Metiri in Zangon-Kataf.

In PU013 and 014 at Emonu-Orogun; PU012 in Aragba-Orogun in Ughelli North LGA of Delta state; Ward 01 unit 005, Parks & Garden, ward 01 unit 11 amusement park; ward 01 unit 007 City Centre; ward 01 unit 08 National Library; PU010 Karu site Ilb near area court; Ward 001 PU001a Efab Lokogoma in the FCT; PU001a Bodinga Kaura Minyo; PU014 Bodinga low cost area in Sokoto state; PU004 Audu Attah Ward 7 Malammadori LGA in Jigawa state; voting cubicles were used. In PU 13, Ward 1, Abakpa, Enugu East, PU 2, Ward 6, Offot 1, Akwa Ibom, PU 010, Alhaji Jimoh/Badagry Street 11, Ikeja, Lagos and PU 017, Gamboru Liberty 05, M.M.C, Maiduguri, Borno state.

#### **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. In PU 085, Ward 13 Maisandari, Maiduguri, there were 6 security personnel made up of immigration, police and civil defence. PU 006 Ward 08 Awkunanaw, Enugu South LG there were 32 police officers. In PU 012, Tundu Wada South, Chachaga LGA of Niger State, there was a detachment of armed immigration officers. There were also a good presence of security in PU 002, Ward 06, Attan Ufot, Uyo with 12 security personnel working.

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 they 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 the case in Benue and

Kaduna States polling units. In the FCT the orderliness was exemplary in PU 017B, Dape Village; PU 014, SSS Quarters Jikwoyi, , PU 014, Karu Village and in PU 003 at Amapu Primary School, Owerri North LGA. The same applied to PU 011, Ward 2, Ikenugbu Layout, Owerri.

**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 competence or capacity. In PU 016, Maje Ward 9, Suleja, INEC staff were on top of the job, explaining details and being rather courteous. The same for PU 019, Tundu Wada South, Minna, Niger state as well as in Ward 14, PU 004 in Obuama, Degema in Kalabari, Rivers.

**g) Vote Buying:**

Vote buying became a sordid part of the gubernatorial and State House of Assembly Election. It was not even done discretely. In PU 001, Ward 2, L.A Primary School, Agbarho, Ughelli North, our observer said party officials were distributing brown envelopes said to contain money. In PU 012, Tundu Wada Ward 11, Tilapia Restaurant, politicians were sharing food to voters as inducement. Payment of the sum of N1000 was reported at PU 030, Gaji Ward 02, Kaduna North LGA, and security personnel apprehended a woman accused of paying money for votes. In Ward 004, Muslim Community Secondary School, Lokongoma, Lokoja, Kogi state, voters were paid to show their thumb printed ballot papers before dropping them into the ballot boxes. In Misandari Ward 067 MMC, Maiduguri a disagreement over the sharing ratio for money to the voters held up voting for a while. Most of the women refused to vote because they were not given money as it was done during the presidential election.

**Challenges**

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

1. Voter apathy
2. Vote buying
3. Non- enforcement/adherence to restriction of movement order.
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 the 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 registration criteria so as to limit the number of political parties that will come on the ballot.

### **Conclusion**

Although the exercise was generally peaceful, the apathy that characterized the elections, suggests that 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.

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