

February 16, 2019 Elections:

End of Campaigns, Citizens Expectations, and Trending Issues



CENTRE FOR DEMOCRACY
AND DEVELOPMENT



Election
Analysis
CENTRE

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As the political campaigns officially ended 12midnight on Thursday 14th February 2019, citizens are increasingly becoming more excited and anxious as we transiting from the periods of campaigns to the Election Day. Generally, across states there are continuous discussions about the campaigns, including debates on which of the major political parties had the most turnout and sophisticated political campaign rallies and messages. The discussions also include claims and counter-claims by parties about pictures and videos of crowds during political campaigns especially across perceived battleground states. As we are counting hours to the 16th February 2019 Presidential and National Assembly elections, citizens' expectations on the election is increasingly high. Citizens across various states are largely concerned about three major issues: peaceful elections, corruption especially in terms vote buying, and more importantly the use of fake news in misinforming citizens.

A review of the feedbacks from CDD election observers across states at the end of the political campaigns highlights the following using three contexts – the situation on electorates' readiness and expectations; trending issues across specific states relating to the 2019 elections; and what could be major threats peaceful election in the states as we have less than 14hours to the election:

Citizens' preparation and expectations

The information gathered at the time of this release from CDD observers across states of Kaduna, Kwara, Oyo, Ondo, Niger, Bayelsa, Taraba, Imo, Enugu, Osun, Benue, Abia, Yobe, Edo, and Cross River, revealed that citizens are in the mood for elections and prepared to vote with high expectations. However, in Benue, there is still increasing political tension in the state as the political campaigns ended. There is a general sense that a higher percentage of citizens in Benue have already made up their minds that they would likely vote massively for one particular political party tomorrow, February 16, 2019. There is also enthusiasm among the electorates as the common slogan across Benue state is "to remove from office all those who have not performed as an example for non performing politicians". There is high expectation and believe that their votes will count. In kwara, different civil society groups were reported be involved in peace campaign sensitization in the community, and INEC also conducted a door to door sensitization programme that further created awareness

on peaceful election towards the end of the political campaigns. In Osun, the level of voter Education is reported to be high in the sense as the campaigns ends, citizens are confident that they are prepared to exercise their franchise and also prepared to resist any form of rigging which may come up. Some are angry with the perceived role security agents played in the last governorship election in the state, while some are of the opinion that a similar incident will occur and their vote might not count.

In Abia, three categories of citizens have been identified: citizens who are eager and willing to vote on Saturday and their expectations are very high; citizens who have made up their minds not to vote because they perceive Saturday's presidential election will be bloody; then the hard core members of IPOB that are bent on sitting at home and are serious circulating the sit at home news. However, for the later, the recent news on cancellation of boycott of election by IPOB leadership might change the narrative on voter turnout during the election.

The situation in Yobe state is reported to be calm towards, although there is a feeling of insecurity in mostly insurgency affected communities. The INEC has however put measures by relocation about 24 after polling units to enable voters cast their votes in relatively peaceful locations.

In Enugu and Edo, people are calm and well prepared to go the poll and cast their vote on Saturday February 16, 2019. In Imo, the expectations of citizens is gauged to be low, as good number of citizens are becoming afraid of the election because of recent reported political killings and political crises across the state. In fact, voter apathy is expected in presidential elections in Imo state.

Key trending issues across states

In Benue, the two leading political parties are reported to have continued accusing each other about arming militia during February 16 2019 elections, and this situation has heightened political rivalry in the state. As observed, the very day all the political parties signed the peace accord in Benue, there was a clash of supporters of APC and PDP reported that led to a casualty. In Kwara, the major trending news revolves around peace campaigns, and in Oyo, the trending news have been around voters' participation during the elections, other trending news include possible low incidence of violence, likelihood of re-run elections, and the ongoing rivalry between the ruling party and the PDP in the state. In Cross River, some eligible voters believe that their vote will not count as a result of possible vote-buying, election rigging, violence etc. There is a sense that people have

developed phobia that 16 February 2019 election might result mayhem especially between the PDP and the APC political thugs. In Niger, the trending news is on the kidnapping of about 3 PDP ward chairmen in shiroro local government area as reported by the PDP state chairman has been trending.

In Osun, a good number of citizens are still not well informed about electoral guidelines on the issue of incident form, collation, pasting and declaration of results. Other issues trending in Osun is the strategic vote buying through different empowerment programme from politicians. In Abia, it is trending that February 16 election will be bloody and this has made some people to lose interest in the election. In Bayelsa, identity politics is trending, such that people are talking about the candidate who is amenable to their ethnic and religious feelings and positions. Other issues trending include, herdsmen, unfavourable policies to the region, increased non-political appointment to the people, sympathy to the former president Goodluck Jonathan, restructuring, etc. The top news in Enugu is the possibility of security personnel being a threat to free and fair election. While in Edo, the key trending issue is that INEC did not shortlist majority of persons applied to work with them as ad-hoc staff. There are allegations that they are all shortlisted by the ruling party. In Imo, recent political crisis across the state especially fight at various party campaigns and rallies, then IPOB threat to boycott elections and fear of more crisis during the poll.

Major threats to peaceful presidential and NASS elections across states

Concerns were raised by Kaduna citizens about fear of insurgents or armed bandits attack in some parts of the state. Bad weather (dusty weather) could affect election process such as late arrival of election materials and visibility during accreditation and voting.

In Benue, it is no longer news to hear about farmers/headers clash which has continued to claim lives. This situation has led to displacement of people from their ancestral homes. INEC must be commended in trying to create voting centres where IDPs are settled. Security is likely going to be a big challenge in Benue. The concern expressed by people of Benue is that the law does not allow security men to carry arms and what people are asking is that what if the headers strike at the election centres, how could the security personnel protect the ordinary citizen. Another major concern in Benue is the rivalry between the two dominant parties, APC and PDP. Recently the party campaign teams clashed at Guma local government area leading to the death of one person. The political atmosphere is tensed and this could cause fear in citizens and possibly lead to voter apathy as voters would prefer to remain in their homes.

In Kwara, the activities of thugs and hoodlums could be a major threat to peaceful elections in the state but increased security presence has been noticed in the state capital.

In Oyo, Cross River, Ondo, Osun, and Niger, citizens expressed concern that vote buying during elections, faulty smart card reader and poor enlightenment of electorates about accreditation and voting processes, political party thugs, partisan security agents, collation and announcement of wrong results, unprofessionalism of INEC officials, could cause violence or disruption of election on Saturday 16 February 2019.

In Abia, IPOB sit at home campaign and the reversal which some members are yet to believe could cause confusion and disruption by aggrieved members. The open political rancour between the PDP and APC candidates/supporters in Abia State is a call for worry. Fake news circulating that armed security men are arresting and molesting people before 6am and after 6pm is a major threat

In Bayelsa, the major threats to February 16, 2019 election in the state as alluded by citizens includes the conduct of political elites, the influence of money politics, fake news and propaganda, partisan role of traditional and religious institutions, the activities of militants and high level of criminality in the state. Whereas in Yobe, citizens are also worried about the issue of vote buying, using political thugs, corrupt election officials and insurgency of Boko Haram, In Enugu and Imo, the major threats expected is about conduct of security personnel, poor security of voters, and political thugs. In Edo, citizens said it will likely be more of power tussle and supremacy that would be a major threat to peaceful election on Saturday 16 February 2019 in the state. It is speculated that majority of citizens in Edo would likely vote for the PDP presidential candidate but, the position of the APC national and state leadership may not allow this to happen and this might result to intimidation and violence.



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