

UPDATES ON ELECTION OF 9TH MARCH 2019.



4pm | 10 March, 2019

1. Introduction

The Centre for Democracy and Development's Election Analysis Centre (EAC) deployed observers to 17 politically-charged and violence-prone battleground states for the elections. Our fake news tracking and analysis unit has continued the work of monitoring and combating fake news and hate speech throughout the election period. For its part, our EAC, which is composed of leading experts on elections and democracy, reconvened to cover the Gubernatorial and State Houses of Assembly elections. This update is the latest in the series of updates that the CDD Election Analysis Centre has issued on the 2019 General Elections. It follows on from the interim report that we released at 4 pm yesterday, Saturday 9th March 2019

2. Logistics and Operations

Two weeks after millions of Nigerians voted in the Presidential and National Assembly elections, voters returned to the polling units again to cast their vote in the Gubernatorial and State Houses of Assembly elections.

Generally, there appears to be some improvement in the Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) handling of logistics, with our observers reporting early arrival of election materials and personnel in most locations. This is in sharp contrast with the Presidential and National Assembly polls in which late opening of polls was widespread.

However, there were significant challenges which affected the smooth conduct of the polls yesterday. The Smart Card Readers (SCRs), which authenticate the Permanent Voters Card, accredit voters and matches voter biometrics to the INEC database, was dogged by glitches, mainly when it came to reading and matching the fingerprints of voters. In some places where they deliberately refused to use the smart card readers, manual voting was reported by our observers in locations like polling Unit Kazawa Primary school polling unit in Kazawa Ward of Kano Central Senatorial District and Unwanar Ganji Open Space Ward in Rimi Gado of Kano north Senatorial District. We are monitoring INEC' compliance with her guidelines on cancellation of results where the SCR were not used.

3. Voter Turn Out

The elections of 9th March were characterised by low voter turnout in many parts of the country. Some of those interviewed by our observers expressed interest only in the outcome of the Presidential elections, while some expressed doubt as to whether their votes will count. The threat of violence also kept away some voters from the polls.

4. Electoral Violence

The CDD EAC finds worrying the quantum of violence that characterised the elections this year. A total of thirty people has so far been killed across the country. Armed thugs turned their guns on citizens and opposing political parties. We also noted the actions of armed bandits and Boko Haram insurgents in Katsina and Adamawa states.

We also note with dismay the activities of security personnel around the country, who have been accused of interference in the electoral process and failure to protect electoral staff and materials. We flag the need to review the rules of engagement guiding the involvement of security personnel in election duties. It is saddening that a suspected ballot box snatcher was killed and that an aide to a candidate also lost his life to so-called accidental discharge.

A. Intimidation and abductions

Different forms of threats, harassment, intimidation and assault were reported during the elections. We reckon that these attempts are aimed at undermining the system usually to favour the perpetrators. Our monitors on the ground did not only report cases of intimidation but were victims, too. One of our observers was arrested by soldiers in the Mile 2 area of Lagos by soldiers on his way to cover the protest over non-payment of allowances by ad-hoc staff. Political thugs slapped and abducted our observer in at PU 2 Afaha Nsit ward of Akwa Ibom and later requested a ransom. Our observer was abducted by political thugs for reporting and sharing photos and permanent voter's card of underaged voters in Polling Unit 15, Ward 04 of Shendam local government area of in Plateau state. He was later released. In a related incident, a politician slapped a BBC journalist in Lagos in a brazen show of power.

By extension, the weaponisation of abductions of INEC staff and the ad-hoc staff is worrisome and constitutes a drawback to the progress we have made so far. INEC officials were kidnapped and later released in Benue, Katsina, Kogi, Imo, Akwa Ibom and Rivers during voting and collation of results, with Katsina alone recording 20 cases of abductions.

B. Arson

We also noticed that arson was, like abductions, used as a weapon during gubernatorial and state houses of assembly polls, a shift away from the trend before the presidential and national assembly elections where burning of offices occurred in the run-up to the polls. The deliberate burning of the electoral commission's offices and election materials and ballot was reported in Ibesikpo Local Government Area of the state on March 8 and yesterday before the commencement of voting, political thugs burned down three Registration Area Centres (RACs) in Okposi in Ohaozara LGA as well as Oriuzor and Ekka in Ezza North LGA all in Ebonyi state.

Similar incidents were reported in of thugs burning election materials in Ward 10 Unit 6 in Usagbe Primary School, Ogbido in Etsako West LGA of Edo state and razing down a Roman Catholic primary school in Aya containing electoral materials meant for Mbalom ward in Gwer East Local Government Area of Benue.

5. Electoral Irregularities

The CDD EAC is seriously concerned at the level of electoral irregularities in some states. In Imo State, for instance, shortly after the commencement of voting, it was reported that there was open ballot stuffing at polling unit 010A and 010B at Mbutu Ward, Aboh Mbaise, Local Government Area of the State. This was the polling unit for Emeka Ihedioha, former Deputy Speaker of the Federal House of Representatives and the PDP's governorship candidate in the election. Ihedioha had not yet cast his vote at the time of the incident, so it was difficult to know whether his supporters did it or sponsored by his opponents who wanted him to humiliate him by making him lose at his polling unit.

INEC announced on the election day the sacking of its ad hoc staff in the state on the grounds that they had been compromised by politicians and announced new ad hoc staff on the election day (apparently to ensure they would not be compromised). However, it was said that even the new set of ad hoc staff appointed on the election day was also compromised.

In Eziamaka Obire, Nkwere Local Government Area of the State, political thugs reportedly murdered a PDP party agent following an argument in one of the polling units in the state.

Voting by unaccredited voters: In Ward 002 Karanolu, in Nwangede Local Government Area of the State, angry youths upturned and destroyed ballot boxes in protest against voting by unaccredited voters. Before upturning the ballot boxes, the angry youths had reportedly demanded the cancellation of some votes by the unaccredited voters but were allegedly rebuffed by the electoral officials.

The police reportedly arrested no fewer than 105 political thugs in the State. The thugs were allegedly arrested for offences that ranged from ballot box snatching to disrupting elections, harassing electoral officials and impersonating police officers.

Vote buying remains a significant concern during the governorship and state houses of assembly elections. Buying and selling of votes prevailed despite the warning by INEC, security agencies and the anti-corruption agencies. On the ground, our observers reported seeing EFCC arresting people involved in vote buying. For example, the EFCC arrested some prominent party stalwart in Benue and Kwara states.

However, reports from our observers indicate significant role played by voters and politicians in the vote trading market. The trend, as we observed, is that voters are bargaining for a higher amount and sell their vote to the party with the ability to meet their demand. The trend is that votes traded from as low as N250 to N7,000.

Another worrying trend observed was that supporters of mainstream party disguising as a member of the smaller party to buy votes for their parties. Also, we gathered that agents of smaller parties were influenced to purchase votes on behalf of the dominant parties.

Cases of underage voting were reported by our observers in Kano, Bauchi and Plateau States. INEC needs to address the issue of underage voting for future elections seriously.

6. Collation Challenges

Throughout the entire election season, we have consistently demanded strict adherence to INEC's rules and regulations on collation. We have also consistently requested that observers and journalists be allowed access to collation centres. We note, however, that observers were denied access to collation centres in some parts of the country, particularly Rivers, Zamfara and Akwa Ibom States.

Late commencement of collation was reported in many states, and of particular interest is the case of Plateau and Benue states where collation is just beginning.

We note with dismay the invasion of collation centres by some prominent politicians, the abduction and attempted inducement of collation officers. More worryingly, we have just received unconfirmed that some lives have been lost in a collation centre in Ondo State. This is a troubling development.

7. Welfare and Training of Ad-hoc Staff

We are particularly concerned about the welfare of ad-hoc and other election staff. It took protests in several states for some of them to get their allowances. Yesterday ad-hoc staff in Mile 2 area of Lagos state, for example, protested over non-payment of their allowances. By implication, this might deter corps members from participating in future elections, meaning we might be confronted with staff shortage amid a growing population and an expanding voter register. We also question the nature of training offered to ad-hoc staff in the run-up to the elections, at least not with reports of inefficiency and poor technical knowledge among election staff. To make training more useful and suitable for elections, INEC must stay away from offering training that use samples and simulated scenarios to prepare election staff for the Election Day.

8. Conclusion

The EAC, in conclusion, finds it pertinent to place the observations and analysis in this report in the broader context of the sustainability of elections as mechanisms for the democratic management of diversity in our country. It is in this light that the EAC directs attention to the disturbing degeneration of our country's competitive and electoral politics since the 2015 general elections, as exemplified in the securitisation, vote-

buying and mindless violence witnessed during the Ekiti and Osun governorship elections and the just concluded 2019 general elections. Beyond electoral outcomes, the country needs to strengthen the process leading to and resulting in them in a manner to create a fair playing ground for all political parties and a political and legal framework that will ensure electoral integrity.

The EAC finds a glimmer of hope in two developments emerging out of the 2019 general elections: the resilience of the Nigerian voter's commitment to democracy and the unfolding third force movement, both of which should be mobilized to make democratic elections a force for development, peace, human security and national integration in our country.



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