



Centre for Democracy & Development

Centre pour la démocratie et le développement



# ANALYSIS: FEMALE CANDIDATURE AND NIGERIA'S 2023 ELECTIONS

Ebunoluwa Afolabi

DECEMBER 2022



# About the CDD

The Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) was established in the United Kingdom in 1997 as an independent, not-for-profit, research training, advocacy and capacity building organisation. The purpose was to mobilise global opinion and resources for democratic development and provide an independent space to reflect critically on the challenges posed to the democratisation and development processes in West Africa.

CDD West Africa does not take institutional positions on public policy issues; the views represented herein are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the CDD or West African Insights.

This paper may not be reproduced in whole or in part, in any form, in any registered online or print publication without express permission from the Centre for Democracy and Development.



# INTRODUCTION

---

Women made up roughly 47.1% of the 84 million registered voters in the 2019 general elections. A further 3.29 million have registered ahead of the 2023 polls, as compared with 3.2 million men. Yet although women make up a significant portion of the electorate in Nigeria, the country's political landscape has historically been male dominated. No female governors were elected in 2019, a pattern that has remained constant since the return to democracy in 1999.

In the 2015 elections, there were 122 women out of 747 senatorial candidates, representing 16.3% of all candidates nominated by political parties. In the House of Representatives, of the 1,774 candidates put forward, 267 were women, representing only 15.1%. Of these 389 women, only 29 won seats: seven were elected to the Senate and 22 to the House of Representatives<sup>1</sup>. In 2019, 235 women (12.3%) contested for seats in the Senate with 533 women, out of 4,680 candidates, vying for seats in the House of Representatives, just 11.4%<sup>2</sup>. Although the number of female aspirants was almost double, just eight women were elected to the Senate - representing districts in Adamawa, Akwa Ibom, Anambra, Ekiti, Lagos, Plateau, and Rivers - and 13 to the House of Representatives - representing constituencies in Abia, Anambra, Benue, Borno, Ekiti, Gombe, Imo, Ogun, Osun, Oyo, Plateau, Rivers, and Yobe. Meaning that the overall percentage of women holding seats in the legislature decreased from 6.1% to 4.4%. According to 2021 data compiled by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Nigeria's female political representation ranks 184th out of 190 nations worldwide<sup>3</sup>.

---

1. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/features-and-interviews/179136-analysis-2015-elections-hold-no-promise-for-improved-women-representation-in-nigerian-politics.html>

2. <https://cddwestafrica.org/how-women-fared-in-the-2019-elections/>

3. <https://www.ipu.org/women-in-politics-2021>

# LOOKING TOWARDS 2023

Following the release of the final list of candidates for the 2023 general elections, a decline in the presence of female candidates is observable at all levels<sup>4</sup>. At the presidential level, just one female candidate will be on the ballot, Princess Chichi Ojei<sup>5</sup> of the Allied People's Movement (APM). Barr. Uju Ken Ohanenye, the only female presidential candidate in the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) presidential primaries, stepped down in favour of Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu<sup>6</sup>. No party is fielding a female as the vice-presidential candidate.

Table 1: Candidates' representation

Positions	Total number of candidates	Number of positions	Male	Female
President	18	1	17	1
Vice President	18	1	18	0
Senatorial	1101	109	1009	92
House of Representatives	3107	469	2821	286
Governorship	419	28	394	25
Deputy Governorship	419	28	317	102
State Assembly	10,225	990	9179	1046
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,307</b>	<b>1,626</b>	<b>13,755</b>	<b>1,552</b>

4. <https://inecnigeria.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Final-List-of-Candidates-for-National-Elections-1.pdf>

5. <https://businessday.ng/politics/article/an-amazon-in-the-midst-of-17-men-the-story-of-apms-presidential-candidate-chichi-ojei/>

6. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/06/22/nigeria-male-gerontocracy-2023-election-tinubu-abubakar-obi/>

Overall, of the four major political parties, the New Nigeria's People's Party (NNPP) has the most female candidates (106) with the All Progressives Congress (APC) proposing just four less. The Labour Party (LP) and People's Democratic Party (PDP) have 80 and 72 female candidates, respectively. The remaining female aspirants are standing on tickets of 14 other political parties.

Table 2: Female candidates by election seat and political party

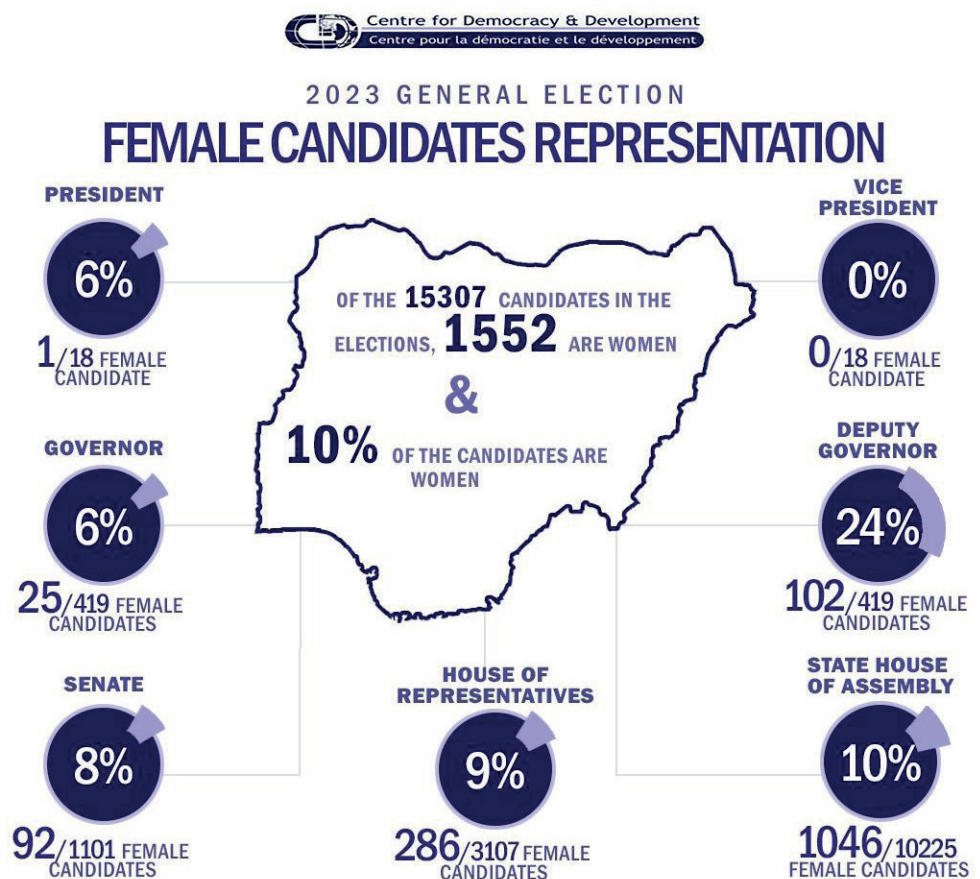
Party	Female Candidates (Presidential)	Female Candidates (Vice President)	Female Candidates (Governors)	Female Candidates (Deputy Governors)	Female Candidates' Senate	Female Candidates House Of Representatives	Female Candidates State House Of Assembly
Accord (A)	0	0	1	7	8	17	34
AA	0	0	2	7	2	12	118
AAC	0	0	0	5	0	0	17
ADC	0	0	1	8	9	42	89
ADP	0	0	3	10	6	12	132
APP	0	0	2	6	8	9	45
APC		0	1	2	4	21	74
APGA	0	0	1	3	2	16	23
APM	1	0	3	6	4	23	72
BP	0	0	1	6	1	6	34
LP	0	0	1	6	4	12	57
NRM	0	0	2	6	10	13	72
NNPP	0	0	0	5	8	24	69
PDP	0	0	0	6	5	18	43
PRP	0	0	1	5	1	10	39
SDP	0	0	3	6	9	27	69



YPP	0	0	1	2	5	11	19
ZPL	0	0	2	6	6	13	40
<b>18</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>286</b>	<b>1046</b>

One of the reasons so few women win seats is because the majority contest on the tickets of smaller parties that rarely win seats in the first place. This pattern looks likely to repeat itself in 2023. At the Senatorial level the National Rescue Movement (NRM) having the highest number of female candidates with 10, followed by the Social Democratic Party (SDP) with nine, whilst the Accord Party and NNPP have eight each. The APC and PDP together have nine female aspirants. In total 1,101 candidates will contest for election to the 109-member Senate in 2023, but just 92 (or 8.4%) are women. Looked at by geographic distribution Bauchi, Kano, Sokoto, Taraba, and Yobe have zero female representatives to choose from while in states like Zamfara, Plateau, Nasarawa, Kebbi, Kaduna, FCT, Ebonyi, and Benue there is just one female candidate covering the three senatorial districts.

Figure 1: Female aspirants in Nigeria's 2023 elections



Out of 3,122 candidates, only 286, or 9.2%, are women in contests to be elected to the House of Representatives. The African Democratic Congress (ADC) has the highest representation of female candidates with 42, followed by SDP with 28 candidates. The APC has 21 female candidates and PDP slightly less with 18. Looked at by geographic distribution, Jigawa has zero female representatives contesting while Zamfara, Nasarawa, Kogi, and Katsina states have just a solitary female candidate each.

At the State House of Assembly and Governorship levels the pattern are repeated. Just 1,046 of the 10,225 aspirants are female (10.2%). The ADP has 132 female candidates, which is the highest amongst the 18 political parties contesting for elective office in 2023, with the ruling APC having 74 and the main opposition PDP fielding just 48. Whilst 416 candidates will run for governor across the federation's 28 states where elections are scheduled to take place just 24 of them - 6% of the total - are women. No female candidate is running in eleven states. The ADP, APM, and SDP have the highest number of female candidates on the ballot with three each.

Figure 2: Female candidates in 2023 by geopolitical zone



As for the geographic distribution of female candidates, northern regions have lower levels of female candidature than those in the south. Bayelsa is the only state in all the south-south, southeast, and southwest political zones that has fewer female aspirants (26) than the best-performing state in the northwest Kaduna, which has 29 female aspirants.

Table 3: States with the highest number of female candidates in each geopolitical zone

<b>ZONE</b>	<b>STATE</b>	<b>TOTAL NUMBER</b>
<b>SOUTHWEST</b>	<b>LAGOS</b>	<b>114</b>
<b>SOUTHEAST</b>	<b>IMO</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>SOUTH SOUTH</b>	<b>RIVERS</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>NORTH CENTRAL</b>	<b>BENUE</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>NORTHEAST</b>	<b>GOMBE</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>NORTHWEST</b>	<b>KADUNA</b>	<b>29</b>

Table 4: States with the lowest number of female candidates in each geopolitical zone

<b>ZONE</b>	<b>STATE</b>	<b>TOTAL NUMBER</b>
<b>NORTHEAST</b>	<b>YOBE</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>NORTHWEST</b>	<b>KATSINA</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>NORTH CENTRAL</b>	<b>FCT</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>SOUTH SOUTH</b>	<b>BAYELSA</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>SOUTHWEST</b>	<b>ONDO</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>SOUTHEAST</b>	<b>ABIA</b>	<b>46</b>



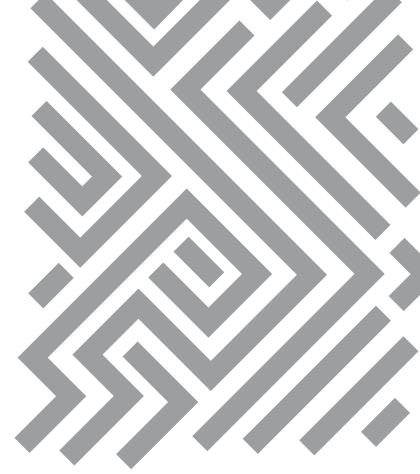


Table 5: States with female candidates in the north-central zone

STATE	GOVERNOR-SHIP	DEPUTY GOVERNOR-SHIP	SENATE	HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES	STATE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY	TOTAL
<b>BENUE</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>KWARA</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>KOGI</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>NIGER</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>NASARAWA</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>PLATEAU</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>FCT- ABUJA</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>						<b>234</b>

Table 6: States with female candidates in the northeast zone

STATE	GOVERNOR-SHIP	DEPUTY GOVERNORSHIP	SENATE	HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES	STATE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY	TOTAL
<b>GOMBE</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>TARABA</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>ADAMAWA</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>BAUCHI</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>BORNO</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>YOBE</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>						<b>127</b>

Table 7: States with female candidates in the northwest zone

STATE	GOVERNORS	DEPUTY	SENATE	HOUSE OF REP- REPRESENTATIVES	STATE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY	TOTAL
KADUNA	0	4	1	5	19	29
KEBBI	0	2	1	4	20	27
KANO	2	1	0	4	20	27
SOKOTO	0	2	0	5	11	18
ZAMFARA	1	2	1	1	9	14
JIGAWA	1	2	2	0	5	10
KATSINA	0	0	2	1	5	8
<b>TOTAL</b>						<b>133</b>

Table 8: States with female candidates in the southeast zone

STATE	GOVERNORS	DEPUTY	SENATE	HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES	STATE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY	TOTAL
IMO	0	0	2	19	65	86
ENUGU	1	6	4	7	59	77
ANAMBRA	0	0	6	15	53	74
EBONYI	1	2	1	8	36	48
ABIA	2	4	3	12	25	46
<b>TOTAL</b>						<b>331</b>

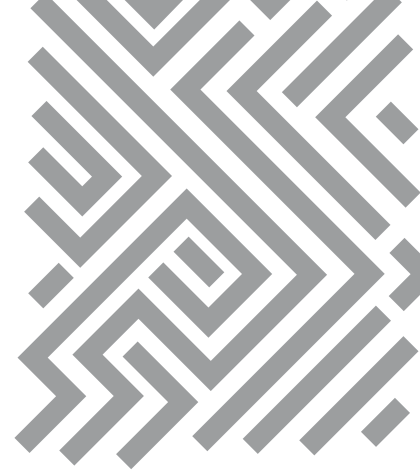


Table 9: States with female candidates in the south-south zone

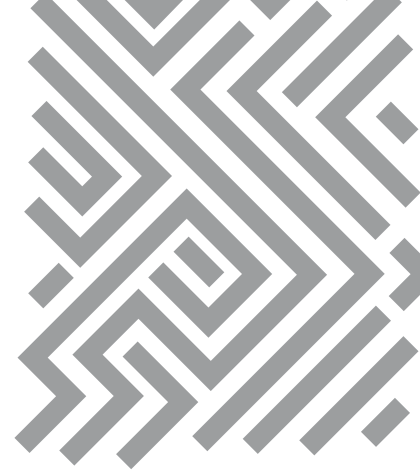
STATE	PRESIDENTIAL	GOVERNORS	DEPUTY	SENATE	HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES	STATE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY	TOTAL
<b>RIVERS</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>AKWA IBOM</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>DELTA</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>CROSS RIVER</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>EDO</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>BAYELSA</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>							<b>337</b>

Table 10: States with female candidates in the southwest zone

STATE	GOVERNORS	DEPUTY	SENATE	HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES	STATE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY	TOTAL
<b>LAGOS</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>114</b>
<b>OGUN</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>OYO</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>OSUN</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>EKITI</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>ONDO</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>						<b>390</b>

Table 11: Female candidates of major political parties by geo-political zone

Political Party	Geo-political Zone	Number of Female Candidates
PDP	<b>North Central</b>	7
	<b>Northwest</b>	5
	<b>South-south</b>	30
	<b>Northeast</b>	5
	<b>Southeast</b>	9
	<b>Southwest</b>	10
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>66</b>
APC	<b>Northcentral</b>	16
	<b>Northwest</b>	0
	<b>South-south</b>	8
	<b>Northeast</b>	10
	<b>Southeast</b>	35
	<b>Southwest</b>	27
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>96</b>
Labour Party	<b>Northcentral</b>	16
	<b>Northwest</b>	2
	<b>South-south</b>	26
	<b>Northeast</b>	6
	<b>Southeast</b>	11
	<b>Southwest</b>	19
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>80</b>
NNPP	<b>Northcentral</b>	16
	<b>Northwest</b>	2
	<b>South-south</b>	26
	<b>Northeast</b>	6
	<b>Southeast</b>	11
	<b>Southwest</b>	19
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>80</b>



---

This broad trend is reflected in the female candidates that have emerged to contest for elective office on the PDP and APC tickets. The PDP is fielding its highest number of female candidates (30) in the south-south but has just five candidates in the northeast and northwest respectively. Whilst the APC has 35 female candidates in the southeast and 27 in the southwest, but not a single female candidate in the northwest and just 10 in the northeast. Even the NNPP, whose presidential flagbearer is a prominent figure in northern Nigeria politics, has only 30% of its female candidates contesting in the three northern zones.

## EXPLANATIONS AND IMPACTS

---

Female participation in politics is inhibited by issues of political violence and godfatherism<sup>7</sup>, as well as by the prevailing patriarchal attitudes of prospective voters, particularly in northern Nigeria. Nigerian politics is highly influenced by political godfathers who are predominantly males, and women are very rarely viewed by these godfathers as strong enough to be invested in during elections. This practice has narrowed down the chance of being nominated or elected to office, especially in the larger political parties. Violence against women in politics also remains predominant and worrisome, with issues such as physical violence, most times intended to force women to resign or withdraw from political life, sexual violence, including sexual harassment and assault, and psychological violence like threats, character assassination, and online abuse, to the fore in recent elections<sup>8</sup>.


The monetization of the electoral process is another element that presents a barrier as many women do not have easy access to the necessary resources. Nomination form waivers granted to women by some political parties such as the

---

7. <https://www.rsisinternational.org/journals/ijriss/Digital-Library/volume-4-issue-11/318-325.pdf>

8. <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2021/Guidance-note-Preventing-violence-against-women-in-politics-en.pdf>





APC<sup>9</sup>, and APGA<sup>10</sup>, have done little to increase the number of female candidates. In part that is because the dominant political parties themselves remain barriers to the effective political participation of women. Their leadership remains male dominated and unwilling to seriously advance female political participation despite some having provisions for gender quotas. For example, in 2020 the PDP adopted a 35% quota on affirmative action for women<sup>11</sup>, which provides that, in nomination for party offices, not less than 35% of positions shall be reserved for women. Despite this, the reserved quotas have yet to be achieved<sup>12</sup>. The fact that only a handful of female candidates emerge on the ticket of the dominant political parties – APC and PDP – impacts their chances of electoral victory. Whilst the growth of new, smaller political parties has provided women more visibility and opportunities to run for office at the state and federal levels this weakens their chances of getting elected, as most seats continue to be won by the APC and PDP.

Female representation in governance, could lead to improvements in the overall political situation in the country, as well as make it easier to achieve gender equality, by bringing issues that disproportionately affect Nigerian women forward, by those who have experienced marginalisation itself<sup>13</sup>. Another critical strategy to support this is to create a more enabling environment that allows women to engage meaningfully in decision-making processes, at all levels of governance, in a sustainable and effective way that is free from intimidation, violence, and harassment. Even though improved women's political participation may not provide an instant solution to women's issues, it can help by bringing them to the fore and placing them more firmly on the agenda.

---

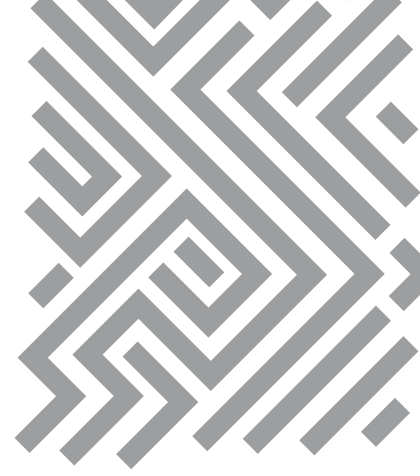
9. <https://www.arise.tv/apc-declares-free-nomination-forms-for-women-seeking-elective-office-in-2023/>

10. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2022/04/2023-apga-cuts-nomination-fees-for-women-youth-by-50/>

11. <https://nigerianwomentrustfund.org/woman-leaders-describe-pdps-35-percent-affirmative-action-for-women-at-all-levels-as-progress-for-women-in-nigeria/>

12. <https://punchng.com/pdp-berated-over-low-female-representation-in-south-west/>

13. <https://ejpr.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/1475-6765.12449>



© 2022 Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD-West Africa). All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means without permission in writing from the Centre for Democracy and Development. Please direct inquiries to:

Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD-West Africa)  
Research Department  
16, A7 Street Mount Pleasant Estate (CITEC)  
Federal Capital Territory (F.C.T) Abuja  
[research@cddwestafrica.org](mailto:research@cddwestafrica.org)  
[cddabv@cddwestafrica.org](mailto:cddabv@cddwestafrica.org)

[CDDwestafrica.org](http://CDDwestafrica.org)

This publication can be requested or downloaded at no cost at [westafricaninsights.org](http://westafricaninsights.org)  
Cover Image: Commonwealth Secretariat  
Attribution-NonCommercial (CC BY-NC 2.0)  
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/comsec/50109553957>



Centre for Democracy & Development

Centre pour la démocratie et le développement



16 A7 Street, CITEC Mount Pleasant Estate, Jabi Airport Road,  
Mbora District, Abuja, FCT



[cddwestafrica.org](http://cddwestafrica.org)



[research@cddwestafrica.org](mailto:research@cddwestafrica.org)



[@cddwestafrica](https://twitter.com/cddwestafrica)