

**#NigeriaDecides2023 #CDDEAC2**



## **INCREASED VIOLENCE AND VOTE BUYING RECORDED IN GOVERNORSHIP ELECTIONS**

March 2023





---

# ABOUT 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.



**O**n 17 March, CDD launched the Election Analysis Centre (EAC) and presented its preliminary preview report of the one-week delayed 28 governorship and 36 state house of assembly elections that are now underway across the country.

Building on key thematic areas identified during the presidential election, the report focused on issues of identity, insecurity, institutional preparedness, intra and inter party disputes, the importance of personalities over parties and voter participation in the process. These will continue to be key themes in our analysis of this election process and will shape our in-depth post-election report. We will continue to flag key election contests across the country.

This initial statement focuses on the voting process now underway, and is based on reports from the more than 1,200 observers deployed by CDD across all 36 states. It focuses on the opening of polls, presence of Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and security officials and the use of BVAS machines. In addition, it captures initial reports of vote trading, election-related violence and reflections on turnout as of 1100. The statement identifies trends by zone, and highlights states to keep an eye on as the voting continues.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Voting largely commenced on time across all six geo-political zones, an improvement on the presidential process.
- Sporadic incidents linked to insufficient availability and questionable integrity of voting materials were reported but voting has generally proceeded with minimal incidents, with BVAS functionality high, across the country.
- An initial trend of lower voter engagement with the process in states across the country has been observed with Kano and Katsina notable exceptions
- There has been an increase in vote trading for goods and cash across political parties and the geo-political zones when compared to 25 February polls.
- In the heightened political environment, party agents and politically sponsored thugs, coupled with reduced presence of security agents, have contributed to increased violent incidents in Kano, Lagos, Enugu, Rivers, Yobe and Kogi.
- South-south, southeast and southwest parts of the country in particular have recorded the most violent incidents so far.
- Violent conduct around polling units increases the risk of conflict, post-election litigation, or the prospect of supplementary elections.
- Lagos, Bayelsa, Edo, Rivers, Benue, Adamawa, Bauchi, Gombe, Enugu and Ebonyi are states CDD intends to closely monitor as we move towards the counting of ballots and collation of results.



---

## INEC PERFORMANCE

---

As compared with the 25 February elections, we note that polls largely opened in a prompter fashion across the country. In the southwest zone, for example, INEC officials arrived on time and commenced voting and accreditation as scheduled in over 80% of observed polling units. This trend is broadly consistent across the six geo-political zones. In Anambra state 75% of polling units had INEC officials who arrived on time with voting commencing on average at 0841. There was even a report of INEC officials in Benue state having slept over at the polling unit to ensure they began on time. Occasional issues of delays have been reported but on the whole the arrival and opening of polls is improved. However there have been some incidents linked to insufficient availability and questionable integrity of voting materials.

In Yobe state, observers in Fika LGA reported that only three of the 10 polling units had results sheets. In Gwandu LGA of Kebbi state voters had yet to start casting their vote at 1000 because INEC officials did not have the ballot papers allocated for the polling unit. In Brass LGA in Bayelsa state, INEC officials reportedly tore out ballot papers from the register before the start of election with party agents refusing to allow elections to commence until all the ballot papers were recounted. Likewise, in Ekeremor LGA in the state, the total number of registered voters was reportedly more than the number of ballot papers provided.

The BVAS seem to largely be functioning adequately across the country. In the southwest, the BVAS was correctly programmed for accreditation in over 95% of cases. There have been occasional issues with the BVAS machines. In one instance in Abakaliki LGA, Ebonyi state BVAS was not being used for accreditation. However, for the most part these examples remain outliers.

We note that in a handful of polling units in Taraba, Lagos, and Plateau states voting has already concluded due to the number of registered voters being very small - less than 10 - and results have already been uploaded to IReV.

However we note with concern that voting has been concluded and results uploaded in a handful of polling units where a significant fraction of registered voters have not voted. For instance, results were uploaded from Agbado Hall Edjekota Ogor, Ughelli North, Delta state before 2.30pm, despite only 130 of the 192 voters on the register having had an opportunity to cast their vote. CDD will continue to monitor the level and quality of the uploading of results to the portal as polls close across the country.

## POPULAR PARTICIPATION

---

Voter turnout is varied across the region, but a number of observers are reporting lower levels of public participation in these polls so far. While there seems to be a general low turnout in relation to the presidential election, different dynamics are affecting the turn out across the different geopolitical zones. States where the incumbent is being significantly challenged by his opponent are experiencing a relatively higher turnout.





In south-south there is a general sense of discouragement that due to the unfavourable outcome of the presidential election ‘there is no point’ of coming out to vote. For instance, voters were seen leaving the polling unit at Obio Akpor In Rivers, as there were no INEC officials on ground. But in Kano and Katsina, early indications point to significant numbers of voters waiting to cast their ballots.

While there were reduced accounts of voter trading during the 25 February presidential election when compared to the 2022 off-cycle polls, there have been many more instances nationwide reported by our observers during these elections. This is likely a reflection of the heightened political environment around governorship polls, the importance of local personalities in state-level politics, and the ongoing shortages of fuel and naira.


## VOTE TRADING

Those who are participating appear to be more open to inducement for casting their ballot, with vote trading being undertaken by all political parties across Nigeria’s six geopolitical zones. Observers in the southwest reported significant instances of vote buying by different parties in different states. Social Democratic Party agents reportedly took down names of voters, with the aim of repayment later, in Ekiti state, while there were similar accusations of the All Progressives Congress (APC) and People’s Democratic Party (PDP) officials actively soliciting votes in Oyo and Ogun states respectively. In the southeast, there were reports of All Progressives Grand Alliance and Labour Party (LP) party agents using materials, phones and other souvenirs to entice voters in Anambra state. In the south-south, multiple party agents reported a desire for voters to show proof of their vote before being paid, with party agents reportedly compiling a list of their voters in Esan Central LGA, Edo state.

In the northwest, observers in all seven states reported increased reports of vote trading, primarily by APC and PDP party agents, with money used alongside other materials such as food items, wrappers and a ‘credit voucher’ to be redeemed after the results. In the northeast, APC and PDP party agents in multiple polling units in Taraba reportedly infiltrated the queue, pretended to be voters and used the chance to offer cash for votes. There were also reports of incidents involving party agents in Bauchi and Yobe who were recorded campaigning and soliciting for votes at polling units. There were multiple incidents reported in the northcentral. Observers noted suspected PDP agents buying votes in Katsina Ala, Benue state for at least N1000, while there were reports of collusion between the APC and PDP agents in Mikang LGA, Plateau state where there has been trading of votes and informal arrangements between parties to support alternative candidates for governor and state house of assembly elections.

## VIOLENCE AND INTIMIDATION

There have been more reported incidents of violence, which reinforces the heightened political environment that these polls have been conducted in. These incidents have often involved party agents and politically sponsored thugs in states including Kano, Jigawa, Lagos, Enugu, Bayelsa, Rivers and Yobe. The reduced presence of security officials could also be a factor explaining the number of violent incidents



---

Observers across the states in the south-south, southwest and northwest reported a much smaller security presence, especially when compared to the presidential election. This led to repeated skirmishes and fights between voters, party agents and officials. For example, observers in Enugu reported clashes between the party representatives, while others in Jigawa highlighted similar issues between self-professed party members.

Voter suppression was an area of concern identified during the presidential election and our preview of the gubernatorial polls and this prediction appears to have been well grounded. Many observers, particularly in Lagos, highlighted intimidation and suppression tactics carried out, with an example in the Lagbasa and Ado primary school in Ajah, where there were reports of voters being flogged. In Ilaje Bariga Somolu Ward Polling Unit 031, thugs chased away voters who were perceived to be supporters of political opponents. In the first six hours of the day, a flurry of voter intimidation videos, particularly from Lagos state, have circulated on social media.

Thuggery has been used to disrupt the process in different parts of the country, with repeated examples of this in the south-south. Observers noted that a Registration Area Centre in Ogbia LGA, Bayelsa was attacked by thugs who carted away BVAS devices and election materials. There were other reports in Ukanafun LGA, Akwa Ibom, where thugs attacked a polling unit and scared away voters. Election materials were also hijacked at gunpoint in Emolga LGA and thugs also disrupted the process in Obio Akpor LGA, both in Rivers state. A similar incident was reported in the Sokoto North where some cubicles were destroyed and deprived voters of secrecy while voting. Finally, in Durmawa Ward Bebeji LGA, Kano an estimated 200 casted votes were destroyed and the ballot box destroyed by political thugs.

## ONLINE NARRATIVES

---

Issues of identity, identified in our pre-election brief, continue to circulate on social media. One prominent rumour, that INEC was excluding non-Yoruba names from the list of voters and ad-hoc staff, continues to make the rounds on Twitter on election day. These claims have been fact checked and found to be false.

## STATES TO WATCH

---

While our preliminary report highlighted several states to focus on, reports from our observers have narrowed down the states that we are actively monitoring for the duration of the polls.

The multiple reports of voter suppression and violence in **Lagos** leaves room for concern, alongside similar trends reported in **Bayelsa, Edo** and **Rivers** in the south-south. In the north-central, multiple irregularities in **Benue** state have been flagged by observers, while the contentious elections in **Adamawa, Bauchi** and **Gombe** - coupled with reported security challenges - have led to increased attention on the remainder of the conduct of the elections in these states. In the southeast **Enugu** and **Ebonyi** are states we are continuing to closely monitor.



© 2023 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 [www.cddwestafrica.org](http://www.cddwestafrica.org)  
Cover Image: CDD



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)