

PRELIMINARY REPORT AHEAD OF THE SUPPLEMENTARY ELECTIONS



22nd February, 2019

PREAMBLE

CDD has deployed trained observers to observe the Saturday, March 23, 2019, supplementary elections in Bauchi, Benue, Kano, Plateau and Sokoto States. As in previous elections, an Election Analysis Centre (EAC) will be opened on Saturday at Centre's Conference Room, located at CITEC Mount Pleasant Estate, Mbora District, Abuja. EAC comprises of leading experts on elections and democracy, and it serves as a one-stop-shop for all election-related information, including combating fake news and disinformation, as it relates to the focal states.

In this statement, CDD highlights the level of preparedness of INEC and political and security situation in the six states where supplementary elections will be conducted. It also lamented the rising phenomenon of vote buying and called on relevant stakeholders to take the necessary steps in ensuring the conduct of credible and peaceful elections.

INEC Preparedness

INEC released its plan for the conduct of the rerun in the affected States. Overall, the supplementary elections will be held in 89 LGAs, 201 Registration Areas (RAs) and 324 Polling Units (PUs) across the five states. There are 362,705 registered voters in the 324 PUs. In most of the States, INEC has been arranging to ensure smooth conduct of the elections.

In Plateau State, our observer confirmed the movement of National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) members to LGAs since yesterday evening and that the distribution of sensitive materials to LGAs will commence today, Friday 22 March 2019. We also received information about similar trends in Kano, Benue and Sokoto States. A good number of ad-hoc staff deployed for election purposes and sensitive and non-sensitive materials were reported to have been ready for distribution to different Registration Areas (RAs) today, Friday.

However, we wish to draw the attention of INEC to the perennial problem of malfunctioning of Smart Card Readers (SCRs) and the challenge of welfare and safety of ad-hoc officials which

characterised the general elections. INEC should ensure that functional SCRs are available at PUs, re-train ad-hoc to optimise its performance and provide adequate logistics arrangement ahead of the supplementary elections. This is extremely important to building trust and confidence in the electoral process.

Political and security situation

The general impression we gathered from our observers and through media monitoring suggested that political tempo has heightened in the affected States. Politicians have been making unbecoming and provocative statements that may trigger violence in the lead-up and during the elections.

Benue state is to be watched closely. APC and PDP have raised an alarm over irregularities, alleging the use of militia in army uniform to intimidate voters during the supplementary election. The parties are locked in a battle of survival as the election draws closer. The PDP in the State has deployed its senior party stalwarts to serve as poll agents, possibly to counter any form of manipulations. The Benue Youth Forum (BYF) has alleged the mobilisation of armed thugs from Kogi state to disrupt the process. More so, security agencies must take these allegations seriously and swiftly respond to any potential threats before they escalate.

In Kano, the state governor and the APC has alleged that Senator Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso paid thousands of 'yan tauri' (hunters), mobilised to cause havoc during the rerun election. According to the allegation, the 'hunters' will be drafted within and outside the state in the pretence of securing leaders of the PDP. The APC says the aim of mobilising these 'hunters' is to subdue the security agencies and oppress their party supporters.

In Plateau, Governor Dalung, who is in the clear lead has raised security concerns as the state heads for supplementary election, attributing the killing of about 82 and rustling of about 30 cows as "politically motivated", which may have a backlash effect, resulting in the farmers-herdsmen crisis. The police say it has a credible report that some people have finalised plans to disrupt polling during the rerun. But that they are ready, well prepared to provide security during and after the polls.

In Sokoto, where the incumbent Governor Aminu Waziri Tambuwal of the PDP leads Alhaji Aliyu Ahmed of the APC with 3,468 votes in the inconclusive election, there is a fifty-fifty chance of any of the two candidates emerging as the winner. The lead margin was lower than the 75,403 votes cancelled in 136 polling units in 22 local government areas of the state.

The political gladiators in the State are mobilising for their respective candidates ahead of the supplementary election across the 22 LGAs. The political parties, by all means, will play any role to secure victory for their party. In this case, Senator Aliyu Magatakarda Wamakko who won his re-election under the APC and orchestrated a big win for the APC in the State is a factor one need to look out for in the supplementary election, while the likes of Attahiru Bafarwa cannot be underestimated in his calculation to get the incumbent secure the ticket.

In the State, the Police Command has assured voters of a peaceful rerun poll, but the Nigerian Army, a few days ago embarked on “Show of Force” exercise on the streets of the city, outwardly sending a signal to political thugs and trouble makers to stay away from the polling areas. The military says it was ready to confront all security challenges during and after the elections.

In Bauchi, the late decision by INEC to go ahead with governorship rerun except in Tafawa Balewa is causing some concern. They would still have to wait for the courts to determine the Tafawa Balewa case before they can declare the governorship result.

Security concerns were the lead factor that resulted in the cancellation of elections in many of the affected polling units in the state. The call for calm by elder statesmen in Kano and Benue is a welcome development. Thus, as the politicians slug it out ahead of the elections, politicians and their supporters must desist from disrupting the process, particularly in areas considered a stronghold of opposition, through the use of thugs. CDD further charge the security operatives to adequately deploy its personnel to ensure the safety of voters and election officials in PUs and collation centres.

Vote Trading

CDD has consistently raised concerns about the phenomenon of vote trading, voter suppression, buying up of voters card or collection of Voter Identification Number (VIN). From the information received from our observers in the States, where rerun elections will hold, the two major political parties are busy sharing gift materials and money to prospective voters and some of the party officials.

In Kano State, CDD gathered that vote buying is most prevalence in Gama Ward in Nasarawa LGA. Gama ward is strategic to winning the rerun by the candidates of APC and PDP. Its registered voters represent 31.8% (40,821) of the 128,324 total registered voters in places where the rerun will be held. Bearing in mind that the total margin between both the APC and the PDP candidates was 26,000, votes from the ward is very significant. A few days ago,

the incumbent government started construction of roads and Primary Healthcare Centre in the ward which opposition party has alleged as a form of voter inducement.

In Plateau State, one of the parties have deployed its voter buying brokers to trade between N6,000 and N7,000 for votes in Naraguta A and B and Tundunwada wards in Jos North LGA. This is simultaneously happening, as we gathered, in Jos South, and Shengham LGAs. Meanwhile, the other is reported to have finalised its plan to buy a vote on Election Day. The APC and the PDP in Sokoto are wooing voters with gift items ahead of the supplementary governorship poll in the state. Though both parties have denied this. However, we received a report that potential voters have been approached with cash and gift items.

Vote buying is punishable by the electoral law in the country. But it is unfortunate that despite its prevalence in our country, hardly had any of its brokers have faced the wrath of the law. Security operatives who have the mandate of securing votes should desist from creating an environment where vote buying thrives. Vote buying brokers should be arrested and prosecuted in line with extant laws in the country to discourage the increasing rate of vote buying in elections.

Signed:

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