COUNTING THE VOTES
WARD-LEVEL COLLATION DURING NIGERIA'S 2019 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION: A POSTMORTEM ANALYSIS

July, 2019
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BACKGROUND

The collation of results has been a much-exploited weakness in Nigeria’s election process, since the country’s return to democratic civilian rule in May 1999. Collation is the process by which the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) aggregates and tabulates polling unit-level results via a multi-layered process, starting from the ward level, through the local government and state levels, to the federal level at the INEC national headquarters.

The integrity of this collation process is fundamental to the overall success and credibility of Nigerian elections. If conducted in a transparently organised and well-regulated way, collation will produce credible election results and boost voter confidence in the process. In the 2019 elections, however, civil society observers all across Nigeria saw a collation process that was chaotic, vulnerable to manipulation and, in some locations, violently disrupted and unnecessarily opaque.

The documentary evidences that informed the in-depth analysis in this report were gathered from the INEC accredited 8,809 observers CDD and its partners deployed during the 2019 elections. In addition, the Zabe SR (software) was further used in collecting data during the elections. Other sources of data include from CDD partners across the civil society organizations and the media, and also from the outputs from CDD Election Analysis Centre.

THE CULTURAL, ECONOMIC, LEGAL AND POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT AFFECTING COLLATION OF RESULTS

Although this report is about the collation of results during the 2019 general elections, it is important not to isolate the collation process from the broader cultural, economic, legal and political environment for the conduct of elections in the country.

The violence, disruptions, and compromised collation of election results detailed in this report is symptomatic and should be understood in the general context of the typical do-or-die, zero-sum approach to political and electoral competition in Nigeria, the deepening poverty and infrastructure deficits in the country, and the culture of political and legal impunity it has tended to encourage and even reward.

While the highlighted challenges that constraint INEC for conducting credible elections is acknowledged, the electoral umpire cannot be totally exonerated being a major stakeholder in the country’s electoral system. How logistic arrangements are made during elections, interactions with stakeholders are coordinated, amongst other mandates of INEC, could create a very tensed atmosphere that discourages conduct of credible elections. Nevertheless, the burden to finding lasting solution to challenges bedeviling elections in Nigeria lies with all the actors including INEC, citizens, political parties, civil society organisations, the media, security agencies etc. All stakeholders must work collaboratively to re-define our socio-political and economic environment. This is a major message from this report.
Ward-level collation is the first point in the results collation process where votes cast and recorded at individual polling units are reconciled with the number of accredited voters at each polling unit. Here is where the results of each polling unit are checked for errors before being added together to produce a single result for the ward. The ward level collation process takes place before the watchful eyes of most election observers, party agents and vigilant voters keen to protect their votes. Ward-level collation is the stage in the result collation process where effective INEC conducts vote reconciliation and collation of results from all the polling-units in the ward. Thus, the voting results or figures generated at this level are carried forward to the next level of collation at the local government. This is why the transparency of the ward level collation process is critical for the credibility of the entire collation process.

The conduct of ward-level collation is the single largest consolidation of results in Nigeria’s election process. Ward-level collation is where the results from 119,973 polling units are aggregated by ad hoc or junior election staff to produce 8,809 ward-level totals. Inadvertent errors or deliberate manipulations to change results in favour of or to the disadvantage of particular candidates at ward level are difficult to detect or reconcile once such errors or manipulations are allowed to pass through the ward collation stage. Ward level collation is very critical, given that INEC does not publish polling units and ward-level results on its website.

Therefore, the ward level collation is the foundational building block in the entire result collation process. Any faulty or compromised declaration of results at this level will surely affect the entire result collation process and impact negatively on the credibility of the election. This is because it is only at the polling units at the ward level that voters cast their ballots for candidates of their choice by secret ballot for each of the House of Assembly, Governorship, National Assembly and Presidential elections.
Ahead of the 2019 general elections, the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD)—in partnership with Premium Times and the Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC)—trained and deployed over 8,809 INEC-accredited ward-level observers to polling units and ward collation centres (WCCs) in every state and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) during the Presidential and National Assembly elections held on 23 February 2019. Using specialised software, CDD observers recorded data on the operational status and conditions at individual polling units in real time and provided qualitative descriptions of the voting process and incidents affecting the collation exercise. They used Zabe SR—an app specifically designed for election monitoring—to report results from hundreds of WCCs nationwide.

Reports from these CDD observers revealed that the 2019 presidential and national assembly elections experienced serious and significant challenges that affected results collation at the ward level. The six main challenges observers identified were (i) INEC missteps and misconduct; (ii) deliberate denial of access to observers and media; (iii) logistical shortfalls; (iv) intentional disruption by politicians, political thugs and party agents; and (v) intimidation of collation staff by security agents.

The Constitution (Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999, as amended) and the Electoral Act (Electoral Act of 2010, as amended) provide the general guidelines for the collation of election results.

The general guidelines are complemented by the regulations and guidelines provided by INEC, pursuant to the powers granted to the Commission in section (S) 15, part 1 of the Third Schedule of the Constitution and S2 of the Electoral Act.

The Electoral Act also provides guidelines for the transmission of results from polling units. S63(4) of the act requires the presiding officer of a polling unit to count and announce the result at the polling units while S65(1) specifies that after results are announced, the same officer must submit all election materials and the recorded results to INEC. S 73 of the Act empowers INEC to issue regulations and guidelines for the collation of results from polling unit at the ward or last collation for the ward or constituency level, where the result of the election shall be declared.

In line with this legal framework, S28-32 of the INEC Regulations and Guidelines for the Conduct of Elections (issued 12 January 2019) provided clear guidance for collation of election results of the presidential elections from ward level to national level. S36 and 37 of the same document provides procedures for collation of election results for senatorial elections from local council level to state level, while S38-39 provide the procedure for collation of federal house results.
Collation Problem Hotspots

Five states—Lagos, Osun, Kaduna, Rivers and Sokoto—experienced significant problems with the ward-level collation, based on CDD observers’ report. Together, the five states accounted for 46% of incidents of concern noted by our observers. The situation was especially bad in Rivers State, where clashes between political thugs and security personnel reflecting de facto proxy battles between top politicians in the state—disrupted several collation centres.

Surprisingly, the three states most affected by the Boko Haram insurgency—Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe—were not among the states with very high level of reported collation challenges. Kano, Katsina and Plateau—each of which saw voter turnout in excess of one million—also did not record a high rate of collation incidents.

Breakdown of States with High and Low Reported Collation Incidence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very High (10-12%)</th>
<th>High (7-9%)</th>
<th>Low (4-6%)</th>
<th>Very Low (&lt; 3%)</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lagos (11%)</td>
<td>Kaduna (7%)</td>
<td>Imo (3%)</td>
<td>Zamfara (1%)</td>
<td>Katsina</td>
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<tr>
<td>Osun (11%)</td>
<td>Rivers (8%)</td>
<td>Ogun (8%)</td>
<td>Yobe (1%)</td>
<td>Benue</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sokoto (9%)</td>
<td>Niger (3%)</td>
<td>Gombe (1%)</td>
<td>Ebonyi</td>
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<td>Kano (3%)</td>
<td>Kebbi (1%)</td>
<td>Jigawa</td>
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<td>Edo (3%)</td>
<td>Delta (1%)</td>
<td>Bauchi</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kogi (4%)</td>
<td>Borno (1%)</td>
<td>Ondo</td>
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<td>Oyo (4%)</td>
<td>Akwa-Ibom (1%)</td>
<td>Plateau</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abia (4%)</td>
<td>Adamawa (1%)</td>
<td>Nasarawa</td>
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<td>FCT (6%)</td>
<td>Bayelsa (2%)</td>
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<td>Anambra (5%)</td>
<td>Enugu (2%)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Kwara (2%)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Taraba (2%)</td>
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2 states | 3 states | 10 states | 12 states | 8 states
WHAT CAUSES WARD-LEVEL COLLATION PROBLEMS?

State-level analysis of these incident reports indicates that the drivers of ward collation challenges defy simple explanation and are instead caused by a more complex set of factors. These include:

**Missteps and misconduct by INEC staff**

Misconduct and mistakes by INEC staff undermined ward-level collation in many locations. Many of the Commission’s ward-level officers or ad hoc staff lacked sufficient knowledge of the rules and procedures designed to ensure successful and credible results collation. Some staff lacked the basic arithmetic skills needed for timely and accurate collation of results, thereby leading to errors in the result sheets, inconsistencies in collated figures, and delays in the time-sensitive process—the longer it takes to conclude the collation process beyond the stipulated time for concluding the process, the more doubts are created in the minds of voters that something untoward is happening to compromise the integrity of the collation process and, therefore, of the elections.

In Kaduna State, for example, collation was slowed by late arrival of materials and the incompetence of some presiding officers. Observers reported that Governor Nasir El-Rufai returned to his ward collation centre at 6pm on election day to observe the counting of ballots but left out of frustration four hours later as the presiding officer continued to struggle to calculate the polling unit results.¹

In Ondo State, some ad hoc staff made errors in entering the results in the sheets, causing unnecessary delays and confusion. In one such instance, an ad hoc staff member erroneously entered the House of Representatives result on form EC8B1, but labelled it as the Senate result.²

In addition to problems caused by human error, observers also noted several instances of misconduct by officials involved in the collation process.

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¹ CDD election observer report, Kaduna State, 23 February 2019.
In Bauchi State, for example, collation at the largest WCC in the state capital—located at Baba Sidi Primary School in Bauchi Local Government Area (LGA)—was halted for 48 hours due to widespread alteration of polling unit results sheets by INEC and ad hoc staff. Observers reported that the INEC collation officer filled out all of the forms incorrectly using illegible handwriting, resulting in confusion and delays that created opportunities to alter results.³

In Kaduna State, observers reported that at least three presiding officers in the densely populated Badarawa ward of Kaduna North LGA absconded with the ward's result sheets. As a result, vote totals for the ward did not arrive at the collation centre until two days after the polls had closed.⁴

Observer reports also revealed widespread failures to follow correct INEC-mandated processes regarding ward-level collation. Many election staff appeared to be confused or lacked knowledge of these procedures. Local and state INEC staff also demonstrated a willingness to ignore procedures. Instead of seeking guidance from their superiors, they readily used their own discretion to change collation procedures and relocate collation centres with little or no notice.⁵

In Imo State, INEC officials in Imo North senatorial district were unsure about which results should be collated at ward level and which should be done at LGA level. Observers reported other irregularities including improper and undocumented movement of ballots that had yet to be recorded on ward-level results sheets and incidences of collation officers receiving or making calls during the collation process in clear contravention of the INEC guidelines.⁶

In Oyo State, observers at one WCC in Saki East LGA reported that "results were not posted at the ward collation center and the figures were not made public because the collation officer did not allow observers to come in contact with the result at all."⁷

In Akwa Ibom State, observers noted that collation at one ward had not commenced by 10pm on election day and the collation officer

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5. CDD election observer reports from Aba North, Aba South and Umuahia South LGAs, Abia State, 23 February 2019.
6. CDD election observer reports from Imo State, 23 February 2019.
Across the country, election observers and the media were denied access to collation centres thereby casting doubt on the transparency, integrity, and credibility of the collation process.

In Delta State, observers and journalists were denied access to the INEC collation centre in Ughelli to monitor the collation of results. Media reports claimed that a special team of mobile policemen were stationed at the three entrances of the collation centre to prevent observers from accessing it.⁹

In Anambra State, one observer noted that she “was not allowed to come inside the ward collation centre by the security agents” even after she showed them her authorized INEC credentials.¹⁰

In Ebonyi State, none of the WCCs observed in the state followed INEC-prescribed rules. Some observers were unable to witness the collation of votes and results, despite remaining at the collation centres overnight.¹¹ There was a widespread failure by INEC to announce collated results at the ward-level or to transparently announce the last-minute relocation of collation centres.¹²

Disorganisation and poor planning on the part of INEC also hampered ward-level collation activities. In wards all across Nigeria, INEC officials caused confusion, delays and created opportunities for election malfeasance by shifting or failing to clarify the location of WCCs.

In Borno State, “[ward collation] proceedings took place at night. The same thing was observed with the local government collation centres. Most of the smaller political parties did not have the resources to keep their agents to watch proceedings for that long period of time. And such delays, in most cases, [ created an environment] that made it easy for bigger political parties to possibly manipulate results”, according to press reporting.¹³

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12. Ibid.

In Abia State, local INEC officials in Aba South LGA were undecided over where to locate the WCC until after the polls closed, thereby creating confusion and significantly delaying the collation process.¹⁴

In Lagos State, one observer reported that “no one knows the [WCC location] yet. I am currently at Pedro Primary School and nothing is happening yet. The INEC officials are not aware...” Later that evening—after ward collation finally commenced—the observer noted that “the collation officers seem a little bit confused...I doubt if this exercise will be concluded anytime soon as the collation officers are very sluggish.”¹⁵

In Edo State, an observer noted that “the electoral officer was yet to be seen at the ward collation centre. He then called and instructed the supervising presiding officer to bring the polling units results to the [INEC] secretariat to collate.”¹⁶

Logistical shortfalls

Ward-level collation was significantly impacted by the logistical problems that characterised other aspects of the 2019 elections. These included inadequate transport for election personnel and sensitive election materials as well as a complete lack of lighting at many collation centres. Given its sizeable budget, it is unclear why INEC was unable to provide basic tools required by the Commission’s ward election officers and ad hoc staff to conduct ward-level collation. INEC claims that contracts were awarded for the purchase of necessary tools such as rechargeable lanterns, yet they were not available at most locations.

In Enugu State, observers reported that the collation officer in one ward refused to use the designated WCC, claiming that INEC failed to provide vehicles to transport his staff and materials there. Instead, all the ward collation officers in the local government abrogated

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¹⁴. CDD election observer report from Aba South LGA, Abia State, 23 February 2019.
¹⁵. CDD election observer report from Gbagada Phase I, Obanikoro/Pedro, Shomolu LGA, Lagos State, 23 February 2019.
procedures there by using the local government INEC office as a collation centre instead. However, in most places in other states, the sudden relocation of WCC’s was due to security concerns.

In Lagos State, a lack of basic lighting slowed and disrupted nighttime ward-level collation in several locations across the state. Darkness also disrupted at least one WCC in Ogun Waterside local government in Ogun State.

In Cross River State, election observers confirmed that INEC failed to deliver election materials to riverine communities and resettled Bakassi villages, suggesting that ward-level results purported to come from those areas were fabricated.

Does INEC’s 2019 budget explain its ward-level collation problems?

A close examination of INEC’s 2019 supplementary budget [shows that financial constraints do not adequately explain the widespread logistical and procedural failures that affected ward-level collation in many states. The wide extent of these failures suggests that funds supposed to be spent on these requirements were misused or misappropriated.

The logistical and transportation shortfalls that disrupted ward-level collation, for example, cannot be adequately explained by funding shortages. For example:

- In its 2019 supplementary budget, INEC received N4.444 billion ($12.33 million or roughly $16,000 per LGA) for “electoral logistics expenses”. In addition to this amount, INEC received N1.05 billion ($2.9 million) to pay the Nigerian Air Force for the transportation and logistical assistance it provided and reimburse the Central Bank of Nigeria for use of its secure facilities to store sensitive election materials.

- INEC also received N2.125 billion ($5.9 million) for procurement of vehicles for election duties. Assuming each vehicle cost roughly $20,000, this adds up to 295 new, INEC-owned vehicles—roughly eight new vehicles per state.

- It also spent N2.477 billion ($6.88 million) hiring vehicles for ad hoc staff to use during the election. INEC also received N105 million ($292,000) to pay for fuel. Although perhaps inadequate, this was the amount INEC put in its budget request to the National Assembly.
Likewise, the widespread security challenges observed during ward-level collation—including those instigated by security personnel themselves—cannot be attributed to a lack of funds.

INEC’s budget included N112.25 million ($311,800 — $8,660 per state) to facilitate pre-election Inter-Agency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES) meetings. It also contained N200 million ($555,000 — $15,400 per state) for election-related training to security personnel. Security agencies separately received supplementary budgetary approvals for an additional N91.77 billion ($254.9 million) to undertake election security duties.

Other significant budgetary allocations should have helped mitigate remaining results management, transparency and other miscellaneous problems that undermined the ward collation process.

INEC received N4.77 billion ($13.25 million) in supplementary funds for E-Trac and E-Collation systems and processes. It is, however, unclear how these funds were spent and to what extent these programs yielded improvements to how results were managed, collated or made available to the public.

Although the National Assembly appropriated only N83.75 million ($233,000) of the N183.75 million ($510,000) INEC requested for the “review of polling units, RACs, super RACs and collation centres (field works)”, it is unclear how these funds were spent, whether such reviews took place and if they led to improved conditions on the ground.

Finally, INEC’s supplementary budget contained N3.818 billion ($10.6 million or $88 per polling unit) to cover miscellaneous expenses. This catch-all fund could have been used to ensure WCCs were equipped with portable lanterns and other basic necessities.

In many wards across Nigeria, security personnel were observed intimidating election workers or were allegedly to have done so. In other locations, security agencies failed to deploy an adequate number of personnel to safeguard election officials and sensitive materials, despite receiving dedicated government funding to do so. In some areas, members of the security forces played an active role in disrupting collation activities.

- In Sokoto State, observers reported that inadequate security had polling staff on edge. “We have only one policeman in Kwakwalwa polling unit and with it looking like we are going to be there till night I think we’re going to need more security men on ground for all the counting of the votes”.

- In Lagos State, observers at one WCC in the heart of Nigeria’s commercial capital noted that “security agents chased everybody outside with guns when the results were being collated.”

- In Abia State, an observer recalled how at one WCC “there was heavy security presence everywhere, both army, police and civil defense all over the place. They didn’t allow me to enter inside. They said I have nothing to do inside even when I show them my [election observer] ID card.”

- In Akwa Ibom, police officers threatened and assaulted accredited polling agents, election observers and journalists.

- Malfeasance by soldiers and other security agents especially disrupted ward-level collation in Rivers State. Elections in several LGAs in the state were heavily disrupted by security agencies tasked with safeguarding the process. As a result, tens of thousands of voters were disenfranchised.

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21. The Inter-agency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICESS) is the body that works closely with the electoral management body to ensure election security. This body of security agencies is led and coordinated by Nigeria Police Force.
22. CDD election observer in Wamakko LGA, Sokoto State, 23 February 2019.
In Okrika LGA, for example, security personnel invaded the INEC office in the LGA and snatched official collated election results. Before doing so, the same security agents had threatened collation centre officials by shooting their firearms into the air.²⁶ Earlier, during ward-level collation, a team of soldiers led by an army officer suspended collation and ordered his men to take away all materials, including results being collated by election officials. The materials were carted away with nothing left for the electoral officer to present as evidence for the election, according to observers. Soldiers similarly seized results from four other wards, according to observers from Stakeholder Democracy Network, a CDD partner.

A similar incident took place in Ikwerre LGA in Rivers State, according to election observers. At 7pm on election day, soldiers forcibly entered the INEC office in Isiokpo, intimidating election staff and preventing collation from taking place.²⁷ The INEC electoral officer alleges that she was held hostage and pressured to fabricate results.

In Akuku Toru LGA, there was no election because of dispute in the morning of election day that led to clashes between local youth and the army in which a soldier and six civilians were reported to have died.²⁸

In Emohua LGA, ward collation officers confirmed to observers that ward-level collation did not take place and that they had no interaction with the LGA collation officer who was to later report the area's final results to INEC. Ward collation had earlier been disrupted by INEC's decision to centralise it at its local office for the safety of election officials involved. Clashes between soldiers and armed militias subsequently ensued, leading to the death of one ad hoc election staff.²⁹

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²⁷ CDD observer report from Ikwerre LGA, Rivers State, 23 February 2019.
The inappropriate activities of political thugs and party agents further contributed to collation challenges. In some instances, political thugs and party agents unduly interfered in the process, threatened collation officials and generally violently disrupted the collation processes.

In Akwa Ibom State, INEC cancelled results from five wards in Essien Udom LGA after Senator Godswill Akpabio allegedly attempted to manipulate the outcome of the election, leading to the disappearance of the INEC electoral officer for the area.³⁰ This delayed collation of the senate election results. Elsewhere in the state, observers reported that some collation officers refused to collate ward-level results, possibly because they had been intimidated into not doing so by politicians, political thugs or party agents.³¹

In Rivers State, political thugs widely disrupted ward-level collation in Okrika LGA. Heavy gunfire prevented election staff from safely collating results. In Ahoada West LGA, violence involving thugs loyal to the two main political parties, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and All Progressives Congress (APC) forestalled ward-level collation efforts.³²

In Borno State, interference by politicians, thugs and party agents seriously marred the collation process, as reported by the media across the state.³³

In Anambra State, a woman rammed her car into a WCC, disrupting the collation process and injuring several polling unit presiding officers who were presenting their results.³⁴

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³⁰ CDD election observer reports, Essien Udom LGA, Akwa Ibom State, 23 February 2019.
³³ CDD election observer reports, Borno State, 23 February 2019.
Although ward-level collation is just one of the many challenges facing Nigeria’s electoral process, it has received scant scrutiny or attention by domestic and international observers. Left unresolved, Nigeria’s widespread ward-level collation problems will continue to embolden election spoilers, weaken public trust in INEC and undermine the credibility of election results.

Less transparent elections
Given the widespread and significant nature of ward-level collation challenges, it is not inconceivable that they could have changed the outcome of the presidential election or several senate races. Unfortunately, INEC has neglected to make public detailed breakdowns of ward-level election results—including voided votes—or provided detailed lists of which polling units experienced cancelled elections and why. INEC has provided this information only at the state-level.

This lack of ward-level transparency is part of a more worrying trend. One of the most noticeable—and avoidable—missteps INEC has made following the 2019 election is its refusal to publish detailed election results on its website. Much like it did in the 2007 general elections, INEC has only published national-level totals for the 2019 presidential elections, choosing to keep sub-national results data hidden from public view. This opaque approach reverses the tangible progress INEC in results transparency following the 2011 and 2015 elections.

It is also unclear why INEC has failed to give a breakdown of the number of voided votes - 1,289,607 for the presidential election - by polling unit or registration area. As a result, it is impossible to analyse whether these voided votes were concentrated in politically significant locations; or whether the reasons for voiding them were avoidable (i.e. non-use of card readers and poor voter education); or difficult to prevent (i.e. politically orchestrated overvoting and violent disruption by political thugs).

The lack of transparency surrounding these voided votes raises additional questions about the integrity and transparency of the conduct of the 2019 general elections. It also raises questions about the indirect or vicarious responsibility of INEC for the lapses in the conduct of the elections.
More inconclusive results

Ward-level collation problems also increase the likelihood that INEC will cancel elections in a particular area or declare them inconclusive. This can disenfranchise voters outright or lead to less-than-credible supplementary elections, contentious legal challenges, and even post-election violence. Although insufficiently widespread as to affect the outcome of the presidential elections, cancellations and postponements significantly impacted senate and house of representative elections in 2019.

In Rivers State, for example, INEC cancelled an unprecedented 942,000 votes: almost 300,000 more than official number of votes cast. Cancellations, suspensions and rescheduling of voting also placed an additional administrative and financial burden on INEC, and forced the commission to hastily organise supplementary elections in areas already roiled by electoral disruptions and political violence.

Ward-level collation disruptions and manipulations represent a welcome opening for opportunistic political parties and individual candidates to dispute the outcome and legitimacy of elections, especially in Nigeria’s most politically contentious wards. Such disputes frequently exacerbate local political tensions, empower local political thugs and even help fuel long-running communal conflicts.

Growing concerns about INEC’s integrity

Disruptions to ward-level collation—many of which can be attributed to INEC itself, as illustrated earlier in this report—reflect poorly on INEC. They reveal how many of the organisation’s shortcomings are not isolated or accidental, but rather the inevitable result of poor execution of plans and mismanagement, especially by lower level INEC officials. Did ward-level collation problems influence the presidential election outcome?

Using the Zabe SR software applications, CDD election observers were able to capture representative samples of ward-level presidential election results in at least 31 states. Using statistical analysis tools, CDD was able to analyse results collated by its observers.

In nine states (Benue, Osun, Anambra, Ebonyi, Ekiti, Jigawa, Kebbi, Kwara and Niger) and the FCT, these predicted results aligned closely with INEC’s official state-level results. In several others, the difference between INEC’s official result
and the Zabe-based prediction impacted both major parties relatively equally, indicating that any ward-level collation problems did not significantly influence the presidential election outcome at the state level.

In ten states, however, INEC’s official results contradict the predicted vote totals and vote share based on ward-level results sampled by Zabe and analysed by the CDD Election Fusion Centre.

In seven states (Kaduna, Ogun, Plateau, Gombe, Bayelsa, Imo and Enugu) it helped the ruling APC. However, the difference between INEC’s official results and CDD’s prediction using ward-level results would not have changed which candidate won these states.

In three of these states (Ondo, Nasarawa and Adamawa), this apparent discrepancy benefited the opposition PDP. In Ondo State, CDD estimates, based on ward-level results, that APC would have narrowly won the state instead of narrowly losing it to PDP. Likewise, in Adamawa State, APC would have narrowly won the state instead of narrowly losing it.

This discrepancy was relevant in Bayelsa and Imo states for another reason. In these two states, INEC’s official results indicated that the APC candidate met the 25% vote share threshold needed in two-thirds of states nationwide to win the presidency. According to CDD’s analysis, however, the APC candidate would have fallen well short of this 25% threshold in both states based on a representative sample of ward-level results. In its rush to certify statewide results, INEC appears unwilling to transparently publish a verifiable and credible paper trail for their ward- and local-level results that demonstrates to Nigerians and the world how they arrived at their official results. Without evidence, voters are asked to trust that INEC’s final results have been calculated accurately and free from outside manipulation despite numerous reports of disruptions to ward-level collation.

This glaring disconnect only serves to further erode public trust in the integrity and credibility of the elections.
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Using the Zabe SR software applications, CDD election observers were able to capture representative samples of ward-level presidential election results in at least 31 states. Using statistical analysis tools, CDD was able to analyse results collated by its observers.

In nine states (Benue, Osun, Anambra, Ebonyi, Ekiti, Jigawa, Kebbi, Kwara and Niger) and the FCT, these predicted results aligned closely with INEC’s official state-level results. In several others, the difference between INEC’s official result and the Zabe-based prediction impacted both major parties relatively equally, indicating that any ward-level collation problems did not significantly influence the presidential election outcome at the state level.

In ten states, however, INEC’s official results contradict the predicted vote totals and vote share based on ward-level results sampled by Zabe and analysed by the CDD Election Fusion Centre.

- In seven states (Kaduna, Ogun, Plateau, Gombe, Bayelsa, Imo and Enugu) it helped the ruling APC. However, the difference between INEC’s official results and CDD’s prediction using ward-level results would not have changed which candidate won these states.

- In three of these states (Ondo, Nasarawa and Adamawa), this apparent discrepancy benefited the opposition PDP. In Ondo State, CDD estimates, based on ward-level results, that APC would have narrowly won the state instead of narrowly losing it to PDP. Likewise, in Adamawa State, APC would have narrowly won the state instead of narrowly losing it.

This discrepancy was relevant in Bayelsa and Imo states for another reason. In these two states, INEC’s official results indicated that the APC candidate met the 25% vote share threshold needed in two-thirds of states nationwide to win the presidency. According to CDD’s analysis, however, the APC candidate would have fallen well short of this 25% threshold in both states based on a representative sample of ward-level results.
Policy recommendations

The 2019 elections revealed that the significant challenges facing ward-level collation—a critical stage in Nigeria's already troubled election process—urgently need to be addressed. To that end, CDD makes the following recommendations:

**Recommendations for INEC**

- Clarify internal guidelines and improve processes for conducting collation in line with international best practices. This includes strengthening INEC guidelines and procedures for collation of results to guarantee the integrity of the overall electoral process during collation.
- Transparently and proactively publish—via the INEC website and through civil society organisations—official results for all election contests, showing a full and accurate breakdown of figures (votes for each candidate, valid votes, rejected votes, votes cast, accredited voters, registered voters, cancelled votes) down to polling unit level. Work towards developing and ensuring a way of transparently making ward-level results easily accessible to, and searchable by, the general public.
- Improve training given to junior INEC personnel and ad hoc staff involved in collation activities. These staff members should be recruited well in advance, properly trained, tested and deployed to participate in off-cycle elections to gain collation experience.
- Use permanent signage to identify WCC locations and ensure they are properly equipped with the basic tools needed to undertake collation.
- Instruct INEC staff and security liaisons that accredited election observers and media are permitted access to ward and local government collation centres.
- Discipline or, if necessary, investigate and then prosecute INEC personnel alleged to have been involved in misconduct during the collation process.

**Recommendations for security agencies**

- Commit to holding soldiers and security agents—and their commanding officers—accountable for unprofessional or illegal conduct while deployed on election duty.
- Issue clear orders to security agents to refrain from obstructing the work of accredited observers and media or preventing them from accessing collation centres.
- Notify the public—via the press and online—which security units will be undertaking election security duties in each local government area of each particular state to ensure that individual units can be held accountable for their conduct on election day.
Recommendations for political party leaders

- Commit to holding their party agents and other members accountable for their election day actions, particularly those present at collation centres. Publish the names and locations of party agents.
- Ensure that party agents sign and adhere to peace pledges and codes of conduct.
- Discourage the use of political thugs and formalise penalties for party members involved in mobilising and financing them.

Recommendations for domestic civil society organisations and the media

- Engage INEC to improve its transparency and dissemination of election tabulations and results, particularly at the ward and local government level.
- Undertake legal action and Freedom of Information Act requests (as necessary) to ensure that INEC is compelled to publish full and detailed results data for all elections held since 2015.
- Advocate for the further amendment of the Electoral Act (2010) to allow for the introduction of electronic vote transmission which will reduce error in the calculation process and improve the pace of collation.
- Intensify engagement with INEC on steps it can take to improve the collation process, using evidence from the 2019 election as a basis for discussion.

Recommendations for the international community and development partners

- Provide international election observers with the support and protection needed to observe after-hours collation at the ward and local government levels.
- Impose international travel and financial sanctions against individuals involved in disrupting ward-level collation and other kinds of election malfeasance as well as their political sponsors.
- Push INEC to improve transparency, accountability and management controls—particularly with respect to its collation processes - in off-elections and ahead of national elections in 2023.