

**THE DELTA GOVERNORSHIP RE-RUN
JANUARY 6TH 2011**

SIGNPOSTS AND STORM WARNINGS FOR THE 2011 ELECTIONS

LITE VERSION – NO PHOTOS

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SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

- The Delta re-run demonstrated both the potential for INEC to administer improved elections with the support of communities and the risk that political actors can still overwhelm reforms with systematic fraud.
- The re-run produced a visible change from earlier elections in participation by voters who in many places were able to see the local results of their election. The more diverse outcome – where the opposition candidate won 11 of 25 LGAs- signifies a very significant change from recent elections that lacked credibility.
- Public and community commitment to the election in most areas was commendable and a guide for protecting further elections. Despite very limited awareness of the election and its methods voters were prepared to wait hours for the opportunity to vote and spend further time to see results declared.
- The results from several key 'riverine' LGAs do not appear to be plausible. Turnouts on paper in these areas were inconsistent with the rest of the state and there are credible suggestions that in at least some places systematic fraud took place at levels of ward and LGA collation.
- Despite the election being 'stand alone' the poll was plagued by logistical delays that led to late poll openings and later closing that left many areas more vulnerable to night-time rigging of results.
- Attempts at rigging in this election appear to have changed somewhat – from blatant fraud with state acquiescence to a pattern of suppressing opposition voting areas while inflating strongholds. This poses serious risks of violence for the main election.
- INEC's continuing practice of not publishing detailed election results after initial announcements was not helpful and is an ongoing problem in terms of both transparency and credibility of results.
- INEC cancelled a number of local election results but only very limited systems were in place to deal with 'on the day' problems. Partly because of the lack of information from INEC it is unclear to the public (and even observers) what actions INEC has taken over a number of cases of reported abuse.
- The election was conducted with extraordinary amounts of security and still some significant violence occurred. There are credible local sources- including election officials- who are deeply concerned at the potential for systematic violence during the inevitably more lightly policed April polls.

[See Pages 13 to 16 for supporting narrative]

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- If new voting methods are to have the desired impact INEC must improve logistics and the associated planning so that polls can be assured of opening on time. With higher turnouts in the main election there is a high risk of serious breakdowns and disenfranchisement if better performance is not achieved
- INEC should put in place strengthened communication with its local officials and a far greater capacity to immediately investigate and respond to election day incidents. Reporting by local Election officials within the day should form a key part of both the election record and systems to protect the integrity of the election.
- There is an urgent need for better public understanding of new voting methods – both in terms of the time commitment required by voters and the potential of the system for communities to fully participate in the election and protect their vote
- INEC should publish ward level election results within 24 hours of their receipt at state headquarters and unit level results should be published within 48 hours of the election and made freely available to the public and observer groups.
- INEC and security agencies should work with urgency to strengthen arrangements with an emphasis on preventing the free movement of groups employed to cause violence. States that have a record of serious violence and face serious contests – such as Delta- should be reinforced by a strengthened *neutral* security presence.
- INEC should as a matter of urgency clarify its role with regard to election tribunals and establish a record for defending the truth- regardless of how painful- of election conduct rather than taking the position of a co-defendent with the poll winner
- As a matter of urgency INEC should put in place additional simple security measures on results sheets. These could include key timings of the poll, the fingerprint of electoral officials and the Voter ID numbers of both officials and agents present.
- INEC should allow party agents to sign for collecting results sheet “with objections” or 'under protest' to eliminate the problem of parties to the election feeling they are unable to collect results without compromising their stand at later tribunals
- Observer groups should reinforce their capacity to observe and report from difficult areas – especially in the rural (riverine) areas of states such as Delta. They should also seek to improve communications with INEC officials and should aim to report serious incidents to INEC as swiftly as possible.
- NGOs, Agencies, and organizations supporting free peaceful elections should concentrate a burst of activity targeting community leaderships and their role in

ensuring that local communities are able to support both INEC and the conduct of a good poll in their area

INTRODUCTION

Stakeholder Democracy Network (SDN) began its work in Nigeria shortly ahead of the 2007 elections so work on preventing violence and on observation were among our earliest projects. Due to security concerns SDN and IDASA were the only international observer groups in the Niger Delta and SDN produced one of the earliest released election observer reports which can be viewed [here](#).

SDN has taken a close interest in the Delta State Governorship re-run because we believe it offers some valuable sign posts for the pending 2011 elections. Analogies between this hasty election with a defective voter's register can be over stretched but it was the first substantial election under the new electoral administration. The events during the election seemed to confirm its relevance with a number of positive and negative developments around election day and thereafter.

Before the election SDN convened a roundtable in early December 2010 with election officials and other government agencies that was hosted by the Canadian High Commission. The event had a good level of participation and encouragingly frank discussion. Some of the issues raised were followed up during the election but others were not followed up when the selection of an early date narrowed available time to a minimum.

The election date of January 6th was officially announced on December 22nd – forcing all involved to make their final arrangements in the midst of the traditional Christmas shutdown.

SDN arranged a small observer team that worked with observers from CEHRD (Centre for Environment Human Rights and Development) which meant that the feasible areas that could be observed directly were a limited sample. Neither organization was able to send observers into the “riverine” areas of the state although this report does contain some post election interviews with trusted community members.

With limited resources the election day focus of work by SDN and CEHRD was to concentrate on issues of violence while also making a limited assessment of steps taken by INEC to improve on previous elections.

The comments in this interim report are not intended to be comprehensive but we hope they will be useful as final arrangements for the 2011 elections are made especially in Delta state.

PRE ELECTION ISSUES

The election was organized in significant haste and given the logistics involved it should be noted that it was a significant achievement that greater logistics breakdowns did not occur.

In the immediate period before the election INEC in the state was still seeking to render the badly corrupted 2007 voters register into a form that could be used for the election. The register was the subject of controversy ahead of the election but in law and in practical terms there seemed to be a choice amongst the 'least bad options'.

Notable amongst the interviews about pre election arrangements was the report that election materials arrived in the state around 24 hours to the election. This inevitably would have placed greater stress on staff and also stretched to the limit arrangements that were put in place for the onwards distribution of materials.

The importance of logistics to the effective conduct of the election is referred to in the polling day records and recommendations. While the late arrival of materials was clearly central to late opening of polls the routinely late opening of polls in Nigeria also appears to be a result of limited planning of the challenging task of reaching remote areas when election materials are moved through several bottlenecks- from state, to local government, to wards and then finally to units.

SDN only made limited contact with INEC in the days ahead of the election so cannot comment effectively on other pre election issues.

POLLING DAY

SDN and CEHRD teams observed throughout election day in Oshomili North and South while visits were made to a number of other LGAs that included Uvwie,

Poll Opening

In the areas where SDN observed polls generally opened late and actual start times seemed to frequently be around two hours. Even in the Oshomili North and South LGAs – relatively close to INEC headquarters in Asaba – election officials were noted only just arriving at their units at 10am. More severe delays were noticed – for example there were still no materials at units seen in Orugun town at 11:20am.

INEC acknowledged delays in some particularly difficult areas such as Burutu LGA where it reported materials did not generally arrive until after 12pm.

Other poll openings that SDN noted informally seemed to range from 10am to starts of between 11am and 12pm.

These delays in opening were to have a significant impact on voters who were also required to wait hours for accreditation to be completed – effectively making voting a somewhat unexpected full day affair for many participants.

If turnouts had not been forcibly so low due to electoral register problems this could have had a serious effect on the ability of INEC to process voters on election day. Even with turnouts of 15 to 30% (and sometimes even lower) polling units were taking up until 3pm or later to complete their voting and local announcement of results.

A Change in Voting Approach

This election represented a major change for INEC's administration of election day. Instead of the usual 'vote and go' method voters would be accredited first and then counted, before finally being allowed to vote. The process also allowed voters to stay on and see their votes counted and results announced.

The process is considerably more time consuming for the voter but this did not seem to deter many voters from staying on throughout the process. For readers less familiar, the approach taken was the same subsequently used at the high profile PDP convention in Abuja and in some elections of the 1980s and 1990s (most often referred to as 'open secret ballot')

The commitment of voters was crucial to the success of this approach – with longer periods for accreditation due to the ad hoc register it was typical for voting with even small turnouts to take several hours. The only thing which prevented a longer day was the reduced number of voters who could present themselves with a voters card and find themselves on the register.

In some areas the new voting approach was not followed – our team observed a reversion to ‘vote and go’ in two units where election officials caved in to local pressure to allow voting to take place without accreditation. Interviews after the election indicated that in at least some ‘riverine units the same ‘vote and go’ approach was used.

However it is notable that even in the riverine areas where serious questions have arisen about the declared result post election interviews suggest that voting took place in several riverine communities in the prescribed manner with little apparent difficulty while in others it reverted to the previous 'vote and go' practice.

Security

There was a massive security deployment to Delta state for the re-run with officials stating that 22,000 personnel had been deployed to the state.

There appears to be an informal consensus that the additional security forces acted as a significant deterrent to political thugs and their sponsors. Community members, political actors and INEC officials have all commented to this effect. There was certainly a significant reduction in the roving bands of armed youths who were noted by SDN in the 2007 election and earlier observers in the 2003 elections.

However despite the improvements there were still incidents where youths and their sponsors acted with alarming impunity.

Typical of the violence that occurred were raids in Sapele town in Sapele Local Government where armed youths were reported at multiple locations, including Okoruvie Primary School along Reclamation Road, chasing away opponents and snatching ballot boxes.

Both local activists and INEC officials have expressed serious concerns about the election in April where national demands mean that the security presence in the state will inevitably be lower than the January poll. At least one official mentioned credible threats ahead of the election while the election result itself has highlighted that positions in the state are likely to be hotly contested.

Voter turnout

The level of turnout recorded on results at the poll was a very poor indicator of the level of interest in the election. Observers consistently reported long queues in many areas with voters showing a willingness to stick with the election throughout most or all of the day to see results counted.

However an inevitable high level of disenfranchisement was noted with the requirement that the flawed 2007 voter's register be used and INEC's existence that voter's present their voter

ID card from 3 years earlier. Based on the 1.9 million people registered¹ for the 2011 election in the same month approximately 20% of the voting population were excluded from the revised 2007 register of 1.55 million voters. This does not take into account the corrupted data in the register that seemed to have excluded many others.

Complaints that voters with apparently valid voter's cards were not to be found in the register were frequently noted by all of our observers. However INEC and observers were also aware that efforts had been made to falsify voter's ID cards for the election – in some cases abusing the material prepared in some haste by INEC to make the most of a difficult exercise.

With all of these problems and limited notice for the poll it should come as no surprise that voter turnouts in areas where SDN observed were low or very low. In Oshomili North and South LGAs where SDN observers followed the entire process the turnouts were 17 per cent and 8 percent respectively.

- In 13 of 25 LGAs turnout was below 25%
- A further 6 LGAs had turnout at or below 37%
- Warri South had a turnout of 52%
- Four other rural and 'riverine' LGAs had turnouts around 60%²

No credible explanations have emerged since the election for the major variance in turnouts that had such a dramatic effect on the election result. At best the turnouts are highly implausible. At worst, they are an indicator of blatant fraud.

Post election interviews by SDN in just two riverine communities suggested that at least in those areas the observed turnout was similar to that seen in northern parts of the state.³ In Oporoza, Warri South West LGA, the two units reported were more suggestive of turnouts below 20%.

1 Based on media reports of INEC announcements of number of registered voters at at 24th February 2011

2 Patani is included in this list because 2 cancelled wards mean that its adjusted turnout was over 60%

3 A voter in Oporoza who stayed for the count at an Oporoza Ogbe Ijaw unit reported PDP 37 votes vs DPP 7 votes (unit strengths in the riverine LGAs average 450 to 600 persons).while at Oporoza ward / Ubabiri townhall PDP reportedly got 23 votes while DPP got 47 votes

VIOLENCE

Despite the reported massive deployment of security forces to Delta state there were incidents of violence across a number of LGAs. Security forces were not – as they have been in the past – accused of routinely supporting violence but the relative impunity with which it was carried out was deeply disturbing.

In Sapele Local Government there were credible reports of a serving commissioner in the State Government being involved directly in the snatching of materials. Equally there were reports of violence in both Ethiope East and Ethiope West LGAs and in Uvwie LGA(Warri).

The most serious incidents included the widely acknowledged kidnapping of INEC staff in Isoko South and reportedly also in Warri South. In each case of violence youth groups seemed to be able to mobilize and move with relative impunity.

However along with reports of violence were also accounts where local youths and communities had either forestalled or prevented violence and the theft of election materials. The strong presence of members of communities throughout the period of voting has some obvious security challenges but appears capable also of bringing significant security benefits.

Delta state elections have been plagued in the past by systematic violence and rigging. SDN reported extensively on elections in 2007 in the state which were effectively a violent whitewash with effectively little or no voting.

In contrast even opposition politicians acknowledged the level of progress in areas where they were immediately involved. The DPP candidate was noted praising the efforts of INEC in his area (Ethiope East) where people 'had been able to vote for the first time' since the change to civilian rule.

INEC reports that it is prosecuting 12 offenders from the election. This is a start but it is unlikely to serve as a significant disincentive to candidates who are seeking access to positions that control billion dollar budgets at the state level. Further action by both INEC and security agencies is needed ahead of the election in April if potentially worsening violence is to be forestalled.

In this election INEC reports that it cancelled results in 184 of 3,625 polling units. At 5% of the total it may seem like an acceptable loss compared to the past but when there are complaints about many more locations it is also clear that significant work remains.

RESULTS

The protection of valid results is one of the most important areas of work for INEC. In previous elections results have been routinely manipulated or have been composed entirely of fraudulent returns. Delta state was one of several Niger Delta states that routinely returned extraordinary turnouts – in 2003 the Governorship vote had a 75% state wide turnout -when observed participation was below 10%.⁴

Perhaps the most relevant baseline is the 2003 elections where early on there was significant interest from voters. All three weekends saw patently rigged results with the “turnouts” as high as 95% making a mockery of common sense.

In the LGAs where SDN most closely observed in January, in the north of Delta state, results in Oshomili North and South were almost a model of propriety. Results were properly declared at the units in front of hundreds of patient voters and the same results were properly reflected at the level of Local Government and State Collation.

In other areas the management of results were far more questionable.

SDN observers were denied access to Uvwie Collation centre where it had hoped to follow up on questions of violence and possible rigging. Opposition leaders complained of harassment or violence towards agents – notably in Ethiope West and a lack of access to other collation centres.

The evening of Saturday January 6th reflected an election more typical of the past – where security services (and sometimes INEC) were sometimes obstructive and observer groups were generally under prepared for tracking results through the night.

Also typical were the disproportionate delays – where local governments that were clearly finished with their elections took many more hours than were required for travel alone to bring these results through to the state capital.

The results process eventually also brought a significant rupture with the opposition. After early successes in the northern parts of the state later results favoured the PDP heavily. As mentioned elsewhere these results were based on turnouts that stretched plausibility on a number of scores.

In effect there is little that can be said by the public or observer groups about the detail of results in the re-run election. After their initial announcement detailed results for the election fall back behind a veil where only participants in the Election Tribunal process can view them after an application to INEC.

4 See SDN 'Further Rigging' and EU Observer reports for 2003
<http://www.stakeholderdemocracy.org/uploads/SDN%20Publications/2007%20election%20report.pdf>

The absence of a detailed and credible explanation for results in a state that was so clearly split fuelled immediate speculation and anger over the outcome. The approach to results appears to be a legacy of past INEC practices and should be dismantled in favour of as much transparency as is feasible from top to bottom.

As a footnote the controversies have not been assisted by shocking photographs of ballot papers from the election – appearing to be for most or all of Warri South LGA- discarded at the local premises of INEC⁵. INEC staff appear to have ruined any prospect of a fair examination of the election in at least this LGA.

Post Election -Election Tribunal Processes

The Delta re-run appears to have thrown no light on whether INEC will reform its approach to election tribunals from being a key respondent – where it has a history of defending results no matter how improbable – to an actor that will principally seek to assist the courts in bringing out the truth relating to an election.

In the past plaintiffs of election tribunals have routinely complained of INEC obstructing access to election materials, often blocking access to even basic information such as detailed results.

Presently the DPP candidate is contesting the results and on the surface it appears little has changed. The plaintiffs are being asked to obtain court orders before they can view ballot papers and other materials from the election. There is no prospect for similar access for observers or the public who under present law have no standing to demand such information.

The “status quo” approach to election materials and its role in the tribunal appears to be both obstructive and biased in favour of the defendant. The as yet unchanged approach to tribunals by INEC is also a significant factor in slowing the pace of election tribunals to a crawl – leading to the situation where this re-run of 2007 took place more than 3 years after the election.

INEC's future relationship with tribunals will be important to both its credibility and the integrity of future elections. Where elections are controversial or seen as unjust it is vital that there is a credible post election process. Presently that process is highly questionable and it is vital that INEC clarifies its role and demonstrates its neutrality at the earliest opportunity.

5 <http://www.saharareporters.com/gallery/photonews-delta-rerun-destruction-election-evidence-inec> . SDN has also seen original copies of these photographs taken by a private individual

LOOKING FORWARD

INEC deserves commendation for establishing a visible commitment to conducting credible elections in communities that have only previously seen a token participation followed by systematic rigging. The political will and innovation required to achieve these moderate benchmarks in a difficult environment will often be under-estimated.

At the time of writing this report there are increasing signs that communities and the public have a significant aspiration towards legitimate representation. The high level of registration and the interest in the re-run election point towards a significantly mobilised electorate.

Unfortunately there is also clear evidence that the approach of many politicians in the state – and elsewhere in the Niger Delta – remains unchanged. The preparations of politicians are systematic and too closely resemble those made for the 2003 and 2007 elections.

Among early warning signs:

- SDN has received credible reports of systematic attempts at multiple registration where the bussing of residents across local government boundaries has been used as a key measure to avoid detection.
- There appear to be implied or explicit threat against election officials who proved not to be sufficiently pliant during the re-run and will face an election with far less security than in January
- Confidence amongst key political actors and their supporters that they have little to fear from INEC or security services seems unreasonably high- on a par with earlier elections where it was found that both services had been extensively compromised

There is now a significant risk of a major clash in interests between communities across Delta state who aspire towards selecting their representatives and politicians that are used to an environment of systematic rigging and force generally determining outcomes.

Aside from the risk of disenfranchisement there is a prospect of significant instability where attempts to rig elections could easily be met with a commensurate response and a series of fractures across the state. The situation is far from hopeless but it demands urgent attention and a high priority for security services.

Delta State is now at the crossroads between a return to past conflict and a pivot towards representation that has appropriate diversity and the prospect of opening new channels for both dialogue and accountability.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **If new voting methods are to have the desired impact INEC must improve logistics and the associated planning so that polls can be assured of opening on time. With higher turnouts in the main election there is a high risk of serious breakdowns and disenfranchisement if better performance is not achieved**

As mentioned in the body of this report logistical failures have been a pattern of elections since 1999 and these failings help create the space for both disenfranchisement and the rigging of elections. Individual RECs should be fully accountable for credible plans that will allow polls to open on time and meet the high degree of voter interest that has been indicated by the registration of voters. Other arms of government should offer every possible co-operation with government and communities can also make a positive contribution to smoother preparations.

- **INEC should put in place strengthened communication with its local officials and a far greater capacity and accountability for immediately investigating and responding to election day incidents. Reporting by local Election officials within the day should form a key part of both the election record and systems to protect the integrity of the election.**

The history of recent elections in the Niger Delta has been one where the greatest failings revolve around the “people factor”. Electoral officials are pressured or persuaded to turn a blind eye to abuses regardless of the protests emanating from communities, candidates and observers. Making this situation worse is poor infrastructure for receiving and responding to complaints within election day.

INEC is showing a commendable willingness to consider options for better communication and it is critical that this is followed up with an obligation on INEC staff and officials to respond in a timely and effective fashion to reports of abuse. Anything less than the most explicit responsibility will leave space for corrupt officials to continue to stonewall complaints of abuse

- **There is an urgent need for better public understanding of new voting methods – both in terms of the time commitment required by voters and the potential of the system for communities to fully participate in the election and protect their vote**

Presently there appears to be little or no public awareness that the proposed method of voting could easily require a commitment of 4 to 6 hours from voters. Nor do communities seem to be aware of the potential for residents to act collectively to protect their vote – where the presence of several hundred people presents a serious challenge to thieves and riggers. Associated with this a need for clear security planning so that the considerable numbers of voters that will gather are predominantly an asset to transparency and integrity rather than a security risk

- **INEC should publish ward level election results within 24 hours of their receipt at state headquarters and unit level results should be published within 48 hours of the election and made freely available to the public and observer groups.**

In the past attention has mistakenly focused on getting global results of elections communicated as swiftly as possible with only very limited concern over the transparency of detailed results. INEC presently operates within a system where after a brief window on election day the results from individual units and wards are indefinitely obscured until endless election tribunals are convened. This saps both confidence in results and necessary accountability over the handling of results from individual units. *It also leaves wide open the conventional space for fraud – that have historically been manipulated at ward level with little space for proof to emerge until weeks after the event.*

With modern technology there appears to be no reason why INEC cannot publish detailed results electronically and make these freely available to any interested member of the public. Such a move would end many controversies and allow much swifter justice in the case of genuine abuse.

- **INEC and security agencies should work with urgency to strengthen arrangements for Niger Delta States with an emphasis on preventing the free movement of groups employed to cause violence. States that have a record of serious violence and face serious contests – such as Delta- should be reinforced by a strengthened *neutral* national security force.**

The disposition of security services in the past has been as important as their numbers. Open bias towards pro government interests has often led to a climate of impunity. With a track record of at least improved neutrality the issue moves on to maintaining a strong enough security presence so that armed gangs cannot move between communities at will. Inadequate security could lead to serious clashes as larger numbers of voters are confronted by gangs who are used to disrupting polls with impunity. If electoral violence is allowed to continue then post election destabilization could accelerate as alienated communities and youths intensify their search for leverage over their future.

- **INEC should as a matter of urgency clarify its role with regard to election tribunals and establish a record for defending the truth- regardless of how painful- of election conduct rather than taking the position of a co-defendant with the poll winner**

One of the major issues subverting confidence in the electoral process is the lack of credibility of election tribunals which have a well deserved reputation for corruption and an endless cycle of appeals. INEC can make a contribution to reforming confidence in this sector of the elections by committing to acting as an impartial witness at the tribunal. Supporting steps should include promoting free access to electoral evidence and ensuring that its own evidence is in support of all possible transparency rather than the interests of a defendant.

- **As a matter of urgency INEC should put in place additional simple security measures on results sheets. These could include key timings of the poll, the fingerprint of electoral officials and the Voter ID numbers of both officials and agents present.**

Result sheet fraud is standard fodder for past Nigerian elections and there are allegations that it featured clumsily in the January re-run. INEC must be able to shift its position from talking tough over electoral offenders to one where it takes credible action. Basic security measures like those described above would be a first step in detecting fraud.

- **INEC should allow party agents to sign for collecting results sheet “with objections” or ‘under protest’ to eliminate the problem of parties to the election feeling they are unable to collect results without compromising their stand at later tribunals**

One of the more ridiculous scenes that plagues Nigerian elections is that aggrieved party agents will often refuse to sign results sheets that they consider to be in any way fraudulent. This leads to a situation where they are routinely blocked from timely access to copies of results which are a pre-requisite for election appeals. INEC should identify simple steps that will allow critical information on election results to be shared so that the ground for dispute are quickly clarified.

- **Observer groups should reinforce their capacity to observe and report from difficult areas – especially in the rural (riverine) areas of states such as Delta. They should also seek to improve communications with INEC officials and should aim to report serious incidents to INEC as swiftly as possible.**

No significant observer groups reached the most rural communities in the Niger Delta that are separated by creeks and significant boat rides. Had they done so then some questions over some of the results from these areas would have been addressed. The capacity to access remote areas has been an issue in past elections – particularly the ability to track results.

As rural populations make up a significant part of the states – and often have the deepest grievances over governance – it is critical that greater efforts are made to observe elections in these areas. With the limited time and resources available both observer groups and their donors should act with urgency to safely plug this gap.

- **NGOs, Agencies, and organizations supporting free peaceful elections should concentrate a burst of activity targeting community leaderships and their role in ensuring that local communities are able to support both INEC and the conduct of a good poll in their area**

This recommendation links to the corresponding message that INEC should inform communities of the change in voting method with an emphasis on their co-operation and support. With very limited time NGOs (who make up the bulk of co-ordinating observer groups) are ideally placed to reach out to communities that they know well and brief them on how they can use their participation to better protect their vote. Communities that have managed to improve their own cohesion and relations with civil society stand to make significant gains if they can work together to promote participation and act when fraud occurs. Civil society groups and NGOs are in a unique position to offer support from an angle that is seen as non government and non partisan.

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