

STAKEHOLDER
DEMOCRACY
NETWORK



Dear Supporters

This interim report focuses on immediate issues that merit the attention of INEC and other actors. Equally important medium term issues will be included in later reports.

SDN noted significant variations in the atmosphere and conduct of elections in the 3 states (Rivers, Bayelsa, Delta) which were

observed.

This breakdown is intended to give an indication of overall tenor of the polls in these states as well as highlight key incidents. More details and a broader record will be included in a full election report and interim information can be requested from SDN in Port Harcourt.

Overall Summary

- Progress in Niger Delta states very significant with relatively free polls occurring in many observed areas across the region after years of systematic rigging.
- Early success compromised in parts of Bayelsa, Delta, and Rivers by highly questionable collation of results.
- Issues of free voting, access of party agents, and absence of election were an issue with damaging local effects on community confidence in government and INEC
- Vital for State INEC offices to demonstrate their impartiality and also demonstrate capacity to respond effectively to complaints. Follow SDN election observation on www.nigerdeltawatch.org

We have hundreds of election observers and a communications hub in Port Harcourt in partnership with **CEHRD**. Read real-time reports from our election observers on **[Niger Delta Watch](#)**. **[>> Visit the elections monitoring 2011 section of our website.](#)**

Key Gains

- A strong majority of observed areas experienced polls which opened on time and had a full complement of election materials, staff, and a peaceful atmosphere
- Voting in most areas reflected real turnouts (between 10-25%) in marked contrast with previous elections in 2003 and 2007 which reported rigged turnouts of 70% to 100%
- In Bayelsa and Delta States party agents played a positive and balanced role in many wards.
- On the whole security forces maintained law and order and remained impartial.

Key Challenges

- Delta and Bayelsa were among states INEC and observers cited nationally as prominent in ballot box snatching and associated fraud
- Serious allegations of collation centre re-writing of results in some areas of Bayelsa and Rivers State (mostly at LGA level)
- Denial of access for Party Agents and observers noted in several LGAs in Rivers State.
- Apparent gross inflation of turnout persists in some isolated but significant cases (eg Tai LGA and parts of Gokana LGAs in Rivers, Akwa Ibom Senatorial races)
- Party Agents also noted in some areas (Rivers State) supervising or interfering in voting

Recommendations

- Urgent steps to improve the transparency of collation in 'non compliant LGAs' is needed

- along with assurance of access for observers and party agents
- Evidence of substantive action to investigate and prosecute abuses in Rivers, Bayelsa, Delta, and Akwa Ibom is crucial to maintaining voter confidence in elections
- Attention to key polling details - such as the midday announcement and recording of accredited voters at units - is needed to reduce scope for later fraud. A check list of key steps should be publically posted at each unit.
- Observer and INEC interaction should be strengthened where possible to allow for cases where urgent response is necessary.

>> [For the latest news about the Niger Delta visit the SDN newsroom](#)

State by State - Delta State

Delta State faced a unique situation coming into the April polls. It had already had a practice run using most of the new approach when a Governorship re-run was held January 6th.

The presence of a vigorous and well organized opposition was also demonstrated in advance when the opposition took 11 of 27 LGAs in the January poll and was only defeated after 4 'riverine' LGAs returned extraordinarily high turnouts in favour of the ruling PDP.

SDN observed in rural areas around the state capital Asaba and received reports from southern Delta State. It is possible that significant variations occurred in the standard of the poll in other rural areas and it is notable that key riverine LGAs have not reported results.

Key features of the election:

- Low turnout which was often around 20% of electorate
- Party agents from both key parties (DPP, PDP) present at all locations visited
- No splitting of units for accreditation seen at any location (fortunately not needed with low turnout)
- Election materials present - result sheets seemed to be more than required in circumstances
- Some late starts observed - often 10am - and reports from other rural areas of much later commencement of poll
- At polling units there was good public and party agent observation of the counting of ballots in what was often a very cordial and engaged atmosphere

Key Challenges

- Polls were sufficiently disrupted in 3 House of Reps constituencies for a re-run to be announced to complete these polls
- In locations visited there appeared to be no announcement of the number of voters accredited before the start of voting and NYSC ad hoc staff had often been instructed not to speak to anyone on such details - including observers
- In at least one ward nearby to observed areas (ward 1 Oshomili North) DPP alleged ballots snatched and no DPP party agents admitted to polls or collation
- Tensions between DPP and PDP over areas perceived to have been rigged led to clashes at collation - Army, Police and Navy team had to restore order in Oshomili LGA collation
- Serious allegation of abuse in Ika North east where protesters at INEC claim NYSC staff were replaced with local youths and that the LGA returning officer was abducted after refusing to sign results for the area. He was later reported to be in police protective custody.
- Some cases of missing names in voters register and in one polling unit (10/07/08/008) register printed with only 24 of the pictures of 536 voters.

State by State - Bayelsa State

At the polling unit level the election was conducted in a cordial and constructive atmosphere in the LGAs observed - Kokoloma, Yenagoa and Ogbia - with additional reports coming from partners

and volunteers in several more communities. The electoral contest in Bayelsa is between the Labour Party led by former NDDC Chairman Timi Alaibe (who has earlier contested under PDP) and the ruling PDP led by Governor Timipre Sylva.

Opening of the poll was close to being on time - often around 9am.

Turnout was low - with later results suggesting around 20% in most of the areas observed.

Key Features

- Low turnout which was often around 20% of electorate
- Party agents from both key parties (DPP, PDP) present at all locations visited
- No splitting of units for accreditation seen at any location (fortunately not needed with low turnout)
- Election materials present - result sheets seemed to be more than required in circumstances
- Some late starts observed - often 10am - and reports from other rural areas of much later commencement of poll
- At polling unit there was good public and party agent observation of the counting of ballots in what was often a very cordial and engaged atmosphere
- INEC appears to have taken urgent action to deal with a serious problem. After the PDP candidate Senator Heineken Lokpobiri was declared winner with an improbably margin of 48,401 votes to LP 696, CPC 1085, ANPP 1404, INEC has cancelled the result and the SSS is reported to have arrested the PDP candidate Senator Heinekin Lokpoberi

Key Challenges

- Reports from other areas suggest that the closely watched home LGA of Timi Alaibe and the state capital of Yenagoa may have faced less irregularities and abuse than other areas.
- A swathe of LGAs in Bayelsa have been cancelled - possibly putting the state at the forefront of cancellations across the country
- Some opposition areas seem to have been denied the opportunity to vote - the SPO for Adagbabiri Ward in Sagbama LGA was given only 7 unit results sheets of 16 and was refused an answer for the shortfall. This caused an immediate controversy in the affected ward where communities refused to vote unless the whole ward was able to participate.
- Basic miscalculations in results at unit and ward level contributed to unnecessary delays - further training will assist in both accuracy and confidence of all parties
- Although widespread cancellations may have addressed some issues the results in a number of LGAs appear questionable and at odds with both relative strengths of political parties in these areas, observed turnout and some polling unit results.
- Turnout remains a crucial issue for developing a relationship between communities and representatives. INEC must continue to follow up on contentious issues and visibly address deficiencies that caused the cancellation of results in many LGAs.

State by State - Rivers State

This appeared to be a 'state of two halves' where a relatively free poll was held in observed parts of Port Harcourt, while rural areas saw more polarised activity and some very questionable results. At the time of writing the PDP is set to win all of the Federal constituencies in the state despite the main opposition party, ACN, having a strong presence in a number of LGAs.

It should also be noted that the ACN in the state is led by former senior members of the PDP with the most important actors all heavily involved in the discredited 2003 and 2007 elections for PDP.

Key features:

- Low turnout which was consistently 10% of electorate in observed parts of Port Harcourt and only occasionally higher in some key rural communities (eg the home of ACN Senate

- Candidate in Rivers appeared to have close to 50% turnout in his village of Mogho)
- Party agents from both key parties present in Port Harcourt, but in rural areas often only agents present from the stronger party in the area.
 - Splitting of units for accreditation seen in Port Harcourt, but not in rural areas.
 - Announcement of number of accredited voters occurred in some Port Harcourt units only, none noted in rural areas visited
 - Election materials present - result sheets seemed to be more than required in circumstances
 - Start of poll generally close to 'on time' in both Port Harcourt and rural areas observed.

Key Challenges

- Party Agents and Observers were excluded from some collation centres (eg Kpor, Gokana LGA, Buguma, Asari Toru LGA, Emouha LGA) by security who alleged this was on instruction from INEC staff at the centre
- Polarised environments at polling units in observed areas meant that locations often had a presence of a single party - usually either ACN or PDP - in rural areas
- Cases of reported ballot box snatching in Gokana LGA apparently met no response from INEC (results from K Dere Ward 6 and Biara Ward 12 were recorded in results sheets well after incidents were reported to INEC and other hotlines)
- Results for some wards seem implausible at best - eg Beera in Gokana appears to have reported a turnout of over 80%
- Apparent poor control of results sheets seems to leave elections vulnerable to 'multiple results' from the same area
- Allegations of results being re-written at LGA level has caused local controversy and there are credible reports of parallel results existing in some areas

Niger Delta Watch

[>> Follow real time reports in the forthcoming elections on Niger Delta Watch.](#)

For press enquiries please contact Inemo Samiama on (Nigeria: +234) (0)7058245748 or (0)7033751788

© 2010 Stakeholder Democracy Network.

All rights reserved. All the views expressed here are those of SDN or the respective authors.

SDN, International Secretariat, Development House, 56 – 64 Leonard Street, London EC2A 4JX, UK.

+44 (0) 207 0650 845