

FLASHPOINTS: THE 2015 ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA

SDN

Issue Two: 20 Jan 2015

Days to Presidential Poll: **25**

Days to Governor and House of Representatives Poll: **39**

GETTING ALL REGISTERED VOTERS TO THE POLLS



- **Millions Denied PVC because of Data Irregularities**
- **PVC Distribution Still Poor**
- **Allow TVC use argue Governors and Senators.**

Millions of registered voters across Nigeria are still without a Permanent Voters Card (PVC) due to mismanagement at regional Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) distribution centres and in the Commission's national operations, say citizens.

There are also complaints that voters have been denied a PVC because their data does not appear on the Register of Eligible Voters, despite having voted in previous elections.

It appears that the cleaning exercise executed by INEC - which aimed to clear the register of double entries and fake names - has wiped out millions of legitimate voters records. Just over three weeks to voting, this adds another significant challenge to the list faced by INEC.

Register of Voters Released - 68.8 million eligible to vote

On Tuesday it was announced that 68,833,476 Nigerians will be able to vote in the 2015 elections - down 4,694,564 from the 2011 register.

The reduction is much smaller than many had feared after the discovery that millions of voters had been struck out because of biodata collection failures, taking the total down from 70.4 million to just 58.9 million. The new register shows roughly 10 million have since been re-registered.

The Director of Information Communications Technology at INEC, Chudi Nwafor, said that the final list was arrived at after the Commission detected over 11 million people involved in double registration. A further 580,000 had no fingerprints on their record, and hence they were cancelled.

Stats Continue to Baffle Observers

Meanwhile, validity of statistics on distribution have been brought into question by numerous reports circulating around the country arguing there is no professional inventory or stock keeping process in local INEC offices.

Photos showing boxes of PVCs piled on top of each other and spilling into heaps are undermining the precise figures of distribution being announced by the Commission. Doubts over the capacity of the central INEC office to keep a comprehensive record is growing, especially with increasingly decentralised distribution.

NUMBER CRUNCHING:

68,833,476 - Nigerians Eligible to vote in 2015

>4,000,000 - Involved in multiple registrations.

132,000 - Card readers ready out of **155,000** required

>120,000 - Polling points in Nigeria.

N1,300 = Cost per voter to INEC in Feb elections (**\$7.90**), only **\$1.10** higher than 2011 elections, despite new technology.

N90.2 billion = total cost to INEC for **68 million voters**.

600,000 - Number of personnel that need to be trained to staff voting stations before 14th February. This is currently an unbudgeted expense.



Disorderly PVC distribution: from twitter @hazucall

Allow the use of TVCs, argue Members of the House

As nearly half of all registered voters have yet to receive new voter identification cards, questions are being raised about INEC preparations with just over three weeks to go.

Members of the House passed a motion arguing that allowing the use of the TVCs - issued four years ago for the previous elections - alongside the new PVCs is the only way to avoid denying many Nigerians their right to vote.

The Plateau State Government are taking INEC to court over the issue, arguing that making PVC compulsory to vote is disenfranchising legible voters.

Yet INEC Chairman, Professor Jega, outrightly rebutted the need for such measures on Thursday, affirming that, "For the avoidance of doubt, possession of PVCs is a strict condition for anyone intending to vote in the 2015 elections."

The Commission maintains that it will have all outstanding cards ready from their contractor by January 28, and that all voters will come and pick them up.

Rumours of fresh registration period and PVC collection

Yet just one day later, in an unconfirmed announcement the Head of INEC office in Abuja, Emmanuel Idakwo, said that the commission was still considering fresh voter registration for eligible persons yet to register, and for those with PVC problems.

Idakwo admitted that the pressure of daily complaints from unregistered voters and those denied PVCs may force INEC to open registration again for a few days.

Observers argue this would be a welcome revelation as the original registration process was not effectively delivered, disenfranchising millions of 18-22 year olds from the Register.

The decision must be made now to allow enough time

and avoid a repeat of the 2011 elections where materials could not arrive in time in most parts of the country and the polls were postponed one week.

Some commentators fear that the disenfranchisement of voters may cause more violence on election days than disagreements over election results.

The priority of election preparations remains the same: To ensure that every eligible Nigerian is allowed to cast their vote.

INEC Dismisses Three Workers over Theft of PVCs in Delta State

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) on Thursday announced the dismissal of two of its officials for alleged theft of Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs).

In its daily Bulletin issued in Abuja, the commission said that the officers allegedly committed the offences in its Patani Local Government Area office of Delta.

Number Crunching:

14 - Political parties submitted candidates for the presidential election.

739 - Senatorial candidates vying for 109 seats

1,780 - Candidates vying for the 360 seats in the House of Representatives.

2,519 - Total number of candidates vying for 479 seats in the National Assembly

RADAR Citizen Journalist Report: Vote Buying and Being Paid to Attend Rallies

Payments are being handed out to supporters for attending political rallies in Bayelsa and Delta States, citizen journalists are reporting.

Best Uso reports that in Erema for his campaign, "the aspirant governor gave 500 Naira (£1.70) to each person that was present."

According to Okonta Emeka, based in Delta State, "500 Naira is the least any political association can hand out to people who support their rally [...] This trend has become the political culture in my nation."

Robert Nitabai Desmond chooses to abstain from rallies to avoid being swung by handouts, explaining "I can't let myself, I can't let my conscience be bought by our failed politicians and that is why I don't attend their rallies [...] This is not the right way of doing politics."

Vote Buying

A more concerning trend in Nigerian elections is vote buying. "I witnessed it yesterday", said Damasus Henry in Oshimili. "Delegates were recorded vote buying in party primaries." Similar claims were made by Glaad Amadi with regards to previous elections. "On the day of voting people were being paid 200, 1500, 2500 Naira to vote. This is what I witnessed," Amadi added.

Money Dominates Politics

While this has been a widespread practice in Nigerian politics, it is worth noting the impact that tightening economic conditions may have on voter behaviour. The danger is that a desperate population could give in to the practice of 'stomach infrastructure' - sharing of money by politicians in return for support - as witnessed during the Ekiti and Osun by-elections.



In all of SDN's interactions with grassroots folks it was clear that besides worsening economic conditions, unresponsive government administrations continue to allow vote buying and crowd renting. This approach to governance favours the politicians more as they continue to feel no obligation to citizens having paid promptly for attendance at rallies and for votes. Community folks maintained that because politicians easily forget citizens' welfare when elected, the electioneering period is a time where the electorate must demand concrete promises from the aspiring politicians.

If you have witnessed this practice then get in touch at election2015@stakeholderdemocracy.org. For more citizen reports go to RADAR's news site: nigerdelta.onourradar.org

QUOTE OF THE WEEK:

"The madness, the attacks, the killings, the insults, the persecution, the wickedness, the impunity and the intimidation has to stop forthwith or else the consequences will be grave for the continued unity of our country."

Former Minister of Aviation, Chief Femi Fani-Kayode

80 Percent of Electoral Offences Left Unprosecuted

It has been revealed that less than 20 per cent of suspected electoral offenders during the 2011 general elections were prosecuted. Out of over 1,000 electoral offenders INEC is given the responsibility to prosecute, they have only been able to prosecute 211.

Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has urged the National Assembly to give priority to the establishment of special commission to handle electoral offences, including people involved in fraudulent multiple registration.

PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES SIGN PEACE ACCORD AMIDST RISING VIOLENCE



All Smiles: Jonathan and Buhari endure an embrace for the cameras

Presidential candidates of all political parties united on Wednesday to sign an accord to pledge for non-violent polls next month.

Signing the accord, candidates vowed to make sure their party agents refrain from religious incitement and ethnic or tribal profiling during campaigns, agreeing “to refrain from making, or causing to make our names or that of our party, any public statements, pronouncements, declarations or speeches that have the capacity to incite any form of violence before, during and after the elections”

“...a large chair does not make a king. To lead, you have to be a role model.”

A Plea for Peace from former UN Chief

The accord was signed in the presence of the former Secretary General of the United Nations, Dr. Kofi Annan. Commenting on the elections, Annan stated:

“As the old proverb says, **a large chair does not make a king. To lead, you have to be a role model.** The 2015 elections are an opportunity to confirm Nigeria’s progress in the eyes of the world, but most importantly, in the eyes of its own people.”

“Nigerians should remember that their destiny is a common one, whether you are Muslim or Christian, Northerner or Southerner, for the PDP or the APC.”

Address Surging Violence Now to Avoid a Repeat of 2011 Elections

A statement purportedly from MEND spokesman Jomo Gbomo reaffirmed the organisation’s support for Buhari on Thursday, it said, “We know that with him, there will be a better Nigeria where corruption and insurgency will be a thing of the past.”

The statement warned that the organisation was getting ready to launch operation ‘Hurricane No Return’. While it was not made clear what this entails, this sounds like a clear threat of violence if the results do not go the way they demand.

Also in the Delta region, unknown assailants threw dynamite into the APC secretariat at Ngor, Rivers State, which left the building razed to the ground by fire.

Meanwhile, a suicide bomber detonated at a market in the northeast Nigerian city of Gombe on Friday, killing at least six people and wounding 10, emergency workers on the scene said. This follows the attack in Baga the previous week, claimed by Boko Haram, where the death toll is reportedly near to 2,000.

Reports have surfaced of an unprecedented influx of illegal arms trafficked into the country ahead of the elections, as state and local politicians have taken to arming their supporters in the Niger Delta and in the northeast.

It is essential that the message of peace from Kofi Annan is respected and mitigating actions taken by politicians to avoid the widespread violence witnessed at the 2011 elections. Riots following the announcement of results left more than 800 people dead in 12 northern states.

UPDATE: INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS (IDPS) WILL VOTE, INEC INSISTS



There are an estimated 3.3 million IDP's in Nigeria

Governor Umaru Al-Makura of Nasarawa state has promised to return all Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the state to their homes before the elections coming up in February, and pay for materials to rebuild them.

INEC are also adamant the challenge will be overcome in time for voting, with Chairman Jega stating, "INEC has always

said it is preparing to conduct elections in all the 36 states and the FCT, including the three states in the North-east experiencing the challenge of insurgency." He insisted that in the North East the distribution of PVCs is ongoing in refugee camps, and that the commission is concluding arrangements to enable the IDPs to vote.

This is likely to be a significant strain on resources with INEC's budget already tight.

"INEC has always said it is preparing to conduct elections in all the 36 states and the FCT"

ALLIANCE FOR DEMOCRACY PARTY PLEDGES TO CREATE 2 MILLION JOBS



The presidential candidate of the Alliance for Democracy party, Dr Rafiu Salau, pledged to create two million jobs if elected into office in next month's election. In a refreshing exchange of policy ideas, the ADP candidate made the announcement while presenting the party's manifesto in Abuja.

To attain such a feat, Salau said his administration would ensure more local company involvement in the exploration and sale of crude oil, refining into petroleum products, as well as shipment.

Savings that would be made on import subsidies would be invested on capital goods to develop the industry. Growing the sector this way would create 2 million jobs for Nigerians, and build US\$200 billion in foreign reserves within four years, he claims.

INEC Clears 88 Observer Groups to Monitor Election

The international bodies accredited for the 2015 elections consist of diplomatic missions of nine countries in Nigeria, including those of United States, Switzerland, Britain, Germany, France, Japan, Republic of Ireland, Australia, and Canada.

Non-state international bodies are International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES); International Republican Institute (IRI); National Democratic Institute for International Affairs; UN Women; European Union Delegation to Nigeria; ECOWAS Mission; and African Students Association of Ireland.

Prominent among the 72 accredited domestic observer groups are Stakeholder Democracy Network (SDN); Transition Monitoring Group (TMG); New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD); Nigeria Bar Association (NBA); Centre for Democracy and Development; National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS); and the National Association of Women Journalists, (NAWOJ).



WEBSITE OF THE WEEK:

RADAR have trained 40 citizen reporters from across the Delta to share stories from their communities. Check out RADAR's Niger Delta elections hub, full of content generated by their network of on-the-ground reporters <http://nigerdelta.onourradar.org/>

ON OUR
RADAR
NIGER DELTA

2015 NIGERIAN ELECTIONS: CITIZEN REPORTS FROM ON-THE-GROUND

Human Rights Activists encourage Asaba youths to
cast their votes >

ABOUT THE PROJECT CITIZEN REPORTERS OUR MODEL CATEGORY MOST POPULAR

FOR ELECTION UPDATES AND TO REPORT YOUR PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS, STAY IN TOUCH WITH SDN

Across the 2015 elections cycle you can report incidents you observe in your area to SDN.

The SDN network is spread across every LGA across Delta, Bayelsa and Rivers State, and will aim to respond to verified reports of incidents within the shortest possible time. This initial response will be followed by a number of positive steps for resolution where appropriate.

SDN has experience working with communities on tackling election related violence. Our aim is to help communities voice their experiences with the election process, whether good or bad.

For a live report you can tweet to our twitter handle **@SDNNigerDelta**

For a more in-depth report of an incident, or a personal account of your experience, you can write an email and send it to:
election2015@stakeholderdemocracy.org

We will be circulating regular updates on elections and educational materials. You can see these by visiting

www.stakeholderdemocracy.org

by liking our page on facebook

and Following us on Twitter **@SDNNigerDelta**

Prepared by **Stakeholder Democracy Network:**

