

# FLASHPOINTS: THE 2015 ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA

SDN

Issue Eleven: 26 Mar 2015

Days to Presidential Poll: 2

Days to Governor and House of Representatives Poll: 16

## THE RIVERS DEBATE 2015



**In an unprecedented event, candidates for Rivers State governor came together in Port Harcourt on Monday for a lively debate on the topics of economy, security and open governance in the State.**

Aspirants Nyesom Wike (Peoples Democratic Party, PDP), Dakuku Peterside (All Progressives Congress, APC) and Tonye Princewill (Labour Party, LP) put aside prevailing party and personal conflicts to stand before citizens to discuss problems and propose their ideas to take Rivers State forward.

It was a special evening as this kind of event is almost unseen in Nigeria, and has never happened in the highly-contested Rivers State. Politicians tend to shy away from public speaking on policy points, and instead rely on party and ethnic loyalties and defamation of the opposition for votes.

But Nigerians are starting to reject this type of politicking and are increasingly demanding that their representatives have the solutions to help society.

With support from both political parties and citizens, the Rivers Debate is a significant milestone in the ongoing process of change.

The event was organised by Stakeholder Democracy Network (SDN), the Rivers Entrepreneurs and Investors Forum (REIF), and NigerianInfo – and broadcast live on Channels TV and NigerianInfo 92.3 FM.

What follows is a brief overview of the discussion and pledges made – but full highlights will follow so stay tuned to our website [www.stakeholderdemocracy.org](http://www.stakeholderdemocracy.org).

### The Economy

After opening statements, the debate facilitators – Kofi Bartels of NigerianInfo and Florence Kayemba of SDN – went straight into the opening topic.

All candidates saw the immediate need to develop a financial strategy that would diversify the State economy away from oil dependency in the face of the collapsed global oil price.

Agriculture was agreed as an immediate area for investment. Wike outlined plans to support investment in commercial-scale agriculture and the entire value chain of local production, such as the development of fruit juice companies. Conversely, Peterside proposed to start by extending the Songhai model – a sustainable farming and agro-processing model where farmers can come to learn techniques, which was established by incumbent Governor Amaechi.

For Princewill, security and multiple taxation are the pressing issues affecting doing business in the State, so his plan would be to stop checkpoints on roads where police illegally extort money from travellers. Wike echoed this and claimed he had the political will to implement laws.

On supporting small- and medium-sized enterprises Peterside proposes access to finance, power farms and incubation centres. For Wike, access to finance was again to be a priority alongside investment in industrial parks to cluster industry.

Peterside claimed that the unemployment rate in Rivers State is lower than at the national level, and attributed this to the efforts of the incumbent APC governor. This, he argues, could be improved further by revamping the education system to include vocational skills training. For Tonye the proposal was clear: address youth unemployment.

### Security

Wike, a lawyer by training, made it clear that it is the role of the state judiciary to be free from undue influence from the Federal government and implement laws that checkmate criminality. The main union of national judiciary staff only recently suspended a strike that has been ongoing for over one year - and therefore has ruled out trial and prosecution.

Peterside outlined the APC's Zero Tolerance policy on crime with plans to augment intelligence gathering with 'Operation Know Your Neighbour' and through increased surveillance.

### Open Governance

Wike highlighted the failure of Rivers State government to pass a Freedom of Information (FOI) bill and proposed to make sure that every citizen who requests information on a relevant subject will get it. Opening government to involve people is the priority for Peterside too - both in the policy-making and budget formulation processes.

Princewill took the idea of inclusive budgeting a step further, proposing to implement 'the Brazil model'.



The first ever full participatory budgeting process was developed in Brazil in 1989, and between 1990 and 2008 over 120 of the country's largest 250 cities have adopted the technique. Some cities, such as Belo Horizonte and Porto Alegre, have spent hundreds of millions of U.S dollars over the past decades on projects that citizens selected.

Results in Brazil are promising, showing that more investment was made in education, healthcare in poorer areas, and sanitation, while infant mortality dropped by more than 20 percent. Participatory Budgeting's influence strengthens over time, indicating that its benefits do not merely result from governments making easy policy changes. Instead, it

shows that greater involvement of citizens and civil society organisations build institutions that are better informed, more responsive and more transparent.

### A Step Forwards

All candidates challenged the perceptions held of them, not just through their attendance, but by the way they engaged with the issue-based questions and proposed steps for progress.

Despite the ground rules, each candidate made the ugly slip back into the habit of subverting the opponent through personal attacks - much to the joy of their respective party faithfuls in the audience. But in a place where this has been the political culture since implementing democracy, this is to be expected.

The audience tuning in on TV and radio, and following online updates, saw through this for what it is - a defence mechanism to fall back on when the ideas are not there.

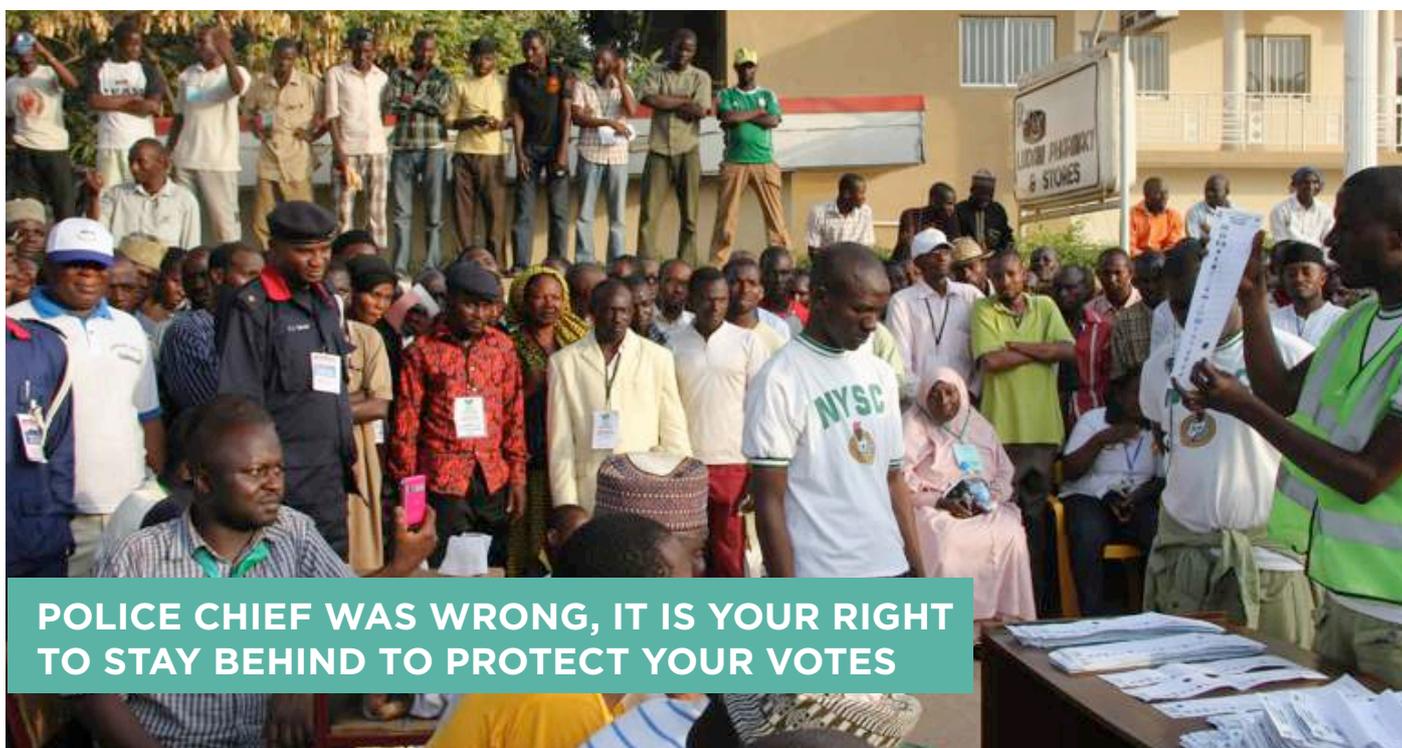
That is why initiatives like this are so important. Just like the proposal for participation in budget making, including the public in the democratic process and discussion of policies enhances transparency, accountability, and the relevance of the decision.

It also helps highlight who is capable to make sense of complex problems and conflicting demands, which if



elected they will be faced with on a daily basis. Ultimately it strengthens downward-facing accountability by building a consensus that candidates must earn their votes through concrete pledges for change that they can then be measured against.

It was a pleasure to work with the partners - the Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme (NSRP), ActionAid, PIND and Enough is Enough Nigeria - on the project, and we sincerely hope this initiative can continue to develop after the election by holding the successful candidate to account against what they proposed.



**This week the Inspector-General of Police Suleiman Abba urged voters to go home after casting ballots. "It is better to cast vote, go and cool down, than to cast vote and remain in the polling station," he said.**

"If you remain, it is likely you will commit an offence. You may utter a word that the other person may perceive as intimidation."

The electoral law does not state anywhere that voters cannot, or should not, wait to watch and ensure that their votes are counted fairly.

Following the IG's comments, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC),

Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and All Progressives Congress (APC), rejected the comment and confirmed that voters are indeed permitted to remain at the booths for counting.

### REC Wrong, Cameras Allowed

Last month's high profile source of misinformation was the INEC Federal Commissioner for Rivers, Bayelsa and Akwa-Ibom states Mrs Thelma Iremiren.

She warned prospective voters in Rivers State not to bring cameras, recording devices, or to post results from Polling Units, collation centres on social media platforms.

Instead of following the advice of these two on the matter of ballot

box observance, we advise that you exercise your civic right and: **Go, Vote, Stay, Observe, Snap, Stay for Vote Count and Results, Report to SDN**

All reports to SDN are treated confidentially and with anonymity. Details of how to report from where you are to SDN are listed on the final page.





## INTERNATIONAL PROSECUTORS SPOTLIGHT NIGERIA'S ELECTION VIOLENCE

**As the Israeli elections conclude peacefully, international political observers and organisations are turning their attention towards the Nigerian presidential elections and taking note of inflammatory statements.**

### The ICC

The International Criminal Court (ICC) has reiterated its call for politicians to refrain from electoral offences, noting that it had the capacity to prosecute culpable individuals “whenever necessary”.

“The Office of the Prosecutor of the ICC conducts independent and impartial investigations and prosecution of the crimes of genocides, crimes against humanity and war crimes,”

The Office of the Prosecutor, which conducts independent investigations and prosecution of the crimes of genocides, crimes against humanity, and war crimes, has begun “conducting preliminary examinations relating to the situations in Afghanistan, Columbia, Georgia, Guinea, Honduras, Iraq, Nigeria, Ukraine and Palestine”, said Fatou Bensouda, an ICC Prosecutor.

Turning to Nigeria, in his statement Mr. Bensouda said, “Any person who incites or engages in acts of violence in the context of the upcoming elections or otherwise - including by ordering, inciting,

encouraging or contributing to the commission of crimes that fall within ICC’s jurisdiction - is liable to prosecution; either by Nigerian Courts or by the ICC.”

“The conduct and outcome of elections in Nigeria, free from violence, will not only prevent further instability in the country, but will also send a clear message that electoral competition does not have to result in violence and crimes that shock the conscience of humanity.”

### US President

President Obama released a message to the Nigerian people to highlight the opportunity that the upcoming elections present for all Nigerians to stand together in rejecting violence and extremism and instead show their support for a more peaceful, secure, and prosperous future.

“I call on all leaders and candidates to make it clear to their supporters that violence has no place in democratic



elections—and that they will not incite, support or engage in any kind of violence—before, during, or after the votes are counted,” Obama said.

“I call on all Nigerians to peacefully express your views and to reject the voices of those who call for violence. And when elections are free and fair, it is the responsibility of all citizens to help keep the peace, no matter who wins.”

### UN

The United Nations has also vowed that it would hold perpetrators of post-election violence accountable. Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Jeffery Feltman, and the Secretary-General’s High-Level Representative to Nigeria, Mohammed Ibn Chambas, gave the warning last week.

“The International community is closely watching the elections in Nigeria and any persons responsible for violence will be held accountable,” said Feltman.

Feltman reiterated that the UN has “urged the political actors, particularly the candidates, to resolve any electoral disputes through existing legal and constitutional means.”

### US VEPP

United States Vice-President Joe Biden revealed that he spoke with GEJ and GMB this week ahead of election.

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He also expressed US support for the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and its work to deliver free, fair and credible elections, in its essential efforts to distribute Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs) and help ensure that electronic voter card readers are in place and fully operational.

### Patience Jonathan

Meanwhile, ICC prosecutors have confirmed receiving correspondence from the All Progressives Congress (APC) against Patience Jonathan, the Nigerian first lady. The official criminal case reference number is OTP-CR-83/15.

An APC spokesman in the United Kingdom claims that, “the ICC based in the Hague has sent confirmation to APC UK, that an investigation will begin against Mrs Jonathan who repeatedly called for the stoning of opposition APC members as captured in the videos released earlier this month”.



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## Movement Restrictions Enforced

The IG of Police, Abba, has restricted movement of vehicles between 8am and 5pm on the upcoming voting days - 28th March and 11th April.

The Federal Government has announced the closure of all land and sea borders ahead of Saturday’s presidential elections, the Interior Ministry has announced.

All borders will be effectively closed between midnight March 25th to midnight Saturday March 28th, “to “allow for the peaceful conduct of the forthcoming elections.”

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## Military Manoeuvres

### **A Federal Court in Lagos has ruled that the Nigerian Armed Forces have no role in the conduct of elections in the country.**

Following the postponement of the election on the grounds of military unpreparedness, the definition between the military and Jonathan’s administration has become increasingly hazy.

Asking for a guarantee of national security politicised the military and opened the door

to it playing an arbitration role in political conflicts among parties and dictating the terms of democracy.

But the court relied on a recent Court of Appeal ruling that barred the use of soldiers in the conduct of elections, stating that it was a violation of Section 217(2)(c) of the Constitution and Section 1 of the Armed Forces Act.

The appellate court had also relied on a judgment by a

Federal High Court in Sokoto last January also barring the use of armed forces in the conduct of elections.

For more detailed legal discussion on the use of military for elections, check out [Issue 7 of Flashpoints](#).

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## ELECTION-RELATED VIOLENCE: FOREIGNERS LEAVE NIGERIA IN DROVES

Many foreign missions in the country have advised their citizens against staying behind for fear of post-elections violence in Nigeria, with many seen leaving the country at both Lagos and Abuja international airports.

Schools, especially private schools, are planning closures for the second term as proactive measures against the uncertain outcome following the polls.

The streets of Rivers State have become particularly eerie this week. Fewer cars on the road make for an unusual change from bumper-to-bumper traffic, but an increase in police checkpoints to stop drivers is an intimidating nuisance.

### Violence in Rivers

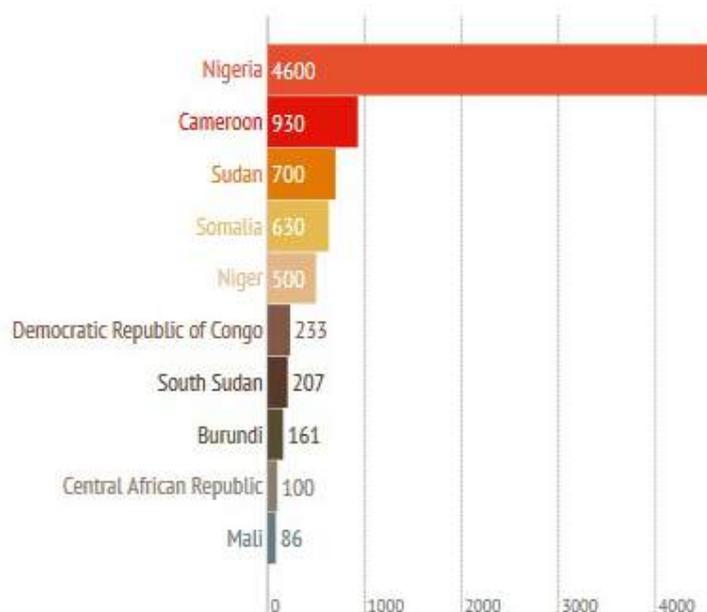
The Department of State Security (DSS) has expressed worry over the spate of politically motivated killings in Rivers State ahead of the forthcoming general elections in the country.

Governor Amaechi alleged recently that over thirty members of his APC have been gunned down in Rivers State in political related circumstance.

Meanwhile PDP governorship candidate, Nyesom Wike, said over 45 PDP members have been killed on account of their affiliation when he addressed a team from the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) last week.

## 10 BLOODIEST COUNTRIES IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

In the first two months of 2015, ten states accounted for 99% of conflict deaths in the region.



Source: [Armed Conflict Location and Event Data project](#)

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## Death Squads

Wike alleged that the governor maintains a killer squad in the police named 'See for Eye', code named C4I to kill their members before the elections.

"We call on Inspector General of Police to, as a matter of urgency, disband Amaechi's hit squad called C4I used to kill our members before the general election. We will, otherwise, be compelled to defend ourselves against the killings."

Amaechi however accuses the opposite, arguing the in a likely step towards executing an alleged scheme to assassinate Peterside, Federal Government has intervened in state security and, "commenced the withdrawal of police security for top APC members including that of gubernatorial candidate, Dr Dakuku Peterside."

## "An Epidemic of Political Violence"

Rivers State commissioner of Health, Dr Sampson Parker, says that between January this year and March, the state owned Braithwaite Memorial Hospital and the Kelsey Harrison Hospital have admitted 41 patients for gunshot injuries and 26 for assault that can be directly attributed to political violence.

No doubt there are many more cases neither reported to the police, nor to government health facilities, nor picked up on and voiced by the public for fear of reprisal. These figures therefore do not truly reflect the death toll of the violence, which is expected to be much higher.

Over the weekend the police confirmed 8 deaths from shootouts in Port Harcourt alone, following 12 confirmed the weekend before.

Commenting on the matter, Dr Parker said in a statement, "Let us note here that the Ebola scourge for which the country and our state rose up as one to combat only accounted for 10 deaths in Nigeria, out of which two were in Rivers State."

He continued to observe that, "Today, we go about our lives as if we have accepted this ominous situation", warning of an ignored "epidemic of political violence".

Many of the deaths have been attributed to warring cult gangs. They often recruit young men looking for work in whatever is currently paying. Right now, the top employers are politically affiliated actors looking to stoke violence and intimidation to influence voting.

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## JOURNALISTS STILL DENIED ENTRY TO COVER ELECTIONS

**In an application process that typically takes one week, many British journalists are still awaiting their press visas despite submitting applications months ago.**

Colin Freeman, foreign correspondent for the Telegraph, wrote obtaining a visa "normally takes only a week, and given that my application went in two months ago, I'm beginning to think the Nigerian government doesn't want me there."

He went on to complain that, "Sadly, if it's on-the-ground reportage you want, don't come to me. Or The Times or Channel

4 News. Or any of the 20-odd other British media outlets that have asked for press visas to cover the elections, and whose applications still languish in a pile at the Nigerian High Commission in London,"

He said most applications for press visas were filed ahead of previous election date - granting authorities an additional six weeks to sift through.

Freeman said even if his visa arrives just in time next week, it would not be conducive to giving the controversial elections proper coverage. "Countries that only let foreign press in for a few

days around election times are observing the rules of the game but not the spirit,"

We think that if you really want to observe the 'spirit' then it takes more than the one week of 'on-the-ground reportage' that Freeman was planning.

Previous issues of Flashpoints cover and analyse all election related issues as they have emerged over the past 11 weeks, grounded in the local Nigerian context, with local views from the Niger Delta. You can find them at [www.nigerdeltawatch.org](http://www.nigerdeltawatch.org), under 'Election Newsletter'.

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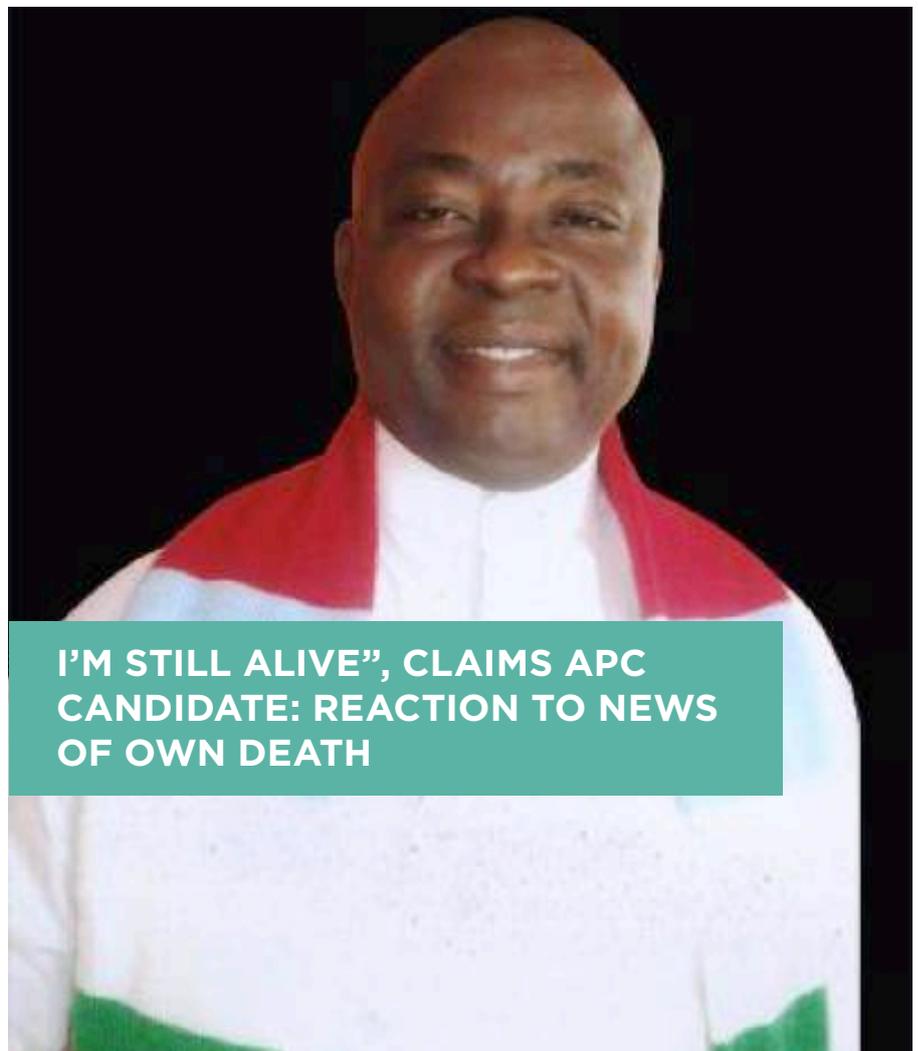
**A signed death certificate of All Progressives Congress (APC) House of Representatives candidate, Chief Christopher Anirah, made its way to both the national chairman of the party, and the national INEC chairman, despite the man claiming he is still alive.**

A letter dated January 15, signed by one Mr. Chidi Okonji and sent to the National Chairman of the party, Chief John Odigie-Oyegun, was titled 'Substitution of a Dead Candidate'.

Another dated January 20, addressed to INEC Chairman Jega, purportedly signed by Chief Odifio-Oyegun, said "The party is seeking to substitute the candidacy of Chief Anirah with Mr. Gibson Akporehe, following the demise of Chief Anirah."

Reacting to the news of his death, Anirah said "I am still alive and would be contesting the election on the platform of APC. Those peddling such rumours are my political detractors, who are bent on stealing the mandate of the electorate."

It is not clear who went to INEC to try and change the name of the candidate running for Okpe, Uvwie & Sapele Federal Constituency, Delta State.



**I'M STILL ALIVE", CLAIMS APC CANDIDATE: REACTION TO NEWS OF OWN DEATH**

## **IS 750,000 INEC AD HOC STAFF ENOUGH FOR THE 2015 ELECTIONS?**



**Following the sudden demise of General Sani Abacha in June 1998, his successor, General Abdulsalami Abubakar dissolved the National Electoral Commission of Nigeria (NECON) instituted by his predecessor.**

NECON had conducted elections into local government councils, state legislatures and National Assembly preparatory to Abacha's grand plan to mutate from a military ruler to a civilian president in 1998.

In NECON's place Abdulsalami's administration established the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). The commission conducted all transitional elections that ushered in the current democratic dispensation on May 29, 1999.

As contained in Section 15, Part 1 of the Third Schedule of the 1999 Constitution (As Amended) and Section 2 of the Electoral Act 2010 (As Amended), INEC's functions include among others, to:

“Organise, undertake and supervise all elections to the offices of the President and Vice-President, the Governor and Deputy Governor of a State, and to the membership of the Senate, the House of Representatives and the House of Assembly of each state of the federation;”

“Arrange and conduct the registration of persons qualified to vote and prepare, maintain and revise the register of voters for the purpose of any election under this [the 1999] constitution;”

“Conduct any referendum required to be conducted pursuant to the provision of the 1999 Constitution or any other law or Act of the National Assembly.”

### **Huge Responsibility, Huge Workforce**

To perform these functions, INEC engages a workforce that is second only to that of the Nigeria Police (said to have about 300,000 officers and men). INEC staff strength comprises of the workforce recruited since 1987 under the former National Electoral Commission (NEC). The commission's staff are spread

across the 774 local government areas in the 36 states of Nigeria and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

Since 1999 INEC has engaged ad hoc personnel to support its permanent staff to organise voter registration and conduct elections all over the country. The continuous engagement of ad hoc personnel is to cut cost of maintaining a large workforce that will for the most times be redundant until it is an election season which in Nigeria is every four years. As at 2014 the commission's permanent workforce was put at just over 14,000, a figure, if distributed evenly among the 36 states and FCT, will be 378 going to each. In past elections INEC deployed no fewer than 8,000 personnel in each state and the FCT.

### **The Challenge of Credible Elections**

In 2011 INEC engaged about 300,000 ad hoc staff to conduct the general elections in that year. For the 2015 elections, the commission said it would require the services of at least 750,000 ad hoc personnel.

This is in view of changes effected in the electoral process like the Permanent Voter Card (PVC) and Card Reader that would require more personnel at the over 150,000 voting points across the country that was the case in the past.

Mr. Kayode Idowu, INEC's Chief Press Secretary disclosed in 2014 that the commission was almost concluding the engagement of the ad hoc staff across the country: “Getting that number is not an easy task, but the recruitment is nearly concluded, except in isolated places where we still need to make up with the number.”

While it is not clear if that much number has been engaged, it is certain that out in the field will be thousands of non-permanent INEC personnel overseeing the conduct of the 2015 elections. In Rivers state the commission said it had engaged about 23,000 ad hoc staff. In Kano, 48,000 are needed. In Lagos, over 33,860 have been engaged. In each of Taraba and Anambra, no fewer than 12,000 have engaged.

The majority of ad hoc staff are drawn from serving and former NYSC members, 3rd year university students, the academia and other group of Nigerians. It is on their shoulders therefore that the conduct of credible elections this year rests. While any failure or success will ultimately be attributed to INEC, it is the collective resolve of these non-permanent personnel to serve with integrity that will determine whether Nigerians will look back and say the 2015 elections bettered previous elections.



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## #RiversDebate2015 Trending on Twitter

The debate raised lots of important points and stimulated a discussion amongst the watching public. In particular, the #RiversDebate 2015 hashtag was red hot on twitter.

According to Nigeria Trends, almost 3 million people saw the hashtag since its 1st mention up until it became a trending topic. As it was trending from 19:15 until well into the early hours of the morning the outreach was far bigger than we could imagine. One thing is certain: It sparked more conversation than the National Presidential Debate held the night before!



**Ben Llewellyn-Jones** @benllewellynjo1 · Mar 23

Glad UK able to support Rivers state gubernatorial candidates debate tonight. Important voters hold candidates to account. @UKinNigeria



**Dittmann** @iambigmillz · Mar 23

This debate has been awesome. Good to know the plans this guberians have for us #RiversDebate2015



**Flomaestro** @floo\_coolfm · Mar 23

#RiversDebate2015 is the definition of a debate



**EJIM TONY** @de\_ejimtony · Mar 23

@nigeriainfoph The debate was very very important. At least, it exposed some weak points of the candidates. #RIVERSDEBATE2015



**Chinedu Peters** @chinair · Mar 23

This rivers debate is trending more than the presidential debate of yesterday #riversdebate2015

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

Stakeholder Democracy Network (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.

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 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 will also be documenting the incidents and displaying the information online. The reports will be treated with full anonymity and posted on the Niger Delta Watch platform. This is our early warning system for collecting and analysing trends in incidents occurring simultaneously across the Niger Delta.

There are a number of ways you can send a report:

**1. ONLINE** at [www.nigerdeltawatch.org](http://www.nigerdeltawatch.org) under the 'Submit a Report' tab



**2. TWEET** and **FOLLOW** our twitter handle [@SDNNigerDelta](https://twitter.com/SDNNigerDelta)

**3. EMAIL** to [election2015@stakeholderdemocracy.org](mailto:election2015@stakeholderdemocracy.org)

**4. SMS** to 0701 067 9724

We will be circulating regular updates on elections and educational materials. Please keep in touch by following [www.stakeholderdemocracy.org](http://www.stakeholderdemocracy.org)