

How to protect your vote on election days

The 2019 elections are approaching in Nigeria. There are a number of steps communities can take to strengthen the processes intended to ensure they are free, fair and credible.

This includes collective action to safeguard votes. Communities can send a clear message that they will resist the manipulation of the electoral process.

Below are four tactics that your community can use to strengthen the electoral process in Nigeria.

Watch out for compromising incidents, and speak to accredited INEC observers at the polling unit



Local and international INEC-accredited observers will visit your polling units on polling day. They will monitor the election as it takes place, and report on the adherence to or violation of electoral laws and INEC's guidelines.

These observers are legally authorised to obtain the information they need to ascertain if the process is credible or not. They can ask electoral officials key questions, and their reports can be used as evidence in election tribunals or court.

You can help by communicating your observations on the process to the observers, especially concerning any incidents which take place before they arrive. These might include, for example:

- Monetary inducements to vote in a specific way.
- The participation of underage voters.
- The display of political campaign materials at election venues.

Observers will be dressed in uniforms provided by INEC with the inscription 'Local/Domestic Observer' or 'International Observer'. See the 'Reporting on Incidents' box below for more information on how to report incidents.

Note that you can also call or send text messages to the INEC helplines, and notify others such as the police and journalists.

Watch the vote counting at unit and ward levels

It is your right to remain at the polling unit after voting, and to watch the counting of votes.

You can help by encouraging the people in your community to be vigilant during the count, and by recording the results manually or electronically. This will make it more difficult to manipulate the results of the election, contribute to increased confidence in the results, and increase the likelihood of the outcome being accepted.

After the votes are counted and the result announced at each unit, the ballot and result materials will be moved to the ward centre for ward-level collation. Citizens (especially accredited party agents) are also encouraged to watch closely at this stage. Here they should monitor and ensure that the results announced at the collation centre do not differ from those announced at each unit in the ward.

Take pictures of important events on the election day

Taking pictures of what happens on election day can help strengthen the electoral process. This might include images of the polling unit voter register and published unit or ward level election results. It is your right to do so and you are not violating any law in Nigeria by doing so. However, do not take

any photos if you think it may put you in danger. Sharing your photos online with INEC, election observers, security agencies, the media and civil society organisations will inform their understanding of the conduct of the election.

Monitor all the elections in 2019

In 2019, citizens will vote for candidates of their choice to occupy the following political offices:

National level

- President
- Senate (Members)
- House of Representatives (Members)

State level

- Governor
- House of Assembly (Members)

Local Government level

- Chairman
- Councillors

Ahead of the 2019 General Elections, your community should therefore make plans to mobilise and sensitise citizens to participate actively at each level of the elections. This means ensuring citizens vote as individuals while taking the steps outlined here to protect their votes as a community.