Not less than 15,567,219 registered voters are yet to collect their Permanent Voters’ Cards (PVCs), INEC reported on Thursday.

According to the data released by INEC, out of 54,341,610 PVCs printed so far, only 38,774,391 have been distributed – around 71% of PVCs printed so far, leaving 15,567,219 registered voters without PVCs.

However these numbers only show part of the challenge in completing registration for the election. After the 2011 poll INEC eliminated 3 million multiple registrations from a register of 73,528,040. This was further reduced by eliminating entries without a minimum standard of data to bring the revised register to 58,881,378. From this register INEC has only received 54 million voters’ cards and it is on this lowest number on which collection statistics are based.

States which stand out as being short on large numbers of voters’ cards for distribution include Lagos (awaiting 630,520), Kano (951,218) and Rivers (293,710). As at now there is no update on the 6-8 million additional and “re-registrations” that have been completed throughout 2014 (some of which were only completed in December). If the Register of Voters due for publishing reaches 66 million then only 58% of voters have their cards one month out from the election, with approximately 25 million voters without voters cards (15 million yet to collect reported by INEC, 4.4 million cards yet to be printed and approx. 6million new registration).

Uneven distribution

Kano, Lagos, Oyo and Imo top the list of states yet to collect PVCs. South-South is third among the zones with the highest number of PVCs collected with 5,756,018. In Rivers State though, with a registered 1,956,983 voters, only 1,253,606 – 64.6 per cent – have been distributed, leaving 703,377 without the PVCs.

Decentralising distribution

Talking to This Day, Chief Press Secretary to INEC Chairman Kayode Idowu stated that the undistributed PVCs are with the various local government councils in the respective states. He urged eligible voters that are yet to collect their PVCs to hurry and collect theirs.

In order to enhance access by persons yet to collect their cards, INEC has ordered the decentralisation of on-going distribution from local government offices to the ward level nationwide.

Collection times have been extended too. Registered voters can now collect cards from 8:30 am to 5:30 pm daily.

However, INEC may not have properly informed voters that yet-to-be collected PVCs have been moved to the commission’s offices in the local government areas where they can be claimed by their owners.

At the January 5 to 10 Civic and Voter Education and Mandate Protection trainings SDN facilitated in four rural communities in Rivers and Bayelsa states, there were streams of questions from troubled participants who said they did not know the next step to take having missed the PVC distribution window. Some who said they heard the cards could be collected at the INEC office in their local government area said they have been at the office many times but are yet to receive their PVCs. The offices according to community folks are usually not open. When eventually they open, the relevant staff are not available. More to come.
There is a growing number of displaced individuals in the North Eastern zone of the country that may not be able to vote, which could expose the election to legal challenges by losing parties said INEC last week.

The 2010 Electoral Act states that people can only vote in the Local Government Area in which they are registered.

Yet millions are currently displaced in Nigeria - 3.3 million people, the largest number in Africa and third highest in the world - according to a report by Internal Displaced Monitoring Centre (IDMC) last year.

Failure to respond to this escalating emergency is compromising the constitutional human rights of millions of Nigerians.

**On-going Boko Haram Attacks**

Many have been forced from their homes in the North East of the country by the on-going conflict with the Sunni extremist group Boko Haram.

According to World Bulletin, that over 9,000 people were killed, 1.5 million displaced, and 800 schools destroyed as a result of Boko Haram violence in 2014 alone.

“The violence shows no signs of decreasing in 2015. The town of Baga was attacked on Wednesday. At least 150 are confirmed dead - other reports claim the figure to be as high as 2,000 - in one of the most fatal assaults yet with the 10,000 population now “virtually non-existent”, BBC Hausa service reports.

Meanwhile, the outgoing Residential Electoral Commissioner in Borno State, Professor Tukur Sa’ad, stated on Friday that the planned distribution of Permanent Voters’ Cards (PVC) in the state would only be carried out in 2 of the 27 LGAs – Maiduguri and Jere - due to prevailing security challenges.

**Legal challenge**

The Electoral Act states that to be elected president a candidate must win 25 per cent of the votes in at least two-thirds of Nigeria's 36 states. With growing numbers unable to vote in their reigon the integrity of the results from Northern areas may be legally disputed, and therefore the result of the Presidential race undermined.

With tensions between north and south already heightened, this is a pivotal issue that already has the potential for violence.”
IMPORTANT DATES ANNOUNCED THIS MONTH:

Tuesday 13th January: INEC to publish Register of Voters

This is just in time as section 20 of the Electoral Act provides that the Register of Voters for an election shall be published at least thirty (30) days before the election.

Tuesday 13th January: Full list of candidates contesting for Presidency to be published

Saturday 24th January: Timetable and Schedule of Activities for the 2015 General Elections to be released to the public

Tuesday 27th January: Full list of candidates contesting for offices of Governor and House of Assembly to be published

WEBSITE OF THE WEEK:

You can check the location of all polling booths in Nigeria at:
http://booths.nigeriaelections.org/
NIGER DELTA WATCH: MEND Endorses Buhari and IYC Threatens Backlash

Reports credited to the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) have emerged endorsing Buhari for the forthcoming presidential election and condemning President Goodluck Jonathan for running a corrupt government.

Sharply criticized by IYC

In a statement the Ijaw Youths Council (IYC) strongly disassociated itself from the statements attributed to MEND, and reaffirmed their unflagging support of President Jonathan.

“We want the members of the pseudo MEND and their sponsors to know that if they buy arms to carry out their evil intentions, we will produce guns to counter them. If they buy bombs, we will produce bombs”, said IYC spokesman Eric Omare. These intentions were echoed by ex-militant Eris Paul, a.k.a. General Ogunbos: “We will react violently to any calculated plan by the opposition political leaders to sponsor some few disgruntled elements in the Niger Delta to perpetuate violence. If there is any attack in the Niger Delta, it will be met by multiple attacks in the states under their control.”

MEND’s endorsement of the APC Presidential candidate has clearly sharply divided the former comrades at arms into two opposing camps. This escalates the threat level in the Niger Delta going into the elections.

NEXT WEEK:

• Presidential candidate profiles
• Updates on the on-going PVC Saga
• Analysis of National Register of Voters figures
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: