INEC declared that ‘hoodlums’ snatched over 14,000 permanent voters’ cards (PVCs) from its officials during the distribution of the cards in Rivers State, one of the highest figures for thefts in the Federation.

Resident Electoral Commissioner in the state, Mrs Gesila Khan, expressed dismay that some of the cards were stolen from local government collection centres where the PVCs were deposited.

But because of the new accreditation system it will be difficult for them to be used she said, “all the cards that are being snatched are useless and meaningless because we are going to use a new system called “card reader”. Your card reader is just like ATM cards. You take it there and they slot it into the card reader to confirm if it is yours before you are allowed to vote. So if you go there with another person’s voter’s card, it is meaningless."

Khan assures citizens that over 50,000 PVCs still with INEC Rivers State would be distributed to the rightful owners before the general election, and pleaded with the perpetrators to return the cards. “Please return them so the rightful owners can collect them so they can participate”, Khan said. “The PVCs are beyond registration; the cards are beyond voting. People now use these cards in the banks as a means of identifying themselves”

Even though the Rivers INEC boss has guaranteed that the stolen cards will be useless in the hands of their holders, the genuine owners of the cards will be disenfranchised as INEC insists only voters with the PVC will be allowed to vote.
The European Union Election Observation Mission (EU EOM) on Tuesday in Abuja said that only one out of 50 recommendations made by the EU observation team after the 2011 general election have been adopted by Nigeria.

The Federal Government only adopted the provision of the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act.

The observers documented poorly conducted elections where interference and undue influence of party agents was a common feature, and underage persons were accredited in every fifth polling unit. The number of used ballots in Governorship and State House of Assembly elections did not equal the number of valid, spoilt and rejected ballots in almost every fifth polling unit, while in the Presidential elections these numbers matched after each observed counting.

The EU EOM report also stressed the importance of measures to stem the prevalence of intimidation of candidates and supporters; open brawls; kidnappings of candidates and family members; shootings; candidate assassinations; and bombings of innocent civilians.

Mitigating Election Violence

Reports indicate that more than 100 people died in election-related violence prior to the 2011 election day. According to Human Rights Watch, more than 800 people were killed, including 10 NYSC members on election duty, in election related-violence following the presidential poll.

Human Rights Watch has accused the authorities of failing to stop the violence and reported cases of excessive use of force by the police and military officers who were deployed to stop rioting and sectarian clashes.

Following the events, President Jonathan constituted a panel tasked with investigating the pre- and post-election violence. The report identifies causes of the crisis, including that the failure to
act on prior recommendations from other similar bodies “facilitated the widespread sense of impunity of the culprits and perpetrators of crimes and violence in Nigerian society.”

The Federal Government has therefore not just ignored the EU recommendations, but also failed to acknowledge the conclusion it arrived at itself after the 2011 elections - that prior recommendations from independent bodies should have been adhered to.

**EU Mission set to abandon the North Eastern Region**

Meanwhile, Chief Observer Santiago Ayxela announced that a 90 member team of the EU EOM will be deployed to various states in Nigeria, but not to the troubled North Eastern region due to insecurity that is out of the control of the Federal Government.

Yet this was the setting for most of the election-related violence in 2011, and where many of the bomb blasts occurred. It is also where the majority of Nigeria’s 3.3 million internally displaced people (IDPs) are concentrated. As such, it must not be abandoned and should instead be the recipient of more assistance this time.

**INEC RECORDS 75% PVC DISTRIBUTION IN DELTA STATE, 80% IN RIVERS STATE**

The Resident Electoral Commissioner (REC) for Delta State claims that over three-quarters of Permanent Voters’ Cards (PVCs) have been collected in both Delta and Rivers State, with two weeks remaining until the Presidential election.

Urging those yet to collect their PVCs, the REC for Delta Aniedi-Abasi Ikiowak says INEC are doing everything in their power to get the cards distributed, saying, “I have instructed electoral officers to distribute these cards even in markets and churches provided that the owners will sign attestation documentation.”

The REC for Rivers State Gesila Khan matched their success rate of their neighbour, claiming that over 80% of registered voters in the state under her jurisdiction have collected their PVCs.

Many of the unclaimed cards will belong to those that have relocated from the state, those who have transferred their registration to other states, and also to deceased Nigerians still on the register.

Meanwhile, REC Ikiowak announced that 4,380 card readers are to be used in the 3,624 polling units in Delta State, and 22,000 ad hoc staff will be drawn from members of the Nigerian Youth Service Corps and staff of government-owned establishments.

365,280 additional PVCs have been made available for those registered during the last Continuous Voter Registration phase, and others who transferred their vote to Delta State.

PVC collection is now ongoing across Nigeria until the 8th Feb. Image: elotitv
More than forty percent of voters in Rivers State are either undecided as to their choice of candidate for the Governorship seat, or keeping their voting preference confidential, a survey by NOI polls indicates.

The poll also shows that PDP candidate Nyesom Wike is leading the list of candidates with 35 percent of support, while Dakuku Peterside had 19 percent. However, 42 percent of those polled are either undecided (21 percent) or sought confidentiality (21 percent) as to their choice of candidate. It is believed this significant proportion of voters would be critical in deciding who eventually wins the coveted seat.

The survey results also show that both candidates have some support from eligible voters across all age groups. However, most first time voters aged between 18-21 years are undecided as to their choice of candidate. The survey also shows that about 9 in 10 eligible voters are registered to vote in the February elections, with almost 8 in 10 (82 percent) being absolutely certain that they will vote.

The opinion poll was commissioned by ANAP Foundation and conducted by NOI polls in the week commencing 12th January 2015.

WEBSITE OF THE WEEK:

Click on the ‘for voters’ section on www.nigerdeltawatch.org for voter education guides, handbills and other information for citizens over the election period.
Recent polling results by Afrobarometer indicate that the public is torn between the candidates of the two largest parties, with support for PDP and APC level as of the 19th January.

Conducted Dec 5 – 27, with a nationally representative sample of 2,400 adult Nigerians (and additional 80 conducted Jan 18-19), the poll finds the two parties running neck and neck in the presidential race, each with 42 per cent support among likely voters.

Some believe Buhari has developed momentum in the weeks since the survey, but support can shift significantly during contentious electoral campaigns.

The poll indicates that President Jonathan’s approval rating has slipped to 40 percent, with his government getting bad marks across the board for how it has managed the economy, in job creation, providing a reliable electric supply, and fighting corruption. Three quarters of respondents feel the country is heading in the wrong direction.

Of those surveyed, an encouraging 80 percent said they feel free to vote as they choose. Yet 50 per cent say that they personally fear “becoming a victim of political intimidation or violence” during the election campaign, a tension that is up from 34 percent in 2012.

Meanwhile the public seems confused about the capacity of INEC to manage the elections. Nearly two-thirds, 64 per cent, express confidence that INEC is “ready to hold reliable, free, and fair elections". Yet confidence in the commission’s trustworthiness is low – 32% trust it “somewhat” or “a lot”

Fewer than one in four Nigerians, 23 per cent, now believes that votes are “often” or “always” counted fairly. To progress past this aspect of the process voters are urged to stay behind after casting their votes to watch the count and document any irregularities. It calls for a long and stressful day at the polling unit, but not nearly as excruciating as enduring the next four years could be if a candidate takes power by cheating their way to a win.

Second Round Run Off

Although there will be 11 candidates formally on the presidential ballot, this time it clearly comes down to a two-man race. This is a positive development for a country that has been ruled by one party since becoming a democracy sixteen years ago.

The polls indicate that the result might be a close call. In Nigeria, to be elected a candidate requires a plurality of the vote. In addition, to prevent purely ethnic or regional appeals by candidates if the winner does not demonstrate a geographic spread of votes – defined as a minimum of 25% of the vote in at least two-thirds of Nigeria’s 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory – the Constitution states the election must go to a second round run off two weeks after polling. In this scenario, to win an outright majority along with vote distribution across the states must be achieved.
INEC declared the People’s Democratic Party (PDP) candidate for Ado/Opoku/Ogadibo Federal Constituency in Benue State, Christian Adabah Abah, as winner of the election that is yet to hold because he is the sole candidate seeking election into the House of Representatives.

Section 41 (1) of the Electoral Act 2010 provides that “if after expiration of time for delivering of nomination papers, withdrawal of candidates and the extension of time as provided for in this Act, there is only one person whose name is validly nominated in respect of an election, other than to the office of the President or Governor, that person shall be declared elected.”

IMMIGRATION OFFICIALS ARREST TWO GHANAIANS WITH VOTERS CARDS.

Two men have been arrested for illegally acquiring permanent voters’ cards (PVCs). According to Justina Ahmadu, Comptroller of Immigration, Lagos State Command, the culprits went to acquire National Identity cards at the Eti-Osa Local Government in Lagos and were caught after interrogation. The men had falsely claimed that they were from Kano State.

SEVEN GOVERNORSHIP CANDIDATES DISQUALIFIED FROM RUNNING

Seven governorship candidates from various parties have been disqualified from participating in the February 28 governorship election for failing to nominate their running mates. The parties and the states affected by the disqualification are the Peoples Party of Nigeria in Delta State, Labour Party in Niger State, the New Nigeria People’s Party in Ogun State, the Unity Party of Nigeria in Oyo State, the United Democratic Party in Rivers State, and the Peoples Democratic Movement in Sokoto and Zamfara States respectively.

Section 187 of the Electoral Act (2010) provides that “a candidate to the office of a Governor shall not be deemed to be validly nominated for such office unless he appoints another candidate as his running mate who shall occupy the office of Deputy Governor.”

119,973 – Confirmed number of polling units announced by INEC this week
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.

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

1. **ONLINE** at www.nigerdeltawatch.org under the ‘Submit a Report’ tab

   ![Niger Delta Watch - Election 2015](image)

2. **ANDROID** download the ‘Ushahidi’ app and search for the map ‘Niger Delta Watch’

   ![Ushahidi](image)

3. **TWITTER** to our twitter handle @SDNNigerDelta

4. **EMAIL** to election2015@stakeholderdemocracy.org

5. **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)

Written by Stakeholder Democracy Network: