

SDN

SDN ELECTION OBSERVATIONS
PRESIDENTIAL & NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS

DELTA STATE



SUMMARY OF KEY OBSERVATIONS AND CONCERNS

Turnout and engagement was high in Delta state with enthusiastic voters waiting patiently and with few reports of violence reported in the areas under observation.

Press and observers were also relatively free to carry out their monitoring duties.

Our observer's impressions of the challenges faced by the electorate have been captured under the following themes;

1. The preparedness of INEC, in particular logistics and preparedness
2. Challenges and irregularities to the voting process, in particular in relation to effectiveness of card readers and staff
3. Security issues and crowd control, in particular in relation to vote buying and canvassing

These electoral process problems and irregularities leave INEC's handling of the presidential election in Delta State open to criticism from citizens, political parties, politicians and impartial observers.

The arrest of INEC staff from Ndokwa East Local Government Area on Monday for the illegal collation of results will go some way to restore trust but INEC must be seen to step up professionally and logistically in Delta State in time for the Gubernatorial elections on 11 April to ensure that voters trust is restored and tensions are diminished before the next round of voting.

OVERVIEW OF DELTA STATE ELECTIONS OBSERVATIONS

A lack of preparedness and professionalism of INEC officers and staff was reported by election observers in Delta State. There was clearly a lack of methodical planning and preparations in place leading to late accreditation and voting across the state.

Our reports indicate that citizens encountered a number of challenges whilst participating in the election in Delta State. These were derived both from INEC's inefficiencies and a lack of civic awareness of fair voting practices by INEC staff.

Card readers did not recognise many of the permanent voters cards nor did INEC staff appear to show confidence in the use of the card readers.

The principles of secret balloting were not upheld in many locations, with unchallenged open canvassing and vote buying seen by observers.

The Military stayed away from polling units in Delta state with only a single police, National Security and Civil Defence Corp observed at polling booths.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The arrest of INEC staff from Ndokwa East Local Government Area on Monday for the illegal collation of results will go some way to restore trust but INEC must be seen to step up professionally and logistically in Delta State in time for the Gubernatorial elections on 11 April to ensure that voters trust is restored and tensions are diminished before the next round of voting.

INEC should work towards a much earlier start from the Central depot in Warri on 11 April or should prepare voters to turn up later in the day to avoid frustrations amongst waiting crowds of voters.

SPECIFIC OBSERVATIONS AND REPORTS RECEIVED

Reports of late arrival of INEC staff, late/missing elections materials, and poor performance of electronic card readers:

Card readers were reported as working well but with slight hitches that were observed to be largely caused by the inexperience of INEC operators.

The last voting materials for the State did not leave Warri office of INEC until 8.20am meaning it was inevitable for people across the region to expect a late start to voting.

In the communities observed in Delta State, Orogun and Bomadi communities in Ughelli North and Bomadi Local Government Areas respectively, materials and INEC personnel did not get to the polling unit until about 8.47am and 9.00am.

At Erhobaro-Orogun polling unit in Ughelli North LGA, our observers recorded that election materials and INEC personnel arrived by 10.30, with accreditation starting by 10.50.

In areas of Sapele in Delta, there were reports that voters were waiting for the arrival of INEC officials at 13:00.

Fortunately for Delta State, our observations indicate that voters were not disillusioned by the inefficiency of INEC in delivering a timely election process.

Reports of polling and collation irregularities:

The arrest of INEC officials from Ndokwa East Local Government Area on Monday is the only report we have of irregularities in the collation of results at the LGA level.

Open canvassing and vote buying was however observed in some quarters.

Observers reported that INEC officials did not abide by standard voting procedure in most polling units with accreditation and voting happening simultaneously and with few announcements or information giving to the assembled voters.

Reports related to security:

Delta State was observed to be in compliance with an earlier Court ruling prohibiting the use of military personnel by the Federal Government and INEC during the elections. It was observed that there was not one military officer sighted at the polling units.

With regard security, the polling units observed had at least three security personnel present nearby in each of the locations. There was one policeman, one National Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) and one Immigration Officer.

However, the challenges experiences throughout the voting process were compounded by issues surrounding crowd control and rowdiness. There was a presence of suspected partisan bouncers, who facilitated unsolicited vote buying practices

In addition, high turnout created problems of crowd control, which the provided security personnel failed to restrict.