

**YIAGA AFRICA**  
#WatchingTheVote (WTV)

# INTERIM REPORT



on the Continuous Voters Registration (CVR)  
for the Period January 09 to March 06, 2018



## **Citizens Call for the Creation of Additional Registration Centers and Intensive Sensitization as INEC ends CVR Exercise for the First Quarter of 2018**

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YIAGA AFRICA, formerly known as Youth Initiative for Advocacy, Growth & Advancement is a civic organization promoting democracy, governance and development in Africa through advocacy, research and capacity building. Our goal is to build democratic societies anchored on the principles of inclusion, justice, transparency and accountability. Our thematic areas of work include elections; legislative engagement; youth and public accountability. YIAGA AFRICA Watching The Vote is a citizen's-led electoral integrity movement dedicated to the promotion of credible elections through systematic and technology driven observation of elections. In pursuit of its goal of enhancing the quality of elections, YIAGA Africa deploys citizens' observers to observe the conduct of activities within the electoral cycle.

# Summary

In continuation of its efforts to deepen citizen participation ahead of the 2019 general elections, YIAGA AFRICA deployed citizen observers across the 36 states and the FCT since the commencement of the continuous voters registration exercise on Thursday, April 27, 2017.

The Continuous Voters Registration Exercise (CVR) as conducted by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) takes place on weekdays from 9.00am to 3.00pm excluding public holidays in INEC offices at the 774 LGA headquarters and some 10 rotational registration centers that were created by INEC in all of the 36 states and the FCT. The exercise is intended to enable citizens who have turned 18 years of age since the last registration as well as those who did not register during the last voter registration exercise to register as voters. In addition, the exercise provides an opportunity for voters seeking to transfer their registration from one State, LGA or Ward to another to do so as well as distribute uncollected Permanent Voters Cards (PVCs) to voters who registered earlier and are yet to collect their PVC's.

YIAGA AFRICA #WatchingTheVote (WTV), is a citizen-led election observation initiative aimed at enhancing the integrity of elections using technology and evidence-based research methodology tools for election observation. WTV is designed to promote credible election and boost citizen's confidence in the electoral process through the provision of citizen's oversight on elections through the electoral

cycle.

Based on observer reports submitted for the 1st quarter of 2018, the CVR exercise was conducted in all of the registration centers visited by WTV Citizen Observers in the 36 states and the FCT. Notwithstanding the procedural challenges, there were reported incidents of Direct Data Capture (DDC) machines break down in some centers, INEC officials not keeping to the official time of opening and closing and the surge in the number of prospective registrants visiting the centers as early as 5:00am. It is worthy of note that INEC responded to the increasing demand for registration by creating 10 additional centers that were rotated within wards in all of the 36 states and the FCT. WTV observers also reported that security deployment was limited across board and most political parties didn't deploy their agents.

The findings presented in this report covers the period from January 9th to March 31st 2018 and it is based on the report submitted by 116 observers from across the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory.

Based on reports, YIAGA AFRICA WTV found that:

- 1) There was increased citizen's awareness about the registration

exercise and the location of the registration centers in the month of March 2018 as compared to the months of January and February 2018. Notably, this increase was observed to have occurred when INEC created 10 additional registration centers in the 36 states and the FCT. Although WTV received complaints about difficulties in locating the CVR centers.

- 2) INEC created additional 10 registration centers across the 36 states and the FCT to address the increased demand for fresh registration.
- 3) More people visited the registration centers to request for transfer of registration, when compared to the WTV observation report in 2017. Although the awareness about the procedure for transfer is low.
- 4) There was a report from Ondo West LGA in Ondo State stating that INEC officials were alleged to have requested for money from registrants to fuel the office generator, and that some officials requested for bribe from party agents before they registered voters.
- 5) Political parties are not deploying their representative (agents) to observe the exercise.
- 6) There was minimal deployment of security personnel in most of the registration centers visited.
- 7) Asides for the delay in processing registrants and the shortage of direct data capturing machines (DDCM), the process was conducted effectively.



# Methodology

YIAGA Africa's #WatchingTheVote deployed 116 citizen observers to INEC' registration centers spread across the 36 States and the Federal Capital Territory. These observers were briefed on how to observe the CVR exercise, how to complete the CVR observation checklist and when and how to call the WTV data center to report their observation.

WTV Citizen Observers were deployed from January 09 to March 06, 2018 to observe the political environment within their place of residence. For the CVR exercise, the citizen observers were deployed to specific registration centers on assigned days and reported their observation only on the days they visited the registration centers.

Each observer called or sent in completed CVR observation checklist to WTV data center from where the reports were reviewed, verified and analyzed.

## Findings:

### **Observers permitted to observe**

- WTV observers deployed reported in the affirmative that they were allowed access to most registration centers to exercise this civic responsibility.

### **Deployment of INEC Personnel**

- On the average 3 registration officials were seen in most of the registration centers visited by WTV observers.

### **Opening and Closing of registration centers**

- WTV findings reveal that most of the registration centers visited on the day observed opened for registration between the hours of 9:00am and 10:00am and most of these centers remained opened until the closing time of 3:00pm.

## Deployment of Materials

- Registration materials were deployed and in good supply across most of the centers visited.

## Functionality of the DDC Machines

- The DDC Machines were observed to be fairly functional. However, some of the registration centers observed experienced different levels of hitches. Some of these hitches occurred because some of the Direct Data Capturing Machines (DDCM) deployed were obsolete and hence, could not function throughout the day for most of the days observed.

## Confirming Status of Prospective Registrants:

- INEC officials did not ask registrants to show any form of identification prior to being registered in most of the registration centers visited. However, WTV observers also reported that in some centers INEC requested for court affidavit before registering voters.

## Average time spent per registration

- WTV Observers reported that it takes on the average between 1 to 11 minutes to register a prospective registrant.

## Public Awareness about the location and accessibility of the registration centers

- Impressively, INEC had improved its communication to the public on the continuous voter registration exercise, however there was the dearth of information about the location of the rotational registration centers created by INEC to enable easy access. Most of the registrants questioned by observers said there were aware of the exercise through the mobilization by INEC, religious leaders and civil society organizations, they however were not informed about rotating the registration centers or location of some of these centers.
- Most of the registration centers visited by WTV observers were located in areas that are accessible to all.

## Deployment of Party Agents

- An exercise of this significance and coming ahead of an important election in 2019 should be of interest to political parties and their candidates. However, reports from WTV observers indicate that political parties were poorly represented in most of the registration centers observed. Only few party agents were seen in most of the registration centers visited.

## **Common challenges encountered by registrants at the registration center**

- Delay in registration occasioned by inadequate DDC Machines
- Registrants complained about inadequate registration centers
- Late arrival and early departure of INEC personnel in some centers.

## **Commendations:**

- YIAGA's WTV commend INEC for the quick intervention by creating additional 10 registration centers across all the states to address the surge in the demand for registration. We commend INEC staff for the professionalism they exhibited in controlling the crowd at most of the overcrowded registration centers that we visited.
- We also commend INEC officials in Lame ward of Toro LGA in Bauchi State for not yielding to the pressure to register those below the voting age of 18.
- We also commend INEC staff for their resilience to educate registrants on the processes of transfer of registration.

# Conclusions and Recommendations

Having noted above the various areas where the Commission recorded improvement in implementing the CVR exercise within the centers visited by WTV Observers, we acknowledge that there are still opportunities for more improvement to ensure efficiency in the CVR process. We hereby recommend that;

1. There is need for INEC to make available more DDC Machines, replace the weak and obsolete machines and deploy more personnel to meet the high demand for registration;
2. INEC should provide detailed, accurate and timely information on the location of registration centers for public use. This information should be provided on all online and offline platforms for easy and widespread communication.
3. There is need to ensure adequate security during the continuous voter registration process as INEC embarks on the next phase of the registration exercise.
4. There is need for extension of the registration closing time so as to encourage more numbers to register especially as there were noticeable larger influx towards the closing hours in the 1st quarter. Registration period should be extended to 6:00pm and Saturdays to enable more people to be registered.
5. INEC should take seriously, the need to decentralize registration centers as we move closer to the 2019 general elections, to enable more citizens the opportunity to register and to exercise their franchise in the elections.
6. There is need for awareness campaigns to sensitize the public on the importance of voter registration in election and the location of registration centres;
7. YIAGA's #WatchingTheVote is saddened by the very small numbers of party agents deployed to registration units/centres. We hope political parties will give the exercise the seriousness it deserves and that we will see improvement in deployment of personnel in the 2nd quarter.







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