PRE-ELECTION OBSERVATION REPORTING

BAYELSA/KOGI

PERIOD ONE
BACKGROUND

YIAGA AFRICA, a non-governmental, civil society organization committed to promoting electoral democracy and citizens participation in Africa has commenced its long term pre-election observation (PREO) towards the 2019 Bayelsa and Kogi governorship election. YIAGA AFRICA, under the Watching the Vote (WTV) project, has dutifully observed the pre-election environment and electoral process of the 2019 general elections and will be carrying out a comprehensive observation of the 2019 Bayelsa and Kogi governorship elections. As the largest citizens' observer movement, WTV is committed to providing accurate and timely information on the conduct of the electoral process.

WTV has so far deployed 48 Long Term Observers (LTOs), 21 LTOs deployed to 8 LGAs in Bayelsa state and 27 LTOs deployed to 21 LGAs in Kogi State, that would be observing the activities of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), voter education and information activities, political campaign activities, inclusion of women, persons living with disabilities (PWDs) and youths, as well as issues relating to pre-election violence. This report is the first of four reports to be issued by YIAGA AFRICA WTV, it reflects the findings between 19th September to October 3rd, 2019 and it is based on reports received from all the 8 LGAs in Bayelsa and 21 LGAs in Kogi state.
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) had announced the 16th November 2019 as the date for the Bayelsa and Kogi governorship elections, which falls within the stipulated time for conducting the elections, as provided by the 1999 Constitution, as amended. The Constitution states that an election to the office of the governor shall be held on a date not earlier than 60 days and not later than 30 days before the expiration of the tenure of office of the last office holder. As such, electoral activities by all stakeholders, INEC, political parties, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and political associations are now building momentum. Below are the summary of the findings, based on INEC’s preparedness, political campaigns, voter education and participation of marginalized groups, and early warning signs of electoral violence.

1. INEC Preparatory Activities: The WTV LTOs have monitored the pre-election environment relating to the activities of INEC from 9th September 2019 to the last week of the pre-election observation. The activities of INEC in the first pre-election observation was directly witnessed and heard across the 21 LGAs in Kogi state and 8 LGAs in Bayelsa state.

2. Distribution of Permanent Voter Cards: As part of the preparatory activities for elections, the Electoral Commission stated that the distribution of Permanent Voters Cards (PVCs) will commence on 2nd September 2019, in both Bayelsa and Kogi state. In addition, the PVCs would be available for collection at the registration areas or wards of all the Local Government Areas (LGAs) in the states. WTV findings for this reporting period show that PVCs distribution is currently ongoing in all the LGAs in both Bayelsa and Bayelsa state.

3. Voter Education and Information: WTV findings show that voter education activities were conducted by INEC, National Orientation Agency (NOA) and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) across the state. The findings from Bayelsa state reveals that voter education activities were conducted by INEC, NOA and CSO in 80%, 50% and 85% LGAs respectively, and in Kogi state, voter education activities were conducted by INEC in 58% of LGAs, by NOA in 19% of LGAs and by CSO in 65% LGAs. Most notably, voter education messages are targeted at marginalized groups like women and People Living with Disabilities (PWDs) was poor across the states, however, this was measurable for youth (45% by INEC and 60% by CSOs in Bayelsa state and 12% by INEC and 42% by CSO in Kogi state).
4. **Political Party Campaign Activities**: Political party activities especially campaign rallies are minimal in Kogi state, as none of the popular political parties in the state (ADC, APC, PDP) seem not to be engaging voters. WTV Kogi report shows that only 4%, 38% and 23%, of LTOs either witnessed or heard of rallies conducted by ADC, APC and PDP, respectively. And in Bayelsa state, 10%, 65%, 65%, and 5% of LTOs either witnessed or heard of rallies conducted by the same ADC, APC and PDP, as well as SDP.

5. **Voter Inducement**: Generally, voter inducement was reported in at least 1 in every 3 LGAs of the 21 LGAs in Kogi state, and in all the LGAs in Bayelsa states. WTV LTOs witnessed or heard of cases of voter inducement in Kolokuma/Opokuma, Southern Ijaw, Yenagoa, Brass, Ogbia, Nembe and Sagbama LGA in Bayelsa state and in Adavi, Ogori Mangogo, Okehi, Okene, Bassa, Ibaji, Idah, Kabba/Bunu and Kogi K.K LGAs in Kogi state.
6. Reports on Buying and Selling of PVCs: The attempt to undermine the integrity of the electoral process was observed as reflected in the report indicating a replica of the ugly incidence in 2019 general elections. In Bayelsa state, it was witnessed in Southern Ijaw, Ogbia and Sagbama and in Kogi state, in Adavi, Okehi, Ankpa, Idah, Kabba/Bunu, Kogi Koton Karfe LGAs.
RECOMMENDATIONS

Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).
1. To ensure inclusion, especially of all marginalized groups, there is a need for a more pro-active and targeted communication using different channels of communication on the electoral process.
2. The gubernatorial elections will be having a large number of political parties contesting (23 in Kogi and 45 in Bayelsa), this may increase pressure on INEC and more importantly on polling officials on election day. INEC should, therefore, beef up its oversight and monitoring mechanisms that will further strengthen and ensure compliance to the electoral laws and guidelines, while avoiding unnecessary postponements of polls.
3. INEC should come up with a robust mechanism and collaborate with both state and non-state actors to curb the menace of buying and selling of PVCs and other forms of voter inducement.

Security Agencies
1. Security agencies should be more intentional in addressing early signs of violence (hate speech, physical attacks, communal crises, voter inducements) and other criminal activities ongoing in the pre-election environment.
2. Security agencies should engage in active engagement and communications with citizens on the principles regulating security deployment and its operations ahead of the election.

Political Parties
1. Political party candidates and supporters should ensure they promote unity and peaceful election by refraining from any form of physical or verbal attacks on opponents or their supporters.
2. Political parties should invest in getting out votes and mobilizing voters to turn out peacefully to vote and not delve into undemocratic ways (buying of PVCs and inducing voters) of winning elections.
3. All political parties, especially in Kogi state should increase their activities of engaging voters with their policy plan while soliciting their support and votes.

Citizens
1. The election is about Nigerians, every Nigerian has a role to play to promote peaceful elections.
2. Voters should get ready to vote with their PVCs and not sell it for short-time gain.
1. Preparatory Activities of INEC and Collection of PVCs
During this pre-election observation period, WTV LTOs observed INEC’s preparatory activities. Preparatory activities may include training of election officials, briefing meetings with state-holders (civil society, religious groups, observers, political parties candidates) and distribution of non-sensitive election materials. During this reporting period, WTV LTOs reported observing INEC preparatory activities in all LGAs of Bayelsa and Kogi States. Ahead of the election, WTV LTOs also reported on-going collection of PVCs in all LGAs. YIAGA uses the opportunity to call on all registered voters who have not collected their PVCs should visit INEC LGA office for their cards.

2. Voter Education Activities
Like the Electoral Commission, INEC, the National Orientation Agency (NOA) is mandated by law to sensitize the citizens on government policies, including voter education. The WTV LTOs were, therefore, tasked with the responsibility of monitoring voter education campaigns conducted by both INEC, NOA and CSOs, ahead of the governorship elections. All three actors were reported to have commenced voter education in both states. Specifically in Bayelsa state, 80% of WTV LTOs reported being exposed to/heard of voter education or information campaigns conducted by INEC, 50% by the NOA, and 85% by CSOs. In Kogi state, 58% of the WTV LTOs reported being exposed to/heard of voter education or information campaigns conducted by INEC, 19% by the NOA, and 65% by CSOs.
Below are the locations (LGAs) where voter education activities were not witnessed or heard of by each of the above-mentioned actors or institutions.

- Voter education activities conducted by INEC were not directly/indirectly witnessed by WTV LTOs in Ankpa, Igalamela, Ijumu, Kogi K.K, Mopa Moro, Yagba East LGAs in Kogi State, and Kolokuma Opokuma LGA in Bayelsa.

- Voter education and information campaigns conducted by NOA were not directly/indirectly witnessed by WTV LTOs in Ajaokuta, Bassa, Dekina, Ibaji, Idah, Igalamela, Ijumu, Kabba-Bunu, Kogi K.K, Lokoja, Mopa-Moro, Ofu, Ogori Magongo, Okene, Olamaboro, Omala, Yagba East & Yagba West LGAs in Kogi, and Yenagoa LGA of Bayelsa.

- Voter education and information campaigns by CSOs were not directly/indirectly witnessed in Igalamela, Ijumu, Kabba-Bunu, Kogi K.K, Mopa Moro, Ogori Magongo, and Yagba East LGAs in Kogi and Kolokuma Opokuma LGA in Bayelsa state.
3. Participation of Marginalized Groups (Women, Youth and PWD’s)

For the purpose of inclusion and diversity, targeted voter information to marginalized and disadvantaged groups is encouraged. WTV LTOs reported very low interventions targeted at enhancing and increasing the capacity of women, youth and PWDs in the upcoming elections. The LTOs witnessed/heard of voter information/education targeted at women by INEC, CSOs, and other stakeholders in Okehi, Ankpa, Dekina, Kabba Bunu LGAs in Kogi State, respectively. The same was witnessed or heard for youth-targeted voter education activities by INEC, CSOs and other stakeholders in Yenagoa, Brass and Sagbama LGAs in Bayelsa state respectively.

In Kogi State WTV LTOs in Ajaokuta, Okehi, Ankpa, Bassa, Kabba/Bunu, Dekina, and Yagba West directly witnessed or heard of voter education targeted at women.

WTV LTO witnessed or heard voter education targeted at youth are Ajaokuta, Okehi, Ankpa, Dekina, Ibaji, Idah, Olamaboro, Omala and Kabba/Bunu.

WTV LTO witnessed or heard voter education targeted at PWDs are Ajaokuta, Okehi, Ibaji, Idah, Ofu, Olamaboro & Yagba West.

In Bayelsa State, WTV LTOs in Southern Ijaw, Yenagoa, Nembe, Ogbia, Brass and Sagbama witnessed/heard of voter information targeted at women.

WTV LTOs in Southern Ijaw, Yenagoa, Brass, Ogbia and Sagbama witnessed or heard voter education targeted at youth.

WTV LTO witnessed or heard voter education targeted at PWDs are Southern Ijaw, Brass, Nembe, Ogbia & Sagbama.
4. Activities of Women and Youth

Similar to the 2019 general elections, women and youth were also seen canvassing for votes for different political parties in different LGAs. In Kogi state, women and youth groups were seen/heard to be canvassing for votes in Adavi, Ajaokuta, Ankpa, Ogori Mangogo, Okehi, Okene, Bassa, Dekina, Ibaji, Idah, Ofu, Olamaboro, Omala, Kabba/Bunu, Lokoja, Yagba East & Yagba West of LGAs. While in Bayelsa state, women and youth groups were seen/heard to be canvassing for votes across all the 8 LGAs.

5. Political Campaigns

WTV LTOs monitored political party campaign activities such as; rallies, meetings, town or street trails and display of posters by political parties contesting in the elections. In both Bayelsa and Kogi state, WTV LTOs paid special attention on the African Democratic Congress (ADC), All Progressives Congress (APC), the People’s Democratic Party (PDP), and Social Democratic Party (SDP). The findings from Kogi state reveals that political parties’ campaign activities are yet to gather momentum in state. While campaign activities were more evident in Bayelsa state. For instance, In Kogi state, only 15% of WTV LTOs reported having witnessed rallies of the APC, 23% heard of it and the other 62% neither witnessed nor heard of the party’s rallies. For the PDP, 4% of WTV LTOs witnessed any rally, 19% heard of and 77% neither heard nor witnessed. While for ADC, only 4% heard of the party’s rallies and a whopping 96% neither heard nor witnessed. While in Bayelsa state, ADC, APC, PDP and SDP rallies were witnessed or heard of by 10%, 65%, 65% and 5% of WTV LTOs, respectively.

i) Violent Physical and Verbal Attacks During Political Party Activities
During this reporting period, WTV LTOs reported hearing of attacks or intimidation of candidates and supporters and violent physical or verbal attacks on street political campaign trails in Okehi and Kabba/Bunu LGAs in Kogi State and in Southern Ijaw, Nembe and Sagbama LGAs in Bayelsa State.

ii) Voter Inducement
WTV LTOs monitored and tracked voter inducement through the distribution of money or gift items. They however, reported to have witnessed or heard of distribution of money or gift items by candidates or their supporters in Adavi, Ogori Mangogo, Okehi, Okene, Bassa, Ibaji, Idah, Kabba/Bunu, Kogi K.K LGAs in Kogi State and Kolokuma/Opokuma, Southern Ijaw, Yenagoa, Brass, Nembe, Ogbia and Sagbama LGAs in Bayelsa.

iii) Buying of Permanent Voters Cards (PVCs)
Buying and selling of PVCs is one of the predominant election malpractices recorded in 2019 general elections. As such, it was pertinent for WTV LTOs to continue to monitor cases of purchase of PVCs in their assigned LGAs. Findings from this observation period reveal that buying or selling of PVCs still exists. This was recorded (witnessed or heard by WTV LTO) in both Kogi (Adavi, Okehi, Ankpa, Idah, Kabba/Bunu and Kogi K.K) and in Bayelsa state (Southern Ijaw, Ogbia & Sagbama).
iv) Violence Against Women in Election
WTV LTOs reported directly observing violence towards women at campaign rallies. This was specifically reported in Okehi and Ankpa LGAs in Kogi State and in Southern Ijaw LGA in Bayelsa State. All incidents of electoral violence against women observed during the reporting period were shared with the Stop Violence Against Women in Politics (Stop-VAWIP) initiative. StopVAWIP initiative seeks to establish the link between gender-based violence and the low level of participation of women in elections. The initiative conducts advocacy campaigns to electoral stakeholders with a view to mitigate and discourage incidents of violence against women, in order to encourage women to participate more actively in elections.

v) Fighting Between Communities or Groups over resources
WTV LTOs reported hearing of community clashes over resources in Kogi (Okehi, Ankpa, Ibaji, Idah, Kabba/Bunu and Kogi K.K) and in Bayelsa (Yenagoa, Ekeremor, Sagbama). This may not be directly related to the elections, however, there is a possibility of a spillover effect, that may impact on the electoral environment.
METHODOLOGY

The process adopted in this PREO involves the deployment of 48 carefully recruited and trained LTOs in every LGA in Bayelsa and Kogi State to systematically observe and gather information concerning the pre-election environment as well as early warning signs of conflict and electoral violence. These observers are equipped with a checklist to record the relevant information and provide verifiable findings. 46 of the LTOs report bi-weekly on a standard set of questions at the local government level, while the others are mobile within the state and they report critical incidents only. The 46 LTOs are also recruited from their LGA of residence where they are expected to monitor electoral activities: voter education and information, political campaign activities, activities of marginalized groups (youth, women and PWDs) and election-related violence, all round the clock. Additionally, they track activities of electoral stakeholders like; INEC, political parties, NOA, CSOs, as well as women, youths and PWDs.

All findings from the LTOs are transmitted to the WTV data center via coded SMS and are thereafter, analyzed and reported periodically. However, in the case of critical incidents, the WTV project escalates immediately to sister CSOs like Search for Common ground and Clean Foundation and Security agencies like; Police and NSDC as well as INEC. YIAGA AFRICA PREO findings are obtained from the entire LGAs within the states and not from a representative of the entire state thus providing an indication of emerging trends during the pre-election period. Unlike the WTV election-day observation methodology, that relies on sample-based observation, YIAGA AFRICA WTV PREO uses a more traditional approach that investigates the activities in LGAs of Bayelsa and Kogi State. YIAGA AFRICA therefore, encourages users of this report to independently corroborate and respond appropriately to trends identified in this report.
FOR ALL NIGERIANS

BEHOLDEN TO NONE

DRIVEN BY DATA

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