PRE-ELECTION OBSERVATION REPORTING

BAYELSA/KOGI

PERIOD TWO

OCT 3 – OCT 17, 2019
Pre-Election Observation Report - Period Two

Bayelsa and Kogi’s November 16, polls presents the people of both states with another critical opportunity to not only choose their Governor but to also determine the path for the electoral democracy. With 23 political parties contesting in Kogi state and 45 political parties contesting in Bayelsa state, the elections promises to be an interesting and keen contest especially with the determination by the All Progressive Congress (APC) and the People Democratic Party (PDP) to emerge as the winner of both elections. With just days to the elections and the close of the period for the collection of the Permanent Voters card (PVC), the crucial challenges of organizing the election logistics and mitigating potentials for politically motivated violence around the elections remain major issues that must be addressed for the conduct of successful elections. With a history of politically motivated violence in the state from previous elections, and indicators of violence observed by Watching the Vote (WTV) in the previous election observation period, an early warning system for the prevention of electoral violence supported by electoral stakeholders will be required.

YIAGA AFRICA, a non-governmental, civil society organization committed to promoting electoral democracy and citizens’ participation in Africa, deployed a total of 48 Long Term Observers (LTOs); 21 LTOs deployed to the 8 LGAs in Bayelsa state and 27 LTOs deployed to 21 LGAs in Kogi State, to observe 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 second in a series of four reports to be issued, it reflects the findings between October 3rd to October 17th 2019. The findings in the reports covers the 8 LGAs in Bayelsa and 21 LGAs in Kogi state.
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

With the emerging trends, the election campaigns are becoming more competitive and fiercely contested, WTV observed political party rallies and campaign paraphernalia including billboards and voter education campaigns from different electoral stakeholders. Below are the summary of the findings based on INEC’s preparedness, political campaigns, voter education, participation of marginalized groups, and early warning signs of electoral violence.

1. Early Warning Signs and Indicators of Violence:
   • Violent Physical and Verbal Attacks During Political Party Activities: WTV LTOs reported political party supporters having clashed over issues of lecturers been partisan or supporting candidates and competition for access to road network in Ankpa LGA in Kogi state. Other physical and verbal violence were reported from Southern Ijaw, Yenagoa, Brass, Nembe and Sagbama in Bayelsa state and Kabba/Bunu in Kogi state.
   • Recruitment of Political Thugs and Stockpiling of Arms and Weapons: WTV reports highlights possible threat to the peaceful conduct of the election with the observation of the presence of small arms and weapons in some LGA’s. LTOs identified a community called Okabb in Ankpa LGA, being used for the storage of ammunition and the recruitment of thugs. Though the ammunition were discovered to have been stored prior to the 2019 General Election. Other reports of recruitment of political thugs were from communities in Yenagoa and Sagbama LGA in Bayelsa state and in Okehi and Idah in Kogi state.

2. Violation of Electoral Laws and Guidelines
   • Trading of PVCs and voter details: WTV findings reveals that buying and selling of PVCs still exists. WTV LTOs reported political parties moving from house to house in Ankpa LGA, Kogi state, documenting names and polling unit numbers and addresses of citizens with PVCs, while offering advance payments of five hundred naira (N500), ahead of the election. In Bayelsa (Yenagoa LGA) findings also reveals that some citizens in Opolo and Gbarian area were selling their PVCs for five hundred (N500) and one thousand (N1,000) naira.
• **Campaigns based on Inducement not issues:** WTV monitored and tracked voter inducement through the distribution of money or gift items. The WTV LTOs found out that political party candidates or their supporters are distributing money and gift items such as vehicles in communities in Yenagoa, Bayelsa state and in Okehi and Ankpa of Kogi state.

3. **Status of Election Administration and Preparations:** WTV recognises the role of INEC in election administration and therefore monitored the commission's activities in the past two weeks. Findings from this monitoring reveals the reasonable compliance of INEC with the elections timetable as indicated in the conduct of preparatory activities such as recruitment and training of adhoc staff, stakeholder engagements and voter education amongst others, in preparations for the November 16 polls in both Bayelsa and Kogi state. These activities were observed in all the LGAs of Bayelsa and Kogi States, except for Ijumu LGA in Kogi state.

4. **Political Party Campaign Activities:** Political parties in Bayelsa state are engaging more in political campaigns than in Kogi state. The findings from Bayelsa state reveals that: APC did not hold any rally in Kolokuma/Opokuma LGA; PDP did not hold any rally in Kolokuma/Opokuma, Southern Ijaw and Ogbia LGA; and SDP as well did not hold campaigns in Kolokuma/Opokuma, Southern Ijaw, Yenagoa, Brass, Nembe, Ogbia, Ekeremor and Sagbama LGA. While for Kogi state: ADC rallies did not hold in any LGA; APC rallies did not hold in Adavi, Ankpa, Brass, Dekina, Idah, Ofu, Ijumu, Mopa Moro, Yagba East, and Yagba West LGA; and PDP rallies in did not hold in Adavi, Ogori Mangogo, Okehi, Ankpa, Bassa, Dekina, Idah, Ofu, Ijumu, Mopa Moro, Yagba East, and Yagba West LGA. While campaigns have commenced earnestly in both states, the conversations are still devoid of in-depth analysis of the issues and political manifesto highlighting clear plans for improving governance and development in both states.

5. **Inclusive and Representative Politics:** There are many aspects to promoting inclusive and representative politics to ensure the participation of women, youth and persons with disability as candidates, as voters, as election personnel etc. For the pre-election observation, specific activities were tracked. This includes targeted voter education and marginalised groups participating in each element of the electoral process. As observed in this reporting phase; INEC, NOA and CSO are engaging in targeted campaigns to ensure peaceful participation of youth. Women groups were canvassing for votes in all the 8 LGAs in Bayelsa state and in 15 LGAs in Kogi state. While youth were canvassing for votes in all 8 LGAs in Bayelsa state and 14 LGAs in Kogi state.
RECOMMENDATIONS

**Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).**
1. INEC and Political parties should develop an effective communication constructive dialogue to address challenges and requirements for achieving peaceful pre-election engagements, and credible and peaceful elections on November 16.
2. INEC should step up its engagements with security agencies, to tacking violation of electoral codes (buying and selling of PVC and voter inducement) and electoral violence indicators.

**Security Agencies**
3. Security agencies, the police should investigate and manage the report of recruitment of thugs and stockpiling of arms, to avoid an outbreak of violence in the coming election.
4. Security agencies should investigate and arrest people engaged in buying and selling of PVCs, and any form of voter inducement, to serve as a deterrent to others.
5. 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**
6. Political party candidates and supporters should shy away from any form of physical or verbal attacks to ensure credible and peaceful elections.
7. 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**
8. Voters should get ready to vote with their PVCs and not sell it for short-time gain
9. Citizens should report any form of electoral malpractice or criminal act to INEC and security agencies, the police, to foster peaceful democratic transition.
1. Status of Election Administration and Preparations

During this pre-election observation period, WTV LTOs observed some election administrative and preparatory activities organized by INEC. The preparatory activities recorded include: recruitment and training of Election Day officials, briefing meetings with state-holders (civil society, religious groups, observers, political parties and candidates) and voter education messages and programs. The WTV LTOs specifically reported observing INEC’s preparatory activities in all the LGAs of Bayelsa and Kogi States, except for Ijumu LGA in Kogi state.

2. Achieving Inclusive and Representative Politics: Participation of Marginalized Groups (Women, Youth and PWD’s)

While democracy provides for an inclusive political and governance processes, barriers to increasing the participation and representation of women, youth and people with disabilities (PWDs) still exist. Under this reporting period, WTV examined voter education targeted at women and youth by INEC, NOA and CSOs. The WTV LTOs reported witnessing or hearing of voter education/information targeted at women by INEC in 6 LGAs, by CSOs in 7 LGAs and by other stakeholders in 5 LGAs in Bayelsa state. For Kogi state, voter education targeted at women by INEC was witnessed/heard of in 5 LGAs, by CSOs in 11 LGAs and by other stakeholders in 6 LGAs in Bayelsa state. This was also observed for youth by INEC in 6 (in Bayelsa) and 4 LGAs (in Kogi), by CSOs, in 7 (in Bayelsa) and 12 LGAs (in Kogi), and by other stakeholders in 6 (in Bayelsa) and 10 LGAs (in Kogi), respectively.

During the reporting period, WTV LTOs observed women and youths participating in political campaigns. For women, they were seen canvassing for votes in all the 8 LGAs in Bayelsa state.
and 15 LGAs (Adavi, Ajaokuta, Ogori Magongo, Okehi, Okene, Bassa, Dekina, Ibaji, Idah, Ofu, Olamaboro, Omala, Kabba/Bunu, Lokoja, and Yagba West) in Kogi state. Likewise for youth, they were seen canvassing for votes as well in all the 8 LGAs in Bayelsa state and 14 LGAs (Adavi, Ajaokuta, Ogori Magongo, Okehi, Okene, Bassa, Dekina, Ibaji, Idah, Ofu, Olamaboro, Omala, Kabba/Bunu, and Lokoja) in Kogi state. Political parties are therefore required to make concerted efforts to fill in women or PWDs as candidates in their future nominations.

3. Political Party Campaigns

WTV observed a range of rallies, billboards and posters advertising political party candidates and all the activities were largely peaceful. Most notably, political parties in Bayelsa state are engaging more in political campaign activities than in Kogi state. The findings from Bayelsa and Kogi state on political campaigns reveals that:

In Bayelsa state:
- APC rallies in did not hold in Kolokuma/Opokuma LGA;
- PDP rallies in did not hold in Kolokuma/Opokuma, Southern Ijaw and Ogbia LGA; and
- SDP rallies in did not hold in Kolokuma/Opokuma, Southern Ijaw, Yenagoa, Brass, Nembe, Ogbia, Ekeremor and Sagbama LGA

While for Kogi state:
- ADC rallies did not hold in any LGA
- APC rallies did not hold in Adavi, Ankpa, Brass, Dekina, Idah, Ofu, Ijumu, Mopa Moro, Yagba East, and Yagba West LGA; and
- PDP rallies in did not hold in Adavi, Ogori Mangogo, Okehi, Ankpa, Bassa, Dekina, Idah, Ofu, Ijumu, Mopa Moro, Yagba East, and Yagba West LGA;

4. Violation of Electoral Code and Guidelines

1. Trading of PVCs and voter details: WTV LTOs tracked violation of electoral code through procurement of PVCs. Findings from this observation period suggests that buying and selling of PVCs still exists. Such situations were witnessed or heard of in Ankpa and Okeki LGA in Kogi state, where political parties were moving from house to house,
documenting names and polling unit numbers and addresses of citizens with PVCs, while offering an advance payment of five hundred naira (N500). This was noted as a recurring practice from the 2019 General Elections. Likewise in Bayelsa (Yenagoa LGA), WTV findings reveal that some citizens in Opolo and Gbarian area were selling their PVCs for five hundred (N500) and one thousand naira (N1,000).

2. Reports of Voter Inducement: Similar to the previous reporting period, WTV tracked voter inducement through the distribution of money or gift items. WTV LTOs reported to have witnessed or heard of distribution of money or gift items by candidates or their supporters in Okehi and Ankpa LGA in Kogi state. Gift items such as vehicles were seen to be distributed in Yenagoa, Bayelsa state.

5. Early Warning Signs and Indicators of Electoral Violence
1. 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. Party supporters clashed over issues of lecturers been partisan or supporting candidates and competition on access to road network during campaign. These cases were specifically recorded in Ankpa LGA in Kogi state. Other physical and verbal violence were reported in Southern Ijaw, Yenagoa, Brass, Nembe and Sagbama LGAs of Bayelsa state and Kabba/Bunu in Kogi state. This worrisome trend creates a high chance of violence erupting in future political campaign trails.
2. Recruitment of Political Thugs and Stockpiling of Arms and Weapons: During this period, WTV LTOs identified a community called Okabb in Ankpa LGA, Kogi state, being used for the storage of ammunition and the recruitment of thugs. Despite the fact that these ammunitions were said to have been stored prior to the 2019 General Election, it has to a large extent raises questions and hence the possibility of outbreak of violence in the coming election. Other reports of recruitment of political thugs were heard from communities in Yenagoa and Sagbama LGA in Bayelsa state and in Okehi and Idah in Kogi state.
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.
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