

Yiaga Africa's Watching The Vote Preliminary Report on the Observation of the Nationwide Display of the Voters – November 12, 2022



Introduction

In compliance with Section 19 of the Electoral Act, 2022, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), commenced the display of the Preliminary Register of Voters (PRV) for public scrutiny on Saturday 12 November to be concluded on Saturday 25 November 2022. The display, claims and objection is a nationwide exercise with the Register of voters displayed in all 8,809 registration areas (wards) as required by law. As part of the display of the Register of voters, INEC will address claims and objections at Registration Area RA (Ward) level from Saturday 12th to Friday 18th November 2022; and at the LGA/Area Council Offices from Saturday 19th to Friday 25th November 2022, 9am to 3am daily. The physical process is also complemented by an online process to enable easy access for voters to confirm their details online and make their complaints using the designed procedure.

To ensure independent citizen oversight over the physical process at the Ward and LGA level, Yiaga Africa WTV is observing the process with 822 citizen observers deployed across the 774 LGAs in the 36 states and the FCT to provide oversight and objective assessment of the exercise. On Saturday 12 November 2022, the Yiaga Africa watching the vote observers visited a total of **1,497** INEC Registration centres to observe the commencement of the Display, Claims and Objections. Yiaga Africa's watching the vote observers reported that the DCO commenced in a significant number of the Wards visited on Day one. However, there were reports of some wards in states like Adamawa, Jigawa, Oyo and Zamfara states suggesting that the PRV were not displayed in some wards as of Saturday, November 12.

Observation Findings

1. **Low citizens' awareness and late commencement on November 12:** Reports across the states indicated a possible low citizens' awareness and late commencement of the process. In Kano Central Senatorial Districts, for instance, reports suggested that the process started late with centres opening at 1:00 pm. The INEC officials mentioned that they were not aware of the assignment for the exercise until late in the day. There was low awareness of the display, claims and objections in Oyo State. In some of the wards visited, especially in Egbeda, INEC did not display the temporary register on the first day of the exercise. In Ibadan North also, a lesser number of electorates came out on the first day to check their details on the register, and make claims and objections. The process also recorded a slow start in some of the wards visited as very few people were seen at the wards display centers in Delta, Ekiti , Kogi and Osun states due to a possible lack of citizens' awareness. In Kogi state for instance, the process started at noon in Adumu Egume Ward and Ojikpadala ward in Dekina LGA. The same was also reported in Eni and Oshobane wards in Ogori Magongo LGA of Kogi state.



2. **No Public Display of the Register of Voters in some locations at Commencement:** Reports from 28% or 420 of the 1,497 of the registration areas (ward) visited, revealed that INEC did not publicly display the temporary voters' registers at the commencement of the exercise on Saturday, 12 November 2022. For instance, WTV observers reported that the process did not commence on day 1 of the exercise in some of the wards visited in Jigawa NorthEast Senatorial District, Jigawa state. Also in most wards in Ife Central, Ife North, and Ede North LGA of Osun state. Reports from Kogi also noted the absence of a temporary register of voters in the Ejule, Ankpa, Ojoku and Enejma ward of the state. Reports from Delta State also revealed that due to the recent flooding challenge that affected 19 LGAs in the state, the Display, Claims and Objections did not commence in many communities and there were no INEC officials present to provide information on when the display will begin. The same goes for the hard terrains of the states. From Akwa Ibom, reports revealed that there was no Display of the Preliminary register of voters at the commencement date in the wards visited in Ikono, Etinan, Okobo, Urue Offong/Oruko, Ibiono Ibom, Ukanafun & Nsit Ibom LGAs. From Osun, reports indicated that

the voters' register was not displayed in most of the wards visited in Ife Central, Ife North and Ede South Local Governments on Saturday. The delay in commencement for Ede South LGA may be due to the fire inferno that engulfed the INEC office on Thursday, November 10, 2022. WTV Observer from Batsari LGA in Katsina State reported that the Register of Voters was not pasted on the walls, because only one(1) copy was provided and they were expected to make all necessary corrections on it and return it back to the INEC office at the end of the activity and display of all the 11 wards within the LGA was done in one ward (GPSS) Batsari.

3. **Absence of Revision Officers during the Display of the Register in some Wards visited:** In Ngwa iyi ekwe ward 13 and in Ugwunago LGA in Abia State and Osuowerre Ward 1 in Isiala Mbano LGA of Imo state, the Preliminary Register of Voters was displayed but there were no INEC revision officials present to provide assistance at the center this was also the case in Umuazu Central Primary School Ward 4, and Achala Uno Primary School Ward 5 in Oyi LGA, Ebogidi Akpu Ward 3 and Central School ukpo Ward 2 in Dunukofia LGA, Ogwu Ikpele Ward and Akili Ogidi Ward in Ogbaru LGA of Anambra State. Also from Taraba, it was observed that INEC officials were not present in all the RAs visited in Wukari, Takum, Donga, Ussa and Ibi LGAs.
4. **INEC officials not permanently displaying the Register for fear of vandalization:** Reports received also showed that INEC officials are not displaying the voters Register in some locations for fear of vandalization. Some officials have resorted to the removal of the temporary register at the end of each day of the exercise to avoid vandalization. Reports from Ward 2 & 4 in Uyo LGA and Ikpe ward 2 and Odoro ward 1 in Ini LGA, in Akwa Ibom suggest that the list was loosely placed on a desk and not pasted in a more accessible location for citizens. Also in Osun, it was also observed that the INEC official did not publicly post the Register for display. The Revision officers held the Voters register in their hands and only opened the Register of voters when anyone showed up for their details verification.



5. **The condition of the temporary voters' Register:** Whilst the vast majority of observers reported that the Voters register was publicly posted in good condition, some observers, however, expressed concerns with the condition of the posted temporary voters register. 5% of the observers reported that the PRVs were detached from the walls and 1% of the observers noted that the temporary registers were either wet or torn.



6. **Citizens making claims and objections:** WTV Observers also reported that citizens have begun scrutinizing the temporary voters' list for claims and objections. 16% of observers reported that citizens who visited the registration areas made a claim to have their details corrected or raised an objection to having a name deleted or raised some complaints.
7. **Deployment of INEC Revision Officers:** an average of two (2) Revision Officers were present in the Registration Area Centres where the display, claims and objection had commenced.



Critical Incidents

1. **Intimidation and Harassments:** 9% of observers reported incidents of intimidation and harassment against citizens or INEC revision officers in some registration areas. These reports were particularly received from Badara wards in Kirfi LGA, Bauchi, Womdiyo wards in Askira Uba LGA in Borno, Katin Babushe ward in Ringim LGA Jigawa state. Similar incident reports

were received from Bali A Ward in Bali, Mutum Biyu Ward B in Gassol and Zing A2 Ward in Zing LGAs in Taraba. Observers also reported intimidation and harassment in Uyeagala ward 2 in Andoni LGA in Rivers.

Preliminary Recommendations

1. INEC should ensure that the Preliminary Register of Voters' is permanently displayed in locations that are physically accessible to citizens for the duration of the Display, Claims and Objection Exercise.
2. INEC should provide information to voters in communities affected by floods on where their Display exercise will be conducted. While we acknowledge that INEC has introduced the online process, it is important to note there are a large number of voters who are not tech savvy to leverage the online process.
3. INEC and other stakeholders especially political parties should intensify the publicity of the Display, Claims and Objections exercise and also increase voter education on the importance of scrutinising voters' review of the temporary voters' register.
4. Security agencies should ensure effective distribution and adequate presence of their personnel in all registration areas to neutralize threats and increase citizens' confidence, especially in locations where there is a higher likelihood of intimidation and violence.
5. Citizens should continue to engage in the electoral process, especially by checking their details in the published voters' register to ensure they can vote in the 2023 elections.

Conclusion

Yiaga Africa has also received reports of irregularities in the Preliminary Voter Register published on INEC's website, and we fear this may impact citizens' confidence in the process. As confirmed by Yiaga Africa #WatchingTheVote Citizen observers, the reports include duplicates, underage registered voters, and deceased persons on the register. This validates our consistent call and that of other CSOs for the comprehensive audit of the voter register.

We call on the Commission to, as a matter of urgent importance, address some of the concerns that have been raised, to boost confidence in the exercise and ensure that legitimately registered voters are not disenfranchised.

Yiaga Africa urges citizens to utilize official channels provided in the Electoral Act 2022 and INEC guidelines to report complaints and objections to irregularities in the voter register. On our part, we have drawn INEC's attention to these disturbing reports. We will continue to aggregate evidence of these irregularities to ensure INEC responds accordingly by cleaning the voter register. We call on citizens to continue to share findings and reports with us via feedback@yiaga.org to enable us to escalate the issue.

Yiaga Africa will continue to observe the process and provide updates as appropriate. A comprehensive report on its observation of the Display, Claims, and Objections exercise will be issued.

Methodology

Yiaga Africa's Watching The Votes observation of the nationwide display of the preliminary register of voters involves the deployment of 822 citizen observers spread across the 774 LGAs in the 36 states and the FCT. The observers deploy to the wards and INEC LGA offices on assigned days throughout the exercise to report their findings on the status of the display. Observers visit wards within their LGAs, observe the process and track the level of citizens' participation and the efficiency of INECs' response to complaints made at the centre's.