

SPACE, ACCESS AND INFLUENCE IN NIGERIA'S ELECTORAL PROCESS

How Youth, Women and Persons with Disability Fared in the 2015 General Elections



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Report of a study commissioned by
ActionAid Nigeria on Citizens' Participation in the 2015 Electoral Processes

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Acronyms

CAN	-	Action Congress Nigeria
APC	-	All Progressives Congress
CVR	-	Continuous Voter Registration
EU EOGM	-	European Union Election Monitoring Group
PWD	-	Person with Disability
EMB	-	Election Management Board
FIDA	-	International Federation of Women Lawyers
FGD	-	Focus Group Discussion
IPU	-	Inter-Parliamentary Union
IPAC	-	Inter-Party Advisory Committee
INEC	-	Independent National Electoral Commission
SCEEP	-	Strengthening Citizen's Engagement in the Electoral Process
NSA	-	National Security Adviser
NCSESR	-	Nigerian Civil Society Elections Situation Room
NOA	-	National Orientation Agency
PDP	-	Peoples' Democratic Party
PVC	-	Permanent Voters Card
SCR	-	Smart Card Reader
UN	-	United Nations
YIAGA	-	Youth Initiative for Advocacy Growth & Advancement

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Obo Effanga
Governance Programme Manager

Executive Summary

Citizens' participation in Nigeria's electoral process has historically been a huge challenge for three broad reasons. First is the long period of military authoritarian rule that totally negated electoral process and undermined citizens' participation in decision-making processes.

Second is the culture of electoral impunity that has historically permeated Nigeria's electoral process right from the colonial period.

Third is the poor policy and institutional framework to guarantee inclusive electoral process and ensure the participation of excluded groups like women, young people and people living with disability (PWDs).

The study is part of ActionAid Nigeria's programme on Strengthening Citizens' Engagement in the Electoral Process (SCEEP). It aims to examine the level of citizens' participation in the 2015 general elections; determine the extent of engagement of women, youth and persons with disability in the just concluded elections; identify and analyse the obstacles faced by women, youth and persons with disability during the 2015 elections and identify the roles played by the election management body, security agencies, political parties and other stakeholders that undermined or enhanced the political participation.

The data for the report is drawn from a combination of data collection methods involving Survey questionnaire, Key Informant Interview and Focus Group Discussion. The survey was conducted based on a questionnaire design and administered in 10 states covering all the six geopolitical zones of the country: Kano and Kaduna – northwest; Adamawa and Bauchi – northeast; Plateau – northcentral; Imo – southeast; Akwa Ibom and Rivers - south-south and Lagos and Oyo - southwest.

The research identifies some of the impediments to the participation of women, youths and persons with disability as religious factors; marital status; lack of economic resources; poor political leverage in the community; lack of internal party democracy; intimidation, militarization and violence; poor economic opportunities and monetized electoral process; discrimination and non-gender sensitive selection.

Despite the relative progress made in the electoral there are still challenges – ranging from electoral administration, laws and citizens participation. Most of these challenges have been documented by different observer groups – national and international. It is therefore important to respond to these challenges and strengthen the electoral process through the following:

Strengthen Electoral Laws to promote participation, deepen the autonomy of INEC and deal with electoral impunity; improve use of Technology - 68% responded that Nigeria is ready for electronic voting with as high as 60.1% suggesting that full electronic voting should commence in the next general election in 2019. It is also important to introduce early voting and special provisions for excluded groups; increase voter education – political education and ensure constituency delimitation and creation of more polling units.

Ojobo Atuluku
Country Director, ActionAid Nigeria

Introduction

Citizens' participation in Nigeria's electoral process has historically been a huge challenge for three broad reasons. First is the long period of military authoritarian rule that totally negated electoral process and undermined citizens' participation in decision-making processes. Second is the culture of electoral impunity that has historically permeated Nigeria's electoral process right from the colonial period. Every electoral exercise is, therefore, associated with massive cases of electoral malpractice such as vote rigging, violence and deliberate institutional manipulation. Third is the poor policy and institutional framework to guarantee inclusive electoral process and ensure the participation of excluded groups like women, young people and people living with disability (PWDs).

As a result, until recently, the country has been unable to conduct free, fair and credible elections in which its citizens have access to adequately enforce and effectively protect opportunities to exercise their franchise. This has made the agenda of democratic sustainability largely a challenge. It is almost like Nigeria is incapable of conducting a credible election. Since 1999, almost each succeeding election is faced with different forms of electoral malpractice.

The legitimacy of a government is, to a large extent, determined by the credibility of elections that produced it. This credibility is not necessarily determined by what happened on the polling day; it involves a chain of processes and activities leading to the election. A credible electoral process requires an open pre-election environment in which citizens participate without fear or obstruction; political parties, candidates and the media operate freely; an independent judiciary functions fairly and expeditiously; and electoral authorities operate impartially.

The 2015 general elections have been celebrated as one of the most credible elections conducted in the country. They were held against the background of Nigeria's recent violent and manipulative electoral history. The outcome of the elections and the peaceful transition was also major cause for celebration. For the first time an incumbent president is defeated in Nigeria and the transition was successfully managed. This is not necessarily about the winning or losing party or candidate, but more about the decisiveness and commitment of the electorate to make their votes count and ensuring a stable polity.

While significant progress has been made in election management and citizen engagement in the electoral process, there are still strong challenges with the process. It is, therefore, important to examine the dynamics of citizens' participation in the 2015 elections with the hope of identifying key leanings for improvement in subsequent elections.

The study is part of ActionAid Nigeria's programme on Strengthening Citizens' Engagement in the Electoral Process (SCEEP). Specifically, the study aims to

- Examine the level of citizens' participation in the 2015 general elections.
- Determine the extent of engagement of women, youth and persons with disability in the just concluded elections.
- Identify and analyse the obstacles faced by women, youth and persons with disability during the 2015 elections.
- Identify the roles played by the election management body, security agencies, political parties and other stakeholders that undermined or enhanced the political participation.

ActionAid Nigeria is interested in harnessing the perspective of women, persons with disability (PWDs) and young people who are the specific targets of its engagement with the elections. The idea is to develop and contribute to the body of knowledge that could help inform needed policy changes and practices that will serve to enhance the effective participation of these groups in future electoral processes in the country.

Methods Of Data Collection and Analysis

The data for the report is drawn from a combined data collection methods involving: Survey questionnaire, Key Informant Interview and Focus Group Discussion.

The survey was conducted based on a questionnaire design and administered in 10 states, covering all the six geopolitical zones of the country. States sampled were Kano and Kaduna in the north-west, Adamawa and Bauchi in the north-east, Plateau in the north-central, Imo in the south-east, Akwalbom and Rivers in the south-south and Lagos and Oyo in the southwest. A planning workshop along with enumerator training workshop was carried out to adopt appropriate sampling procedures, develop research instruments, approve logistical arrangements and check ethical issues. Semi-structured questionnaires, Focused Group Discussion and Key Informant instruments were administered in three selected communities per local government area in each state. The administration of semi-structured questionnaires attained an overall 99.9 % (3474/3750) return rate.

Semi-structured questionnaires were purposively administered in the clusters. FGDs and KII were held with identified participants drawn from for election stakeholders (Women, Youths, Security agencies, INEC Staff, Party Supporters, the disabled and general voters) in the communities sampled.

Sample Size Estimation (Semi-Structured Questionnaire)

The projected sample size that was required to meet the set objectives at ninety five per cent (95%) confidence level was calculated using the formula for cross-sectional or descriptive studies below.¹

$$n = \frac{Z^2 pq}{C^2}$$

Where:

n = the desired sample size

Z = the standard normal deviation corresponding to 95% level of confidence. The value obtained from a standard normal distribution is 1.96.

p = the proportion of citizens who voted in the last general elections pulled out of the overall registered voters on the INEC's database which was estimated to be 42.7%

q = 1 – p (1 - 0.427) = 0.573

c = degree of accuracy desired (i.e. precision) is set at 5% (0.05)

The sample size, n = $\frac{(1.96)^2 \times 0.427 \times 0.573}{(0.05)^2}$.

n = 374.9 rounded up to 375 per state (Cluster)

The overall sample size computed based on 10 clusters (states) n = 375 X 10

Survey Sample Size = 3750

Data Collection and Analysis

The semi-structured instruments were administered concurrently with focused group discussion (FGD) and key informant interviews (KII) across the selected 10 states of the federation.

Returned semi-structured instruments were captured and analysed using SPSS^(R) VERSION 20

statistical package. This quantitative data was expressed in frequencies, percentages and presented in charts and frequency distribution tables. Associations between factors were determined using chi-square test of independence. A probability value of < 0.05 was accepted as statistically significant. Qualitative data collated from FGD and KII were transcribed and analysed qualitatively using contextual approach with the method of content analysis. Details of findings are presented in tables and charts.

The secondary data was sourced from an array of published documents including books, reports, journals and special reports or documents physical accessed or retrieved online. The extant Electoral Act and related laws were also reviewed. This was to provide a robust conceptual and historical foundation for the report.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The copies of questionnaire were administered on a total of 3,747 respondents; 2,142 (57.2%) were males while 1,605 (41.8%) were females, indicative of a fair gender balance among respondents. Of a total of 3,747 respondents, 114 (3.0%), 1,454 (38.8%) and 1,037 (27.7%) fell within the age range of 10-17, 18-29 and 30-39 respectively, implying that a total of 1,568 (41.8%) of the sample population were below the age of 29.

This indicates a fair representation or adequacy of youth population in the survey sample, especially when viewed against the backdrop of the Nigerian national youth policy which defines youth as people between the ages of 18 and 35 such that if we take the liberty to add the age range of 30-39 to the 'youth mix', the total youth population in the sample data would hover near 2,605 or 69.5%.

Those in the age range of 40-49 were 619 (16.5%) while 50-59 was 342 (9.1%) of respondents and those in the category of 60 and above were 181 (4.8%), which is an indication that there was the likelihood of limited numbers of age-related infirmities among the sample population.

On disability, 468 (12.5%) acknowledged that they suffer some form of disability with 3,279 or 87.5% claiming no disability. The majority of respondents were also observed to be educated with 3,164 (84.5%), having a minimum of secondary education or higher qualifications while as many as 1,898 (50.7%) had tertiary education. Other education breakdown reveals that 1,266 (33.8%) had secondary education, 291 (7.8%) had primary education while 292 or 7.8% had no formal education. Even if some respondents had exaggerated, it would still be allowable as it is an indication that respondents considered themselves smart enough for certain level of education.

The religious dispositions of the respondents also point towards certain level of representation, with 1,397 (37.3%) of respondents being Muslims, 2,277 or 60.8% were Christians while 56 representing (1.5%) of respondents identifying with African Traditional religions even as 17 (0.5%) claimed no religious allegiance. The questionnaires were administered across rural-urban boundaries, with 1,028 (27.4%) of the respondents from urban centres, 993 (26.5%) from rural areas, 935 (25.0%) from semi-rural backgrounds with 791 (21.1%) of the respondents from semi-urban settlements.

SECTION 1



ActionAid

AN OVERVIEW OF THE 2015 GENERAL ELECTIONS

Context and Background

The 2015 general elections were the fifth set of regular elections conducted since Nigeria returned to civil rule in 1999. The 1999 elections were supervised by the military government and were broadly accepted or tolerated by most of the political actors. This was largely because of the almost national consensus to wrest the military out of politics. This apparently required a level of sacrifices by political actors to sustain the political transition. It was also due in part, to the fact that the political leadership was not directly involved in the contest. Electoral experiences in Nigeria revealed that contests were less acrimonious when those in powers were not contestants, as in the case of military handing over power or when leaders were constitutionally barred from further contesting for the same position.

Succeeding elections since 1999 were marred by violence and irregularities. Often, the final outcomes of the elections were determined in different stages of the electoral appeal process. The 2007 elections were the worst of elections and were rightly denounced by both local and international observers (Ibrahim and Ibeanu, 2009). The credibility deficit of the elections was acknowledged by even the chief beneficiary – President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua during his presidential inauguration. He promised to do everything possible to turn-around the electoral process.

He established the Electoral Reform Committee headed by Justice Muhammad LawalUwais, retired Chief Justice of Nigeria with the following terms of reference:

- (i) Undertake a review of Nigeria's history with general elections and identify factors, which affect the quality and credibility of the elections and their impact on the democratic process.
- (ii) Examine relevant provisions of the 1999 constitution, the electoral act and other legislations that have bearing on the electoral process and assess their impact on the quality and credibility of general elections.
- (iii) Examine the roles of institutions, agencies and stakeholders in shaping and impacting on the quality and credibility of the electoral process. These should include Government, electoral commissions, security agencies, political parties, non-governmental organisations, media, general public and the international community.
- (iv) Examine electoral systems relevant to Nigeria's experience and identify best practices that would impact positively on the quality and credibility of the nation's electoral process.
- (v) Make general and specific recommendations (including but not limited to constitutional and legislative provisions and/or amendments) to ensure:
 - (i) A truly independent electoral commission imbued with administrative and financial autonomy;
 - (ii) An electoral process that would enable the conduct of elections to meet acceptable international standards;
 - (iii) Legal processes that would ensure that election disputes are concluded before inauguration of newly elected officials; and
- (vi) Mechanisms to reduce post-election tensions including possibility of introducing the concept of proportional representation in the constitution of governments.
- (vii) Make any other recommendations deemed necessary by the committee.

After extensive consultations, the electoral reform committee made far-reaching recommendations on the reform of the electoral systems. They were meant to ensure greater credibility and confidence in electoral outcomes. The recommendations covered key issues of election management, autonomy of the election management body, role of citizens and election arbitration processes among others.

In 2010 Dr G. E Jonathan became the President, following the death of Umaru Musa Yar'Adua. The new president appointed Prof. Attahiru M Jega as the new INEC chairman. Prof. Jega was a member of the Justice Uwais electoral reform committee. Jega's appointment was to receive a widespread acceptance by politicians, the civil society and the international community. The conduct of the 2011 elections was generally seen to be a relative progress over the previous ones. These elections apparently set the basis for the progress made in 2015.

Despite the relative improvement in the 2011 elections, the general elections recorded the worst post-election violence in decades. It left at least 800 people dead and more than 65, 000 displaced. The election also polarised the country along regional, ethnic and religious lines. However, despite the many malfeasance and violence that attended the announcement of the results, the elections were observed to be a good progress over previous elections since 1999.

The 2015 General Elections:

The 2015 general elections attracted a huge and almost universal apprehension about possible violence that could undermine the Nigerian state. This apprehension was largely drawn from ranging security situation in the country, the past electoral experiences, especially the violence that followed the 2011 elections, the experiences of other African countries and the contention and violence that heralded the electioneering process.

The electioneering was characterised by mudslinging, hate speeches and character assassination, which, to a large extent, divided the country along primordial fault line of ethnicity, religion and even region. This was complicated by the intense pressure on INEC to postpone the elections and challenges of distribution and collection of the by PVCs.

The elections were eventually postponed ostensibly for security reasons. The National Security Adviser's (NSA) letter to the Chairman of Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) further heightened events leading to the postponement of the elections by the Chair of the INEC. The letter drew the attention of the Chairman to the challenges of Boko Haram insurgency in the northeast and how it could impact the election. The letter concluded by stating that security could not be guaranteed during the proposed period in February for the general elections (Jega, 2015).

The NSA and all the Armed Services and Intelligence Chiefs reiterated the same argument during the Council of State meeting. There was request for at least six weeks postponement in order to conclude a major military operation against the insurgents. In doing this, the military may not be able to provide the traditional support for the smooth conduct of elections. The commission after consultations decided to take the advice of the Security Chiefs and postponed the elections for six weeks.

To manage the tension, civil society groups, development partners, religious leaders and traditional rulers instituted different peace initiatives. Diplomatic efforts were also put in place to ensure peaceful elections. The United Nation (UN) Secretary General, the United States Secretary of State and the United Kingdom Foreign Secretary all differently and collectively engaged the main contenders and sued for peaceful election. The two contenders eventually

signed a peace pact, which was to guide the conduct of the politicians throughout the electioneering period and beyond. Eventually, Nigeria had a relatively peaceful elections and the result of the elections, particularly the Presidential elections, held on the 28th of March 2015 was generally observed to be credible, free and fair.

Candidates and Political Parties

In all, 14 candidates participated in the Presidential Elections. There were also elections into 29 states governorship positions, 109 Senatorial and 360 House of Representatives seats. However, the Presidential elections was a two-horse race between two major contenders: The ruling People Democratic Party (PDP) represented by the incumbent President, Goodluck Ebele Jonathan and the leading opposition party, All Progressive Congress (APC), represented by Muhammadu Buhari, a retired military General and former Military Head of State. He had been in the presidential race since 2003 and had participated in all the three presidential elections since then. The 2015 presidential election was therefore his fourth attempt.

The PDP was one of three political parties registered to participate in 1998/1999 general elections that ushered in the current democratic dispensation. Since 1999 it has won all the presidential elections and the majority of the state governorships and national assembly seats. The APC was only registered in 2013 following the merger of some leading opposition parties. The party inherited some state governors and national assembly members from the dissolved parties and those who left PDP. It went into the 2015 general elections as the opposition party and was seen by observers as the underdog.

Conduct and Outcome of Voting

The voter register indicates that 68,833,476, while the total collection of Permanent Voters Card stood at 55,904,274 representing 81.22% of the total registered voters. The total votes cast in the presidential election were 29,432,083, representing less than 50% of the registered voters. This scenario also played out in all the other elections held as part of the 2015 general elections.

The above data raise issues about participation of citizens in the electoral process. While there were instances of voter apathy, the practicalities of conducting the elections from the voter registration process to the accreditation process and to the actual voting were also fraught with inefficiencies that served to disenfranchise some Nigerians. The fear of violence also had negative impact on citizens' participation.

The 2015 presidential election was held on 28th March, 2015. Due to the innovation and changes brought about by INEC and the mobilisation campaigned by the stakeholders, the electorate were determined to ensure that their votes counted and that their choices reflected in the outcomes of the elections. Reports indicate a significant improvement in election management over the previous experiences.

Table 1. Results of 2015 Presidential Election in Nigeria

S/No	State	Geopolitical zone	APC	PDP	Majority party
1.	Abia	South East	13,394	368,303	PDP
2.	Adamawa	North East	374,701	251,664	APC
3.	Akwabom	South South	58,411	953,304	PDP
4.	Anambra	South East	17,926	660,762	PDP
5.	Bauchi	North East	931,598	86,085	APC
6.	Bayelsa	South South	5,194	361,209	PDP
7.	Benue	North Central	373,961	303,737	APC
8.	Borno	North East	473,543	25,640	APC
9.	Cross River	South South	28,368	414,863	PDP
10.	Delta	South South	48,910	1,211,405	PDP
11.	Ebonyi	South East	19,518	323,653	PDP
12.	Edo	South South	208,469	286,869	PDP
13.	Ekiti	South West	120,331	176,466	PDP
14.	Enugu	South East	14,157	553,003	PDP
15.	FCT	Federal Capital	146,399	157,195	PDP
16.	Gombe	North East	361,245	96,873	APC
17.	Imo	South East	133,253	559,185	PDP
18.	Jigawa	North West	885,988	142,904	APC
19.	Kaduna	North West	1,127,760	484,085	APC
20.	Kano	North West	1,903,999	215,779	APC
21.	Katsina	North West	1,345,441	98,937	APC
22.	Kebbi	North West	567,883	100,972	APC
23.	Kogi	North Central	264,851	149,987	APC
24.	Kwara	North Central	302,146	132,602	APC
25.	Lagos	South West	792,460	632,327	APC
26.	Nasarawa	North Central	236,838	273,460	PDP
27.	Niger	North Central	657,678	149,222	APC
28.	Ogun	South West	308,290	207,950	APC
29.	Ondo	South West	299,889	251,368	APC
30.	Osun	South West	383,603	249,929	APC
31.	Oyo	South West	528,620	303,376	APC
32.	Plateau	North Central	429,140	549,615	PDP
33.	Rivers	South South	69,238	1,487,075	PDP
34.	Sokoto	North West	671,926	152,199	APC
35.	Taraba	North East	261,326	310,800	PDP
36.	Yobe	North East	446,265	25,526	APC
37.	Zamfara	North West	612,202	144,833	APC
	Total		15,424,921	12,853,162	APC

The results showed that PDP won the majority of votes in 15 states and the Federal capital territory while APC won the majority in 21 states. The candidate of PDP received 25% or more of the votes cast in 26 states whilst the APC candidate won 25% or more of the votes in 27 states of the federation.

The APC candidate was declared winner of the presidential election, having fulfilled the requirements of the electoral act. The outcome of the 2015 election was significant because for

the first time in Nigeria's electoral history an opposition party had defeated a ruling party and an incumbent candidate in a Presidential context. The opposition candidate won with a margin of 2,571,759 votes.

The governorship election was conducted on the 11th of April 2015 in 29 of the 36 states of federation. Like the Presidential election, the opposition APC won the majority of the seats. The results provided in table 2 shows that PDP won in nine states whilst the APC won in the remaining 20 states.

The results of the national and state assembly elections followed similar trend with the presidential and governorship elections. In some states, particularly in the northern part of the country, PDP lost not only governorship seats, but also the majorities in both states and national assemblies.

Table 2. Results of the Governorship Election

S/No	State	Geopolitical zone	Party that won
1.	Abia	South East	PDP*
2.	Adamawa	North East	APC
3.	Akwabom	South South	PDP*
4.	Anambra	South East	**
5.	Bauchi	North East	APC
6.	Bayelsa	South South	**
7.	Benue	North Central	APC
8.	Borno	North East	APC
9.	Cross River	South South	PDP
10.	Delta	South South	PDP
11.	Ebonyi	South East	PDP
12.	Edo	South South	**
13.	Ekiti	South West	**
14.	Enugu	South East	PDP
15.	FCT	Federal Capital	***
16.	Gombe	North East	PDP
17.	Imo	South East	APC
18.	Jigawa	North West	APC
19.	Kaduna	North West	APC
20.	Kano	North West	APC
21.	Katsina	North West	APC
22.	Kebbi	North West	APC
23.	Kogi	North Central	**
24.	Kwara	North Central	APC
25.	Lagos	South West	APC
26.	Nasarawa	North Central	APC
27.	Niger	North Central	APC
28.	Ogun	South West	APC
29.	Ondo	South West	**
30.	Osun	South West	**

31.	Oyo	South West	APC
32.	Plateau	North Central	APC
33.	Rivers	South South	PDP*
34.	Sokoto	North West	APC
35.	Taraba	North East	PDP*
36.	Yobe	North East	APC
37.	Zamfara	North West	APC

Source: Collated election results as announced by INEC returning officers

Key: - * Decision overturned by the judiciary, case not concluded.

** States that did not participate in the governorship election

Innovation and Changes in the Elections

The 2015 elections were driven by innovations at all levels and different stakeholders, particularly the INEC. The Commission made some far-reaching decisions that were to radically alter the processes, conduct and possibly the outcomes of the 2015 elections. Some of the decisions include the introduction and use of Permanent Voter's Card (PVC) and the smart card reader (SCR); the insistence on the non militarisation of polling units; the freedom of voters to remain around the polling area and await the release of results by the election staff and finally, the use of internet and the social media to disseminate election outcomes as announced at the polling units.

These decisions became necessary in order to address the following alleged electoral problems.

- Multiple voting, snatching and stuffing of ballot boxes,
- Use of fake ballot papers,
- Declaration of false results,
- Challenges in the distribution of election materials and voting environment from the commission of violent acts, and finally to
- Ensure greater transparency and accountability in the entire election process by minimising the role of INEC staff in the collation and declaration of results (Jega, 2015).

These reforms, in addition to other reasons relating to the performance of the ruling party, such as the raging insecurity, unbridled corruption, crisis and disaffection in the ruling party combined to determine the outcome of the election.

SECTION 2



CITIZENS' PARTICIPATION IN THE 2015 GENERAL ELECTIONS

Concept of Political Participation

Political participation is one of the basic conditions for a functioning democracy. The depth and scope of citizens' participation often determines the extent of democratic space in a polity. Political participation refers to those activities by citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of political leaders and/or the actions they take (Verba and Nie 1972:2). Political participation is also referred to as an activity that has the intent or effect of influencing government action – either directly by affecting the making or implementation of public policy, or indirectly by influencing the selection of people who make those policies (Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995).

There are different forms of political participation. The most notable is the voting in elections. It also includes joining a political party, standing as a candidate in an election, joining a non-governmental advocacy group, or participating in public protest or engaging government in decision-making issues. The foundational legal articulation of political participation can be found in the UN's 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and it has been further formalised and elaborated in later treaties, most notably the 1976 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. As currently implemented by the UN, various operating entities assess signatory states' respect for this right and, when violations are determined to have occurred, may call on states to change their practices.

The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria provides for basic rights of citizens to participate without discriminations. Citizens of 18 years and above are guaranteed to participate in the electoral process. The extent of this participation is often shaped by a number of factors ranging from individual's disposition, institutional structure, and economic and political opportunities, level of mobilisation among others.

Citizens' participation in the context of this study refers to all the levels and processes of citizens' engagement in the electoral process – from membership of political parties, civic mobilisation, voting to contesting elections. This is with particular reference to women, youth



and people living with disability. These are traditionally excluded groups in Nigerian electoral process. Historically in Nigeria, gender, age, social status and physical ability play important roles in elections.

Elections, Political Participation and Representation

Regular elections are important elements of democracy. However, elections are not in themselves a guarantee for sustainable democracy. Indeed, experiences have shown that elections can also be used to disguise authoritarian rule, what Andreas Schedler called “electoral authoritarianism.” (Schedler, 2002: 46). Under such circumstances, elections are only held as a transitional ritual where the people have little or no choice, as has been the case in most African countries under the so-called third wave of democratisation (Adejumobi, 2000).

When this happens, the democratisation process gets easily compromised, disempowering elections from playing its crucial roles (Schedler, 2002). It is, perhaps, on these strengths and weaknesses of elections in the democratisation processes that Michael Bratton argues that while 'elections do not, in and of themselves constitute a consolidated democracy,' he insists that they, however, 'remain fundamental, not only for installing democratic governments, but also as a requisite for broader democratic consolidation.' (Bratton, 1998: 52). This shows that the relationship between elections and democratic transition is not a given. It is largely contingent upon a number of forces; important among them is the administration of the election. It is partly for this reason that it has been argued that:

The regularity, openness and acceptability of elections signal whether basic constitutional, behavioural, and attitudinal foundations are being laid for sustainable democratic rule – while you can have elections without democracy, you cannot have democracy without elections. If nothing else, the convening of scheduled multi-party elections serves the minimal function of marking democracy's survival (Bratton, 1998: 52).

By implication, elections remain, in the least, the minimum requirements of democracy. For it to move beyond the minimum level and graduate toward the maximum axis of energising democracy, it must be free and fair, capable of promoting real participation, competition and legitimacy. These are attainable under a competent, capable and professional election umpire who can administer election impartially (Jinadu, 1997).

While the last decades have witnessed remarkable improvements in the acquisition of voting rights by women, the minority and the poor in several parts of the world, there is still intense struggle to attain equal opportunity in the political playing field even in the most advanced democracies in spite of the importance of participation to the development of democracy (Forbrig, 2005).

Underrepresentation of certain categories of people is thus a global challenge even in established democracies where it is often observed that such bodies as legislative assemblies remain 'unrepresentative,' and, in particular, that they are under-representation of women, ethnic minorities, and the poorer and less educated social classes” (Bird, 2003). The World average of women in legislatures is put at 22% (IPU, 2015). The Inter-Parliamentary Union through several reports indicates that there is a minimum of 987 indigenous (ethnic minorities) parliamentarians in the world out of more than 44,000 parliamentarians and 80% of them are men. Also, less than 2% legislators worldwide are below the age of 30 (IPU, 2014).

Elections should enhance effective representation of all segments of the society. Effective



representation and inclusive electoral process contribute to managing diversity and strengthening democracy. The need to consider gender equality, and by extension, fair gender representation as a compelling argument for gender inclusiveness because gender equality is not simply a desirable end, but a potent means of human development in poor countries (United Nations, 2005) where class-specific issues are widespread.

Similarly, research suggests that increasing participatory relations between young people and adults is important for healthy development (Wong, Zimmerman, & Parker, 2010). Wong et al (2010) further point out with empirical assessment an emerging trend indicative of higher degree of shared control in youth-adult partnerships while considering the development potential in such relationships. Some countries and economic areas have to evolve deliberate youth-participation policy frameworks that promote youth inclusiveness (Kovacheva, 2005).

Equally, although the topic of disability and political participation remain underexplored, findings have shown that people with disability are still not part of the mainstream political system (Schuret.al., 2002). People with disabilities remain less likely than abled persons to vote, be voted for or engage in other forms of political activities (Schur & Adya, 2012).

While the election process varies from country to country, it would be erroneous to assume that it starts and ends with voting on Election Day. Such a limited context could only short-change the underrepresented class or undermine our understanding of the 'electoral processes. Generally, a typical election process starts with primaries or caucuses or conventions organised by and for political parties to decide their flag-bearers or candidates. It is after this stage that the parties advance with their candidate(s) to confront other party or parties' candidate(s) in a final general voting showdown. In most stable democracies such as the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom, this former part is in itself decided mostly through keen contests that involve variation of voting types or selection methods by party members and or leaders.

In many countries, particularly the poorer nations, this is ironically the stage where a few political leaders could weed out the underrepresented elements or party elites who often prefer to choose party candidates for office opaquely (NDI, 2012). As a result, the process becomes heavily monetised and prone to violence and militarisation.

Trend Analysis of Participation since 1999

Nigeria returned to electoral democracy on May 29th 1999 after protracted military authoritarian rule. The 2015 elections were fourth in the series of regular general elections since the return to democracy. As indicated earlier, the country has been making gradual process in the conduct of elections since 2011. Citizens' trust in the process has continued to improve and their participation is also increasing.

There has been a steady increase in the number of registered voters from 1999, except in 2015 when a marginal decline was recorded. This may be attributed to challenges experienced in setting up the platform for the permanent voters' card electronic structure. Details can be seen in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Trend of Presidential Election from 1999-2015

Year	No. of Registered Voters	Total Vote Cast	% of total votes cast to reg. Voters
1999	57, 938, 945	30, 280, 052	52.3%
2003	60, 823, 022	42, 018, 735	69.1%
2007	61, 567, 036	Not released	Estimated at 57.5%
2011	73,528,040	39,469,484	53.7%
2015	67,422,005	29,432,083	43.6%

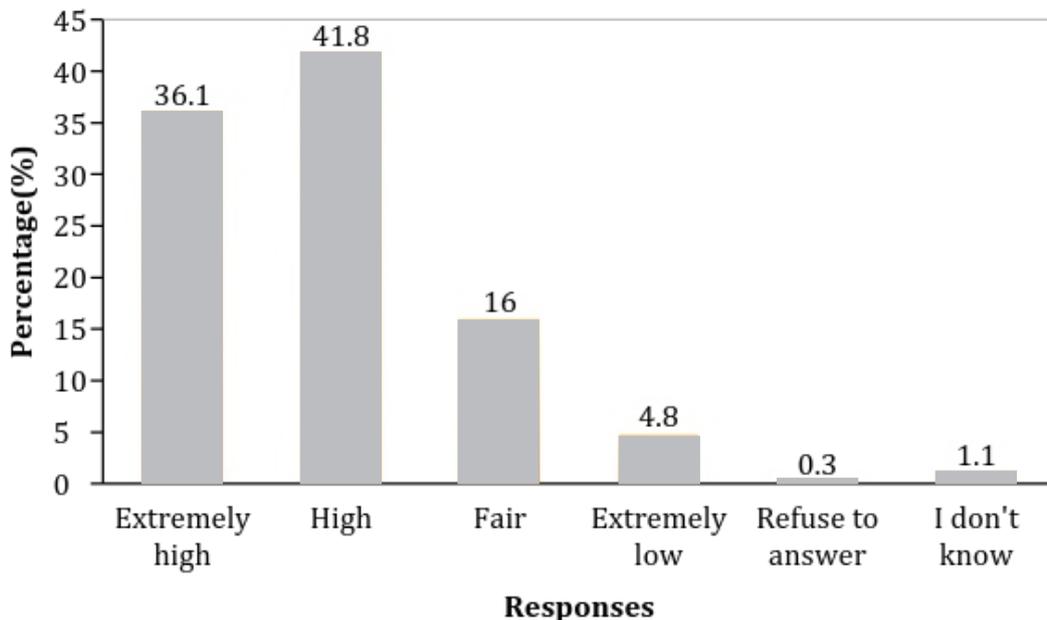
Source: INEC, 2015

After 1999, the total number of votes cast witnessed a steady decline against the increasing number of registered voters. The implication of this is that more people trooped to register but few turned out to vote. Several reasons have been attributed to this. Among them were the possibility of inflated voters' register, cumbersome polling process that excludes a number of people, including the apathetic middle class, credibility deficit of the electoral process and electoral violence among others.

Level of participation:

At least 14 political parties fielded candidates for the presidential election. More importantly, however, the level of citizens' participations was found to be generally high. From our survey report, 77.9% of our respondents submitted that participation of citizens was at least high. Yet, another 16.0% rated level of citizens' participation as fair. When compared to previous elections in the country, 50.2% and 34.2% of the respondents considered the citizens' participations to be very active and active respectively. This translates into a total of 84.4% of the respondents. Interestingly, these perceptions were almost evenly distributed across the ten (10) sampled states for the study. These were Kano, Bauchi, Plateau, Adamawa, Rivers, Kaduna, Lagos, Imo, Akwa-Ibom and Oyo states.

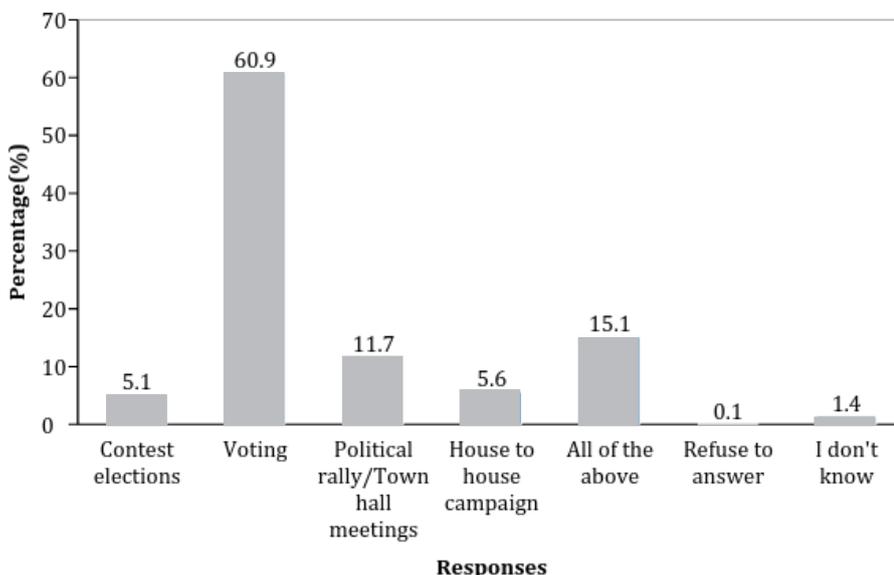
Figure 1: Level of Citizens' Participation in the Last General Elections in Nigeria



Source: Post Election Research Survey, August 2015

There were a few interesting dimensions of participation as revealed by our study. One is the fact that citizens' participation took diverse forms that suggest the increasing development of democratic political culture close to the one generally referred to as participant political culture in the literature. This typifies a political system where citizens are not only aware about politics, but also have the consciousness to participate up to the highest level, including as candidates or as key players on other high levels of the political process. To be specific, our respondents recognised the participation of Nigerians in the elections to include contesting elections, voting, and participation in electioneering campaigns and political rallies, house-to-house campaigns, party agents and so on.

Figure 2: Political activities People Participated the Most in Nigeria



Source: Post Election Research Survey

SECTION 3



ELECTION MANAGEMENT, SECURITY AND PARTICIPATION

The importance of effective electoral governance to democracy has long been recognised. Electoral governance is the “wider set of activities that creates and maintains the broad institutional framework in which voting and electoral competition take place” (Mozaffar and Schedler, 2002: 7). Depending on their management, elections can be a positive or negative reinforcement of the democratisation process. What happens, however, depends on the electoral institutions particularly the Election Management Board (EMB); in the Nigerian case, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). This is because institutional structures that promote a level playing field at each stage of the electoral process will enhance the extent to which voters perceive their elections to be fair (Birch, 2008). The import is that good elections are said to be impossible without effective electoral administration.

However, a credible, free and fair election cannot be attained without security. Security is, therefore, pivotal to the effective management of elections and the promotion of electoral integrity. Elections can only fulfill their democratic functions of political participation, competition and legitimacy only if they are conducted in a non-violent manner. Conversely, insecurity diminishes electoral integrity by compromising the salient qualities of credible elections.

In the absence of adequate election security, the level and quality of participation may be compromised. It is based on this that the right to safely participate in the electoral process is recognised as a fundamental pillar and standard of electoral integrity (Mohan 2014). Electoral integrity requires an atmosphere free of fear, intimidation or manipulation on Election Day. Security during the election process is critical, especially during voting, vote counting and transmission of the results. A peaceful election environment facilitates a free, fair and credible election, and tranquil conditions in and around voting sites lessens problems that could compromise voter confidence, integrity of records, turnout or election results. Perhaps, Elklit and Svenson (2011: 1) elaboration better captures the essence of election security.

Good security is critical to a free, fair and competitive electoral process. Electoral staff needs a safe working environment. Candidates need to be able to move about the country and to campaign freely, and voters need to be able to attend rallies and to vote without fear or intimidation. Having good physical security enables the Electoral Management Body (EMB) to administer the elections according to their operational plans in a logical and well thought out manner, rather than reacting to events. Good security enables the freedom of movement for EMB staff and candidates that is so necessary for a free and credible electoral process. It also enables the safe and timely movement of valuable electoral assets and sensitive electoral materials to registration and polling sites. Good security, and an electoral climate without fear, can increase the participation of political parties, candidates and the voters. It also enables a more objective coverage of events by the media and easier circulation of voter education messages and materials. Good security also protects the integrity of the process and the accuracy of the results. Systems and procedures designed with integrity mechanisms, including monitoring and tracking systems, are essential components.

Any elections that lack adequate security will most likely be attended by negative consequences, including disenfranchisement of voters, loss of trust in the electoral process, and lack of electoral integrity. Therefore, the deployment of massive security for electoral purposes should, ordinarily, not be confounding. The puzzle is not about the use of security agents for elections per se. It is more about the appropriateness, suitability or proportionality of the security agencies and professionalism, training and neutrality.

While the deployment of massive security agents has been credited with relative success, especially in recent elections, their involvement would also appear to have also come at huge costs. This includes allegations of professional misconduct and partisanship, intimidation, arrest



and repression of opposition party leaders. This negatively impacted political participation, resulting in declining voter turnout. It is, therefore surprising that despite the complex role of security agents in election integrity, no serious attention has been devoted to the issue.

INEC and the 2015 Elections

INEC has the constitutional responsibility to conduct elections into federal and state level offices. It therefore takes responsibility for successes and failure of the electoral process. However, it is important to note that the effectiveness or otherwise of INEC can also be a function of the institutional and political frameworks that surround it. This may include political parties, mass media, the judiciary, the interaction among them and their degree of institutionalisation (Elklit and Reynolds, 2002; Omotola, 2010). Until recently, the popular verdicts on INEC's performance of its duties have always been damning. Many studies identified the body as a very weak link in Nigeria's elections and the democratisation processes as a whole (see Omotola, 2010, 2009, 2006; Akhaine, 2011, Obi, 2009; Adebayo and Omotola, 2007).

Nevertheless, this negative perception began to change in the aftermath of the 2011 general elections. Many consider it to be a significant improvement over previous elections, despite the appalling post-election violence that claimed close to 1000 lives (Gberie, 2011). The noticeable improvements have been explained in terms of a series of electoral reform measures being introduced, following the deeply troubled elections of 2007. Details of this have been provided in the earlier sections. Based on the improved performance in 2011, Nigerians expected more in subsequent election.

Our assessment of the effectiveness of INEC was largely drawn from a combination of approaches including the following:

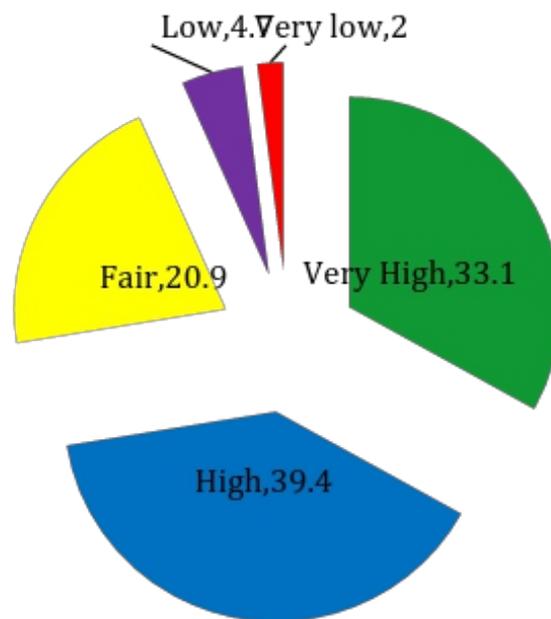
- Review reports of local and international election observers to measure the integrity of the elections. This is a universally acceptable standard that has been gaining increasing currency over the years.
- Measure legitimacy by popular acceptance of the electoral outcomes, especially by the opposition parties, as well as the number of litigations arising from the electoral cycle, but

- most importantly, from the electoral outcomes.
- The degree of occurrence of violence – particularly post-election violence.
- Public perception survey to gauge the integrity of the elections. In what follows, we offer an assessment of the performance of INEC in the administration of the 2015 Nigerian election, drawing on a combination of these various approaches, but with greater emphasis on public perception drawing on our survey instruments.

It is important to note ab initio that there is general impression, if not consensus, that the 2015 elections were effectively administered. It was observed to be a significant improvement over previous ones. Apart from the reports of local and international election monitoring groups that reinforce this position, there are other key indicators of the effective management and improved integrity of the elections at all levels.

INEC conduct of 2015 Elections compared to Previous Elections: When asked to assess INEC's performance in the 2015 elections compared to previous ones, the respondents were positive. 33.1% and 39.4% rated the performance to be very high and high respectively. When added, this represents 72.5% of the respondents. This is apart from another 20.9% that rated it to be fair. By implication, only 6.7% of the respondents returned negative assessment. Details can be seen in Table 6 below.

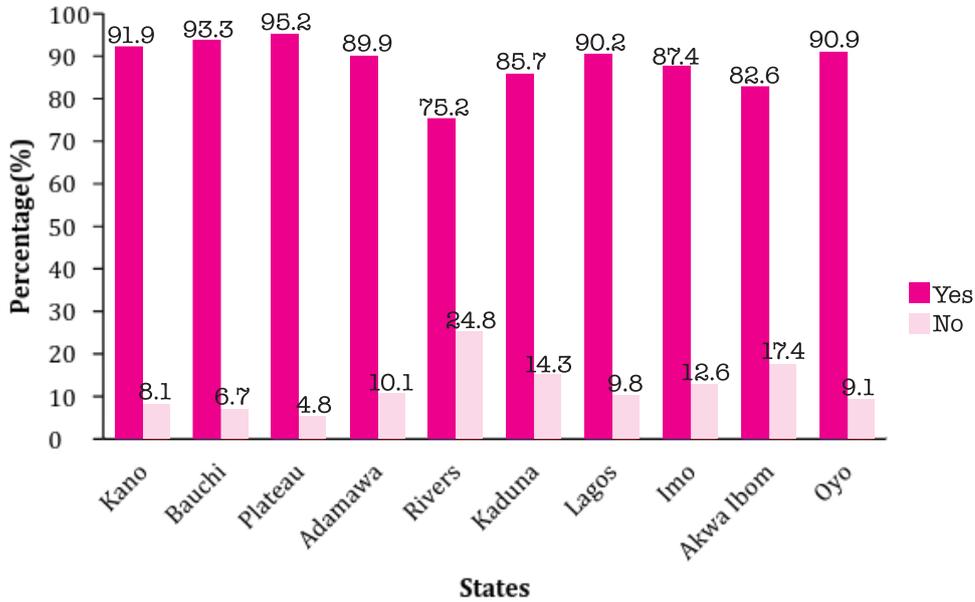
Figure 3: INEC's 2015 elections Performance compared to the previous elections



Source: Post Election Survey, August 2015.

These positive perceptions possibly explain why most of the respondents were of the view that Nigeria was making progress in the management of its elections. This was the view expressed by 87.7% of the respondents. The same reasons, especially the relative success of the card readers, may also have accounted for 68% of the respondents, holding the view that Nigeria was due for full introduction of electronic voting. For many of the respondents, the introduction of e-voting could be immediate, as expressed by 26.4%, 2019 as advocated by 33.7% and 2023 as suggested by 7.3% of the respondents. This suggests that despite the shortcomings associated with the use of the card readers, Nigerians seem to have developed some measure of appetite and possibly confidence in electronic voting.

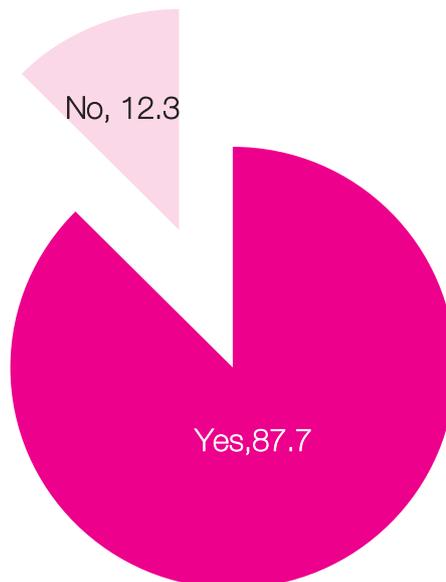
Figure 5: Level of Satisfaction with Distribution and Arrival of Voting Materials in 10 States



Source: Post Election Research Survey, August 2015.

Distribution of Materials: On the effectiveness of INEC, the survey reveals high satisfaction with the distribution and arrival of voting materials. In specific terms, 28.3%, 34.6% and 21.0% of the respondents were very satisfied, satisfied and fairly satisfied with this aspect of the elections respectively. This amounts to 83.9% of the respondents, which is very significant. Only 16.1% of the respondents expressed one form of dissatisfaction or the other with the administration of the election. This can be seen in figure 5 below.

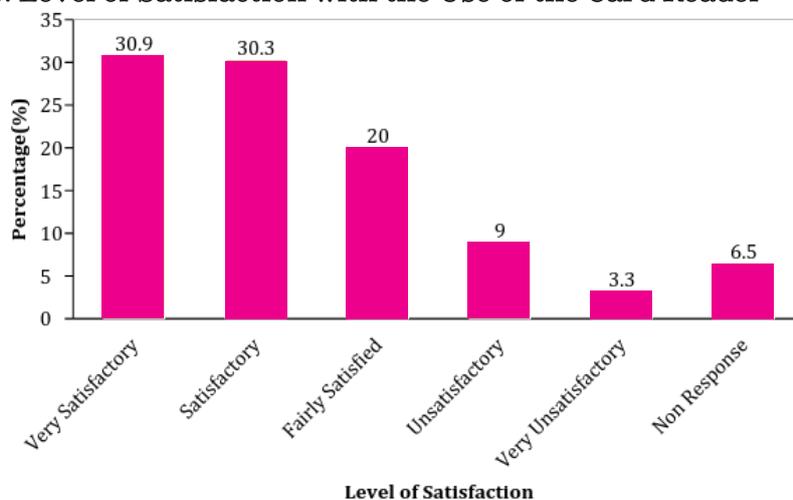
Figure 4: Nigeria is making progress in Election Management



Source: Post-Election Research Survey, August 2015.

Use of Card Reader: With respect to the use of card readers, which represented a major innovative feature of the 2015 elections, the figures were also very impressive. To begin with, 97.7% of the respondents across the 10 sampled states admitted that card readers were effectively deployed for the conduct of the elections. More importantly, a large chunk of the respondents also expressed high level of satisfaction with the use of the card readers. Specifically, 30.9%, 30.3% and 20.0% of the respondents were very satisfied, satisfied and fairly satisfied with this process respectively. This amounts to a total of 81.2% of the respondents, leaving only 12.3% and 6.5% of the respondents with some form of disaffection and no response respectively.

Figure 6: Level of Satisfaction with the Use of the Card Reader



Source: Post Election Research Survey, August 2015.

These findings are well supported by other salient elements of the elections. We have already addressed the elements of participation as a vital indicator of the integrity of the elections. Closely related to this was the high level of competitiveness of the elections exemplified by the alternation of power recorded for the first time in Nigeria's presidential election. Others include the closeness of the gaps between the two leading presidential candidates - While Muhammadu Buhari of APC won the presidential election with 15,424,921 (53.96%) of the total valid votes cast, Goodluck Jonathan of the PDP polled 12,853,162 (44.96%) of the votes. This closeness was also maintained in the National Assembly Election results.

The legitimacy of the election represents another useful indicator of the integrity of the elections. The incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan not only accepted the result of the presidential election and congratulated the declared winner, but he also did not contest the outcome in court. There was also no post-election violence, contrary to expectations (see Omotola and Nkyonge, 2015), in any parts of the country. All these are significant for the quality of the elections.

Interestingly, findings from FGDs and KIs conducted in selected communities and local government areas of some states including Bauchi, Kano, Plateau and Rivers largely corroborate these major findings regarding various aspects of the management of the elections. Similarly, the reports of local and international election observer groups attest to these claims. For example, Nigerian Civil Society Election Situation Room (NCSESR) (2015) reported that:

The Presidential and National Assembly elections were conducted in a generally peaceful and orderly manner with enthusiastic voters committed to patiently attend the accreditation and voting process from early in the morning. However, voters endured severe difficulties during the



elections due to several operational and logistic lapses. This was compounded by the difficulties experienced in the use of card readers for the voter accreditation process. In the face of a difficult security environment, logistical and operational challenges, and many other adversities, INEC managed to safeguard the voting rights of Nigerian citizens. Throughout the elections, especially when faced with challenges, the commission consulted widely with political parties, civil society organisations and other stakeholders in an effort to promote inclusiveness in its decision-making processes and the transparency of the elections.

Similarly, the European Union Election Monitoring Group (EU EOMG) (2015) was of the view that:

The 2015 elections were historic because 'the opposition won for the first time since the transition from military rule in 1999, and with the incumbent presidential candidate conceding defeat and thus paving the way for a peaceful handover of power. However, these highly competitive elections were marred by incidents of violence, abuse of incumbency, and attempts at manipulation. Although the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) made commendable attempts to strengthen electoral arrangements, systemic weaknesses leave the process vulnerable to abuse by political contenders. Now is the time for the new office holders, legislative bodies, INEC and other stakeholders to demonstrate their commitment to electoral reform.

The Commonwealth of Nations (2015) observer group also reported that:

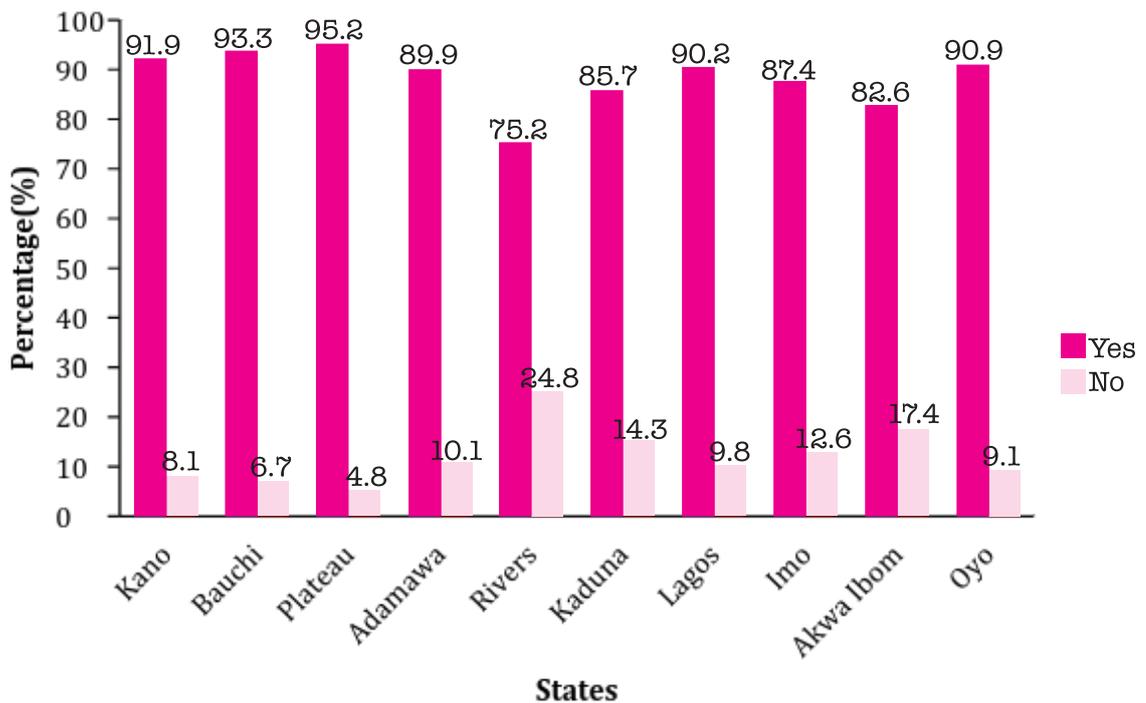
These elections mark an important step forward for democracy in Africa's most populous country, and a key member of the Commonwealth, Notwithstanding the organisational and technical deficiencies, the conduct of the Presidential and National Assembly elections was credible, peaceful, transparent and reflected the will of the people of Nigeria.

Election Security and Citizens Participation

As noted earlier, election security matters for the effective administration of elections. Unfortunately, election security has been one of the weakest links in Nigeria's electoral processes since 1999. Some of its limiting dimensions over the years include partisanship, highhandedness, militarisation and attendant violation of the right to vote and in some cases, serving as agent of election fraud and violence. These tendencies have been identified as some of the causative explanations for electoral violence in the country (Nwolise, 2007; Orji and Nzodi, 2012; Onapajo, 2014).

As the 2015 elections approached, there were concerns about the capacity of the security agents to rise above board and act professionally in providing election security. As it turned out, the result of our findings in this regard suggests a gradual shift in the dispositions of security agents towards election management. First, our finding reveals the presence of security agents across the sampled states during the elections. 88.2% of the respondents admitted this in their responses. Ideally, the mere presence of security agents should instill some measure of confidence among the electorates and electoral officers about their security. This may not necessarily be the case. A lot depends on the professionalism and capacity of the security personnel. Details can be seen in figure 7 below.

Figure 7: Security Presence during the Last Elections in Sampled States

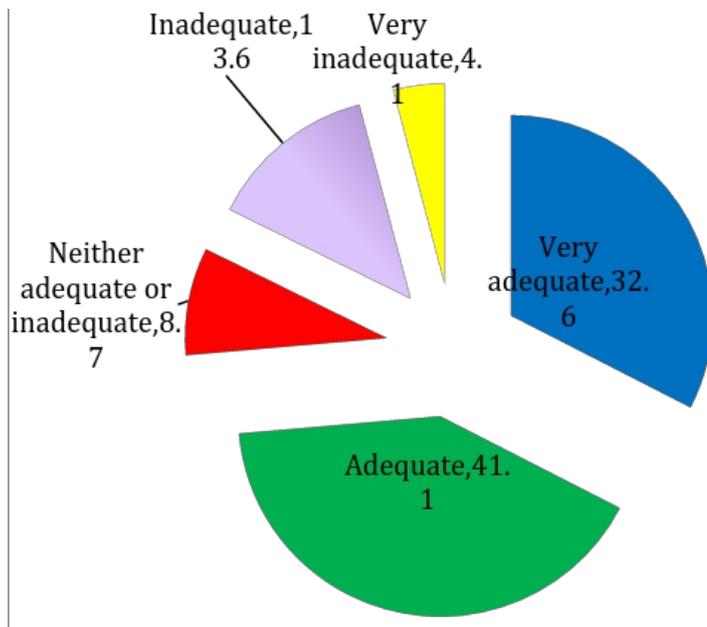


Source: Post Election Research Survey, August 2015

Adequacy of Security: It is one thing to have security agents at polling units; it is another thing for them to act professionally and adequately. Our findings reveal security agents during the 2015 elections seemed to have largely lived up to popular expectations. 32.6% and 41.1% of the respondents considered the performance of security agents during the elections to be very adequate and adequate respectively. This translates to 73.7% of the respondents. In terms of

their responsiveness, 20.5%, 54.4% and 12.7% of the respondents considered it to be extremely high, high and fairly high, respectively. This is illustrated in figure 8.

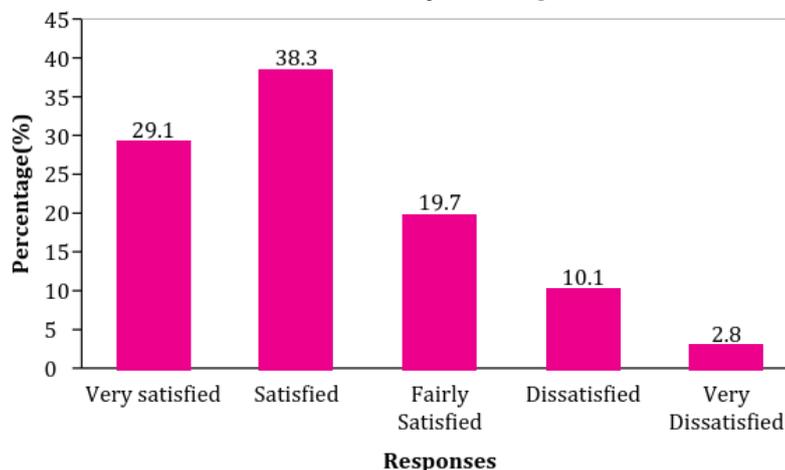
Figure 8: Level of Adequacy of the Security Arrangement during Elections



Source: Post Election Research Survey, August 2015

Satisfaction with security arrangement: With respect to the level of satisfaction with security arrangements during the elections, most of the respondents expressed one degree of satisfaction or the other. While 29.1% of the respondents were very satisfied, 38.3% said they were satisfied, while another 19.7% said they were fairly satisfied. This amounts to 87.1% of the respondents expressing one level of satisfaction or the other. Only 12.9% of the respondents felt dissatisfied. Such a high level of satisfaction with security arrangements during the elections may have resulted from the relatively low level of security breaches, at least those known to the respondents. This can be seen in figure 9.

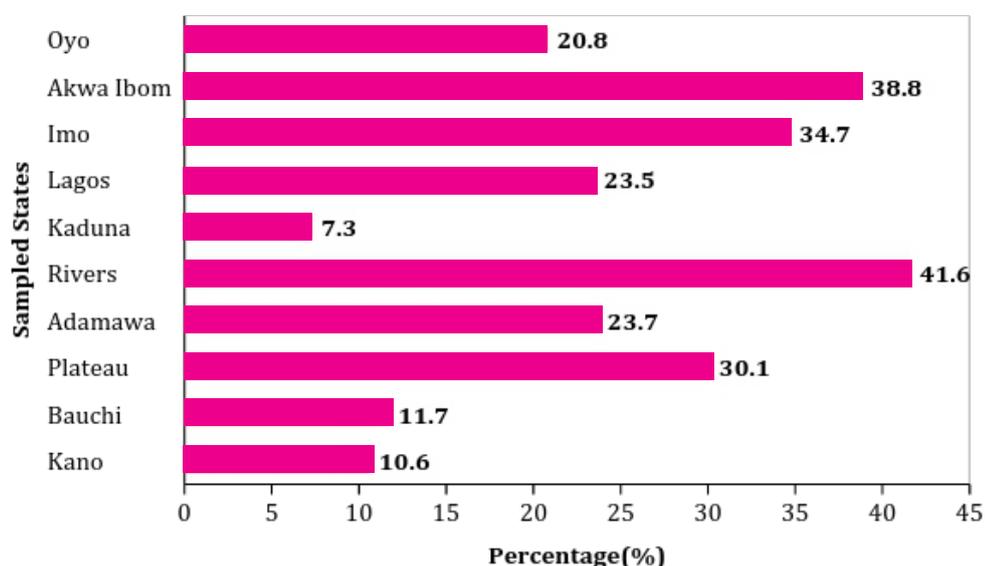
Figure 9: Level of Satisfaction with Security arrangement



Source: Post Election Research Survey, August 2015.

Security Breaches: When asked on their experiences with security breaches, only 24.3% of the respondents said that security breach happened during the elections, while the other 75.7% claimed otherwise. In a seeming demonstration of their knowledge of the subject matter, responses revealed that the security breach occurred in this order of magnitude: Rivers state had 41.6%, Akwa-Ibom 38.8%, Imo 34.7%, Plateau 30.1%, Adamawa 23.7% and Lagos 23.5% of the respondents. Some of the security breaches associated with the 2015 elections included partisan violence, ballot snatching, communal conflicts and terror attacks.

Figure 10: Determining the Incidence of Breach of Security in Respective Sampled States



Source: Post Election Research Survey August 2015.

Success Factors and Notable Challenges

A number of factors account for the noticeable improvement in the management of the 2015 general elections in Nigeria. The first relates to a series of electoral reform initiatives executed, especially since 2007. These include the Justice Muhammad Uwais Electoral Reform Committee and several other internal administrative restructuring within INEC aimed at boosting its capacity and autonomy. Such initiatives were aimed at improving its structure, planning and policy-making capacities. Other innovations by INEC include:

1. Increased public confidence in the electoral process following the outcome of the 2011 general elections and the series of governorship elections, despite the signs of relapse in the Anambra governorship election;
2. Continued refinement and improvement on the Electoral Roll that has over 70 million registered voters with the rolling out of Continuous Voter Registration (CVR) and issuance of Permanent Voter Card (PVC), to terminate the latter by December 2014);
3. INEC's internal review and lessons learned from the 2011 elections that informed a five-year strategic plan and the rolling out of Election Project Plan, Election Management System, improved stakeholders' engagement (political parties, civil society, security agencies and the National Youth Service Corps), and the revitalisation of the Inter-Party Advisory Committee (IPAC) into a vibrant platform for addressing inter-party concerns, including conflicts, was also very crucial to the entire process (Egwu 2014).

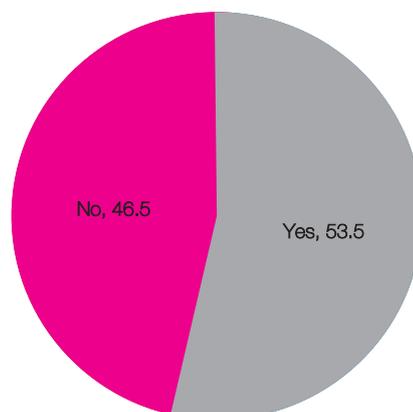
Besides INEC, many other electoral stakeholders played important roles in enhancing the overall quality of the management of the 2015 elections. Some of the active stakeholders, which played vital roles in the success of the 2015 elections, according to the findings of our survey, include politicians, traditional rulers, religious leaders, youth organisations and civil society organisations, including a segment of the mass media. Civil society, for example, was found to be involved in voter education, election observation and anti-violence campaigns. Other bodies such as the National Orientation Agency (NOA), Faith Based Organisations and political parties were also said to be involved. 74.7% of the respondents admitted to receiving voter education from various sources, including radio, television and social media, where the youth happened to be the main actors.

Peace Accord: The Peace Accord that was signed by the main presidential contenders also had positive impact. The peace accord made the leading presidential candidates to commit themselves to:

- Run issue-based campaigns at national, state and local government levels; in this, we pledge to refrain from campaigns that will involve religious incitement, ethnic or tribal profiling; both ourselves and agents acting in our names;
- Refrain from making, or causing to make our names or that of our party, any public statements, pronouncements, declarations or speeches that have the capacity to incite any form of violence, before, during and after the elections;
- Commit ourselves and political parties to the monitoring of the adherence to this accord by a national peace committee made up of respected statesmen and women, traditional and religious leaders; and that
- All institutions of government including INEC and security agencies must act and be seen to act with impartiality and to forcefully and publicly speak out against provocative utterances and oppose all acts of electoral violence whether perpetrated by our supporters and/or opponents (Alli, 2015).

Surprisingly, only about half of our respondents knew about the existence and activities of the peace accord. Specifically, 53.5% of the respondents knew about this, while the other 46.5% did not. Worse still, lesser proportion of 48.8% of the respondents expressed any form of satisfaction with the activities of the peace committee. The breakdown shows that 18.8%, 23.4% 6.6% were very satisfied, satisfied and fairly satisfied respectively. A whopping 47.7% had no response to the question, underscoring their lack of adequate awareness about the peace accord. This can be seen in Table 12 below.

Figure 11: Awareness of the Existence of any Peace Accord

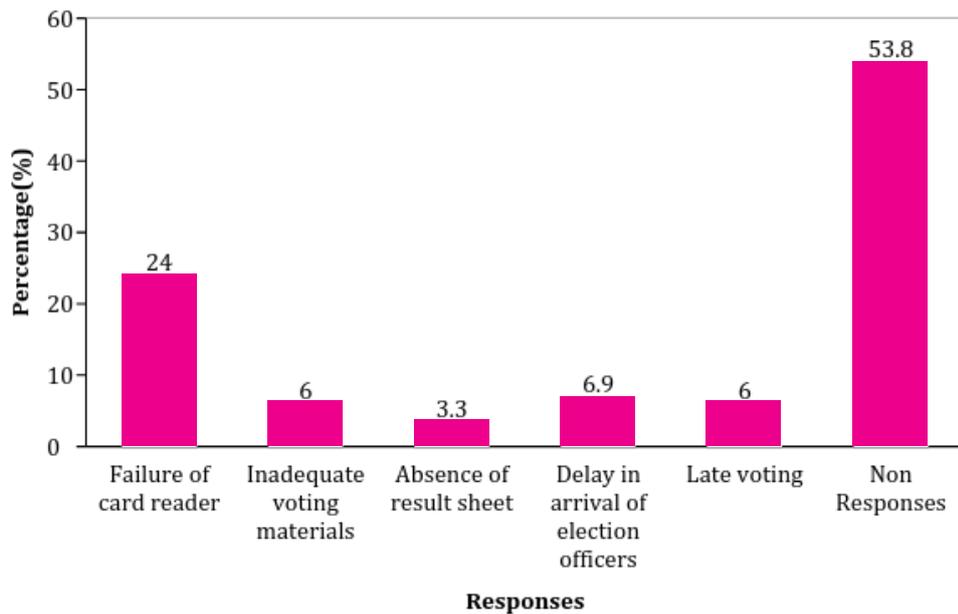


Source: Post Election Research Survey, August 2015



Another negative side of the management and security of the election includes the resort to the use of hate speech, especially by politicians, ethnic nationality and religious groups, among others. Worse still, the administration and security of the 2015 Nigerian elections also came with their challenges. As noted earlier, a few cases of security breaches were recorded across the country. However, such breaches seemed much more pronounced in the southeast and the south-south. Moreover, some major challenges were also reported with the administration of the elections. At least, 48.5% of the respondents said they encountered such challenges, including the failure of card readers, inadequate voting materials, absence of result sheets, delay in arrival of election officers and late voting. The other 51.5%, however, did not have such experiences. Details can be seen in the table below.

Figure 12: The Nature of election administration challenge



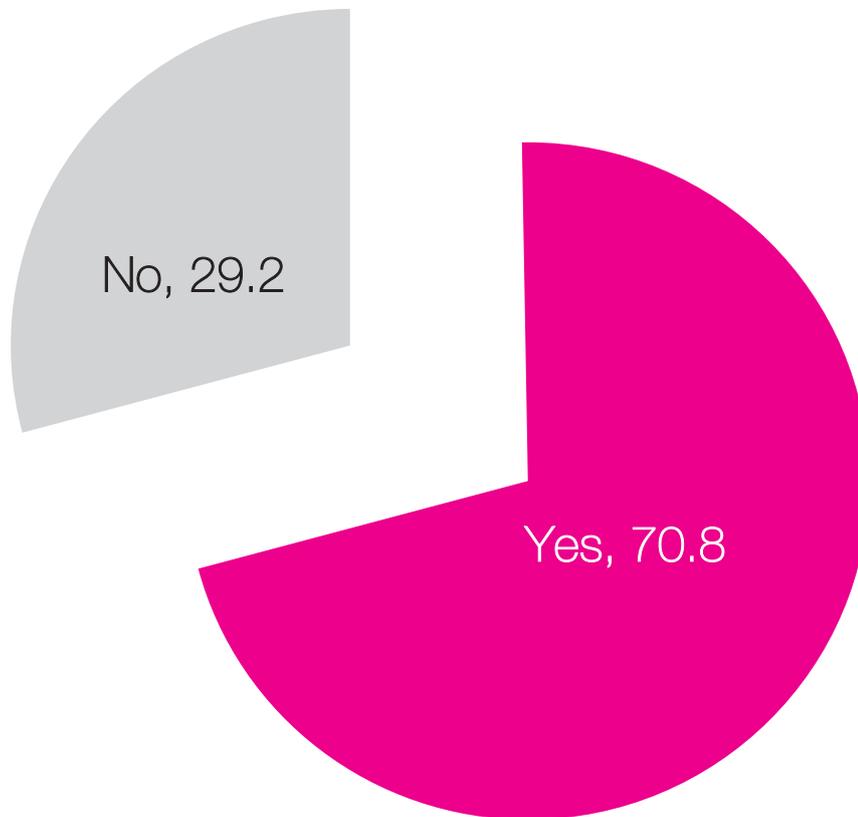
Source: Post Election Research Survey, August 2015.

Media and Election Reportage:

The influence of media in the entire political process cannot be over emphasised. In emerging and developing democracies, the media is expected to go beyond the primary role of information dissemination to also hold the government and its institutions to account. In this circumstance, the media becomes the conscience of the nation. Over the years, the media appears not to have creditably and optimally performed its role in this regard. This could be explained by the fact that:

- ✓ Government media maintains the widest reach, especially in rural communities and are usually influenced by the incumbent during elections.
- ✓ Politicians are the highest owners of private media and therefore may influence their level of professionalism as indicated in the figures below.

Figure 13: Whether Media was balanced in its reportage on Elections



Source: Action Aid Post Election Survey, August 2015.

Although the majority of respondents 70% were of the opinion that the media was balanced in its report, most of the observer reports – local and domestic indicated otherwise. Opinion differs across the states. About half of the respondents in Rivers and Akwal bom states (46.7 and 46.5 respectively) believed the media was not balanced.

Figure 14: Whether Media was balanced in its reportage on Elections in Sampled States



Source: Post Election Survey, August 2015.

The above data gave interesting findings which were contrary to public perceptions in which the media, particularly government controlled were not fair to the opposition parties in their coverage of electioneering activities. The data presented indicates that respondent perceived the media to be balanced in states that were won by the opposition party.



SECTION 4



ActionAid

WOMEN, YOUTH, DISABILITY AND THE 2015 ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA

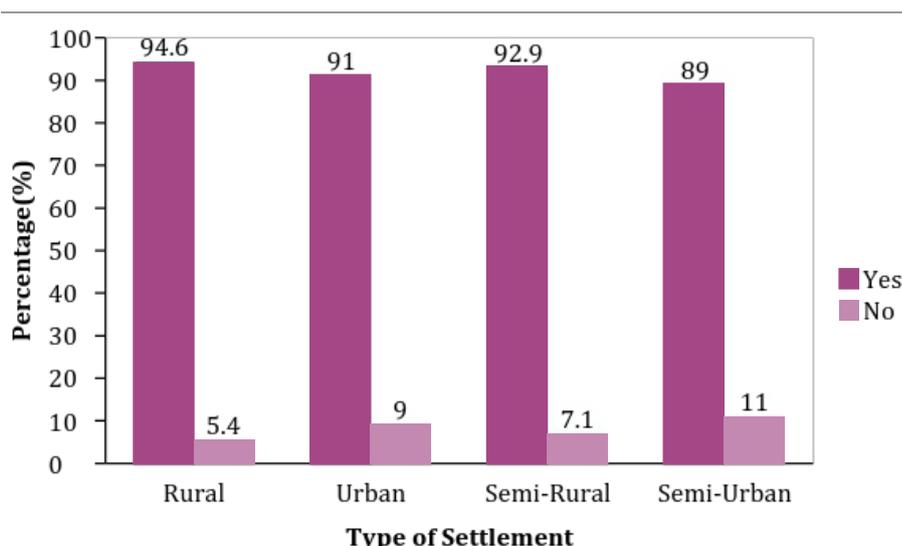
Electoral inclusiveness has been a challenge for women, youth and people living with disability. For women in particular, this is largely due to the patriarchal charter of the society as differently expressed in the cultural, religious and traditional practices in the country. The 2015 elections showed marginal improvements in women's participation in terms of registration, voting, as well as canvassing for support for others. However, women's participation as contestants suffered grave decline.

Women's Participation

Although women constitute 41.8% of a typical sample population in the surveys, while youths represent 69.5% and those with disability were 12.5%, yet there is a general concern when contrasted against the backdrop that 54.1% of voters were females and only 4.6% contested. Barely 3.2% canvassed support for other candidates while only 0.9% served as party officers. The 2015 election result shows a remarkable decline in women's participation in elective positions in the national assembly. This decline started in 2003. Women have, however, continued to be actively involved in voting exercise or as part of cheering crowd at rallies - activities rightly labeled as "ephemeral and less significant" (Inokoba & Zibima, 2014).

When asked how candidates were determined, majority of the respondents (42%) reported it was purely a party affair. When compared to the high percentage of respondents not interested in joining political parties (51%), it is not surprising to find from the data that 58% of respondents adjudged women to have been fairly active during election and were found to have been more active as voters than candidates or canvassers. 27% of respondents reported that women's contest was low with contest for House of Assembly reported as the highest at 26%. 63% of respondents believe that participation of women was constrained by gender specific challenges with marital status reported as 22% of the reason for such hindrance.

Figure 15: Women Active Participation in the Last General Election and Type of Settlement



Source: Post Election Research Survey, August 2015.

From the survey, state with highest record of women's participation generally is Bauchi at 96.5%. Meanwhile, no female emerged elected. However, in Akwa Ibom and Rivers state where participation was perceived to be low, 86% and 84% respectively, women emerged as both House of Assembly and House of Representative members. The state with reported highest

number of women who voted in the 2015 general elections was Adamawa at 73.6%. Meanwhile, Lagos with the lowest number of women voters had 2 women emerging as House of Assembly members, 1 House of Reps member and 1 female Senator. Level of women's contest for positions was highest in Oyo State (30%). This translated to the emergence of the first female senator representing Oyo in addition to 1 House of Reps member. Women's participation was more constrained by gender factors in Kano, Bauchi and Kaduna states and no woman emerged elected at any level. Even a former female senator from Kaduna lost her seat.

Factors Inhibiting Participation: The following factors were identified as capable of hindering women's participation in the political processes in Nigeria:

- i. Religious factors
- ii. Marital status
- iii. Lack of economic resources
- iv. Poor political leverage in the community
- v. Lack of internal party democracy
- vi. Violence and intimidation

Table 4: Factors Hindering Women's Participation in the Political Processes in Nigeria

Sampled States	If yes, what are the factors hindering women's participation in the political processes in your state or community?						
	Religious factors	Marital status	Lack of economic resources	Poor political leverage in the community	Lack of internal party democracy	Violence and intimidation	All of the above
Kano	85	21	10	6	3	6	34
	51.5%	12.7%	6.1%	3.6%	1.8%	3.6%	20.6%
Bauchi	98	54	28	10	1	4	29
	43.8%	24.1%	12.5%	4.5%	0.4%	1.8%	12.9%
Plateau	33	87	67	23	2	10	70
	11.3%	29.8%	22.9%	7.9%	0.7%	3.4%	24.0%
Adamawa	51	41	39	19	7	8	45
	24.3%	19.5%	18.6%	9.0%	3.3%	3.8%	21.4%
Rivers	21	48	38	11	9	66	27
	9.5%	21.8%	17.3%	5.0%	4.1%	30.0%	12.3%
Kaduna	104	54	43	8	3	7	72
	35.7%	18.6%	14.8%	2.7%	1.0%	2.4%	24.7%
Lagos	17	52	37	25	1	7	69
	8.2%	25.0%	17.8%	12.0%	0.5%	3.4%	33.2%
Imo	18	61	48	12	2	13	71
	8.0%	27.1%	21.3%	5.3%	0.9%	5.8%	31.6%
Akwalbom	12	35	76	34	2	28	36
	5.4%	15.7%	34.1%	15.2%	0.9%	12.6%	16.1%
Oyo	27	52	26	12	10	12	78
	12.4%	24.0%	12.0%	5.5%	4.6%	5.5%	35.9%
Overall Total	466	505	412	160	40	161	531
	20.5%	22.2%	18.1%	7.0%	1.8%	7.1%	23.3%

Chi-Square = 684.6

Source: Research Field Survey, August 2015.

Over 14% of respondents believed that the combination of all factors are jointly responsible for lowering women's participation, while marital status and religion top the list factors considered inhibitive to women's political participation. Interestingly, barely 1.1% of respondents believe that the limiting factors against women's participation had anything to do with internal party democracy while only 4.3% believed fear of violence had any major impact on their participation. This outcome is at variance with the concern expressed for internal democracy (NDI, 2012) and reflects a lack of awareness among the population of the mighty significance of internal democracy and absence of possibility of violence as critical success factors in creating level playing ground for women's participation.

There are state variations in the impact of the factors reported to have inhibited women. Religious factor had the highest impact in Kano with 51% and followed closely by Bauchi at 43.8%. Marital status has the highest impact in Imo and Plateau States and this may be influenced by a highly catholic/ECWA background that frowns at divorce. Lack of economic resources had the highest impact in Akwa Ibom 34% and Plateau States thereby showing where funds influenced the electoral process.

Table 5: Participation of women in Elective Position 2003 to 2015

	1999	2003	2007	2011	2015
SENATE	2.8% (3/109)	3.7% (4/109)	8.2% (9/109)	7.3% (8/109)	7.3% (8 ¹ /109)
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES	1.9% (7/360)	5.8% (21/360)	7.5% (27/360)	6.9% (25/360)	5.8% (20/360)
NASS AVERAGE	2.3%	4.7%	7.8%	7.1%	6.5%

Source: Nigerian Women Trust Fund 2015

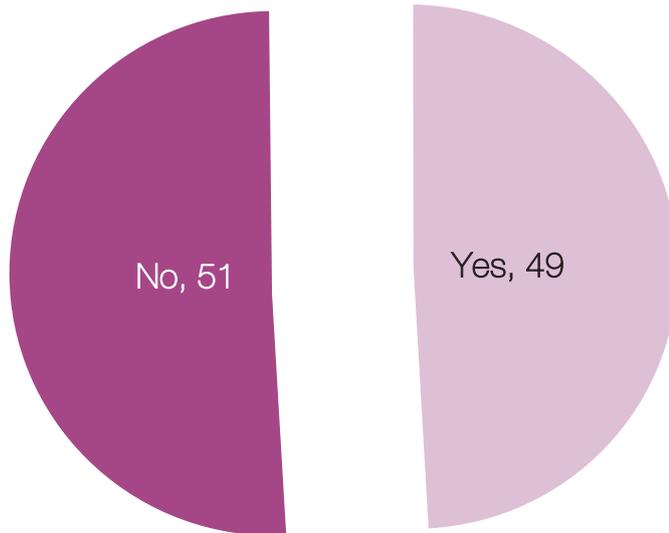
In the 2003 elections, there were 4 (3.67%) female senators. Out of the 360 available seats in the Federal House of Representatives, women won only 21 (5.8%). In 2011, only 32 women were elected to the national assembly out of 469 members, which is 8% representation. Out of the 109 Senators who emerged winners at the 2011 polls, only 7 (6.4%) were women. Basically, 1999 to 2007 shows marginal increase (2.3% - 4.7% - 7.8%) while 2007 to 2015 shows steady decline (7.8% - 7.1% - 6.5%) for women participation in the national assembly.

Only one female presidential candidate contested the 2015 elections; four females vice-presidential, one governorship contender and five deputy governorships. Less were candidates for Senate and House of Representatives for 2015 elections. In the contest for Senatorial seats, 122 women out of 747 candidates, representing 16%, were cleared by the Independent National Electoral Commission to run in the March 28th, 2015 general elections. In 2015 general elections, only 14 women emerged members of the House of Representatives according to the INEC website while the number of female senators is 7. Out of 943 House of Assembly members, only 50, representing 5.3%, are females (IRI, 2016). The current ratio of women's representation in state and national legislatures is far below the country's policy statement on women's representation of 35%. It is also far below the global average of 21%. In countries that have been able to change the tide for women, legal framework was a core of the strategy. It mandates and enforces actions that can be termed as affirmative action. There is a need to amend both the Electoral Act and the Constitution. Particular attention can be paid to Section 31 and 32 of the Electoral Act that provides for candidates list from political parties.

Persons with Disability

More than half of the sampled population (74%) believed that people living with disability (PWD) participated in the last election. 78% of respondents reported 'no' when asked whether PWDs contested for elections. Discrimination was reported as the highest factor inhibiting PWD. 47% of the sampled population asserted this in their response.

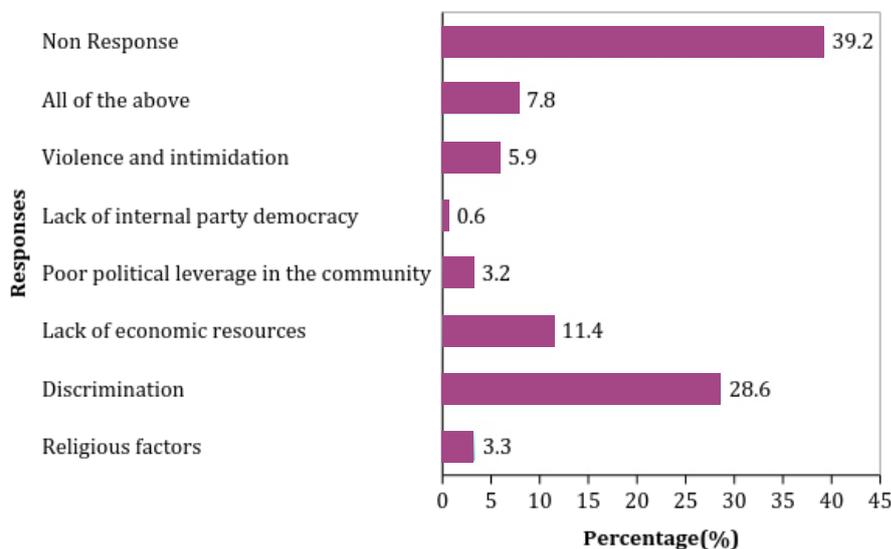
Figure 16: INEC Made Special Arrangement for People with Disability to Vote



Source: Post Election Survey, August 2015.

INEC was said to have made special arrangements to lessen the burden of voting for this category of voters. These included the provision of special queue, special ballot for the blind, quick attention, provision of shades and assistance in voting where necessary as experienced across the sampled states.

Figure 17: Factors Hindering PLWD's Political Participation



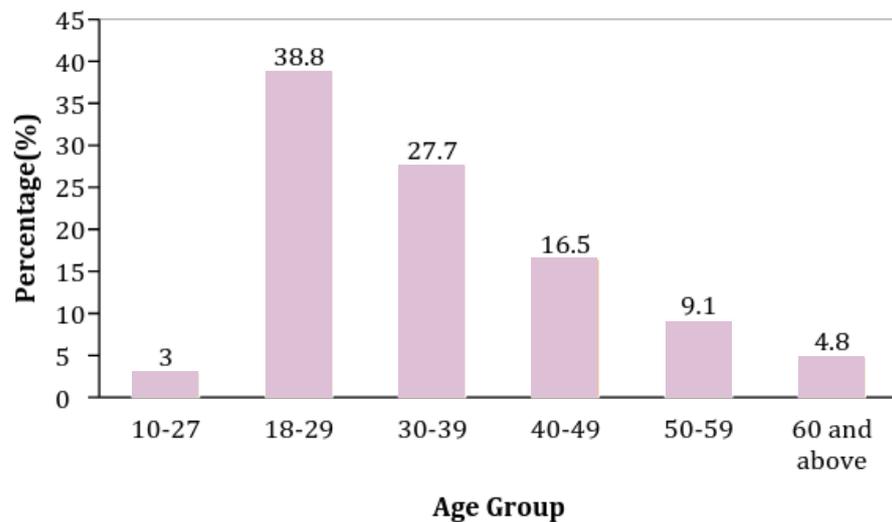
Source: Post Election Survey, August 2015.

At 28.6%, discrimination tops the list as inhibitive factor for people with disability in their communities as par participation in election processes, followed by lack of economic resources at 11.4% while only 5.9% believed that violence critically impeded the chances of people with disability to participate. Only 0.6% perceived that lack of internal party democracy is of any consequence to participation by people with disability.

Youth Participation

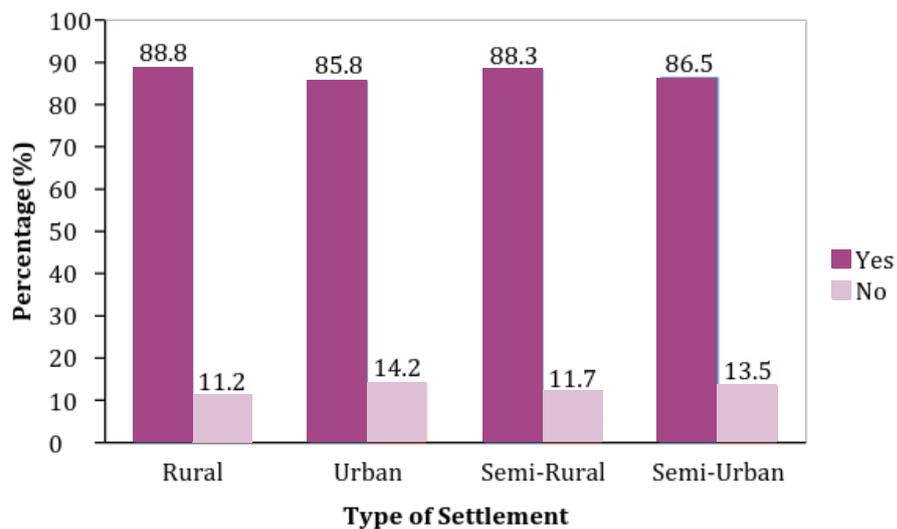
The participation of young persons in the 2015 general elections was adjudged 'very active by 55% by respondents.

Figure 18; Participation by age category



At 19.0%, discrimination based on age tops the list of inhibitive factors against youth participation in politics followed by lack of economic resources at 16.8% while only 4.2% of respondents believed that lack of internal party democracy negatively impacted youth chances.

Figure 19: Participation of Young People in the Last Political Process by Settlement



Source: Post Election Research Survey, August 2015.

Another evidence to support the findings is captured in the summary of an observatory Youth Initiative for Advocacy, Growth & Advancement (YIAGA)(YIAGA, 2015) ran to understudy how young people are engaging the electoral process:

Synopsis of key findings

1. The political parties with seemingly less national prominence had more youth candidates than the leading ones across all the elections;
2. The Constitution bars and limits youth candidacy for the Presidency, Vice Presidency, Governorship, Deputy Governorship and Senate by prescribing a minimum age that is either the maximum youth age mark or above it; 40 years for presidency and 35 years for Governorship and Senate respectively;
3. A significant number of the youth candidates fielded by political parties for the 2015 general elections were below the constitutional age requirement for those offices;
4. Youth candidacy was below 30% in all elections in 2015: 4% in presidential, 11% in the gubernatorial, 10% in the Senatorial, 18% in the House of Representative and 29% in the State Assembly elections;
5. Candidacy of ages most proximate to youth for offices barring or limiting youth candidacy was: 14% (36-50years) in presidential, 56% (36-50years) in the gubernatorial, and 20% (35-40years) in the Senatorial elections;
6. Generally, female candidacy was very low and below 20% in all elections in 2015: 18% in presidential, 11% in the gubernatorial, 17% in the Senatorial, 15% in the House of Representative and 14% in the State Assembly elections;
7. Female youth candidacy was even lower in all elections: 4% in presidential, 3% in the gubernatorial, 3% in the Senatorial, 5% in the House of Representative and 6% in the State Assembly elections;
8. Female candidacy for offices barring or limiting youth candidacy was also very low for ages 36-50years most proximate to youth: 7% in presidential, 5% in the gubernatorial, 9% in the Senatorial, 7% in the House of Representative and 6% in the State Assembly elections;
9. The State Assembly elections produced the most number of youth candidates, 29%, in all the elections;
10. Most youth candidates had the basic constitutional educational requirement of school certificate. There were fewer youth candidates with Bachelors, Masters and Doctoral degrees;
11. The North-West produced the highest number of youth candidates in all the elections;
12. The zones with the lowest youth candidacy were South-South and South-West in the gubernatorial; North-East in the senatorial, South-South in the House of Representatives and North-East in the State Assembly elections.

Factors Hindering Inclusive Political Participation

It is clear from the survey data that women, youths and PWD appear not to have had much success at the polls despite their enhanced participation in the electoral process. Three broad factors have been identified to be militating against effective political participation of women, youths and people with disability. They include:

- i. Militarisation and violence
- ii. Poor economic opportunities and monetised electoral process.
- iii. Discrimination and non-gender sensitive selection process.

Militarisation and violence

Violence is a key weapon being used to frighten women from involvement in competitive politics. This could be before, during or after elections. The goal is to intimidate and get them psychologically attuned to the narrative that it is a 'male only' affair. The general observation appears to support the view that there were indeed reduced incidences of violence against women during the 2015 elections compared to the previous two elections.

Notwithstanding, the lasting impact of the established 'psychological damage' of previous threats against women linger. This had been made possible by the sheer intensity, savagery and scale of such previous attacks which had done the damage to their psyche and could be substantially argued as a contributory factor in making elective position not so appealing to some women in the 2015 election cycle despite heightened social advocacy. For instance, a sensational incidence whereby a People's Democratic Party (PDP) chieftain arrested, detained and raped a pregnant Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) member was reported in 2007 (Ezeamalu, 2014). However, a disturbing conundrum is manipulation of youth for electoral violence.

Although there is no evidence to suggest that women were specifically targeted in some of the incidences, there are however strong basis to suggest that women and children and the disabled are the most likely to be intimidated and disenfranchised by such premeditated violent actions as they are usually the worst affected. The world has seen politically active women



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stripped publicly by police on their way to political and election events, decapitated and stabbed" (Hubbard, 2015) in hoodlum orchestrated or even elite "created 'violence and protection' markets" (Mahmood, Sohail, Mushtaq, & Rizvi, 2014). Even the United Nations Security Council stated that "women suffer disproportionately during and after" (UN, 2003) violent upheavals.

Few months after the 2015 elections, a coalition of women NGOs in collaboration with the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), USAID and other partners launched the "Stop-Violence against Women in Election" (Stop-VAWIE) campaign project (NAN, 2015).

IRI (2016) reported instances when women "were encouraged or allegedly threatened into abandoning their ambitions either for the sake of the parties presenting a consensus candidate" and cited the case of "Ireti Kingibe who on the eve of the PDP primaries quit the race for the ticket to represent the Federal Capital Territory at the Senate".

Poor Economic Opportunities and Expensive Electoral Process

If we correlate settlement type with economic status as theorised by Owen (2011) that "human settlements might have discriminatory power that sheds light on quality of life and economic well-being of the residents of an area", it could be deduced that economic well-being impacted on participation by women and people with disabilities to significant extents. Settlement types were classed into rural, urban, semi-rural and semi-urban for the purpose of this work in line with the national standard and three (3) distinct scenarios emerged from the data analysis as (please refer to Tables 2, 3 and 4) presented below:

- i. Settlement type had a significant influence on women's active participation in the last general election (p value = 0.03)
- ii. Settlement type influenced the chances of people with disability to win an election into any of the elective positions (p value = 0.002)
- iii. Participation of young people did not differ significantly among the settlement types. That is, settlement type did not influence the participation of young people (p value = 0.13)

Monetisation of the election processes that potentially skewed advantage against women and the poor. From party primaries to the election proper, the system was notoriously signposted by rent seeking, direct delegate inducement by competitors and outright trading of support favour (Daily Trust, 2011; Premium Times, 2014; HRW, 2007).

The major political parties charged prohibitive costs as prerequisites for nomination and expression of interest forms (Vanguard, October 17, 2014; Premium Times, October 27, 2014). In APC, aspirants to the office of the President were expected to pay N27.5 million while that of PDP was N22million. Aspirants raised concern (Vanguard 2014) over the high cost of nomination forms as capable of excluding most aspirants and Gen. Muhammadu Buhari had to obtain a bank loan for his forms. Forms for other seats such as Senate, House of Representatives and Houses of Assembly cost N4.5 million, N2.5 million and N1.2 million respectively in PDP. Undoubtedly, this impacted on the participation of youths and women as aspirants and candidates.

Usually, youth involvement was expected to be higher at the state level. For state Houses of Assembly, the 1999 Constitution provides that anyone from the age of 25 is qualified. However, N1.5 million is the equivalent of the national minimum wage for 84 months! Admittedly, some parties provided free forms for women but this has not had significant impact on the number of

women contesting. Such waivers appear not to be adequate antidotes to the other extraneous but heavy incidental expenses that are peculiar to the Nigerian type of democracy.

Discrimination and non-gender sensitive selection process

Our findings show that youths suffer age discrimination while people with disability suffer discrimination occasioned by societal prejudice. Women still suffer discrimination on the account of their sex and the primordial tendency of many men to associate leadership with patriarchal orders.

The data points to marital status as one of the critical factors that inhibited women during the 2015 general elections. There are evidences that back this assertion. For instance, women such as former Senator Grace Bent (Adamawa), Honourable Martha Bodunrin (Plateau) and Josephine Anenih are women who lost their re-election or aspiration bid when asked to source for party tickets in the state where they are from and not from their husband's state. Often times, women become stateless once they are married. Their state of origin asserts that she has adopted her husband's state while her husband's state refuses to recognise her as an indigene.

As captured by Joyce Mangwvat & Co:(MANGWWAT, IBEANU, & MAHDI, 2009)

'When women go into politics they want to win and the choice of where they emerge from has proved crucial to their victory in many respects. This has influenced women's choice of political party and the position contested for. Indigeneship is a factor, which seems to have excluded more women than men. Women who are married to men, who are not indigenes of their father's natal local government or state, suffer systematic discrimination. They do not enjoy a bona fide status and are not seen as 'eligible' or deserving to possess the indigeneship status of their husband to merit acceptance. At the same time, their marriage has alienated them from their families of birth.

Sometimes, such women are referred to as strangers and when they go back to their local government or state of origin to seek for an elective post, they are told, "you are no longer part of us" This is a problem confronting women's politicians. This was the case of Chief Onyeka Onwenu (2003), Barrister Nkoyo Toyo (2003), Chief Josephine Anenih (2003 and 2007) who hails from Anambra but is married to Chief Anenih of Edo state. Remi Adiukwu Bakare faced opposition to her governorship ambition for Lagos in the first instance because her first husband (late) was Igbo from Eastern Nigeria.'

There is therefore a need for legal reform on issues of citizenship and indigeneship. The 7th Assembly and the House of Representatives in particular recommended changes that would benefit women when it stated that any person who has stayed for a certain number of years in a state is entitled to seek for political office in such state whether the person is by birth an indigene of the state or not.

SECTION 5



ActionAid/Ayuba Ohere

ISSUES FOR THE ELECTORAL REFORM

The 2015 elections showed that considerable progress has been made in the electoral process. The elections reflect strong elements of continuity and changes. There are undoubtedly changes and innovations that impacted positively on the elections as indicated in our earlier findings. There are yet continuations of some of the negative practices of the previous elections. These negative practices are reflected in election management, security and citizens' participation. This is an indication that the situation is not yet perfect and requires considerable improvements. This is in line with the position of the main observer groups in their reports.

The Commonwealth of Nations, for example, acknowledged the presence of “organisational and technical deficiencies” the European Union on its part observed that “although the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) made commendable attempts to strengthen electoral arrangements, systemic weaknesses leave the process vulnerable to abuse by political contenders – now is the time for the new office holders, legislative bodies, INEC and other stakeholders to demonstrate their commitment to electoral reform”; finally the Nigerian Civil Society Election Situation Room also reported that: “However, voters endured severe difficulties during the elections due to several operational and logistic lapses.

This was compounded by the difficulties experienced in the use of card readers for the voter accreditation process. In the face of a difficult security environment, logistical and operational challenges, and many other adversities – All these attest to the fact that challenges abound that must be addressed in the administration and security of Nigerian elections.

The concern that elective positions be demographically representative of the diverse classes of citizens, women, youths and people with disability, is not new (Hamilton, 1788). Fear of violence and militarisation, economic disadvantage and monetisation as well as discrimination and non-gender sensitive selection processes conspired to challenge such fair representation. Youths can rejuvenate Nigeria's patterns of political participations and people with disability and women are a veritable opportunity for inclusiveness.

While ephemeral activities such as registration, campaigns and voting continue to prominently feature women, there is a grave decline in women's participation as leaders in elective positions. Even though there might have been less direct incidences of violence against women in the 2015 elections, past sustained militarisation of the electoral process, economic challenges and selection processes mostly choreographed by 'powerful men' hold the ignoble credit for denying Nigeria diversity and inclusiveness through the entrenching of a male patriarchy in the psyche of women.

There are certain complications observed in the Nigerian electoral process that undermine inclusiveness even in instances of voting. Such examples include:

- Use of open spaces and ad hoc centres on election day;
- The requirement for accreditation in the morning and voting in the afternoon which is known as Accreditation Voting;
- Reliance upon people's presence at polling centres as the only means through which the protection of their votes could be guaranteed;
- Holding of election and concluding it on a single day with thousands having to stay in the sun all day.



The following are therefore required to strengthen Nigeria's electoral process:

Strengthen Electoral Laws: The delay in the amendment of the 2010 Electoral Act prior to the 2015 general elections no doubt created a distortion and stalled most supportive initiatives of democratic stakeholders both locally and internationally.

The Electoral Act should clearly reflect measures that would ensure that youths, women and PLWDs are not excluded in future elections. Stiff penalties should not only be clearly spelt out but also administered for offenders of electoral laws. Included in the electoral law should be a stipulated cost of running for political or elective offices. This cost must be reduced and made affordable. Such legislation will reduce the prevailing corrupt tendencies prevalent with public office holders.

Effective electoral laws must for instance be able to frustrate the determination of a few powerful individual to decide at party primary levels, open up equal opportunities for all and organically empower the ordinary members of political parties to decide in a free and fair manner. For instance, an examination of the Electoral Act 2010 (as amended) reveals a fundamental weakness. The Act provides in Section (87) that:

- (1) A political party seeking to nominate candidates for elections under this Act shall hold primaries for aspirants to all elective positions,
- (2) The procedure for the nomination of candidates by political party for the various elective positions shall be by direct or indirect primaries,
- (3) A political party that adopts the direct primaries procedure shall ensure that all aspirants are given equal opportunity of being voted for by members of the party.

Subsection (4) goes further to provide for guidelines for parties that opted for indirect primaries while subsection (7) states that "a political party that adopts the system of indirect primaries for the choice of its candidate shall clearly outline in its constitution and rules the procedure for the democratic election of delegates to vote at the convention, congress or meeting, in addition to delegates already prescribed in the constitution of the party". Experience reveals that this generous latitude is a grave weakness and an invaluable weapon of control in the hands of privileged elites who 'own' the political parties and their associated structures.

By allowing the party leadership such latitude, the framer of that clause handed over control of what should be a collective responsibility to a few people. This is the reason from 2011 and 2015, political parties have generally preferred the indirect primary for this obvious reason – it removes power to decide from the ordinary members of the party and handed same over to a few leaders in direct contradiction of the very purpose of primary that has its origin in the determination to keep power with the people (Smith, 2011).

The framer of that clause assumed that the political parties in Nigeria would, naturally elect to discretionarily do what is right in the nation's interest. History has shown that such expectation is usually misplaced when it is within the context of a developing country that is battling with several internal contradictions, vested interests and rent seeking opportunists. In Nigeria, “under the 2011 electoral law, political parties were required to hold primary elections to select candidates. However, most party primaries were conducted under opaque conditions and several party leaders hand-picked many of the candidates” (NDI, 2011).

It is, therefore, reasonable to argue that a good fix is for the option of indirect primary itself to be completely expunged from the Electoral Act thereby eliminating rent opportunities. This will not only assist in promoting the chances of the underrepresented, but it will also equally create level playing ground for ordinary non-aligned people, who usually are in the majority, but who are outside the cycle of influence of the typical political leaders, thereby increasing the country's leadership turnover in terms of divergent makeup.

Improve use of Technology: Results from the survey shows that Nigerians are ready for electronic voting technology in future elections. The failure of the card reader in some of the polling units in the last elections was absorbed and tolerated by Nigerians because it was generally considered as a test case. Nigerians hope to see an improved technology driving the administration of future elections. This position is corroborated by the survey, as 68% responded that Nigeria is ready for electronic voting with as high as 60.1% suggesting that full electronic voting should commence in the next general election in 2019. Details are shown in Table 21 below.

Table 6: Nigeria's is readiness for Electronic Voting

Responses	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	2549	68.0	68.0
No	1198	32.0	100.0
Total	3747	100.0	

Source: Post Election Research Survey, August 2015.

The significance of the use of technology will be better appreciated against the fact that 29.4% of respondents in the survey attributed their disenfranchisement in the 2015 election to inability to find their PVC, 8.7% experienced threats of violence and 6.5% could not locate their polling units. Electronic voting that is conditioned upon a robust and secured national central database that has protective audit trail or activity log would have ensured that each voter could be identified through his fingerprint minutiae or iris.

This will render obsolete and unnecessary the need for early morning accreditation, PVC and any such cumbersome requirements while ultimately eliminating possibilities for multiple voting.

Each voter could thence be issued a print out of his or her vote decision as receipt for the performance of his civic duty.

Table 7: Suggested Time of Commencing the Full Use of Electronic Voting

Responses	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Immediately	991	26.4	37.1
2019 elections	1264	33.7	84.5
2023	274	7.3	94.8
Not anytime soon	139	3.7	100.0
Non Responses	1079	28.8	
Total	3747	100.0	

Source: Post Election Research Survey, August 2015

Rather than depend on people remaining at their respective polling units as the only definitive mode of protecting their votes, a need for fundamental overhaul of the Nigerian voting process is advisable. With modern technologies built upon carefully designed policy instruments, it would be possible for the underrepresented to vote without the traditional gridlocks of fear of violence, intimidation, voter's inducement and the likes.

Autonomy of INEC: Election stakeholders in Nigeria and international political best practices suggest that for an EMB like INEC to conduct free, fair and credible elections, it must have reasonable level of financial autonomy. In addition, the selection of its administrative officers must pass through credible processes devoid of any political influence.

Early Voting and Special provisions for Excluded groups: There is no provision for early or advanced voting, voting from homes for people with disability, voting by post for absentees. These are not only proofs of inefficient processes; the workaround, such as accreditation voting, long queues and staying behind to defend votes, are susceptible easily to the very ills they were designed to prevent. Absence of early voting means everybody votes on a single day. Large crowd increases chances of D-day brigandage, political violence, direct intimidation, scare tactics, direct financial inducement to vote a particular way and other election related vices. These factors jointly conspire against the underrepresented and undermine the integrity of those elections as representing the actual will of the Nigerian people as against the choreographed outcomes of some puppeteers. People with disability would naturally be discouraged from voting if they have to be on a long queue. This also applies to nursing mothers and the elderly.

Political Education: Political education, different from voter education should be planned and structured to reach citizens in remote communities through appropriate media and channels. Special attention should be paid to the excluded spaces identified as highlighted in the survey. To achieve this, INEC must review areas of low administration performance in the conduct of the past elections and adopt well-researched recommendations for improvement in future outings.

Constituency Delimitation and Increased Polling Units: INEC should review its existing registration and polling centres across the country so as to ensure even spread and the capture of eligible voters for future elections. The INEC must adopt a continuous training approach for its field staff to be able to manage election administration and use of facilities effectively.

Remove unfair incumbency advantages: In developing countries such as Nigeria the incumbent governments have often used the advantages of office in ways, which have negatively affected the opposition parties. These advantages include the use of the government-controlled media to give preferential coverage to the party in power whilst at the same time denying the opposition equal opportunity.

The security forces particularly the police have also been known to have made several attempts to stifle opposition parties, mistreat and even unfairly arrest opposition members over some nebulous offences whilst turning a blind eye to members of the party in power even when they are accused of similar or even worst offences.

In order to ensure fair treatment to all, these government agencies should be under the control (from the national to the local levels) of some group of people who are impartial, unbiased, non-contestants and therefore, unaffiliated to any political party. It is mandatory that these agencies that are funded by the taxes of the people are scrupulously fair to all contestants and political parties.

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