

**AFRICAN CENTRE FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INFORMATION  
DEVELOPMENT**

**DEEPENING GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATIONS ENGAGEMENT IN NIGERIA  
ELECTORAL PROCESS**

**PROJECT**

**ACTIVITIES'**

**REPORT**

**DEC 2018- MARCH 2019**

**WITH SUPPORT OF NIGERIA CIVIL SOCIETY SITUATION ROOM**

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## **Introduction**

Elections represent one of the major ingredients of liberal democracy practiced by many countries including Nigeria. This is because it is through elections that people elect those who will represent and foster their interest at different levels of government. However, given the strategic position of elections in the democratization process, experiences from evolving democracies especially in Africa and other Third World countries have shown that the conduct of free and fair elections in these countries has often been a tortuous task as these elections have often than not been flawed. In the Nigerian case, virtually all elections the country has conducted from independence up to 2007 have been fraught with variegated electoral malpractices. This phenomenon has made close observation and monitoring of the electoral process in Nigeria imperative. In the build-up to the 2019 General Elections in Nigeria, there was a general appreciation in the level of enthusiasm among Nigerians and the international community for credible polls to be held. The zeal among Nigerians arose out of the positive change in the leadership of Nigeria's electoral body, the Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) and the continued pledge by the Federal Government to facilitate free and fair elections in 2019. Arising from this confidence instilled in the electoral process before the 2019 elections, both domestic and international election observer groups mobilized to monitor the process and outcome of these elections.

Following a financial grant from Civil Society Situation Room to observe the 2019 General Elections in Nasarawa State, African Centre for Entrepreneurship and Information Development (ACEIDEV) constituted an Election Observation Working Group (EOWG) to observe relevant aspects of the organization, conduct and voting process in all the thirteen Local Governments Areas (LGAs). These include: Akwanga, Awe, Doma, Karu, Keena, Keffi, Kokona, Lafia, Nasarawa, Nasarawa Egon, Obi, Toto, Wamba.of Nasarawa State. The observers were drawn mainly from the pool of local and community personnel made up of young men and women with a minimum of National Diploma as educational qualification. In all, a total of 3 observers were deployed to the all LGAs, that is, 39 observers to each of the thirteen local government council areas.

## **Executive Summary**

As various stakeholders prepare for 2019, Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room held an Election Strategy and Planning Retreat in Lagos to harmonize activities of its over 70 member organizations so as to feed in their efforts into the Situation Room 2019 General Elections programmes. During the retreat, Situation Room provided grants to member organizations across different states in the country to carry out election related activities.

African Centre for Entrepreneurship and Information Development (ACEIDEV) received a grant from the Situation Room to Deepen Grass Roots Organizations engagement in the Electoral Process in Nasarawa State. The grants specifically is aimed at galvanizing Grassroots organizations, Traditional and Faith based Institutions to own the process of mitigating and curbing election violence in the state during the election.

This report documents activities carried out by ACEIDEV in Nasarawa State during the project timeline. Part of the gains of the project is the linkage between the Faith based, Traditional Institutions and grassroots organizations resolve to nip incidence of election violence on the bud.

## **PRE-ELECTION AND POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT**

### **Legal Framework**

Overall, the legal framework for the 2019 General Elections provides an adequate basis for the conduct of democratic elections in accordance with international principles and with the international instruments ratified by the Federal Republic of Nigeria. However, a number of key issues remain to be addressed as shortcomings, lacunae and ambiguities exist, while an exercise of political will by all stakeholders is required to ensure proper implementation. The conduct of the National Assembly, Presidential, Governorship and State House of Assembly elections is regulated primarily by the 1999 Constitution, as amended, and the Electoral Act 2010 (as amended), that underwent a series of revisions since its enactment. Though an attempt was made by the National Assembly to secure amendments to the Electoral Act prior to the elections but the President declined his assent, hence its passage was delayed.

## **Election Administration**

The current leadership of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), established in accordance with section 153(f) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, was inaugurated on (xxxxxx.....pls put date) and is mandated to conduct all elections to the offices of the Republic<sup>24</sup>. Competent to register political parties and candidates, to monitor political campaigns and to audit party accounts, INEC is further responsible for the registration of voters, voter and civic education activities, the demarcation of constituency boundaries, and for the enacting of bylaws and guidelines.

INEC as a permanent body composed of twelve Commissioners<sup>25</sup> and the Chief Electoral Commissioner is independent of the direction or control of any authority or person in the exercise of its powers. Directly appointed by the President, after consultation with the Council of State and confirmation by the Senate, the Chairperson and Commissioners hold office for a five-year tenure<sup>26</sup>. INEC meetings are closed sessions. A third of Commissioners is required for a quorum and decisions are taken by majority. INEC's permanent staff comprises approximately 900 persons in Abuja Headquarters and about 9,000 in the States countrywide. Offices in all 36 States and in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), headed by a Resident Electoral Commissioners (REC), manage Federal and State level administrative duties, as well as the area council elections in the FCT. Appointed for five years by the President and subject to confirmation by the Senate, a REC is accountable to the Commission and can only be removed by the President, acting on an address supported by a two-thirds majority of the Senate for inability to discharge the function of the office. Lower level organizational structures include 774 Local Government Area (LGA) offices and further 8,809 wards, the latter without permanent structures.

## **The Administration of the 2019 General Elections**

In accordance with its mandate and international, and regional principles INEC managed to organize elections guaranteeing overall effective exercise of voting rights to the Nigerians citizens. Requirements such as the secrecy of the vote, the protection of the

voter from any form of coercion and from unlawful interference with the voting process, the security of the ballot, the access of political agents and domestic observers to all phases of the process are comprised in the Electoral Act. INEC was fairly independent in its decision making process. Throughout the elections, and especially when faced with challenges, it widely consulted with political parties, civil society organizations and other stakeholders in an effort to promote inclusiveness of the decision making process and transparency of the elections.

However, lack of commitment by some electoral officers impacted adversely on the overall conduct of the polls. Hampering logistical and operational challenges, such as the late arrival of sensitive materials, were openly recognized by the Commission, while prompt decisions were taken in time to correct problems. During the three main rounds of elections, it was noticeable that the Chairman's resolve to adhere to election regulations was not always corresponded by the performance of the remaining INEC structure. The performance, expertise and transparency of the different State Commissions differed strongly. Moreover, competing candidates and parties, government officials and security agents were often seen as a disturbing factor to the peaceful conduct of the elections, interfering with the process at all stages. The Chairperson reiterated his intention to have all cases of alleged misconduct and dereliction of duty committed by its own staff investigated and prosecuted by the Courts. Also, political parties and candidates were encouraged to resort to legal means to address alleged electoral offenses and irregularities.

Though, the election was postponed and shifted by a week against the initial dates, the Presidential and National Assembly took place a week after as other subsequent ones follow suit as rescheduled by the Commission. Between February and March, elections were held in 1,496 constituencies, specifically to the office of the Presidency, to 26 Governorship positions, to 109 members of the Senate, to 360 members of the House of Representatives, and to 990 legislators in 36 State Houses of Assembly.



**ACTIVITIES DURING**

**THE PERIOD**

## **Support from Nigerian Civil Society Situation Room**

During the period under review, ACEIDEV received support from Nigeria Civil Society Situation room to Deepen Grassroots Organizations Engagement with the Electoral Process, with special focus on galvanizing stakeholders towards mitigating and curbing election violence during the 2019 General Elections. The following activities were carried out:

### **Pre-election Activities**

#### **1. ADVOCACY VISITS TO KEY STAKEHOLDERS**

As described in the project terms of reference (ToR), ACEIDEV embarked on series of advocacy visits to identified stakeholders during the period leading to the 2019 general elections. These stakeholders visited include the following:

- a. **The Catholic Secretariat:** ACEIDEV team paid a courtesy call to the Secretariat of Catholic Diocese of Lafia. The advocacy visit is aimed at introducing the project to the leadership of the diocese, obtaining the permission and commitment to work with the Joint Development and Peace Caritas (JDPC) of the Catholic Church, as a result of their previous works in elections and grassroots penetration. The Office of the Arch Bishop of Lafia, agreed to work with ACEIDEV through the JDPC to reach out to the people at the grassroots before and during the election period.

b. **The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC):** Advocacy visit was paid to INEC State headquarters in Lafia, where ACEIDEV team was

received by the Resident Electoral Commissioner, Dr. Abdulrahman Uthman Ajidagba and key top management staff of the commission. During the meeting,



the INEC Resident Electoral Commissioner commended the work Situation Room have been doing to consolidate the electoral process in Nigeria, and also applauded ACEIDEV's mission to work towards a violent free election in Nasarawa State, stating that ACEIDEV is the only Civil Society Organization that paid a visit to INEC Office



since his resumption of Office as Nasarawa State INEC Resident Electoral Commissioner. He pledges the support of INEC Office Nasarawa State to ACEIDEV where possible, and promised to be involved in ACEIDEV

programmes in the state whenever the need arises.

c. **Department State Services:** ACEIDEV also paid an advocacy visit to the state command of Department of State Services Nasarawa State. Essentially, the visit was aimed at notifying the state command of ACEIDEV planned

activities for the 2019 elections in Nasarawa State. The meeting further sought information where possible on the preparedness of the State command against incidents of election violence and some of the mechanism put in place to forestall any act of violence in the State. The State commandant of the DSS, applauded ACEIDEV for its bold initiative to reach out to command and its commitment with other Stakeholders in forestalling any act of electoral violence ahead and during the election in the state. He stated that the command will be working round the clock to obtain relevant information that will assist in frustrating the plans of any persons or groups planning to undermine peace and security in the state during the election. Some of the key Directors in the Command were assigned by the Commandant to work closely with ACEIDEV throughout the duration of the election in the State.

- d. **Nigeria Police Force:** Advocacy visits was planned to the Nasarawa State



Police command, but due to engagement of the Commissioner of Police, a physical meeting could not take place. ACEIDEV however received the support of

Nasarawa State Police command who were present during ACEIDEV activities in the state. Ahead of the elections, the State CP had pledged his commitment and support to ACEIDEV.

- e. **Traditional Institutions:** The traditional institutions were not left out in the Advocacy campaign trail of ACEIDEV. The advocacy team visited the

Palaces of Emir Nasarawa, Emir of Keffi, Chun Mada of Akwanga and Andoma of Doma respectively ahead of the elections. The planned visit to Emir of Lafia was aborted as a result of his demise, the Emir passed on within the period and the scheduled meeting was cancelled. Recognizing its commitment to the electoral process, ACEIDEV was also invited during this period by the Independent National Electoral Commission to address both the Traditional and Faith Based Institutions during INEC two-day stakeholders meeting with the above institutions in Lafia, Nasarawa State. The auspices was graciously used by ACEIDEV to further engage and reach out to more traditional and faith based leaders at the grassroots notifying them of ACEIDEV planned programmes during the election.

- f. Grassroots and Community Based Organizations:** ACEIDEV reached out to several Grassroots and Community Based Organizations in all the 3 Senatorial Districts of Nasarawa State, namely, Nasarawa West, Nasarawa South and Nasarawa North Senatorial Districts. The organizations mobilized people at the grassroots to work with ACEIDEV in passing the message of violence free election in Nasarawa State. The collaboration with the grassroots and community is further aimed at working with citizens observers during the election to feed back to the situation room on election days.

## **2. FOCUSED MEETING ON MITIGATING AND CURBING ELECTION VIOLENCE**

In its bid to stem the tide of violence and build peace among Nigerians, ACEIDEV organized focused meeting with stakeholders in all the 3 Senatorial Districts of

Nasarawa State preparatory to the 2019 General Elections. The Focused meeting was aimed at mobilizing stakeholders at the grassroots to come up with actionable plans towards mitigating and curbing elections violence in the state through strategic engagement with key players in the electoral process.

**a. Nasarawa West:** The Focused meeting for Nasarawa West Senatorial district took place on 23<sup>rd</sup> January, 2019 at Keffi, Nasarawa State. Over 60 participants representing various grassroots and community based organizations from Karu, Keffi, Kokona, Nasarawa and Toto LGA of the state were present during the meeting. Also in attendance **were** representatives of Christian Association



of Nigeria, Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria and Jamaa'tu Nasir Islam. The Traditional Institution was represented by the Emir of Keffi, Alh. Dr. Shehu Chindo,

Yamusa III **at the event**. Welcoming participants in his opening remarks, the Executive Director of ACEIDEV, James Ugochukwu explained that the meeting was purposeful organised for election stakeholders at the grassroots within Nasarawa West Senatorial district to come up with a people centred approach in forms of far reaching suggestions and recommendations that would help reduce and if possible, eliminate incidence of violence during the election. He emphasized the need for various stakeholders to pull their resources and work together with citizens at their various community to curtail incidences of Election Violence in the State. Similarly, while presenting his paper at the

meeting, the Emir of Keffi, Alh. Dr. Shehu Chindo, Yamusa II, described the gathering as timely and necessary as the country prepares for the 2019 General Elections. He also commended ACEIDEV for choosing to work towards a violence free polls in Nasarawa State. He pledged to use his office and influence to prevail on political aspirants, their supporters and the people in his Emirate to conduct themselves peaceful throughout the electioneering period.

The meeting which was syndicated into different sessions also deliberated on sub themes such as “Strengthening Civil Society and Community Synergy in

Mitigating and Curbing Election Violence”; “Community actions in curbing election violence, effects of Social Media and how to resist fake news, Towards Violence Free 2019 Elections in Nasarawa State”; “the



Divine Mandate to Election Stakeholder as well as Strategy Meeting with Local Government and Ward Collation Observers”. At the end of the meeting, Stakeholders admitted that to curb election violence, political parties, their supporters and youth groups at the grassroots should be engaged and sensitized on the imperative of avoiding activities capable of inciting violence during the elections.



**b. Nasarawa North.** The Focused meeting for the zone took place on the 24<sup>th</sup> of January, 2019 in Akwanga, Nasarawa State for the 3 Local Government Areas in the Zone, namely,



Wamba, Akwanga and Nasarawa Eggon. Representatives from Grassroots Organizations within the zone, Traditional and Faith based Organizations all participated in the meeting. Participants at the workshop, affirmed that to discourage electoral violence, **Youth should be**

**strategically engaged by preventing them from engaging any action or acts that may contravene the peace of the country. Youths were identified as primary tools used by the politicians. As such they believed that they need to be engaged as champions of the anti-violence campaign during the elections.** The participants at the event expressed their commitment and resolved to work with Traditional and Faith based Institutions as custodians of the people's faith and culture. **They urged the political parties to prevail on the political aspirants and the people to promote peace during the election.**

**c. Nasarawa South.** ACEIDEV, organized the Focused meeting for the 5 Local Government Areas of Lafia, Doma, Keana, Obi and Awe in Nasarawa South Senatorial zone. Being the last in the series of grassroots engagement in the state, ACEIDEV expanded its reach to other stakeholders in the electoral process in the state, namely the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Nigerian Police Force, Department for State Security, National Orientation Agencies and other key institutions. During the meeting, the State INEC Resident Electoral Commissioner, Dr. Uthman Ajidagba, commended ACEIDEV for the gathering and stressing the need for Civil Society



Organizations to work with state actors like INEC as he stressed that ACEIDEV was the first CSO to pay him advocacy visit after resumption of office in the state. He further said that CSOs especially those at the grass roots stand a better chance of curbing election violence because of their closeness to the youth and the politicians, whom he identified as the two key players in election violence.

The representative of Andoma of Doma, expressed his appreciations for the gathering and pledged the commitment of the traditional institution to ensure that politicians and their supporters tow the part of peace during the 2019 General elections in the state.

The State Commissioner of Police, represented by SP Monday Musa of State CID, B Division, Lafia, expressed the delight of the state command on the initiative of CSO for embarking on public enlightenment on the need to stakeholders to eschew violence ahead of the polls. He stated that the police were combat ready to arrest and prosecute electoral offenders as stipulated by the law without prejudice. He urged stakeholders gathered that they owe it a duty to enlighten people in their immediate community to behave responsibly so as to avoid falling victims of Police arrest and prosecution. The meeting received support from youth groups such as Young Men Christian Association, (YMCA), Young Africa Leadership Initiative (YALI) members who also used the opportunity to canvas for a violence free 2019 polls in the State.

The highpoint of the occasion was the official unveiling of ACEIDEV election activities in the state. This included the official presentation of ACEIDEV

feasibility and campaign materials such as T-shirts with different campaign captions/slogans against violence in a way of passing the message to the public.

## **Election Day Activities**

Prior to the Election Day, ACEIDEV mobilized and trained a carefully recruited team of observers (roving and stationary) in accordance with the regulations of the INEC to observe through different phase of the election day activities ahead of the 2019 general elections. The observers were selected from within the various communities in the state.

### **3. ELECTION OBSERVATION**

ACEIDEV deployed a total of 39 Local Government observers across the 13 Local Government Areas of Nasarawa State. Each Local Government Areas had 3 election observers covering the election activities during the Presidential and National Assembly Elections as well as the Governorship and State Houses of Assembly Elections respectively. The observers provided real time information on the happenings in the field which they shared with the Communication Room of Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room for analysis and prompt intervention if necessary.

In furtherance of her determination to encourage voters to eschew election violence, ACEIDEV Election Team carried our real time campaign against election violence in polling units across the states. The aim is to get stakeholders to commit to a violence free elections during the elections. The team specifically targeted youth at the vicinity of the polling units, party agents and party supporters, elderly men and women. All the voters welcomed the initiative and committed to ensuring the election is violent free.

During the election, ACEIDEV Observers reported a total of ..... incidences and submitted a total of ..... checklists. The reports ranges from election administration from INEC, voters conducts during the election, activities of security operatives and collation of results. In all, 2019 general election can be said to be violence free in Nasarawa State.

## **Grass Roots Partner Organizations**

### **1. Nasarawa West**

- a. Lion's Pride Children Initiative, Karu
- b. Global Youth Trust Initiative, Karu
- c. Peoples Care Advocacy Initiative, Keffi
- d. Pius John Sardauna Foundation, Nasarawa
- e. Great Initiative Youth, Karu
- f. Gammun Centre For Care and Development Nigeria, Kokona
- g. Building Our Lives Together Foundation, TOTO
- h. Best Life Foundation, Keffi
- i. Comforters Foundation International and Kings Business Organization, Keffi.

### **2. Nasarawa South**

- a. Family Health Care Foundation , Lafia
- b. Aboh Youth and Community Initiative, Obi
- c. Child Education and Community Development Initiative, Doma
- d. Young Men Christian Association ( YMCA ), Keana
- e. Life Building Awareness Initiative, Awe.
- f. Young Africans Leadership Initiative (YALI)

### **3. Nasarawa North**

- a. Majilisa Macido Andaha Foundation, Wamba
- b. Esther Gabi Foundation, Nasarawa Eggon
- c. Gyunka New Hope Foundation, Akwanga
- d. Jamatu Nasir Islam, Akwanga.

### **Recommendation**

The 2019 General Election Project by ACEIDEV is an indication that community action can be activated to enhance citizens' participation in the electoral process and curb some negatives trends such as violence, electoral malpractice and voter apathy which are hitherto the trend in Nigeria electoral system. The following recommendation will help achieve better results when similar project is being carried out in other states during elections across the country.

1. Bureaucratic bottleneck in correspondence with stakeholders is a risk factor as it takes time for some government institutions to revert to request, which slows down project execution. When intervention commence on time, there will be ample opportunity to engage relevant stakeholders so as to reduce bureaucracy considerably.
2. Timeliness of Intervention with all stakeholders is a risk factor as late intervention at the peak of electioneering activities affects citizens' assimilation of initiatives at this point. The nature of Nigeria political season is that of exchange of money majorly in form of voters' inducements. Most citizens are much more interested in how much they can make during the election season than any reform initiatives being proposed or carried out by the Civil Society. Intervention should commence, at least six months before the elections, so that information will be disseminated, stakeholders engaged and feedback received ahead of the election from the citizens. Carrying out interventions very close to the elections always results to positive initiatives of Civil Society competing with Politicians Inducements, coercions, and manipulations.

3. Timely release of fund: Fund is the bedrock of activities and intervention. Timely release of adequate fund will help in carrying activities on time and ensure proper planning.

## **Picture Gallery**

## **Appendices**