



Nigeriawatch2011

What you see about election



C/o committee for the Defence of Human Rights (CDHR)
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The National Elections Incidents Center – www.nigeriawatch2011.org

Preliminary Statement on Reported Incidents During the Presidential Elections
April 16, 2011.

The National Elections Incidents Centre (NEIC) is a unique project that captures problems and incidents in the electoral process as they occur. These incidents are mapped on the website www.nigeriawatch2011.org, providing an easy-to-understand image of where and what type of problems are occurring. In this way, the NEIC is an early warning system. It captures incidents in a timely manner so they can be brought to the attention of electoral officials, security agencies and other stakeholders in the electoral process.

Based on our findings as detailed below, the NEIC in the course of the April 16th 2011 Presidential elections received a total of 1,332 reports from trained observers as well as members of the public. Of this figure, a small number of reports (198) represented actual incidents, most of which focused on the late arrival of INEC officials and materials, underage voting, harassment of accredited election observers, instances of simultaneous accreditation and voting, and in some instances the commencement of accreditation, voting and counting processes before the stipulated time.

Despite these challenges, the vast majority of reports from the field, from both observers and members of the public, indicate that the accreditation and voting process was smooth and peaceful in their polling stations.

NEIC works towards free, fair and credible 2011 general elections using text messages from observers stationed at polling units throughout the country to generate reports on incidents that could affect a smooth election process in areas that they occurred.

The NEIC is supported by three Domestic Election Observation partners (DEO partners): The Centre for Environment, Human Rights and Development (CEHRD), Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (CDHR), and the Trade Union Congress of Nigeria (TUC). Members of the three organizations observed the Presidential Elections on April 16 and reported incidents to the NEIC throughout the day. The NEIC is also supported by the National Democratic Institute (NDI).

The NEIC is collecting and reporting *only* on problems with the electoral process. Its role is not to judge the overall quality of the elections, but to highlight problematic areas and trends to inform the public and electoral officials so that the problems can be addressed.

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METHODOLOGY:

During the Presidential elections held on 16th April 2011, DEO Partners deployed a total of 3,100 observers to 24 states of the Federation comprising of the South-East, South-West, South-South, North-Central, North-East and the North-West zones. Observers were trained in the principles and best practices of election observation prior to their deployment.

FINDINGS:

The NEIC in the course of the April 16th 2011 Presidential elections received a total of 1,332 reports from trained observers as well as members of the public. Of this figure, a total of 198 reports represented actual incidents, with trained observers reporting a total of 178 incidents while members of the public reported a total of 20 incidents. The large number of positive reports indicates a smooth and peaceful process in most of the polling stations observed.

A total of 58 reports on accreditation issues were sent to the NEIC, while intimidation and violence accounted for 31 reports, polling station issues amounted to 68 reports and voting issues had a total of 41 reports.

Most of the reported incidents had to do with underage voting in certain parts of the country, starting the accreditation process before the stipulated time of 8am, polling officials conducting simultaneous accreditation and voting in contravention of the voting regulations, violence in parts of the country, and the harassment and arrest of accredited observers.

Throughout the Election Day, the NEIC alerted relevant officials of critical incidents reported by observers in the field. Examples of incidents brought to the notice of officials include the case of the harassment and detention of accredited observers by the State Security Services (SSS) in Jos, Plateau State and Efon in Ekiti State and by other security agencies in other parts of the country. Also, the case of likely breach of peace in Gwarimpa, Abuja was also brought to the attention of the relevant authorities to which the Police responded swiftly.

Of importance to the NEIC are the steps taken by the Independent National Electoral Commission to address some of the lapses reported by observers and members of the public during the National Assembly Elections. For instance, reports of the late arrival of voting materials and INEC officials were significantly fewer than last week.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Some issues identified during Presidential Elections that could be improved for the upcoming Gubernatorial and State House of Assembly elections include:

- That all accredited election observers – both domestic and international – be allowed to perform their duties free from harassment and intimidation.

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- That INEC should ensure that its officials adhere strictly to election guidelines, especially the time for commencement of accreditation and voting and that the practice of concurrent accreditation and voting contrary to INEC guidelines be stopped forthwith so as to ensure the credibility of the voting process.
- That all those caught violating electoral procedures be investigated and when appropriate prosecuted, particularly concerning underage voting and vote buying.
- That security agencies should do more to arrest the spate of reported violence during and after elections and encourage their operatives to exercise restraint in handling matters involving the electorates

NEXT STEPS:

The NEIC will for the Gubernatorial/House of Assembly elections be deploying a total of 3,100 observers in the six geo-political zones of the country.

In addition to the trained observers to be deployed to observe the elections, the NEIC makes provisions for members of the public to send in incident reports on the day of the elections so they can contribute to the process of a free, fair and credible election in Nigeria. Members of the public can text incident reports to the NEIC by following the format below-

DEO followed by the City/Street Polling Unit number (PU), Local Government Area, State then the Report. And send to the shortcode 32051.

For example: DEO In Ikeja, Obafemi Awolowo way, PU 09/002 Ikeja local government, Lagos state. A group of youth with guns came and snatched the DDC machines and people at the registration center ran for their lives.


In addition to incident reporting, DEO Partners will also be deploying the use of election observation checklists and incident report forms to observe the elections. The checklist and the incident report forms will be collated, analysed and used in developing the final observation report on the conduct of the 2011 elections to be issued by DEO Partners.


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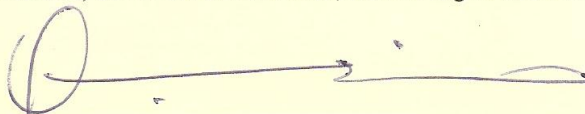


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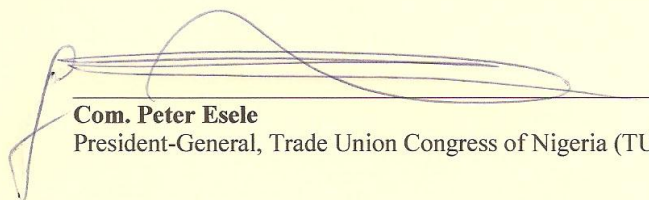
Signed by the DEO Partners on April 17, 2011:

 18/4/2011

Patrick Naagbantou
Coordinator, Center for Environment, Human Rights and Development (CEHRD)



Olasupo Ojo
President, Committee for Defence of Human Rights (CDHR)



Com. Peter Esele
President-General, Trade Union Congress of Nigeria (TUC)

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APPENDIX:
 Mapped National Assembly Election and Presidential Election Related Incidents (www.nigeriawatch2011.org)

