



Statement on the Ondo State Governorship Election – Held 20 October 2012

Delivered at Bolton White Hotel, Abuja, on 22 Oct 2012

Summary

Ladies and gentlemen of the press, on behalf of the National Steering Committee (NSC) of Project Swift Count, it is our pleasure to welcome you to this press conference to report on our observation findings for the 20 October 2012, Ondo State governorship election.

As you already know, Project Swift Count is jointly carried out by the Federation of Muslim Women's Associations in Nigeria (FOMWAN), Justice Development and Peace/Caritas (JDPC), the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) and Transition Monitoring Group (TMG). Thus reflecting the rich diversity of Nigeria, it brings together Christians and Muslims, as well as organizations with citizen election observation and legal expertise.

For the Ondo State governorship election, Project Swift Count deployed 832 observers across all 18 Local Government Areas (LGAs) — 800 stationary observers at 400 polling units and 32 mobile observers.

The polling units to which stationary observers were deployed were carefully selected as a stratified, representative random sample of all 3,009 polling units across Ondo State; therefore, PSC is able to conclude, with 95% certainty, that its qualitative

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observations about the electoral process and its quantitative estimates of the election results reflect the process and results from all 3,009 polling units in Ondo State, not merely at the 400 polling units observed.

Our findings today address the processes of accreditation of voters, the voting and counting at polling units, and the verification of the Ondo State governorship election results as announced by the Independent National Election Commission (INEC).

Project Swift Count finds generally that the process provided most of the people of Ondo State with a meaningful opportunity to exercise their right to vote and that the official results as announced by INEC accurately reflect the ballots cast at polling units.

Project Swift Count wishes to congratulate the citizens of Ondo State for their peaceful and substantial participation in the election. Project Swift Count also wishes to recognize the largely effective conduct and administration of the election by INEC. Project Swift Count also observed that the adequate security presence was of tremendous help in maintaining the peaceful environment.

Methodology

The primary objective of the Project is to help promote free, fair, peaceful, credible, and legitimate elections in Nigeria that are conducted in accordance with international and regional standards as well as the laws and the constitution of our country and the “Declaration of Global Principles for Nonpartisan Election Observation and Monitoring by Citizen Organisations”.

The Swift Count methodology provides voters, political contestants and electoral authorities with an accurate, real-time picture of the conduct of the accreditation of voters, voting, and counting. This serves as a deterrent to anyone tempted to manipulate the process. Project Swift Count also provides voters

and political contestants greater confidence that the official results accurately reflect the ballots cast.

Project Swift Count uses samples of polling units for each election that have been carefully selected by a trained Nigerian statistician, using time-tested statistical principles to ensure that they are both representative and unbiased. This methodology, when matched with the latest technology—text messages transmitted by cell phones to a central data base—enables Project Swift Count to present an objective, nonpartisan, real-time picture of the conduct of the election and to verify the accuracy of the official results.

Findings

Opening of Polling Units

INEC has improved but getting there at 7:30am still remains a challenge.

- As of 7:30 am, polling officials and election materials had arrived at 47% of polling units across Ondo State. This is comparable to Kebbi (53%) and Sokoto (43%), and is better than Edo (26%), Cross River (19%) and Bayelsa (32%).
- In Ondo State, 99% of polling units opened for voting. This is similar to Edo (99%) Kebbi (100%), and Sokoto (100%) and better than Cross River (97%) and Bayelsa (91%).

Accreditation of Voters

- Accreditation of voters had started by 9:00 a.m. at 70% of polling units. This is worse than Sokoto (73%) but better than Kebbi (65%), Edo (44%), Cross River (35%) and Bayelsa (32%).
- However, by noon accreditation had commenced at 98% of the polling units.

- In 35% of the polling units, the required 3 polling officials were present and in all polling units an average 4 political party agents were present.
- There were security personnel at over 98% of the polling units.
- At 97.2% of polling units, no one was accredited to vote who did not have a voter's card.
- At 2.8% of polling units, some people were accredited to vote without voter's card.
- At 99% of polling units, none or only a few voters were turned away because their names were not found on the register of voters.
- Most voters' names were ticked in the register of voters at 98% of the polling units, and most voters had their cuticles marked with indelible ink at 99% of the polling units.
- There were incidents of harassment or intimidation at only 2% of polling units during the accreditation process. While 10 of 18 LGAs reported no incidents of harassment or intimidation, this problem was most significant in Idanre (14%), Akure North (13%), Ese Odo (13%), Ondo East (9%), Ilaje (7%), and Ose (6%) LGAs
- Of the incidents of harassment reported during accreditation, party agents or other people were responsible for such incidents, with virtually none attributed to security agents.

Nearly everyone remained at their assigned polling unit after being accredited at 74% of polling units; however, at 17% of the polling units, most people left their assigned polling unit after being accredited. This problem was most acute in Akure South (47%), Idanre (36%), Akure North (33%), Ifedore (33%), and Akoko South-East (30%) LGAs.

Voting

- Voting had commenced by 2:00 pm at 97% of polling units.
- At 4.5% of polling units, new voters were accredited once voting had commenced. This is compared with Edo (6%), Kebbi (11%), Cross River (19%), Sokoto (10%), and Baylesa (16%).
- At 99.5% of polling units, the ballot box was shown to be empty before being closed and locked.

- At 92% of polling units, voters were able to mark their ballots in secret.
- At virtually every polling unit, almost all voters showed their voters cards and had indelible ink on the cuticle of a left finger when voting;
- At 99% of polling units, all ballot papers were stamped and signed;
- All voters' cuticles on a right finger were marked with indelible ink at 96% of polling units.
- All voters' names were checked in the register of voters at 98% of polling units.
- Incidents of harassment or intimidation during the voting process occurred at only 3% of the polling units. While 8 of 18 LGAs reported no incidents, Ondo East (14%) and Ese Odo (9%) LGAs reported substantially higher incidents of harassment or intimidation during the voting process.
- Of the incidents of harassment reported during voting, 25% were attributed to agents of political parties and 75% were attributed to thugs or other people. No incidents were attributed to security forces.

Counting

- Ballot papers were properly sorted and counted at 99% of polling units.
- At 98% of polling units, the official results were publicly posted, and these posted results matched the announced results at 99% of the polling units.
- At 4% of polling units, some political party agents present disagreed with the results as announced by the polling officials. This issue was most problematic in Akoko North-West (14%), Ese Odo (13%), Ilaje (13%), Ondo East (9%), Akure South (8%), Idanre (7%), and Akoko North-East (6%) LGAs.
- Acts of harassment or intimidation during the counting process occurred at only 1.5% of the polling units. While no incidents were reported in 13 of 18 LGAs, this problem was significant in Idanre (14%), Ese Odo (13%), and Ondo East (9%) LGAs.

- Of the incidents of harassment reported during accreditation, no incidents were attributed to either security forces or party agents. evaluate

Turnout and Rejected Ballots

PSC estimates the turnout for the Ondo State governorship election is 39.7%, with a margin of error of 1.5%. This is compared with Kebbi (51.8%), Edo (44.4%), Cross River (37%), Sokoto (29.9%), Adamawa (37.5%) and Kogi (35.1%).

Rejected ballots (meaning those for which the voter's intent could not be clearly determined and hence were not counted) were estimated at 4.3%.

Verification of Official Results

Using a stratified random, representative sample that included reports from 400 polling units, the results estimated by Project Swift Count are consistent with the results announced by INEC.* Our observers collected official results as they were announced and posted at the polling units by INEC.

Table 1: Project Swift Count Ondo State Governorship Election*				
Political Party	PSC Estimates (%)	Margin of Error (at 95% level of confidence)	PSC Estimated Range (%)	INEC Announced Results (%)
ACN	23.2%	1.4%	21.8% – 24.6%	23.0%
LP	41.4%	1.8%	39.6% - 43.2%	41.7%
PDP	25.5%	1.7%	23.8% – 27.2%	25.0%
Remaining 10 parties	5.6%	0.3%	5.3% – 5.9%	5.5%
Rejected Ballots	4.3%	0.3%	4.0% - 4.6%	4.8%

**Results posted on INEC Website on 22 Oct 2012.*

The order and magnitude of the INEC results for each of these parties is the same as the Swift Count estimates. Because Project Swift Count was able to independently collect and collate official results from polling units and arrive at the same results as INEC, political contestants and the public alike should have a high degree of confidence that the official results as announced by INEC reflect the votes cast in the Ondo State governorship election.

Critical Incidents

Critical incidents are electoral irregularities, whether intentional or inadvertent, that could undermine the integrity of the overall process if they were to occur at significant levels and rates. For the 832 observers, only 32 critical incident reports were received. Of the incidents reported, the late arrival of election materials (6), intimidation and harassment (6), and violence (4) were the most significant.

Recommendations

- For Ondo State, 47% of the polling units were opened on time. This is similar to Kebbi (53%) and Sokoto (43%), but is better than Edo (26%), Cross River (19%) and Bayelsa (32%). INEC must address this issue for subsequent elections in Nigeria.
- Secrecy of the ballot continues to be a challenge, violating a fundamental dimension of democratic elections. Across Ondo State, 8% of the polling units failed to provide secrecy of the ballot for voters. While this is better than some of the previous elections, INEC should continue to improve the processes to ensure that voters may cast their ballots free from scrutiny. In addition, INEC should provide suitable environment and adequate cubicles for voter to achieve the required secrecy.
- PSC calls on INEC to appraise, update and produce the register of voters so as to increase citizens' confidence in the electoral process.

- Having regard to the 4.8% rejected ballots as announced by INEC, there is an apparent need for education of voters, particularly the elderly, physically-challenged and other marginalised groups.

Project Swift Count plans to continue to observe the electoral process and deploy observers for future elections.

God Bless Nigeria



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