

National Democratic Institute

Nigeria

Introduction

Since Nigeria's 1999 transition from military to civilian rule, NDI has supported the development of the country's democratic institutions, working with Nigerian civil society organizations (CSOs), legislatures, and political parties to increase transparency and inclusivity in government, build citizen confidence in the electoral process, and increase the political participation of marginalized groups. In 2015, Nigeria held a historic and closely contested election which peacefully transferred power from one political party to another for the first time since independence. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) implemented transparency reforms, and a well-publicized civil society-led parallel vote tabulation (PVT) provided real-time verification of the election results.

The success of the 2015 presidential election increased confidence among Nigerians and citizens across Africa that credible elections matter and that leaders can be held accountable. However, Nigeria's governance challenges – including economic hardship, citizen dissatisfaction with public services, deeply rooted corruption, political tensions and a fragile security situation – still need to be addressed. Additionally, political marginalization of women, youth, people with disabilities (PWDs) and other minorities threatens Nigeria's democratic consolidation.

Despite these issues, continued PVTs and data-driven observation of the electoral cycle reinforce successes from the 2015 polls and further enhance the role of citizens in promoting credible, peaceful elections. Increased citizen engagement through advocacy also provides an opportunity for Nigerians to hold elected officials to account and build upon the country's democratic advances.

Current Programs

DATA-DRIVEN CITIZEN OBSERVATION OF ELECTORAL PROCESS

In 2011 and 2015, NDI supported citizen election observer groups to conduct national PVTs, which were the largest ever conducted in the world. In addition to collecting and sharing data in real-time on election day processes, both PVTs verified the election outcome as reported by INEC.

Since 2011, NDI has supported citizen observer groups to conduct more than 20 PVTs at state and national levels. For the 2018 polls in Ekiti and Osun states, the Institute is also supporting citizen-led PVT, party primary and pre-election observation (PREO) efforts. In 2016, NDI also supported disabled persons organizations (DPOs) to conduct Africa's first- and second-ever PWD-led, statistically rigorous audits of polling stations' accessibility during off-cycle gubernatorial elections in Edo and Ondo states. NDI's DPO partners have been using the accessibility audit findings to lobby for reforms to increase PWDs' political participation.

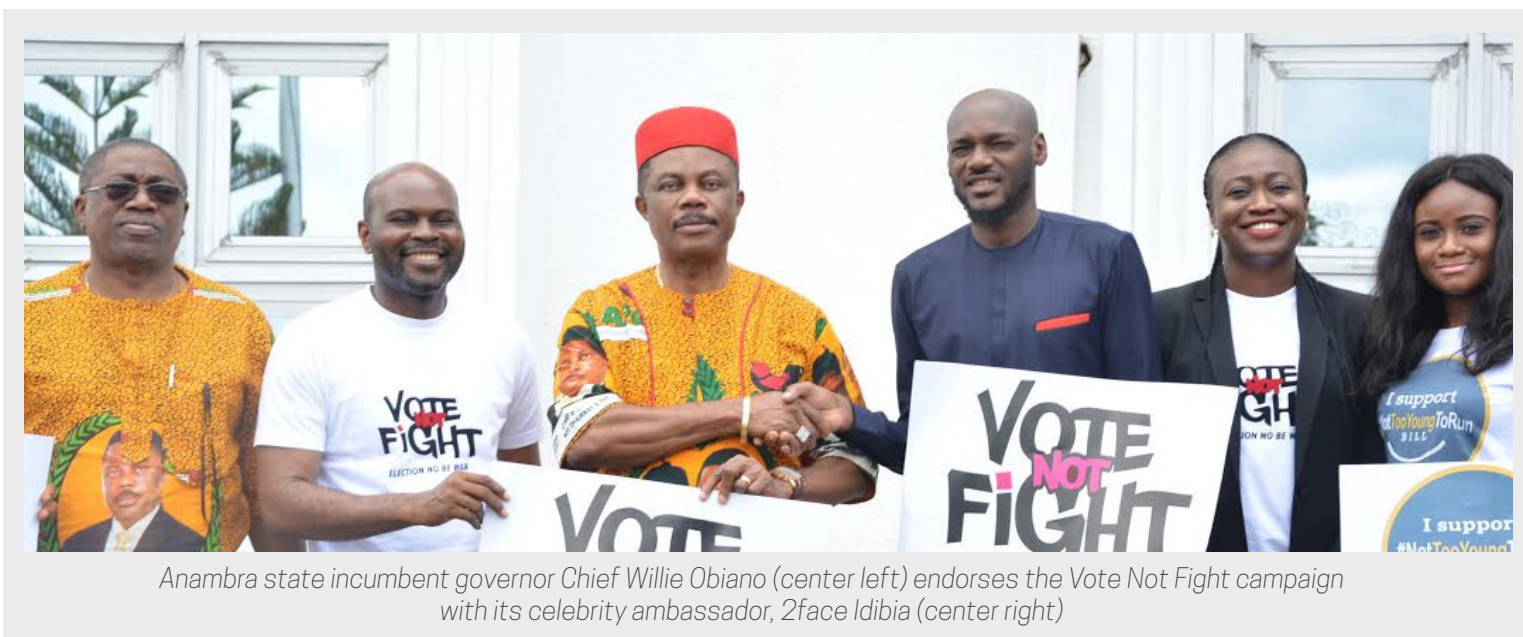
YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN ELECTIONS AND POLITICAL PROCESS

Despite comprising almost half of the Nigerian population, youth have been historically marginalized from politics – a problem which NDI's partner YIAGA AFRICA sought to address with the "Not Too Young To Run" (NTYTR) campaign. In May 2018, the campaign witnessed presidential assent to a constitutional amendment that lowered the age requirements for presidential and gubernatorial candidates to 35 years old, and for



YIAGA AFRICA's monitoring and evaluation officer trains data clerks on processing election day PVT reports.

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Anambra state incumbent governor Chief Willie Obiano (center left) endorses the Vote Not Fight campaign with its celebrity ambassador, 2face Idibia (center right)

House of Representatives candidates to 25 years old. To mount pressure for the passage of the amendment, YIAGA AFRICA carried out strategic outreach to political actors, organized NTYTR marches across the country, and raised awareness about the campaign and its petition on social and traditional media.

For the 2015 presidential poll and subsequent off-cycle gubernatorial elections, NDI partnered with Nigerian youth organizations and musician 2face Idibia to impart the message of their campaign titled “Vote Not Fight” (VNF), which calls for youth’s peaceful participation in elections. Through concerts, a peace pledge, social and traditional media campaigns, and community-based peace ambassadors, VNF targets individuals (particularly youth) who have historically been drawn into election violence either as perpetrators or as victims.

ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN’S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Recognizing the downward trend of women in politics in Nigeria, NDI is supporting effective leadership of female legislators and working to create better opportunities for women to attain elected and appointed office. Using its Win With Women assessment tool, NDI evaluated the level of women’s inclusion in a total of 21 state and national chapters for five major political parties. With these findings, the Institute has been supporting women leaders of political parties to develop action plans and advocacy strategies to convince their parties’ leadership to include more

women. NDI also trains women legislators on gender sensitive budgeting, media relations and constituency relations management. NDI is training women aspirants in six states on navigating candidate nomination processes, fundraising and running effective campaigns.

In September 2015, NDI and the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) launched the “Stop Violence against Women in Elections” (Stop-VAWIE) campaign. In 2015 and 2016, Stop-VAWIE documented and reported first-of-its-kind data on types and incidents of violence against women; engaged with election officials, security services, women’s groups and others to mitigate violence; and organized civic education around preventing violence against women in elections.

NDI also supports women’s groups to conduct legislative advocacy campaigns in target states for the passage of the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act (VAPP), which enacts a new framework to address domestic and electoral gender violence. The Institute also supports local partners to conduct get-out-the-vote campaigns targeting women during gubernatorial polls.

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