

# PROJECT 2011 SWIFTCOUNT



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Dafe Akpedeye (SAN)  
1<sup>st</sup> Co-Chair

Mashood Erubami  
2<sup>nd</sup> Co-Chair

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Hajia Bilkisu (mni)

### Ex Officio

Victor Agbogun  
Project Manager

## Pre-Election Statement for 2011 General Elections Thursday March 31, 2011

Delivered at the Sheraton Hotel, Abuja

### Preamble

Ladies and gentlemen of the pre

ss, on behalf of the National Steering Committee (NSC) of Project 2011 Swift Count, it is our pleasure to welcome you to this pre-election press conference on the eve of the 2011 Elections.

As you are aware by now, Project 2011 Swift Count is jointly implemented 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 diversity and complexity of Nigeria, it brings together Christians and Muslims, as well as organizations with citizen election observation and legal expertise.

Our primary objective is to help promote free, fair, peaceful, credible and legitimate elections in Nigeria that are conducted in accordance with international and regional standards (such as the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, the *African Charter on Peoples' and Human Rights* and *ECOWAS Protocol A/SP1/12/01 on Democracy and Good Governance*) as well as the laws of the country (in particular the *Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria* and the *Electoral Act* as amended). The initiative also conforms to the *Declaration of Global Principles for Nonpartisan Election Observation and Monitoring by Citizen Organizations*.

### Why Swift Count?

Over the next three weekends Nigerians will march to the polls to elect their representatives to various political offices. Since Nigerians re-embraced democracy in 1999, elections have become part and parcel of their political life. Unfortunately previous elections did not meet the expectations of our people nor international and regional standards. This is because elections were fraught with wide spread rigging and other electoral malfeasance.

Civil society organizations, including ours, have been frustrated by the brazen electoral fraud in the past. Rather than giving into this frustration, we have redoubled our efforts and have adopted a new and advanced approach to citizen observation in Nigeria drawing upon the best practices from around the world, but also adapting it to our own local peculiarities. This new approach is called Swift Count and is designed to help restore electoral accountability in Nigeria so that everyone's vote counts.

## What is Swift Count?

Swift Count is an advanced observer methodology. It employs information and communication technology (ICT) and statistical principles to enable observers to provide more representative and accurate information about the electoral process in real time to voters, political contestants and INEC. It also permits verification of the official results as announced by INEC. Trained accredited observers will deploy to a representative random sample of polling units and send reports to a National Information Centre (NIC) located at the Sheraton Hotel by coded text messages which will allow Project 2011 Swift Count to share nationwide systematic information on the elections.

The Swift Count methodology, first of all, will provide voters, political contestants and electoral authorities with an accurate, real time picture of the conduct of the accreditation of voters, voting and counting.

To this end, Project 2011 Swift Count will hold a press conference at 11:00am on the Sunday after each election (i.e. April 3, April 10 and April 16) at the Sheraton Hotel. These press conferences will focus specifically on the conduct of accreditation of voters, voting and the counting of ballots and will be based on factual reports received from observers in all 774 LGAs. Ultimately, it is up to Nigerians to determine if these elections have met their expectations. It is only with independent non-partisan information that is truly representative of the whole country can people decide if the 2011 elections were better than those in the past.

Second, the Swift Count methodology will verify the accuracy of the official results as announced by INEC for specific elections.

It is a common saying in Nigeria that elections are fought on a Saturday, but won on a Sunday. This implies that after the results leave polling units, they are manipulated and the results that are ultimately announced do not reflect the will of the people.

The change in leadership and attitude at INEC has given greater confidence that the collation and tabulation of results will be conducted properly and the results announced by INEC will reflect the votes cast at polling units. However, given Nigeria's electoral history, the Swift Count is still vital. It serves, first and foremost, as a DETERRENT to anyone who may be tempted to manipulate the results. Project 2011 Swift Count will be able to expose any attempt to manipulate the results and identify the party which benefited from the manipulation. Furthermore, when the official results as announced by INEC are accurate, Project 2011 Swift Count will be able to provide independent non-partisan verification of those results giving voters and political contestants greater CONFIDENCE in the electoral process and the country's electoral management body.

## What the Swift Count is Not?

The Swift Count is not an exit poll. Unlike an exit poll, a Swift Count does not involve asking Nigerians for whom they voted. There is every reason in Nigeria to be skeptical of exit polls as people may not be comfortable telling a stranger how they cast their ballot – after all your vote is your secret. Rather, the Swift Count involves collecting from a representative random sample of polling units the official results as announced by INEC officials at these polling units.

Swift Count observers do not count the ballot papers. Only INEC polling officials are authorized to count the ballot papers. Swift Count observers watch the entire process – accreditation of voters, voting and counting – and then report the official result as announced by the INEC polling officials. In all our trainings it was stressed that the INEC officials are in charge and that the role of Swift Count observers is to watch the process and report.

Swift Count is not crowd sourcing. Other valuable initiatives to promote electoral accountability are also using text messages to gather information. They are using a methodology called crowd sourcing in which any citizen can share their experience. Project 2011 Swift Count, however, will only accept information from trained accredited observers specially selected from the four partner organizations.

Project 2011 Swift Count will not announce official results. INEC is the constitutionally mandated body for conducting elections and announcing the results. Project 2011 Swift Count will collect official results from polling units as announced by INEC polling officials as this is public information that will be posted at the polling unit using INEC Form EC60.

## **Swift Count Samples**

The Swift Count samples of polling units for each election have been carefully selected by two trained Nigerian statisticians with over 38 years of experience between them. The samples have also been reviewed by staff from the National Democratic Institute (NDI), our technical partners, who have more than 20 years of experience supporting citizen groups to employ the Swift Count methodology around the world. The techniques used to draw the samples are based on time-tested statistical principles to ensure that they are both representative (meaning that the sample of polling units has the same distribution of the complete list of polling units) and unbiased (meaning that polling units were selected randomly).

## National Assembly Elections

Project 2011 Swift Count will observe the National Assembly elections. We will deploy observers to every LGA of the country in order provide voters, political contestants and INEC with systematic nationwide information on the conduct of accreditation of voters, voting and counting process.

## Presidential Election

For the Presidential Election, Project 2011 Swift Count will collect information from a representative random sample of 1,497 polling units located in every state and LGA of the country. To ensure the sample is representative, it was stratified by state and LGA. This means that the percentage of sampled polling units in any state closely matches the percentage of total polling units in that state. For example, according to INEC Jigawa state has 3,527 of the 119,860 polling units or 2.9% of the total number of polling units in Nigeria. In the Swift Count presidential sample, Jigawa has 44 polling units representing 2.9% of the 1,497 polling units in the entire sample. The same logic is applied within states to allocate the sample to each LGA. Within each LGA polling stations are selected entirely at random. The result is a national sample that is both representative and random and that includes polling units in every state (and the FCT) and in all 774 LGAs. Attached to this press statement is the full distribution of the presidential sample by state.

## State Elections

We will conduct pilot gubernatorial Swift Counts in six states: Plateau (NC), Borno (NE), Kano (NW), Imo (SE), Delta (SS) and Oyo (SW). One state was selected per geo political zone based on a number of factors including degree of contestation and concerns over possible post-election violence. For each of the six states a sample of approximately 400 polling units was drawn. The sample was stratified by LGA and then polling units were selected within each LGA entirely at random.

## Swift Count Preparations

The four partners have been working for over a year to implement the Swift Count in Nigeria. A total of 148 state coordinators and state deputy coordinators in all 36 states plus the FCT were recruited and trained in October of last year. 798 LGA supervisors, at least one per LGA, were recruited in November and trained in December and January. To test the Swift Count methodology and the text messaging system, the 148 state coordinators and state deputy coordinators as well as 798 LGA Supervisors were deployed to observe the voter registration exercises and display, claims and objections.

All of the 7,114 observers were vetted and recruited by the four partner organisations. The Swift Count methodology requires Project 2011 Swift Count to be even more discerning in its recruitment of observers. All observers were trained on 29 March and will also attend refresher training on 05 April. All observers must adhere to a strict Code of Conduct while observing – this code stresses that INEC polling officials are in charge at polling units and not to interfere in the process, but to watch and report their observations. All observers signed and read aloud a Pledge of Neutrality and Objectivity to ensure that they conduct their observations in a strictly independent and non-partisan manner. Today, a full simulation is being conducted where all 8,060 members of the network (state coordinators, state deputy coordinators, LGA supervisors and observers) are sending in sample coded text message as a practice run for election day. A similar exercise will take place next week.

## Other Swift Count Experiences

The Swift Count methodology has been used repeatedly around the world to help improve electoral integrity and reduce post-election tensions and violence. It was first employed in the Philippines in 1986. In Africa it has successfully been used in Kenya, Ghana, Madagascar, Malawi, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. In Ghana, where the first and second round of the presidential elections were decided by less than 1% of the vote, the Swift Count (figures confirmed the official results) and helped all parties accept the results. In the recent constitutional referendum in Kenya the Swift Count methodology was introduced after the violence that occurred after the 2007 elections specifically to help reduce post-election tensions and prevent a repeat of election related violence.

## Conclusion

Project 2011 Swift Count is extremely concerned about the level of political violence in the country on the eve of the elections. As we go forward the pressures on politicians and their supporters will only increase – especially given the do or die nature of our politics.

Project 2011 Swift Count is encouraged by the efforts of INEC and the security agencies to prevent political violence and the decision to bar politicians and their supporters from moving around on election day. However, this should not unintentionally hamper the efforts of both citizen and international observers who will need to be mobile on election day and move from one polling unit to another. INEC should take immediate steps to make sure that all observers have sufficient INEC identification and materials for their vehicles so that they can freely undertake their observation duties.

Project 2011 Swift Count is also encouraged by the recent code of conduct signed by all contesting political parties. However, we call upon the leadership of all political parties to immediately and publicly call for a cessation of all political violence and to immediately and publicly condemn any act of political violence perpetrated by their own supporters.

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Project 2011 Swift Count notes the many steps that INEC is taking to ensure smooth operations on the election days. However, we remain cautiously hopeful that INEC will spare no effort to ensure that the proper logistics are in place on election day and that there is not a repeat of the voter registration exercise when only 16% of centres opened on the first day. Each election is only one day and there is no room for error. We also note the recent decision to rotate state police commissioners to enhance confidence in the security forces. INEC should, as appropriate, take similar steps to ensure all INEC staff, in particular the RECs, are not compromised during the elections.

Project 2011 Swift Count calls upon all Nigerians to work together to ensure that these election reflect the will of the people. Election day will be very long and voters will need to spend many hours at the polling unit first queuing for accreditation and then for voting. It is likely to be hot and tempers may be short. We urge Nigerians to remain calm and participate in the process.

In the interest of transparency and accountability, we again recommend that INEC not only announce aggregate results, but also provide results by individual polling unit in Abuja for the presidential election and in the state capitals for the gubernatorial elections. This would further enhance confidence in the accuracy of the official results.

Finally, Project 2011 Swift Count calls upon the relevant authorities to make available immediately the authentic electoral law that will govern the 2011 elections. There are multiple versions of the electoral act on the street. This causes confusion over the legal framework. We further urge the Judiciary to live up to its constitutional responsibility by fair independent dispensing justice in election related matters in a timely manner.

Project 2011 Swift Count partners are responsible for the design, implementation and conduct of the initiative as well as the content of all observation statements. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) provide support for Project 2011 Swift Count. The project receives technical assistance from the National Democratic Institute (NDI). A Memorandum of Understanding exists to ensure ownership of the initiative by the Project 2011 Swift Count partners.

If the electoral authorities, the security agencies, political parties, civil society and voters all do their part, Nigeria can reverse the downward trend in our elections; our elected representatives can have greater legitimacy; we can stand proud amongst the democracies of the world and restore our faith in democracy and democratic institutions. **Project 2011 Swift Count encourages all registered Nigerians to go out and to vote in the National Assembly, Presidential and State elections.**

God Bless Nigeria



Dafe Akpedeye (SAN)  
1<sup>st</sup> Co-Chair



Mashood Erubami  
2<sup>nd</sup> Co-Chair

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**For media inquiries please contact:**

Muritala Abdul-Rasheed: Tel. +234 8033231849 Email [media@pscnigeria.org](mailto:media@pscnigeria.org)  
Chibuike Mgbeahuruike: Tel +234 7036024736

Learn more about Project 2011 Swift Count at [www.pscnigeria.org](http://www.pscnigeria.org)

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Table 1: Distribution of National Sample for Presidential Election					
Zone	State	PUs	Sample PUs	% PUs	% Sample PUs
North Central	Benue	3,688	46	3.1%	3.1%
North Central	FCT	562	8	0.5%	0.5%
North Central	Kogi	2,548	32	2.1%	2.1%
North Central	Kwara	1,872	24	1.6%	1.6%
North Central	Nasarawa	1,495	21	1.2%	1.4%
North Central	Niger	3,185	39	2.7%	2.6%
North Central	Plateau	2,631	35	2.2%	2.3%
North East	Adamawa	2,608	31	2.2%	2.1%
North East	Bauchi	4,074	51	3.4%	3.4%
North East	Borno	3,933	47	3.3%	3.1%
North East	Gombe	2,218	27	1.9%	1.8%
North East	Taraba	1,912	23	1.6%	1.5%
North East	Yobe	1,714	20	1.4%	1.3%
North West	Jigawa	3,527	44	2.9%	2.9%
North West	Kaduna	5,101	65	4.3%	4.3%
North West	Kano	8,074	101	6.7%	6.7%
North West	Katsina	4,892	61	4.1%	4.1%
North West	Kebbi	2,398	30	2.0%	2.0%
North West	Sokoto	3,035	36	2.5%	2.4%
North West	Zamfara	2,436	29	2.0%	1.9%
South East	Abia	2,675	34	2.2%	2.3%
South East	Anambra	4,608	60	3.8%	4.0%
South East	Ebonyi	1,785	22	1.5%	1.5%
South East	Enugu	2,958	38	2.5%	2.5%
South East	Imo	3,523	43	2.9%	2.9%
South South	Akwa Ibom	2,980	39	2.5%	2.6%
South South	Bayelsa	1,803	22	1.5%	1.5%
South South	Cross River	2,283	29	1.9%	1.9%
South South	Delta	3,624	46	3.0%	3.1%
South South	Edo	2,627	32	2.2%	2.1%
South South	Rivers	4,434	56	3.7%	3.7%
South West	Ekiti	2,195	25	1.8%	1.7%
South West	Lagos	8,458	105	7.1%	7.0%
South West	Ogun	3,213	38	2.7%	2.5%
South West	Ondo	2,998	39	2.5%	2.6%
South West	Osun	3,010	39	2.5%	2.6%
South West	Oyo	4,783	60	4.0%	4.0%
<b>Nation</b>		<b>119,860</b>	<b>1,497</b>		