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PRESS RELEASE

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Swift Count Boosts Confidence in Registration Exercise

The National Steering Committee of Project 2011 Swift Count today issued an interim report on the on-going voter registration exercise in Nigeria as well as recommendations for improving registration and for the April elections.

“Overall, as of Saturday January 29, the originally scheduled end for the exercise, we are encouraged by the registration process. As is widely known, the voter registration exercise started extremely poorly, but has significantly improved. It has not been perfect, but INEC has recognized problems and has addressed them promptly,” said Dafe Akpedeye (SAN) of Project 2011 Swift Count.

In two specific areas—opening times and the functioning of the direct data capture (DDC) systems—we saw dramatic improvement over time. Only 18% of centres opened by noon on the first day, but this increased to 93% by the end of the first week and has remained at this level. Similarly, DDC systems went from operating properly throughout the day at 46% of centres at the start of registration to 79% of centres by the end of the second week.

The Project 2011 Swift Count added that there are still problems with registration centres not opening, with the functioning of DDC systems and shortages of essential materials. “INEC needs to continue to work around the clock to ensure that all registration centres open and function smoothly.”

Among Project 2011 Swift Count recommendations to enhance confidence in the process were:

- INEC needs to improve its logistical and organizational capabilities for the elections since it won't have the luxury of making improvements over time as has been the case during voter registration exercise. For elections, INEC has to ensure that all centres open and operate properly on the first day because unlike voter registration there won't be another opportunity to correct any problems.
- INEC should make the process as transparent as possible by taking advantage of every opportunity to share information with voters, political parties and civil society organisations.

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- Building on data released on the number of registrants to the Senate on January 26, INEC should now routinely provide such information. For the remaining days of registration, we renew our call for INEC to release daily figures on the number of registrations per state and by LGA.
- In addition, for Election Day, INEC should publicly commit itself to releasing not only aggregate results, but also polling station results for all elections. This will enable voters to determine for themselves if the official results accurately reflect the will of the voters.

The National Steering Committee of Project 2011 Swift Count congratulates the people of Nigeria for their participation in the registration exercise and commends them for their patience despite noticeable imperfections. In addition, since the registration process continues, we call upon those who have not registered to perform their civic duty and register, and we urge political parties and other elements of civil society to encourage their members and followers to register, and to vote in the upcoming elections.”

Project 2011 Swift Count takes traditional observation to the next level by using by using the latest methodologies and information and communication technologies (ICTs). During voter registration the project partners are fielding approximately 1,000 observers who are deployed in every one of Nigeria’s 774 Local Government Areas (LGAs) and who conducted a precise and comprehensive observation for five days during the first two weeks of Voter Registration.

For Election Day Project 2011 Swift Count will deploy approximately 8,000 observers to a representative random sample of polling stations. Each observer will send reports via coded text messages using mobile phones. This will allow Project 2011 Swift Count to quickly collect, analyse and share detailed and comprehensive information on the conduct of elections with the people of Nigeria, political contestants and INEC and to verify the accuracy of the official results as announced by INEC.

Project 2011 Swift Count is a joint initiative of the Federation of Muslim Women’s Associations in Nigeria (FOMWAN); Justice, Development and Peace/Caritas Nigeria (JDPC), Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), and Transition Monitoring Group (TMG). Reflecting the diversity of Nigeria, the project brings together civic organizations and religious groups (Christian and Muslim) to promote free, fair, peaceful, credible and legitimate elections through non-partisan, independent citizen observation.



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Learn more about Project 2011 Swift Count at www.pscnigeria.org