



Nigeriawatch2011

What you see about election

C/o committee for the Defence of Human Rights (CDHR)
No. 43 Adeniyi Jones Avenue, Ikeja. Lagos
president@cdhrnigeria.org, olasupo.ojo@gmail.com
08033046175, 018726377

The National Elections Incidents Center – www.nigeriawatch2011.org

**Preliminary Statement on Reported Incidents During the Gubernatorial and House of
Assembly Elections
April 26, 2011.**

The National Elections Incidents Centre (NEIC) is a unique project that captures 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, but is not comprehensive. 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.

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 Governorship and State Houses of Assembly Elections on April 26 and reported incidents to the NEIC throughout the day. The NEIC is also supported by the National Democratic Institute (NDI).

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 collecting and reporting *only* on incidents 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.

Based on our findings as detailed below, the NEIC in the course of the April 26th 2011 Governorship and State Houses of Assembly elections received a total of 1004 reports from trained observers as well as members of the public. Of this figure, about 35.5 per cent of the reports (357) represented actual incidents, majority of incidents reported include late arrival of INEC officials and election materials, late commencement of accreditation, ballot box snatching, inducement of voters and vote buying as well as intimidation and harassment of voters and party agents.

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 generally smooth and peaceful in their polling stations.

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METHODOLOGY:

During the Gubernatorial and House of Assembly elections held on 26th April 2011, DEO Partners deployed a total of 2,966 observers trained in the principles and best practices of election observation prior to their deployment to 22 states of the Federation in the South-East, South-West, South-South, North-Central, North-East and the North-West zones. Observers were not deployed to Bauchi and Kaduna states where elections were postponed by the INEC.

FINDINGS:

The NEIC in the course of the April 26th 2011 Gubernatorial and House of Assembly elections received a total of 1004 reports from trained observers as well as members of the public. Of this figure, a total of 357 reports represented actual incidents, with trained observers reporting a total of 322 incidents while members of the public reported a total of 35 incidents. The few number of incidents reports indicates a smooth and peaceful process in most of the polling stations observed.

Of the actual incidents, a total of 84 reports on accreditation issues including violation of accreditation procedures were sent to the NEIC, while intimidation and violence accounted for 73 reports, polling station issues amounted to 96 reports and voting issues had a total of 104 reports.

When disaggregated, the South-East recorded the highest number of 180 incident reports while the South-South recorded a total of 70 incident reports. Reports from these two geo-political zones represent a combined total of 78 per cent of the total number of incidents reported by observers. Both zones also accounted for 66 percent of reported incidents by members of the public. In both geo-political zones the majority of incidents reported include late arrival of INEC officials and election materials, late commencement of accreditation, ballot box snatching, inducement of voters and vote buying and intimidation and harassment of voters.

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 simultaneous accreditation and voting in places like Mokwa, Niger State and Dambo in Zamfara State, early stoppage of accreditation exercise before 12 noon in Iba Housing Estate of Ojo Local Government area of Lagos State, as well as a case of a violent clash in Mosogar in Ethiope West Local Government Area in Delta State, a case of an INEC Adhoc Staff absconding with a ballot booklet in Atissa community in Yenegoa Local Government area of Bayelsa State, the case of threat and violent attack on Observers in Ubima Community in Ikwerre Local Government of Rivers State and in Ukana-East Village

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in Essien Udium Local Government area of Akwa Ibom State as well as other cases of violence and likely breach of public peace brought to the attention of the relevant authorities.

Additional reports of incidents can be accessed on the NEIC website-
www.nigeriawatch2011.org

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

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Some issues identified during the Governorship and State Houses of Assembly Elections that could be improved for subsequent elections, include:

- That INEC should continue to 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 violence, ballot box snatching, 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 compile a comprehensive report and analysis of its findings of the three elections with the aim of producing a final report for the CWC. The NEIC will still receive reports from members of the public and trained observers on the post-election period, including the post election adjudication processes. Reports to the NEIC should be sent through the following format:

DEO followed by the City/Street, Local Government Area, State then the Report. And send to the shortcode 32051.

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For example: DEO In Ikeja, Obafemi Awolowo way, 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 collection of further incident reports, all the Checklists and the Incident report forms filled by our observers 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.

Signed by the DEO Partners on April 28, 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, Presidential Election & Gubernatorial and State Assembly Related Incidents (www.nigeriawatch2011.org)

