



Caritas
NIGERIA ...fullness of life for all

CATHOLIC CARITAS FOUNDATION OF NIGERIA

2023 General Elections Situation Room

Preliminary Report Presented at 03.05 pm

Gentlemen of the Press, good afternoon!

1. Arrival of Materials and INEC Officials

Across the country, reports of the arrival of both sensitive and non-sensitive material were marked as belated and delayed as many of the INEC ad-hoc and regular staff were not present at least by 8.30 am. Remarkably, logistics issues around the inability to duly sort and deploy materials from the INEC National Office (especially from the Ward Collation Centers in the various Local Government Areas as expected) were spotted. There are reports signaling sabotage as some state officials made the arrival of materials difficult. For instance, in Kogi State (Northcentral), the roads leading to some opposition strongholds in the State were cut off by the State Government alleging that it will help prevent threats to security in the areas.

In Enugu State (Southeast), it was alleged that some Corp members already trained as ad-hoc officials declined to participate in the process due to threats of attacks and violence at the PUs. In fact, in *Recreation Club-Opp. Stadium* (PU Code: 14/04/13/016, Ogui Township Ward/RA) Enugu, and in so many other areas, this move affected the turnout of officials as the PUs were only mounted and set up by 12:42 pm. This has made many eligible voters vacate their PUs without voting. In Abia North, Abia State, no single INEC official had arrived in almost all the PUs as of 12:05 pm. This is also the same for Nnewi, Anambra State, and in most parts of Warri, Delta State.

The same situation was noticed in Okota, Okpebi, and in Lagos Island (Southwest) where many of the PUs had no INEC officials in place to attend to the teeming electorates. So far, the reports from other parts of Southwest reflect very gloomy turnouts of ad-hoc staff and materials.

2. Accreditation and Verifications of Voters

In most of the Polling Units where the arrival of materials and ad-hoc staff were on time, the Bimodal Voters Accreditation System has worked fairly with minor hitches recorded so far. Voters whose fingerprints were not duly captured were authenticated with the facial recognition feature of the BVAS. However, there is an urgent need to deploy more BVAS machines in some PUs where the queued voters are more than 1000 persons waiting to be accredited. For example, in PU 022 Durumi 2 Primary School, only one BVAS machine was deployed to more than 3000 electorates who have been online waiting for accreditation



Caritas
NIGERIA

...fullness of life for all

since 7:00 am. In PU 11, Oku/Borum/Njua Ward, Boki LGA Cross River State, voter accreditation was disrupted by some thugs who forcefully snatched the BVAS machine from the Presiding Officer. According to some of our observers in the PU, this had happened because of the absence of Police and other security personnel in the area.

3. Voting

There are many odious and irregular happenings across the PUs in the country with reports of vote-buying, inducements, and threats amounting to violence. For instance, in Lagos State, thugs were spotted threatening voters in Fehintola Giwa Street, Aguda in Surulere if they did not vote for the APC candidates. There is also a case of omission of the Labour Party in the Ballot Paper for Lagos West Senatorial Districts. This has discouraged many of the voters in the district who have been protesting this omission since morning. There is also a protest ongoing in some parts of Lekki as in some parts of Ikate as a result of the disruption of the process by some hoodlums who came to disperse the electorates at the PUs. Also, in a Polling Unit in Agboola Obisanya Junction, Mafoluku Area of Lagos State, thugs have reportedly invaded the PUs, brandishing weapons of all kinds while dispersing the electorates and destroying the Non-sensitive and Sensitive materials belonging to the INEC. All of these are happening despite the huge presence of security personnel alongside INEC officials who appear helpless.

Aside from this, those duly accredited have voted seamlessly without any form of interference across the PUs recorded so far.

4. General Comments

As we remarked yesterday while launching our Situation Room, we want to reiterate that the INEC has a responsibility to organize and deliver a free, fair, credible, secure, and inclusive election. Reports so far are not encouraging and call for urgent troubleshooting and immediate solution across the States. Lagos State is already showing signs of collusion with the officials as electorates in some quarters are being disallowed from not only getting accreditation but also being denied voting by thugs despite the huge presence of Military and Para-military agencies. We recommend that the authorities move in swift response to save the situation as it stands.

Thank you!

Signed:

Revd. Fr. Uchechukwu Obodochina, PhD

National Director, Church and Society Department of the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria and CEO, Caritas Nigeria