

18 November 2017
For Immediate Release
20h00

Election Analysis Centre
Anambra: Operational Lapses mar elections otherwise peaceful elections

Against the anticipated fear of insecurity marring the Anambra governorship elections, polls have closed and counting is underway. The Independent Electoral National Commission, INEC, have in their own way delivered the elections even if marred by challenges of late opening and card reader malfunctioning. INEC Chairman, Prof. Mahmood Yakubu, had in October assured Nigerians that his team has put in place measures to ensure a hitch-free election in Anambra.

“The preparation we have put in place for Anambra is simply amazing. We have done all that needs to be done to ensure a successful outing. We have finished printing the voters’ register in triplicate. One in colour, two in black and white,” Prof. Yakubu said while addressing a dialogue session with civil society organizations in Abuja. Obviously, there was a discrepancy between what was promised and what was delivered.

However, the realities of the election have been far from promises made by the commission as challenges of late opening of polls, malfunctioning of card reader, flagrant vote buying and selling, and complaint of ad-hoc officials welfare mar a much-anticipated election

Opening of Polls

The election witnessed a late opening of polls, with polls opening averagely between 9 and 11am as against the stipulated 8am. This lateness was not unlinked to late deployment of election materials.

Card Readers Malfunction

Contrary to INEC’s promise that smart card readers will function optimally and that there would be no recourse to manual accreditation or use of incidence form, for the umpteenth time, the smart card reader malfunctioned. In some of the polling units we observed, the smart card readers failed to capture fingerprints of voters and instead manual accreditation was deployed. For instance, at ward 1, polling units 002, 003, 004, at All Saints Primary School Onitsha, voters were delayed for

accreditation over failure of the card readers. Same was the case at Bishop Patterson Junior Seminary Mbosi Ward 20, Polling unit 004, polling unit 003, Ubuluisiozor, Ihiala LGA, polling unit 003 St Peters Ogidi and several others.

Meanwhile, the incumbent Governor, Willie Obiano, was also unable to use the card reader at his Eri Primary School, Unit 004, Otuocha 1, Aguleri, polling unit as the card readers also malfunctioned. There is definitely a need for further refinement and improvement in the card readers for future elections.

Omission of Ad-Hoc Staff Names And Their Welfare

Elements of operational lapses started manifesting on Friday, a day to election, when some ad-hoc staff, already trained for the elections could not ascertain where they were posted to as their names were not on the INEC list. Information gathered from our observers revealed that INEC did not paste the final list until the eve of the Election Day. This incident generated lots of speculations that the names of trained ad-hoc staff may have been replaced overnight.

For example, corps members at the Nkpor Registration Area Centre in Idemili North Local Government insisted they be paid their feeding allowance before setting out for the day's business. INEC has however tried to blame it on the attitude of the corps members, saying some refused to go where they were posted.

Vote Buying and Selling (AKA Stomach Infrastructure)

The place of money in Nigeria politics again reared its head during the election as agents of different political parties were sighted openly distributing food and cash gifts at polling booths to sway the support of voters.

Our observers witnessed agents of the ruling All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA), All Progressives Congress (APC), and the People's Democratic Party (PDP) either giving cash or cooked food as gifts to voters. In some cases, voters handed over their voter cards for money. For example, at Illo Abito square, Nsugbe, where the APC gubernatorial aspirant, Tony Nwoye, voted, people received cooked rice as encouragement to vote for the party.

Also at the Okija Ward 2, PU009, Umuohi Community Primary School, our observers witnessed suspected agents of the PDP, APC, APGA wooing voters with cash. At Nnewi Ichi Polling Unit 003, our observers witnessed suspected APGA agents giving prospective voters money in exchange for their voter cards. Also, agents of APGA shared gala sausage and Malt drink at Polling Unit 020/ and Unit 021, Community Primary School at Abatete.

However, the incident of vote selling assumed a different dimension in this election as some voters demanded for enticements before casting their votes for parties. Some of these cases occurred at Nnewi Ichi ward, Polling Unit 003, Polling Unit 008 Umudioka Primary School Awkuzu ward 2 and some others. Our observers also captured a video of inducement at Umuenem, Otolo Ward 2, Nnewi North LGA. Watch at <https://youtu.be/aU64GKs-mVE>

Over ‘Securitisation’ of the Elections

The Anambra Governorship elections was over securitized with 26,000 police officers, 13,000 civil defence officials, 10 gunboats and 3 helicopters deployed. This may not be unconnected to the threat of the proscribed Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), which threatened that unless a referendum is conducted, the Anambra governorship election shall not hold. To demonstrate their seriousness, just one week to the election, IPOB held a massive rally and threatened voters with death if they vote and also vowed to disrupt the election. This factor may have accounted for the massive deployment of security in the state.

While the security officers are largely reported to have been decorous, there are few isolated incidences of high handedness. On Friday, 17th November, the eve of the election, observers witnessed police officials driving in Hilux vans in the capital, Awka, shooting indiscriminately into the air at flyover, at Aroma junction of the capital at about 2pm.

There was also the case of the Punch correspondent whom police threatened to shoot for taking photographs. However, we have no evidence at this point to show that the massive deployment of military affected voter’s turnout. A review of the voter turnout in Anambra state since 2007 reveals a progressive decline. For instance, of the 1.84 million registered voters in the State for the 2010 governorship election only 302,000 voted, representing a mere 16 per cent voter turnout. Again, in 2013, while a total of 1, 770,127 were registered, only 465,891 voted representing just 24 per cent voter turn-out

Incidences

Our observers reported an isolated case of ballot box snatching by two men at the Amaugochukwu Hall 1 polling unit in Idemili South Local Government which led to the disruption of accreditation and voting. The NEC officials were reported to have fled the scene with the ballot papers only to return to discover that the card reader and ballot box had been carted away. However, it is important to state that as at the time of filing this report, there was no significant violent incident recorded.

While the voting phase of this election has ended and counting is underway, it is important for us to critically compare and contrast the elections with previous elections, for instance the November 26th, 2016 Ondo elections. The elections witnessed early opening, few challenges with smart card readers and other logistics. It is important to interrogate the Anambra election to be sure that environmental variables have not contributed to the challenge being witnessed.

The election analysis centre ran by Premium Times and Centre for Democracy and Development will be issuing another release on the result collation phase.

Signed

Idayat Hassan
Director

Dapo Olorunyomi
CEO & Publisher