



Statement on the Kogi Gubernatorial Election Saturday December 4th, 2011

Delivered at the Sheraton Hotel, Abuja

National Steering
Committee Members

Summary

Dafe Akpedeye (SAN)
1st Co-Chair

Mashood Erubami
2nd Co-Chair

Dr. Aisha Akanbi

Rev. Fr. Zacharia Sanjumi

Priscilla Achakpa

Rev. Fr. Ben Asogo

Reuben James

Farida Sada Yusuf

Honourary Members

Olisa Agbakoba (SAN)

Hajia Bilkiisu (nni)

Professor Bolanle Awe

Ex Officio

Victor Agbogun
Project Manager

Ladies and gentlemen of the press, on behalf of the National Steering Committee (NSC) of Project Swift Count, it is our pleasure to welcome you to this press conference to report on our initial observations concerning the December 3rd, 2011 Kogi Gubernatorial Elections. Now that INEC has announced the official results, we are able to verify the accuracy, as well as provide detailed information related to the processes of Election Day.

As you already know, Project Swift Count is jointly carried out 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 rich diversity of Nigeria, it brings together Christians and Muslims, as well as organizations with citizen election observation and legal expertise.

Project Swift Count deployed 800 observers who reported from 400 polling units and used a sample of 331 polling units in all of Kogi's 21 local government areas (LGA) where elections were held December 3rd. Based on the information received thus far, Project Swift Count found that while the election was not perfect, it noted backsliding in some areas from April's Polls, that it provided a meaningful opportunity for Kogi people to exercise their right to vote.

Despite the delays faced in starting the day, people who chose to exercise their franchise did so enthusiastically. Project Swift Count commends the people of Kogi State for their resilience and commitment to the democratic process.

Members who served as polling officials turned out en masse to perform their national duty despite many challenges.

Voter turnout in Kogi should cause concern. Almost two-thirds of registered voters did not participate in the Gubernatorial election. This is not an anomaly because April's elections registered similar low turnout based on the certified voters' register.

Methodology

The primary objective of Project Swift Count is to help promote free, fair, peaceful, credible and legitimate elections in Nigeria that are conducted in accordance with international and regional standards as well as the laws and the constitution of our country and the “Declaration of Global Principles for Nonpartisan Election Observation and Monitoring by Citizen Organisations”.

The Swift Count methodology provides voters, political contestants and electoral authorities with accurate, real-time information of the conduct of the accreditation of voters, voting and counting. This serves as a deterrent to anyone attempting to manipulate the process. Project Swift Count will also be able to provide voters and political contestants greater confidence that the official results accurately reflect the ballots cast or otherwise.

Swift Count uses samples of polling units for each election that have been carefully selected by trained Nigerian statisticians, using time-tested statistical principles to ensure that they are both representative and unbiased. This methodology, when matched with the latest technology—text messages transmitted by cell phones to a central data base—enables Project Swift Count to present an objective, nonpartisan, real-time information on the conduct of the election and to verify the accuracy of the official results.

Findings on Kogi poll

In analyzing the data, Project Swift Count drew a comparison with the April polls and found as follows:

Accreditation

Project Swift Count observers reported that officials were present at 7:30 am at 18% of polling units compared to 42% in April’s Presidential elections.

Observers reported that accreditation of voters started at 34% of polling units by 9:00 am, this compares to 76% in the Presidential election.

- Only 5% of our observers reported incidents of harassment or intimidation compared to 6% during the Presidential election.
- Observers reported that there was an average of 2 polling officials at polling units.
- In addition, there was on average 3 party agents at polling units.

Voting

In 10% of polling places people were accredited to vote after accreditation closed, compared to 15% in the Presidential election.

Project Swift Count observers reported that voting began by 1pm at 57% of polling units, significantly worse than the 80% reported for the Presidential election.

- In 93% of polling places voters' names were always checked in the register.
- Observers report that in 5.4 % of polling stations there was intimidation or harassment, compared to 5% in the Presidential election.
- Observers reported that in 11.5% of polling units voters were not able to mark their ballots in secret.

Counting

On December 4, 2011 INEC announced the official results; a total of 1,325,272 registered voters in Kogi and a total of 518,949 votes cast. INEC reported turnout as 39.1%. Project Swift Count calculated turnout at 35.1%. Unfortunately, these numbers closely match turnout in previous elections, the Presidential election in April in particular.

Compared to April, 9% of our Project Swift Count Kogi observers reported incidents of harassment or intimidation in the counting process which, sadly, represents an increase from 5% in the Presidential poll.

97% of observers reported that the ballot papers were properly sorted and counted at polling units, a 2% decline from the 99% reported in April's Presidential election.

In only 6% of polling units did observers report that party agents disagreed with the announced results unlike the April Presidential elections which was 4%.

- Project Swift Count observers reported that official results were not posted in only 8% of polling units.
- Observers reported that in 5% of polling units the announced results did not match the posted results.

Critical Incidents

During accreditation, relatively few incidents were reported. However, they increased as the voting process began, though they were isolated to specific polling units. Of the 18 incidents reported, 64% came from Kogi East Senatorial District. Serious incidents involving violence occurred in at least three reported polling units, resulting in the suspension of voting. These polling units are located in Olamaboro, Omala, and Adavi LGAs.

Violence, intimidation, and harassment was also reported in polling stations, but did not result in suspended voting, in the following LGAs - Yagba West, Dekina, Olamaboro, and Ankpa. In addition to reported violence, other accounts included late arrival of materials, accreditation of voters after voting had started, and illegal voting.

While no level of violence, intimidation, harassment, fraud or serious error is acceptable in democratic elections, the reported incidents were not widespread as to affect the overall outcome or the generally acceptable tone of the Kogi gubernatorial elections.

Reports of our observers indicate that political parties did not demonstrate the expected level of maturity and respect for the voting public.

Verification of Official INEC Results

Using a random representative sample that included reports from 331 polling units Project Swift Count is able to verify the official results as announced by INEC. Results collected by our observers at the polling units. Observers collect results as they are posted at the polling unit.

The results below demonstrate that the official results as announced by INEC and Swift Count estimates are very similar.

Table 1: Swift Count Kogi Gubernatorial Election Estimates		
PARTIES	*INEC Official Results (%)	PSC Estimates (%)
PDP	62.04	61.2
ACN	33.03	32.6
ANPP	1.99	2.5
CPC	1.18	1.0

** Official results as announced by INEC, live on NTA December 4, 2011*

Conclusions and Recommendations

- As PSC estimates are based on polling unit level results, there is very little probability that the collation process was subject to manipulation. However as has been previously noted, the current collation process is a manual one, and is subject to human or deliberate error.
- Logistics challenges continue to plague elections in Nigeria. Rather than having improved, over April, polling officials and materials were not properly deployed in a timely manner. INEC has room to improve. It must demonstrate continued progress and build on each experience.
- While INEC needs to be congratulated for its open cooperation with observer groups, a number of improvements in place for April's polls were noticeably absent. Publication and online posting of official documents, announcements, and forms was noticeably less effective for the Kogi poll. Aside from the public good in providing accessible information, official information provided in a timely manner has the potential to limit inflammatory speculation, and ensure a higher standard of transparency.
- INEC trained personnel maintained a consistent degree of attention to the process, and should continue their efforts to comply with all established procedures.
- Voter turn- out in Kogi continues to be low. INEC reports in April of 2011 that only 39.9% of eligible Kogi voters went to the polls for the Presidential election. Again for December 3, 2011 both INEC and Project Swift Count reports lower turn out, (39% INEC and 35% PSC). This consistent low rate needs urgent examination and remedy.
- Intimidation of voters and observers in particular by thugs and community members persists as an intolerable situation. More effort needs to be made by governments, INEC, and civil society to educate communities on the importance of credible elections, and the necessity of citizen observation.
- Secrecy of the ballot continues to be a problem, violating a fundamental dimension of democratic elections. INEC must review the processes in place allowing voters to cast ballots with their choice free from scrutiny. Polling officials, security forces, political parties, and citizens must promote this critically important aspect of voting.
- Security personnel, working with INEC, have again demonstrated their restrained ability to positively contribute to democratic processes. Security agencies and forces should continue to support their personnel with additional training and education in advance of future electoral exercises.
- There is an urgent need for political parties and contestants to show maturity and respect for the voting process so as to forestall nefarious practices that will be debilitating to the democratic process.

- Additionally, police, prosecutors, INEC, and the judicial system must make an example of those who deliberately undermine Nigeria's aspirations for free, fair, and peaceful elections.

Once again, we congratulate the people of Kogi for conducting themselves in a largely peaceful manner. The National Steering Committee of Project Swift Count also wishes to thank the patriotic commitment of its observers, who often faced challenges in trying to contribute to the fabric of our Nigerian democracy. We also take this opportunity to announce that Project Swift Count is in the process of preparing for observing the Adamawa Gubernatorial elections in January.

Thank you for coming today, and God bless Nigeria.

END



Dafe Akpedeye (SAN)
1st Co-Chair



Mashood Erubami
2nd Co-Chair

For further media enquiries contact
Festus Owete: 08033312677, email: festusowete@yahoo.com or pscnigeria.org