

# PROJECT 2011 SWIFT COUNT



## PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

May 18, 2011

### April 2011 Election – A Potent Safeguard for Democratic Consolidation

#### National Steering Committee Members

Dafe Akpedeye (SAN)  
1<sup>st</sup> Co-Chair

Mashood Erubami  
2<sup>nd</sup> Co-Chair

Dr. Aisha Akanbi

Rev. Fr. Zacharia Samjumi

Priscilla Achakpa

Rev. Fr. Ben Asogo

Reuben James

Farida Sada Yusuf

#### Honourary Members

Olisa Agbakoba (SAN)

Hajia Bilkisu (mni)

Prof. Bolanle Awe

#### Ex Officio

Victor Agbogun  
Project Manager

Project 2011 Swift Count, a nonpartisan joint effort by four groups (FOMWAN, JDPC/Caritas, NBA, and TMG) representing the rich diversity of Nigerian society, reported today that while the 2011 April general elections were not perfect and were marred with incidence of intimidations and harassments, denial of accredited observers to access some polling units, violence, ballot box snatching, and other election malpractices and irregularities, overall the elections were good, credible and transparent.

The group in a final statement on the general elections noted that it deployed close to 8000 stationary and mobile observers for the National Assembly, Presidential and Gubernatorial elections. The observers were deployed to a representative random sample of polling units throughout the country and its observers were in every state and in every LGA of the country. Based on the reports received from its observers, who reported by text messages, Project 2011 Swift Count observed the accreditation, voting and counting process of each of the election. The group also, through its swift count methodology, verified the accuracy of the presidential results as announced by INEC as well as the official results for Plateau, Borno, Kano and Oyo gubernatorial elections.

The statement said based on its overall findings “the elections marked a departure from flawed and sour elections that this country has experienced over the last twelve years, particularly the 2007 elections”. Dafe Akpedeye (SAN), 1<sup>st</sup> co-chair of the group noted that “the elections were neither perfect nor faultless; they revealed persistent challenges, including logistical problems and election-related violence. Nevertheless, the elections provided genuine opportunity for citizens to exercise their rights to vote and for their votes to count”.

The group noted that “there is no doubt that the modified option A4 also known as **“simultaneous accreditation, simultaneous voting”** ensured the transparency of the election and gave integrity to the electoral system giving the electorate who so desires, to wait and obtain the result of the election in which he/she has participated”. Mashood Erubami, the 2<sup>nd</sup> co-chair of the group said “the overall general conduct of the 2011 elections dimmed the bad

experiences witnessed in the 1959, 1963/1964, 1983, 1999, 2003, 2007 and positively built on the glimmer of hope built by the 1993 presidential election to create a new template for future freer, fairer and non-controversial election in the country”.

The group expressed worry with the spate of election-related incidence and violence that characterized the elections. It unreservedly condemned the levels of violence that characterized the pre-election, election and post-election periods. “Violence has been the greatest obstacle to credible election in Nigeria but it was limited before and during the election, except when it became a post election phenomenon, but it was quickly put down with many arrest made of people who participated in the post election mayhem”. The group stated that its findings indicated a steady progression in levels of critical incidents from the national assembly through to the presidential and gubernatorial elections. “Overall, credible reports were received from our observers and international and domestic media indicating that at least the elections were freer, fairer and not violent ridden in large part of the country”. The group welcomed the setting up of a commission of inquiry by the President to look into the causes of the violence that occurred following the presidential polls and hopes that the commission will be diligent in its work.

### **Commendations:**

1. Project 2011 Swift Count commends and congratulates the Chair of INEC, Professor Attahiru Jega, for his sterling leadership qualities and the transparent manner he administered affairs of INEC during the elections. We believe that the INEC Chair has brought the yearning respect to the commission, not only in Nigeria but in the international community;
2. The group also commends the entire leadership of INEC, its staff, the Resident Electoral Commissioners (RECs), and its adhoc staff for their commitment and dedication towards the electoral process;
3. Project 2011 Swift Count commends the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) for the untiring efforts and contributions to democratic development in Nigeria. It regretted the loss of NYSC members due to election violence and commiserated with their families. While urging the authorities to apprehend and bring to justice those behind this deplorable acts of violence, Project 2011 Swift Count commends government for its program to rehabilitate the victims of these violent acts and also offer support to the families of the dead. Project 2011 Swift Count, however, recommends to government to go a step further by immortalizing those NYSC staff who lost their lives to demonstrate a recognition of their contributions to Nigeria’s democracy;
4. Project 2011 Swift Count commends all political parties, security agencies, civic organizations, domestic and international observers for their contributions to credible and successful elections. Without all the stakeholders, joining hands with INEC, this country would not have pulled off this incredible election outcome;
5. Project 2011 Swift Count commends the civil society community and the media for your steadfastness and resilience in the defence of our democracy;
6. Project 2011 Swift Count commends international observer groups for staying the course and expressing faith in Nigeria’s democratic process;
7. Project 2011 Swift Count commends the people of Nigeria for being patient and for their resolve to make democracy succeed in this country. Undaunted by the stream of violence in some parts of the country, millions of Nigerians went out on each election day to exercise their franchise and this alone demonstrated the desire of Nigerians to sustain the democratic process

### **Condemnations:**

1. Project 2011 Swift Count unreservedly condemns the levels of violence that characterized the pre-election, election and post-election periods. The level of violence experienced, especially in the aftermath of the presidential polls in the northern part of Nigeria, has no place in a democracy. It is heartening that the

government has instituted a 22-member commission of inquiry to investigate the causes of the post-election violence that occurred. Project 2011 Swift Count hopes that the commission will be diligent in its work and not only will perpetrators be brought to justice but the work of the commission will lead to the prevention of such violence in the future.

2. Project 2011 Swift Count condemns the significant levels of intimidation and harassment that were perpetrated against observers. Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1789 guarantees the right of Nigerians to participate in the affairs of their country. *“Any person has the right to take part in the direction of the public affairs of his or her country; either directly or via freely elected representatives”*. The article also establishes that free elections are the only legitimate basis for the authority of a government. It states thus *“The will of the people is the base of the power of the authorities this WILL must be expressed by honest election which must take place periodically*. The acts of intimidation against accredited observers no doubt are appalling and could undermine citizens’ engagement with the democratic process, as they illustrate the level of desperation on the part of politicians and their associates.
3. We strongly condemn leaders of local communities, in particular local government chairmen, who by their actions and inactions deprived citizen groups, accredited by INEC, of their mandate to observe the elections. Local government chairmen are not INEC officials and are also not members of the security agencies. They should not take the law into their hands by doing things that they are not mandated to do.

### **Recommendations:**

The April 2011 general elections have come and gone. Based on our findings and the lessons from the April 2011 elections, Project 2011 Swift Count recommends the following:

## **A**

### **Future voting procedures**

- INEC should ensure that ballot papers include the names and pictures of candidates and not only the party symbol and party abbreviation.
- INEC should ensure that the required numbers of staff are present in polling stations throughout election day.
- INEC should ensure that voting booths are distributed in sufficient time to all polling stations and all polling staff are trained to erect them and fully implement all procedures designed to ensure secrecy of the vote.
- INEC should publish on its website, names and contact phones and addresses of all electoral officials both ad hoc and permanent

### **Future the election petition process**

- The electoral act should be review in a way that all election-related disputes would be determined before certificate of return is handed to the winner or assumption of office of those elected.
- Consideration should therefore be given to amending the Constitution in order to provide a more realistic timeframe between the date of the election and the inauguration into office.
- New Electoral Act should enable voters, domestic observers or other election stakeholders to file election petitions based on their observations and findings.

### **Participation of women in the electoral process**

- Political parties should establish effective policies to facilitate participation by female candidates in all elections. International support should be directed towards such efforts
- INEC on its own must make conscious efforts to ensure greater involvement of women in the election administration at all levels.

## **Independence of the judiciary**

- New reform measures should be introduced to ensure that the authorities do not interfere in the judicial process. In addition, INEC in the discharge of its duty should continue to adhere to the rule of law and observe at all times all judicial declarations.

## **Security, Human Rights and Elections Policing**

- Law enforcement agencies should strengthen their impartiality and capacity to police polling booths, materials, electoral officers and election materials. INEC should conduct regular and continuously review the voters register and protect the conduct of elections in an effective and credible manner throughout the country.
- INEC staff, political party agents, observers and other election stakeholders should receive appropriate security protection throughout the election process.

## **B**

### **To INEC:**

- Independent National Electoral Commission should allocate appropriate time and resources to election planning, staff capacity building, the voter registration process, the candidate selection process, data management, polling staff recruitment and training, voter and civic education and compliance mechanisms
- INEC should demonstrate democratic commitment to work with all stakeholders to ensure peaceful and credible elections, working together with the security agencies and explore ways of ensuring that all accredited observers are able to observe elections in future without inhibitions.
- The right of domestic observers to observe the entire election process should be guaranteed by law.
- The Electoral Act should be amended to establish a clear procedure, including appropriate criteria, for approval or rejection of an application for accreditation. Accreditation for observers should be published and accessible for completion by observer institutions from the date that INEC announces the election timetable.
- Adequate visibility and accreditation materials should be printed by INEC and distributed to accredited organization with their accreditation circulated to all INEC offices and police formation
- INEC should address its logistical challenges. The voter registration exercise and the elections exposed INEC on this front. Careful and proper logistical planning hold the key to credible and legitimate elections on election days. It is important that INEC conducts a retrospective exercise to determine its weaknesses and finds ways to address it for the integrity of future elections; Conduct operations transparently and conduct outreach activities with political parties, domestic monitors and international observers, and security services.
- Create unhindered access to all aspects of the election process to political party, candidate agents, domestic election monitors and observers.
- Partner with the press to ensure that accurate information on the electoral process is provided to the public.
- Take all measures to ensure the accessibility of the voting process to marginalized groups.
- INEC should intensify its call for setting up of the electoral offences commission, recommended by Justice Muhammad Lawal Uwais-led electoral reforms committee, as part of its approach to address electoral violence. Such a commission should bring the Police administration on board to find ways of dealing with election-related violence that are criminal in nature.
- Widespread **voter and civic education should be executed** by the State Independent Election Commission in collaboration with civil society organizations;
- Appointment into INEC should not be on the basis of party loyalty but ceded to distinguished persons with character and the will to serve, as only people of impeccable character and track record can uphold the ethics

of elections with integrity.

- In the administration of future elections, INEC should be unbundled of its various tasks by creating a party registration commission and an election crime commission.
- Finally, INEC should consider organizing a consultative post-election stakeholder conference to draw lessons from the just ended general elections. Such a forum should bring INEC leadership, political parties, civil society groups, particularly domestic observer groups, and security agencies to outline and articulate the things that worked well with a view to sustaining or improving on them as well as identifying the flaws that emerged from these elections and make appropriate recommendations for deepening the electoral reforms and process in Nigeria

#### **To political parties:**

1. Even the playing field to ensure credible, domestic and peaceful elections by advocating for electoral and regulatory framework.
2. Take proactive actions to promote and participate in multi-stakeholder and inter-party dialogue platforms to ensure a transparent and inclusive electoral process.
3. Commit to peaceful actions during electoral periods, sign and enforce codes of conduct and educate party activists to honour their provisions.
4. Ensure that voter register is displayed as appropriate for people to contest and periodically make claims.
5. Involve in issue-based campaign and politicking, derive manifesto from the people and ensure that the documents serve the cause of the electorate.
6. Conduct democratic and transparent candidate selection processes.
7. Use the time between elections to recruit and educate members, and prepare women and youth leaders for positions of leadership, within party structures and as candidates for elected office.

#### **For domestic and international observer groups:**

1. Adhere to international standards and principles guiding their actions. Monitors and observers must be selected on the basis of competence and impartiality, and codes of conduct should be enforced for all involved in observation and monitoring efforts.
2. Endeavour to observe and report on all aspects of the electoral process, including factors that affect the overall political environment.
3. Conduct activities in a fully impartial and transparent manner
4. Endeavour to coordinate, to the fullest extent possible, efforts between groups and within coalitions.
5. Pledge to work with all other stakeholders to ensure peaceful and credible elections

#### **To security and military services:**

1. Review and reinforce institutional mechanisms to ensure full impartiality in the conduct of official duties during the entire electoral process.
2. Play a discretion led and proactive roles in national, sub-national and local-level electoral coordinating bodies in order to maximize intra-government cooperation and coordination throughout electoral processes.
3. Maintain high standards of professionalism during electoral periods

#### **To the media:**

1. State owned and state controlled media must subscribe to and enforce codes of conduct prohibiting biased news or other coverage and must guarantee accurate, fair and equitable coverage of electoral contestants.
2. State owned and state controlled media must provide free (unpaid) access, without prior censorship, on an

equitable basis for all electoral contestants across their distribution channels

3. State owned and state controlled media must provide robust voter education to ensure citizens know voter registration and polling day procedures.
4. Private media should adopt codes of conduct, ethical standards and professional guidelines requiring unbiased, accurate and equitable news coverage of political parties and electoral candidates.
5. State owned, state controlled and private media must assume responsibility for training journalists and media personnel within their establishments in order to cover elections accurately, effectively and professionally.

The National Steering Committee of the group commended all Nigerians, INEC, security agencies and civic groups for collaborating to ensure that the elections were successfully conducted. This transparency fostered by checks and balances in the electoral process created a more conducive space for local and international observers to observe the general conduct of the elections and verify the official votes declared by INEC which boosted the confidence of the people and uplifted the integrity of the electoral system. According to the statement “the outcomes of these elections should inspire Nigerians to deepen the discourse on electoral reforms aimed at a more transparent and credible electoral processes as well as legitimate outcomes”.

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 rich 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.

God Bless Nigeria



Dafe Akpedeye  
1<sup>st</sup> Co-Chair



Mashood Erubami  
2<sup>nd</sup> Co-Chair

###

**For media inquiries please contact:**

Muritala Abdul-Rasheed: Tel. +234 8033231849 Email [media@pscnigeria.org](mailto:media@pscnigeria.org)

Chibuike Mgbeahuruike: Tel +234 7036024736

Learn more about Project 2011 Swift Count at [www.pscnigeria.org](http://www.pscnigeria.org)

