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Statement on the Edo State Governorship Election – Held 14 July 2012

Delivered at Sheraton Hotels, Abuja on 16 July 2012

Summary

Ladies and gentlemen of the press, the National Steering Committee (NSC) of Project Swift Count welcomes you to this press conference to report on our observation findings for the 14 July 2012, Edo State governorship election.

As you already know, Project Swift Count (PSC) 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.

For the Edo State governorship election, Project Swift Count deployed 834 observers across all 18 Local Government Areas (LGAs) — 800 stationary observers at 400 polling units and 34 mobile observers.

The polling units to which stationary observers were deployed were carefully selected as a random, representative sample of all 2,627 polling units

across Edo State; therefore, PSC is able to conclude, with 95% certainty, that its qualitative observations about the electoral process and its quantitative estimates of the election results reflect the process and results from all 2,627 polling units in Edo State, not merely at the polling units observed.

Our findings today address the processes of accreditation of voters, the voting and counting at polling units, and the verification of the Edo State governorship election results as announced by the Independent National Election Commission (INEC).

Project Swift Count finds generally that the process provided most of the people of Edo State with a meaningful opportunity to exercise their right to vote and that the official results as announced by INEC accurately reflect the ballots cast at polling units;

Project Swift Count wishes to recognize the commendable level of participation in the election by the citizens of Edo State and to congratulate their peaceful conduct. Project Swift Count also observed that the adequate security presence was of tremendous help in maintaining the peaceful environment.

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 Non-partisan Election Observation and Monitoring by Citizen Organisations”.

The Swift Count methodology provides voters, political contestants and electoral authorities with an accurate, real-time picture of the conduct of the accreditation of voters, voting, and counting. This serves as a deterrent to anyone tempted to

manipulate the process. Project Swift Count also provides voters and political contestants greater confidence whether or not the official results accurately reflect the ballots cast.

Project 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, non-partisan, real-time picture of the conduct of the election and to verify the accuracy of the official results.

Findings

Opening of Polling Units

INEC continues to suffer logistic challenges as evidenced by the delayed deployment of polling officials and election materials to some polling units.

- As of 7:30 am, at only 26% of the polling units across Edo State had polling officials and election materials arrived at the polling unit. This compares poorly against Kebbi (53%) and Sokoto (43%) but is similar to Cross River (19%) and Bayelsa (32%).
- One percent (1%) of the polling units never opened in Edo. In comparison, Kebbi and Sokoto States reported all polling units opened, while some polling units also failed to open in Cross River (3%) and Bayelsa (9%).

Accreditation of Voters

- Accreditation of voters had started by 9:00 a.m. at 44% of polling units, with 96% by noon. This is worse than Sokoto State (73%) and Kebbi State (65%) but better than Cross River State (35%) and Bayelsa State (32%).

- Across all polling units, there were on average 3 polling officials and 4 political party polling agents present at polling units.
- There were security personnel at 98% of the polling units.
- At 97.5% of polling units, no one was accredited to vote who did not have a voter's card, while at an additional 2.3% of polling units, only a few people were accredited who did not have voter's card.
- At 99% of polling units, none or only a few voters were turned away because their names were not found on the register of voters.
- All or most voters' names were ticked in the register of voters at 98% of all polling units, and all or most voters had their cuticles marked with indelible ink at 99% of polling units.

Of concern during accreditation of voters:

- Everyone or nearly everyone remained at their assigned polling unit after being accredited at 82% of polling units; however, at 12% of the polling units, most people left their assigned polling unit after being accredited. This problem was most acute in Ovia South-West, Etsako Central, Orhionmwon, Esan South-West, and Ikpoba Okha LGAs.
- There were incidents of harassment or intimidation at 4% of polling units during the accreditation process. While 8 of 18 LGAs reported no incidents, this problem was most significant in Owan East (12%), Akoko Edo (10%), Uhunmwonde (8%), Etsako East (7%), and Esan North-East (6%) LGAs.
- Of the incidents of harassment reported during accreditation, the majority of incidents (75%) were attributed to agents of political parties, while there were no incidents attributed to security forces.

Voting

- Voting had commenced by 2:00 pm at 93% of polling units.
- At 6% of polling units, new voters were accredited once voting had commenced. This is compared with Kebbi State (11%), Cross River State (19%), Sokoto State (10%), and Bayelsa State (16%).
- At 99% of polling units, the ballot box was shown to be empty before being closed and locked.
- At 94% of polling units, voters were able to mark their ballots in secret.
- At virtually every polling unit, all or almost all voters showed voters cards and had indelible ink on the cuticle of a left finger when voting;
- At 98% of polling units, all ballot papers were stamped and signed;
- All voters' cuticles on a right finger were marked with indelible ink at 95% of polling units..
- All voters' names were checked in the register of voters at 97% of polling units.
- Incidents of harassment or intimidation during the voting process occurred at only 2.3% of the polling units. While 12 of 18 LGAs reported no incidents, Owan East (12%), Owan West (9%), and Esan South-East (7%) LGAs reported substantially higher incidents of harassment or intimidation during the voting process..
- Of the incidents of harassment reported during voting, the majority of incidents (64%) were attributed to agents of political parties, while 18% of incidents were attributed to security forces.

Counting

- Ballot papers were properly sorted and counted at 99% of polling units.

- At 99% of polling units, the official results were publicly posted, and these posted results matched the announced results at 98% of the polling units.
- At 5% of polling units, some political party agents present disagreed with the results as announced by the polling officials. This issue was most problematic in Esan North-East (13%), Owan East (12%), and Etsako Central (9%) LGAs.
- Acts of harassment or intimidation during the counting process occurred at only 1.5% of the polling units. While no incidents were reported in 13 of 18 LGAs, there were incidents reported in Esan West (12%), Owan East (4%), Owan West (4%), Orhionmwon (3%), and Oredo (2%) LGAs.
- Of the incidents of harassment reported during accreditation, the majority of incidents (55%) were attributed to agents of political parties, while there were no incidents attributed to security forces.

Turn-out and Rejected Ballots

The estimated turnout for the Edo State governorship election is 44.4%, with a margin of error of 3.9%. This is compared with Kebbi (51.8%), Cross River (37%), Sokoto (29.9%), Adamawa (37.5%) and Kogi (35.1%).

Rejected ballots (meaning those for which the voter's intent could not be clearly determined and hence were not counted) were estimated at 2.1%.

Verification of Official Results

Using a random, representative sample that included reports from 400 polling units, the results estimated by Project Swift Count are consistent with the results announced by INEC.* Our observers collected official results as they were announced and posted at the polling units by INEC.

Table 1: Project Swift Count Edo State Governorship Election*

| Political Party | PSC Estimates (%) | Margin of Error (at 95% level of confidence) | PSC Estimated Range (%) | INEC Announced Results (%) |
|------------------------|--------------------------|---|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| ACN | 76.7% | 3.0% | 73.7% – 79.7% | 73.7%* |
| PDP | 21.9% | 5.9% | 16.0% – 27.8% | 22.3%* |
| Remaining 5 parties | 1.3% | 0.4% | 0.9% – 1.7% | 1.3%* |
| Rejected Ballots | 2.3% | 0.7% | 1.6% - 3.0% | 2.7%* |

*Results as announced on NTA by INEC on 15 July 2012.

The order and magnitude of the INEC results for each of these parties is the same as the Swift Count estimates. Because Project Swift Count was able to independently collect official results from polling units and arrive at the same results as INEC, political contestants and the public alike should have a high degree of confidence that the official results as announced by INEC reflect the votes cast in the Edo State governorship election.

Critical Incidents

Critical incidents are electoral irregularities, whether intentional or inadvertent, that could undermine the integrity of the overall process if they were to occur at significant levels and rates. From the 834 observers, only 40 critical incident reports were received.

The most frequently reported incidents were:

- late arrival of election materials
- intimidation or harassment
- under-age voting

The less frequently reported incidents included:

- Eligible accredited voters not permitted to vote
- accreditation of voters after voting has commenced

While these incidents are serious and must be addressed by INEC, they did not occur at levels and rates that would substantially undermine the integrity of the overall electoral process or the results of the Edo State governorship election held 14 July 2012.

Recommendations

- Only 26% of the polling units were opened on time. This compares poorly against Kebbi and Sokoto States. INEC must address this issue for the upcoming governorship election in Ondo State.
- INEC should reconcile the voter's registers and display same at least two weeks before any election so that registered voters will not be disenfranchised.
- INEC is encouraged to implement continuous voter registration to ensure that all eligible voters are able to register and are not disenfranchised for any election in which they wish to participate.

Project Swift Count plans to continue to observe the electoral process and deploy observers for the upcoming Governorship Election in Ondo State.

God Bless Nigeria



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Learn more about Project Swift Count at www.pscnigeria.org