

INEC Preparation Ahead of the Anambra State Governorship Election

A paper presented at Policy and Legal Advocacy Center (PLAC) Civil Society/INEC Dialogue on Anambra State Governorship Election.

By

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Anambra State represents a microcosm of Nigeria before and after military rule. Before the intervention of the Nigeria military into the governance of this country, the years 1960 (when Nigeria become an independent state), to 1966 (the year when the Nigerian military took over the governance of the country for the first time) Nigeria witnessed unprecedented development in all walks of life. For instance, in Agriculture, Nigeria's agricultural products formed the bulk of raw materials of the food processing industries in the Western world. For example, Nigeria by the 1960s was the no.1 producer of Palm oil and Kernel, no.2 producer of Cocoa and no.3 producer of groundnuts in the world. Hides and skin, cotton, shea butter, and rubber to mention a few were of world class standard and widely sought for. In terms of macadamized roads, Nigeria had the densest network of macadamized roads in Africa. The industrial development which were propelled by the Kainji Dam Hydro-electric power project and the Elesha Eleme petrochemical refinery, made the Nigerian economy buoyant and a force to be reckoned with.

During that time the products of Nigerian primary and secondary schools were amongst the best in the world. In the area of high level manpower development, Nigerian first generation universities – University of Ibadan, University of Nigeria Nsukka, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria and University of Ife – were amongst the most highly rated Universities in the world. Given the potentials of the enormous human and material resources in the country, Africans in the Diaspora and the Third World looked up to Nigeria to provide economic, political, educational etc leadership in the development of the human and material resources in the Third World. That is why for instance, Malaysia depended solely on Nigeria for the development of its Palm oil and Kernel industries. One can therefore contend that the period between 1960 and 1966 marked the golden age of the development of the human and material resources that abound in Nigeria.

To some extent, the Nigeria scenario was replicated in Anambra State. Between 1960 and 1966 Anambra State projected the best of what Nigerian has ever had. For instance, the first African Vice-Chancellor of a University, Professor K. Dike hailed from Anambra State. The first Governor General and later first President of Nigeria came from Anambra State. The first Secretary General of the Commonwealth of Nations, Chief Emeka Anyaoku came from

Anambra State. The first Nigerian novelist whose novel (*Jagua Nana*) was filmed, Cyprian Ekwensi, was from Anambra State. It is to be noted that Cyprian Ekwensi was a Pharmacist by profession. The world master story teller Chinua Achebe whose novel **Things Fall Apart**, has been translated to over one hundred languages in the world, who clinched many coveted literary awards and was short-listed for the Nobel prize in literature hailed from Anambra State. The first Nigerian University graduate to be enlisted in the Nigerian armed forces Dim Chukwuemeka Odimegwu Ojukwu was from Anambra State. The most successful African business mogul whose sneeze sent shivers to the British colonial masters in the fifties and sixties – Sir Odimegwu Ojukwu – came from Anambra State. The list of first achievers in Nigeria – recalling the Chike Obi’s, Pius Okigbo’s etc – is definitely endless. As a matter of fact before the 1940s, Eastern Nigeria to which Anambra State belonged, was much lower in the rung of educational attainment than Western Nigeria which placed first in the educational rung of the country. However, by 1960 when Nigeria achieved its independence, Eastern Nigeria to which Anambra State was on the top position had surpassed Western Nigeria in the educational continuum in Nigeria.

Unfortunately, when the Nigeria military took over the reigns of governance in Nigeria, the development momentum in Nigeria could no longer be sustained. It is therefore an incontrovertible fact that the intervention of the Nigerian military in the governance of the country stalled the attainment of sustainable development in the land. As Onukaogu (2012) and Iwu (2008) have pointed out, Sustainable Development (SD) can not be attained where there is no good governance. Given my contention elsewhere (Onukaogu, 2012 : 17), I see Sustainable Development (SD) as the

- ✓ Management and renewal of natural and human resource base
- ✓ Sustenance of the art of good governance, especially democratic governance
- ✓ Enhancement of information dissemination so that every member of government and community is involved in information receiving and giving.
- ✓ Promotion of the market and economic policies of government (Onukaogu, 2012: 17).

I take the stand that good governance is the pedestal or fulcrum which propels the attainment of SD. I therefore share Ogundiya’s view that:

Good governance means accountability in all its ramifications. It also means the rule of law and an unfettered judiciary; that is freedom of expression and choice of political association. Good governance means transparency, equity and honesty in public office. In the Nigerian context, good governance calls for constitutional rule and a true federal system. These are the basic pedestals on which development rests (Ogundiya, 2010: 204).

Besides,

If governance is generally referred to as the means for achieving directions, control and coordination of wholly or partially autonomous individuals or organizations on behalf of interests to which they jointly contribute (Lyn et al 2000) then good governance in the words of Healey and Robinson (1994) implies “a high level of organizational effectiveness in relation to policy formulation and the policies actually pursued, especially, in the conduct of economic policy and welfare”. More especially,

it is the means by which power is exercised in the management of development” (World Bank, 1992, quoted in Azeez: 2009: 218).

That is to say that

It is impossible for an economy to flourish where “the might of the sword” rather than free and fair elections decide who should rule. A government that shoulders responsibilities for sustainable development and ensures its peoples’ solidarity, order and continuity, creates an environment on which its citizens can exercise their productive, political and cultural abilities (Novaltis Foundation, 2012: 3).

That our country Nigeria could not attain SD during over three decades of military rule is to a large extent as a result of our people not being allowed to elect those who should govern them. It is therefore incontrovertible that if good governance is to become a culture in Nigeria, Nigerians must be free to elect those who govern them (Ujo, 2012). The position or view that only elected people should be in charge of governance if SD is to be achieved is also shared by Iwu (2008). In stressing that the objective of setting up the Electoral Institute is to promote the attainment of SD, Iwu succinctly contends that:

The objective is sustainable development especially in line with the views of Denis Gouler in **The Cruel Choice**. In his view, three basic components or core values should serve as a conceptual basis and practical guideline for understanding the inner meaning of development and, hence, democratic consolidation. These are:

- ✓ Life sustenance: The ability to provide basic necessities
- ✓ Self-Esteem: To be a person
- ✓ Freedom from servitude: To be able to choose

What this means is that one clearly needs enough in order to be more and, development and democracy should be avenues for gaining self-esteem. Freedom to choose here implies a range of economic and social options outside any form of bondage. In this setting, cohesion and undermining the will of others by deploying either material, inducement or physical force have no place (Iwu, 2008: 11-12).

Arising from my advocacy and that of Iwu (2008) is the fact that election is a sine qua non requirement in any nation that aspires to attain SD. As Iyayi has rightly pointed out:

Elections are a complex set of activities with different variables that act and feed on one another. It can be defined as a formal act of collective decision that occurs in a stream of connected antecedent and subsequent behaviour. It involves the participation of the people in the act of electing their leaders and their own participants in governance. It includes the authenticity and genuineness of the voter’s register; it includes the independence or freedom of its electoral agencies and organs. It includes the liberalism or otherwise of the political process in the country and the independence of adjudicating bodies of elections (Iyayi, 2007: 2).

Since the generality of Nigerians in well over three decades of military rule have not been allowed to fully and freely elect those who should govern them, SD will continue to elude the country. Given its complexity and importance regarding democratic consolidation, the mode of conducting and overseeing any election is very critical to desired outcomes. This position is supported by Jega (the current Chair of INEC) who contends that: “however, if elections are poorly managed, fraudulently conducted and are characterized by intense conflicts and violence,

then they become mere procedural democratic “rituals” which are of no consequence as far as good governance and democratic consolidation are concerned” (Jega, 2012: 24).

Since I have made a point that elections are critical elements in the promotion of good governance and the attainment of SD, I take the position that the attainment of SD is sine qua non if our people are to live meaningfully and not just barely exist.

I contend that we in INEC view the forth-coming gubernatorial election in Anambra State as one that should be faithfully and meticulously conducted in order to meet the aims and aspirations of the people of the state. It is in our plan, our goal and desire therefore to conduct an election that would lay a very solid foundation for the attainment of SD in the state. We want to ensure that the wishes, aspirations and desires of the people to make their own choice, are respected.

We now lay emphasis on the electoral process while at the same time not undermining the importance of election in the electoral process. In the rest of the paper I shall draw attention to five critical steps INEC has taken in order to ensure total success in the 2013 Anambra State gubernatorial election. First, we have a new orientation in which we look at the entire spectrum of the electoral process. Second, we are embarking on a very extensive and intensive voter education drive. Third, we have put in place a logistics package which we hope would be hitch free in spite of the poor ICT background in our country. Fourth, we have packaged a unique and dynamic training programme in order to ensure that every ad hoc staff is conversant with the nitty gritty of implementing or conducting an election that commands national and international acceptability and which meets international standard. Finally, we have put in place an in house mechanism to ensure that we conduct an election that is the best election ever conducted in Nigeria. We want this election to serve as a model of the “ideal election” in the years to come. Let me examine each of these points in some details.

Electoral process versus Election as an Event

As a matter of fact our preparation for the forth-coming gubernatorial election started in 2011 when we completed the historic general elections of that year. Since we the political appointees took up position as Chairman, National or Resident Electoral Commissioners, we have been primarily concerned with the entire electoral process. We have paid attention to the electorate, electoral law, electoral materials, the permanent and ad hoc staff of the commission, the security agencies, the international community and the election event. Our view as an election management body has been to harness the strengths in the variables that constitute the electoral process and use them in conducting elections that would meet the best standards in election management. In addition, we also take cognisance of the challenges in our management of elections in the country with a view to addressing the challenges by eliminating the obnoxious one’s and realigning those that can be positively realigned to promote best practices in election management.

Soon after the 2011 elections we had series of review meetings at the national, state and local government levels with a view to understanding and appreciating what makes elections free, fair and credible. We sponsored many of us to a number of national and international workshops, seminars and election monitoring both within and outside Nigeria. For instance,

in 2011, I and Mrs. Nkechinyere Vivian Enemoh presented a paper on “*Literacy and Transparent Elections in Africa: Lessons, Issues and Challenges of the Nigerian Experience*” at the 7th Pan African Reading for All Conference in Gaborone, Botswana. In 2012, I went to monitor elections in Liberia and the United Kingdom. This year Mrs. Enemoh was in the University of Hofstra, New York, USA to present our joint paper “*An Empirical Assessment of the Role of a Formal Electoral Literacy Curriculum and the mode of presenting the electoral curriculum to Some Selected Nigerian Adult Literacy Learners*”. From July, 2011 to August 2012 INEC Anambra in collaboration with some veteran literacy and curriculum professors from some Nigerian Universities developed *An Electoral Literacy Empowerment Curriculum for use in the literacy instruction for Nigerian illiterate adults*. This curriculum is now being studied by the Electoral Institute for implementation. We have therefore by academic, professional, national and international exposure and interactions acquired the basic knowledge, attitudes, and skills for conducting the November 16, 2013 gubernatorial election, much better than we were, when we conducted the 2011 general elections. We are therefore confident that given our knowledge, attitudes and skills, we are adequately positioned to conduct the gubernatorial election that will be devoid of malpractices, errors and misconduct.

Voter Education

No matter how well prepared we are and no matter how well intentioned we as an election management body are, it is the people of Anambra State who must vote and usher in the governor. Unless the people in Anambra State turn out en mass to vote, the outcome of the election can not reflect the real choice of the people. The people of the state must be enthused to vote.

Available statistics from the operations department (INEC Anambra) show that the generality of the electorate in Anambra State are not keen to vote. For instance, in the 2011 elections only 28.8% of the registered persons voted. This is because while 1,708,014 people registered, only 492,750 votes were cast. Similarly in the federal constituency election, out of the 746,230 registered voters, only 244,934 votes were cast. In other words, only 31.2% of the registered voters voted in the federal constituency election. Out of the 607,415 registered voters in Anambra North Senatorial Zone, only 162,481 votes were cast. That is to say only 26.7% registered voters voted. In the Anambra Central Senatorial Zone, only 621,992 people registered to vote. However only 194,485 persons voted. That is to say only 31.3% voted. In the Anambra South Senatorial Zone, out of the 532,905 registered voters only 163,999 persons voted. In other words, only 30.8% of registered voters voted during the election. This trend must be halted through an appropriate voter education programme if the generality of the people of Anambra State are to begin to participate actively in elections by casting their votes.

A number of factors are responsible for the apathy of the electorate in Anambra State. The insecurity which bedevils elections in Nigeria has made the electorate to develop apathy to elections. As Olurode has pointed out

When attempts are made to secure elections well above the ruling security rate in society, this may have its own backlash of discouraging the electorate from effective

participation as they may become scared and thus frightened away. Generally, people avoid an over-protected or over secure territory since stray bullets are a common phenomenon in our society. Secondly, security forces may become overwhelmed and thereby become overzealous in their response to security challenges of election. Security personnel may readily exploit the setting to extort money from innocent and gullible members of the public. The deployment of security forces for purpose of election security may thereby be counter-productive (Olurode and Jega, 2011: 8)”.

The attitudes of politicians also make the electorate in Anambra State to be apathetic towards elections. As Iyayi has rightly observed, “the political parties on whose shoulders rested voter education and mobilization simply abandoned the duty to civil society groups and organizations. Party agents had to do the voting on behalf of the voters while in other places, security agents assisted those who could not identify the symbol of the parties they intended to vote for” (Iyayi, 2007: 6-7).

In order to eliminate the unfortunate incidence of voter apathy in Anambra State we have embarked on a vigorous voter education programme. We have developed a unique education package specifically tailored to empower the electorate in Anambra State to understand, appropriate, value and implement all aspects of our electoral process. Our voter education package is streamlined in the context of history, citizenship education, social studies and the constitution of the country (INEC, 2007, 2008). We have therefore in our voter education package tried to empower the electorate in Anambra State with the knowledge, attitudes and skills for optimal and maximal operation in the electoral process and to make the electorate eager, serious and enthusiastic in participating in local, state and federal government elections.

More specifically our voter education programme is designed to address

- ✓ The nagging problem of electorate violence
- ✓ The power of the electorate in demanding accountability from the elected
- ✓ The power of the electorate in recalling the elected
- ✓ The adverse influence of money on the electorate in the state
- ✓ Gender inequality and
- ✓ Unhelpful mindset in elections.

We have therefore designed stakeholders voter education meetings in/amongst

- ✓ Each of the three senatorial zones
- ✓ Each of the federal constituencies in the state
- ✓ Churches
- ✓ Traditional kingdoms and chiefdoms
- ✓ Market women and men locations
- ✓ Youth organizations in tertiary institutions
- ✓ President generals of the various communities in Anambra State.

In making our people embrace our voter education package, we use the mode of

- ✓ Storylets

- ✓ Dance
- ✓ Drama and
- ✓ Lecturettes
- ✓ Dialogues

in presenting the content of the voter education package. Given the participatory nature of our voter education programme, we have achieved considerable success among the electorate. We can now ask the Anambra electorate tomorrow to vote and sure they will.

Election Logistics

One of the reasons why we have often in the past performed very woefully in our management of elections is the inefficiency and ineffectiveness that characterize the logistics of our election management. For instance, it is not at all unusual that the sharing of sensitive and non-sensitive materials still takes place at the state office even on the very day that elections take place. When many hours after the commencement of elections, materials and personnel are not at the RAC and polling level, there is no how that such an election can not be shoddy and subject to abuse. For instance, in one of the 2011 general elections, result sheets were not available in many states of the country hours after the election had commenced. This led to the rescheduling of the election. In some cases, desperate politicians who have an axe to grind with the election management body have been known to sabotage the deployment of hired vehicles thereby making the deployment of personnel and material a nightmare. Besides, the very late release of funds often makes it difficult for a Resident Electoral Commissioner to take pre-emptive measures that could enhance the effective and efficient conduct of elections.

After extensive deliberations by operations, logistics and training departments at both the Commission head office, Abuja and the State office Awka, we have taken the following steps:

Early Deployment of Materials

Going by the timeline we have set for the elections, the non-sensitive materials will be made available to the state office latest by 30th of October. Thus by the 3rd of November all the non-sensitive materials would be moved to the local government offices and shared according to the RAC in the various local governments by the 5th of November. Thus it will be possible for us to detect any shortfall or aberrations regarding the allocation of the non-sensitive materials in respect of units that make up a RAC. Similarly, we have agreed that sensitive materials will be at the Central Bank of Nigeria Awka, on time as well. Similarly all the sensitive and non-sensitive materials will get to the state and local government offices in time.

Super Registration Area Centres (SRACs)

We demarcated the Registration Area Centres in each local government into Clusters of RACs. Thus four or five RACs may constitute a cluster of RACs. SRAC will be developed to cater for the cluster of RACs nearest it. It is at these Super RACs that all sensitive and non sensitive materials needed at the polling units that are within RACs would be moved to. It is from there that materials as from 4:00am in the morning would be moved to the polling units.

Each SRAC would be equipped with toilets, water, sleeping materials and treated against mosquitoes. They each would be made habitable for it is there that the ad hoc staff would stay before moving to their polling units in the morning.

We also resolved that all the tables and cubicles needed for the election would be moved to the polling units by the evening of Friday the 15th November so that it would be relatively easy to set them up early enough on the day of election.

While a minimum of 326 vehicles would be deployed for conveying materials and personnel from the Local Government offices to the SRACs and polling units, an additional 120 vehicles would be deployed for supervisors who would go round to monitor and ensure that the election challenges are addressed. We hope to meticulously implement our logistics package. We believe that as we do so the election would take off on schedule and would be hitch free.

Training of Ad hoc Personnel

We have improved on our training of ad hoc personnel. We have taken three vital steps in this direction. First, we have training manuals. Each trainee is given a manual during the course of training. In this way each trainee after the training session can have access to materials to read, recall and reinforce the knowledge, attitudes and skills taught during the training session. Second, we now have a training ratio of 1 teacher to 40 trainees unlike the former trend of having 1 teacher to a 100 or more trainees. Besides, our training period has been extended from two to five days. In this way the training is more thorough and gives the trainees the opportunity to have enough hands-on-activities on the materials to be used during the election. Finally, we now use very spacious locations so that the training would be done with minimal stress and strain on both the trainers and trainees.

We have resolved that the training would end at least ten days before the election. This will enable us to deploy the trainees at least four days before the election. The trainees would then be in the position to know where they are deployed to. One of the challenges we faced in the past is that many ad hoc staff never knew their place of assignment until the morning of the election. This we have resolved to put a stop to.

Ad hoc Election Planning and Monitoring Committee

The Chairman of our Commission on the 10th of June this year set up an election planning and monitoring committee. The committee is made up of Heads of ICT, Registry, Voter Education, Legal and Training Departments at both the head Office

and State Office. This committee meets every fortnight to take situation reports, decide on the next line of action, keep to the agreed timelines and deadlines and ensure that decisions taken are duly implemented. One unique and positive outcome of this committee is the effective, efficient planning and implementation of the last Continuous Voter Registration (CVR) exercise in Anambra State which has been judged the best CVR exercise so far in the country.

Conclusion

The journey regarding this forth-coming gubernatorial election which started after the 2011 general elections has come a long way. In spite of the bumps we experienced on the way, we have been able to cross our “Ts” and dot out our “Is”. God on our side, we hope to conduct a gubernatorial election in Anambra State that will be the best ever conducted in Nigeria. This election we believe will signal the dawn of a new era in the election management in this country. We will by the grace of God show that at long last regarding election management in the country the beautiful ones have been born.

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Thank you.