

**INTERIM STATEMENT BY NIGERIA CIVIL SOCIETY SITUATION ROOM ON THE OSUN STATE GOVERNORSHIP ELECTION OBSERVATIONS SUMMARY HELD ON SATURDAY 22<sup>ND</sup> SEPTEMBER 2018**

**Issued: Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2018**

**Introduction**

The Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room observed the Osun State Governorship election conducted by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) on Saturday 22 September 2018. Following field reports received from its deployed observers and networks, across the three Senatorial Districts of the State, Situation Room hereby makes the following observations:

**Voting Process**

Polling units (PUs) across the State opened early for accreditation and voting. Typically, accreditation and voting started by 8:00 am throughout the State. Indeed at 7:00 am, large crowds had built up at most polling units with lots of enthusiastic voters waiting to begin participation in the voting process.

The process of accreditation was however reported to be slow as a result of the delays in the functioning of the smart card readers and the effect of this during the authentication of fingerprint of voters.

In some PUs, women and elderly persons were given separate queues and priority voting. There was however the concern that some elderly persons were being helped to vote in ways that appeared to compromise their right to free choice.

In a sizeable number of polling units, there were reports of INEC staff and officials not being sure of their responses to voters concerns or voting procedures, which created delays. There were also reports of inadequacy in the voters register in some polling units, where some voters complained of their names being missing or incorrectly entered, thus frustrating their cast of vote.

In almost all PUs visited by Situation Room, there were still issues of accessibility of PUs by Persons with Disabilities (PWDs). INEC had promised that Braille would be used for the visually impaired voters, yet Situation Room could not verify that this was the case, with most polling staff expressing ignorance of the Braille or its availability.

The set-up of the PUs in some locations was a source of concern. While some units were set up in such a manner as protected the privacy of votes, some other PUs did not address the problem of secrecy of the votes and ballot paper, leading to continuing concern about vote buying.

**Vote Buying**

As with recent INEC conducted Governorship elections, incidents of vote buying reoccurred in the Osun State elections, even if at a reduced and less brazen manner. Incidents now seemed subtler. The announcement by INEC and law enforcement officials that suspects would be arrested and charged to court, and the actual deployment of security personnel to enforce this, helped significantly.

### Security Personnel

There was a diverse presence of multi-agency security personnel, which included the Military, Police, Directorate of State Service, Federal Road Service Commission, Civil Defence Corps, Prison Service, Immigration Service and the Customs Service. Most PUs had good numbers of security personnel attending to them. Police and security personnel across PUs conducted themselves professionally and contributed to the peaceful conduct of the election. Although there were a few reports of overzealousness, it did not detract from the overall good performance of the police and security forces during the election.

### Political Parties

The political parties conducted themselves well and there were minimal reports of parties-perpetrated violence. There was however the concern that political parties did not deploy sufficient number of polling agents for the elections, thus opening themselves to not being represented at critical stages of the electoral process. As well, several of the polling agents did not appear to have received proper training on election procedures thus reducing their effectiveness and professionalism.

### Conclusions and Recommendations:

The Situation Room commends the people of Osun State for the peaceful manner in which they conducted themselves on polling day. Following from our observations, the Situation Room will like to make the following recommendations ahead of the 2019 general elections:

Situation Room calls on INEC to intensify the training of the different cadres of its staff to enhance their understanding of election duties and increase their confidence and ability to respond to election day challenges.

There needs to be more improvement in the placements of voting cubicles as well as modifications to its present configuration in order to protect the secrecy of the ballot and curtail vote buying. Greater efforts to curb vote buying should be introduced to apprehend and prosecute offenders as a disincentive and deterrent to all.

On collation of results, Situation Room is concerned that the process of collation is delayed and appears to happen mostly at night when the political parties, candidates, Observers and

other election stakeholders may have depleted away from observation of the process, especially with fears of insecurity. This trend needs to change and INEC should consider an improvement and innovation in its processes that will enable the collation of results in as much of daylight as possible and thus reduce night time election activities.

INEC's electronic collation of results has also come up for more queries. In the last several elections, INEC has stated that its e-collation of results is at test phase. Situation Room calls on INEC to open up its e-collation system to independent elect observers, including Situation Room, as well as other stakeholders in the electoral process to create an understanding of this aspect of the election process and win support for its use. This will eliminate the present suspicion that now clouds the use of the said e-collation system.

To further increase the credibility of election results, INEC will need to return to its previous practice of immediate publication of polling unit election results and indeed all of the comprehensive details of collated results, including the Form EC60E, on its website and to be accessible to all.

Situation Room also calls on INEC to ensure that its announcement of the introduction of Braille for voting is made operational across the country and that all PWDs are able to vote during elections.

Political parties should on their part, escalate the seriousness with which they take elections. Political parties should train trusted party agents and improve their quality and ability to effectively monitor all stages of the electoral process.

**The Situation Room is made up of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) working in support of credible and transparent elections in Nigeria and includes such groups as Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC), CLEEN Foundation, Action Aid Nigeria, Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), Proactive Gender Initiative (PGI) Enough is Enough Nigeria, WANGONET, Partners for Electoral Reform, JDPC and Youth Initiative for Advocacy, Growth & Advancement (YIAGA). Others are Development Dynamics, Centre for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) Stakeholders Democracy Network, Human Rights Monitor, Election Monitor, Reclaim Naija, Institute for Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, CITAD, Alliance for Credible Elections (ACE) CISLAC, and several other CSOs numbering more than seventy.**

-----  
**Contact information:**

**Website:** [situationroom.placng.org](http://situationroom.placng.org)

**Email:** [situationroom@placng.org](mailto:situationroom@placng.org)

**Twitter:** @situationroomng

#NigeriaSituationRoom

**Facebook:** Facebook.com/situationroomnigeria

**Hotlines:** 09095050505,09032999919