



## State of Civil Society Report 2019 dialogues Nigeria

### 1. Background to the dialogue

#### Date and location

26 July 2019; Asaba, Delta State, Nigeria

#### Organisation/organisations convening the dialogue

Grassroot Development Support and Rural Enlightenment Initiative (GDEV)

#### Focus of the session

1. Have the standard of election management and citizen-led monitoring and reporting in Nigeria improved or worsened? Is it likely to improve in the next five years?
2. How is civil society in Nigeria responding to election management challenges, and how are citizens monitoring and reporting election management standards? What are the challenges encountered in monitoring and reporting?
3. What could civil society do more to respond most effectively, and what further support civil society needs to respond?



## 2. Participants in the dialogue

### Number of participants: 35

- Two representatives of Community Town Unions (President Generals)
- Three representatives of three major political parties (People Democratic Party- PDP, All Progressive Congress- APC, and All Progressive Grand Alliance- APGA)
- One government representative (Primary Education Board)
- Three youth representatives (National Youth Council of Nigeria, Community Youth Leader, National Youth Service Corp)
- One representative of the Market Association
- One representative of the Nigerian Union of Journalists (staff of Anambra State Broadcasting Service, ABS)
- One representative of the Oshimili/Aniocha federal constituency at the Nigerian National Assembly
- One academic (PhD) from the National Open University of Nigeria
- Two representatives of faith-based organisations
- 20 representatives of various civil society groups

### Distribution by gender

Female	9
Male	26
Other	0

### Additional information about participants

Invitations were sent to the following groups:

State Resident Electoral Commissioners (REC), Inter Political Party Advisory Council (IPAC), Transition Monitoring Groups (TMG), professors in the Department of Political Science, Nigerian Labor Congress (NLC), information and communications technology (ICT) experts, National Youth Council of Nigeria (NYCN), representatives of State and National Assembly, faith-based organisations (FBOs), civil society organisations (CSOs) working on election, President General of Town Unions, and media organisations.

The invitation asked each organisation to send at least five representatives.

Responses to our invitation letters were as follows:

1. The Independent National Electoral Commission declined to attend, citing the on-going election appeal tribunals across the country as reason; stating that the Commission does not want to make any public appearance until tribunals are over.
2. The TMG promised to send a representative only if we could pay NGN 150,000 (about 422 USD), in addition to airfare. Our resources could not accommodate this request, so he did not attend.
3. The Nigeria Labour Congress sent a representative, who arrived very late to the event as a result of heavy downpour in Asaba that disrupted human activities for more than five hours.
4. The Inter Party Advisory Council sent three members, one each from the People's Democratic Party (PDP), All Progressive Congress (APC), and the All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA).
5. Other invitees sent few participants to the event, citing inadequate logistics to sponsor five persons to an event, since we were not providing a transportation



### 3. Content of the dialogue

Participants acknowledged some level of improvement in election management from 1999 to 2019, noting the introduction of smart card readers (SMR) in particular. However, they also noted that the tool had not been successfully applied to ensure effective election management. Similarly, participants observed some improvements in citizen-led monitoring and reporting, particularly on the use of social media to track events during the electoral process but pointed out that the timely submission of election reports to relevant authorities remains very poor.

#### 1. Politicians

The desperation of politicians to acquire political power (vote-buying) result in state resources being controlled by a few cliques, which results in the neglect of electoral rules/guidelines and the fundamental human rights of voters.

#### 2. Government and election management body

Excessive control of the election management body- the Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) by the Presidency and the All Progressive Congress (APC), the political party controlling the federal government, obstructs INEC's neutrality, which affects the credibility of the electoral process.

#### 3. Civil society organisations

Corruption among civil society organisations, leading to financial inducement by politicians to obtain favourable election monitoring reports, conflicts of interest, insecurity and fear of physical molestation by agents of influential politicians, disconnection from rural communities resulting from difficult terrain, poor capacity, and inadequate funds to effectively mobilise and deploy monitors to many areas, late or no submission of monitoring reports to relevant authorities, and inadequate funding for civil society work that often leads to compromise.

### Civil society actions identified to address these problems

1. Increase social media uploads of videos exposing politicians and their agents while distributing money to voters on the queue to buy their votes during elections.
2. Sustain civil society sensitisation programmes for citizens to shun election violence, financial inducement and vigilance for vote protection, as well as a coordinated national advocacy for the independence of election management body, INEC.
3. Shun financial inducements from politicians to ensure accurate, unbiased and timely reporting of electoral processes by civil society.

### Recommendations made for further civil society action to address the problems identified by the dialogue

1. Civil society to initiate, mobilise and lead campaigns against politicians to end vote buying (money politics) in future elections, to ensure the protection of the integrity of Nigeria's democracy and to end the incessant harassment of civil society groups and killings of aid workers perceived to be working against someone's political interest while on monitoring duties.
2. Civil society to collaborate and re-strategise to ensure the resumption of national advocacy actions for the signing into law and implementation of the required electronic voting system in Nigeria (Electoral Act)
3. Civil society to ensure the timely submission of electoral process monitoring reports to relevant authorities such as the INEC at the federal and state levels, security agents, etc. to encourage continuous improvement in election management standards in future elections.



### Recommendations for other stakeholders

<b>1. Government</b> Sign Electoral Act into law, delegate appointment of INEC chairman on an independent body (e.g. Judiciary) and create incentives to reduce the number of Nigerian political parties.
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## 2. International civil society

Assist Nigerian civil society with capacity strengthening on election monitoring and reporting, develop advanced specialised Election Monitoring apps allowing for quantitative and qualitative reporting.

## 3. Donors

Make more funding available to ensure that civil society carries out election monitoring and reporting activities in Nigeria's rural areas, which is currently not the case.

### Additional reflections made during the dialogue

1. A suggestion was made to encourage civil society to develop a lobbying and advocacy strategy directed to the Nigerian Government, aimed at establishing a National Civil Society Defence Corp, an armless security outfit to protect civil society groups on election duty in order to ensure their safety.
2. An appeal was made to donors and international civil society groups to develop an Insurance Policy Cover for civil society groups in some areas where civil society groups are constantly threatened, such as the Northern areas of Nigeria where Boko Haram insurgency is still ongoing. A recent case came up of aid workers kidnapped by Boko Haram on their way back from a camp for internally displaced persons in Bornu State, where they had been distributing food and medical supplies.
3. A suggestion was made for civil society to be included among signatories of election results sheets at polling boots, wards and local government collation centres, alongside political party agents and INEC staff. According to the initiator, this would not only ensure the credibility of the outcome but would also enable civil society signatories to testify at election appeal tribunals, as needed.
4. An appeal was made to CIVICUS to support another event of this nature for three days in future, and for civil society members present to disseminate learnings from the consultation event in their various localities.

## 4. Further material

### Relevant quotes from participants

*"If there are any endangered species of groups of people, it is the civil society that stands as a buffer between the bullets of various political parties"* - Keynote speaker from the Department of Political Science, National Open University of Nigeria, Abuja.

*"Group consciousness, conspiracy, and cohesion of political parties must be broken by civil society through value reorientation, civic education, and de-programming of citizens"*- Keynote speaker from the Department of Political Science, National Open University of Nigeria, Abuja

*"Nigerian political parties do not see politics as a vocation or a calling but as the quickest avenue to enriching themselves economically"* - Chairman, forum of clans of President Generals of Town Union.