



Post-Election Statement by CLEEN Foundation on the 26 November, 2016 Governorship Election in Ondo State

Introduction

CLEEN Foundation observed the 26 November, 2016 Governorship election in Ondo state, with specific focus on the security dimensions of the election. The mission was in furtherance of a series of interventions earlier made by the organization to enhance electoral security in the state. Such interventions included the deployment of CLEEN Foundation and INEC Electoral Institute Election Violence Mitigation Tool (EVMT), the conduct and release of a comprehensive report on Security Threat Assessment (STA) for the election and the training of senior police officers, including all Divisional Police Officers (DPOs) and Area Commanders across the 18 Local Government Areas (LGAs) of the state on election security management. As it has turned out, happenings across the 18 LGAs have largely validated the STA report; the same way all the interventions have positively impacted the electoral landscape in general and electoral security management in particular.

In this report, we present key findings from the reports of our observers, given that our primary focus was on electoral security management, greater attention is paid to issues in the deployment and conduct of security agents in the election.

Methodology

CLEEN Foundation deployed observers across the 18 LGAs of the state. Each LGA has one stationary observer, with a checklist containing important questions about the deployment and conduct of security agents during the election. These were in addition to two other roving observers, whose activities cover at least three LGAs each. These were complemented with information sharing among partner organisations in the Nigerian Civil Society Situation Room for the Ondo election under the coordination of the Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC).

Political Background

The race for the 2016 governorship election in Ondo state was highly competitive but tendentious. Many factors could have been responsible to this. First, the *dramatis personae* in the 2012 governorship election remained key players in 2016. The incumbent Governor Olusegun Mimiko, a two-termer, did not conceal his strong preference for Eyitayo Jegede over all other contenders within his party. Rotimi Akeredolu, the APC candidate, was also the candidate of ACN in 2012. Olusola Oke, one of those who contested the primary on the platform of APC, but lost out and defected to pick the ticket for the AD, was the PDP candidate in the 2012 election. Contestations over the processes and outcomes of party primaries and candidate selection generated considerable intra and inter-party tensions and conflict. Second, the internal schism within the PDP at the national level only served to complicate matters. The two competing

national executives of the party conducted parallel primaries and produced candidates for the election. While Jegede emerged from the Ahmed Markarfi faction, Jimoh Ibrahim emerged from the platform of Alli Modu Sherrif. Third, the attendant litigations and counter litigations came with their own complications. Above all else, the exclusion of Eyitayo Jegede from the election by INEC, until a few days to the election, when the Supreme Court ruled to the contrary, was generally seen as a major source of election security threat. Before the Supreme Court ruling, there were pockets of protests across the state; there were also protests and demands for the postponement of the election, especially from the PDP. These and related factors heightened the political temperature of the state before the election.

General Observations

The administration of the 2016 governorship election in Ondo state will go down as one of the most effective in recent times. The main defining elements of the election include its overall peacefulness, good organization, including timely deployment of electoral materials and officers, adequate electoral security management, timely collation and release of results, among others. More specifically, CLEEN Foundation's observers found:

- Early deployment of electoral materials and personnel, as well as early opening of pooling centres and commencement of voting in most polling units covered in the state;
- Orderly organization of polling units, including appropriate placement of voting points in a way that guarantees independence of choice, openness and transparency;
- Professionalism on the part of electoral officers, including substantial improvement in the handling of electoral processes and procedures by adhoc staff of INEC;
- Substantial improvement in the level of coordination and communication between/among different stakeholders -political parties, security agencies, electoral officers- in handling and resolving contentious issues;
- The deployment of technical assistants from INEC's headquarters to attend swiftly to challenges emanating from the use of Smart Card Readers;
- Timely collation and release of results at all levels -Polling units (PUs), registration areas (Wards), LGAs and state level;
- Overall improvement in dealing with the challenges of electoral logistics, including transportation and deployment of materials and officers. This has usually been a major source of concern in previous elections;
- Drastic reduction in the level of electoral violence compared to previous elections;
- Substantial compliance with the legal frameworks governing the administration of the election, including simultaneous accreditation and voting.

Despite these advances, however, our observers also reported some negative dimensions of the election, namely:

- Malfunctioning of Smart Card Readers (SCRs) in some Pus, which made accreditation difficult, slow and/or impossible in some Pus;
- Attempts at vote buying by party agents and/or chieftains who were seen distributing money in order to influence the direction of voting;
- Pockets of electoral violence, including snatching of electoral materials such as SCRs and ballot papers;

- Low level of voters turnout in most of the PUs visited;

Security Agencies and Election Security

Election security management is pivotal for the promotion of election integrity by engendering political competition, participation and legitimacy and vice versa. Our observers found that the adequate provision of election security by security agencies largely explains the substantial improvement in the effectiveness of the administration of the 2016 Ondo governorship election. Security agents were found to have demonstrated exemplary professionalism that has been missing in previous elections. In particular, security agencies were found to have excelled in the following ways:

- Timely deployment of security agents to PUs, RAs, collation centres and INEC offices across the 18 LGAs of the state. It was found in 33.3%, 56.6% and 11.1% of the PUs covered by our observers, security agents arrived before 7.00am, 7 - 7.59am and 8 - 8.59am respectively.
- Deployment was also found to be adequate, defined mainly in terms of number of security agents per PUs. Specifically, a minimum of two (2) or three (3) or more security agents were found in 11.1% and 88.9% of PUs visited by our observers respectively.
- In addition to the above, our observers found security agents to either be very adequate or adequate in 38.9% and 61.9% of the PUs they visited respectively.
- Exemplary professionalism of security agents, including unusual politeness in relating with voters and electoral officers. For example, our observers found security agents to be very approachable and approachable in 66.7% and 33.3% of the PUs they covered respectively. It is also gratifying that security agents did not leave their duty post at anytime in 94.4% of the PUs visited, but did so in 5.6% others. Moreover, security agents were found to be following instructions given by the presiding officers in all (100%) of the PUs visited by our observers.
- Sufficient demonstration of neutrality and impartiality across most PUs visited by our observers. Specifically, security agents were found to be very impartial and impartial in 61.1% and 33.9% of visited PUs respectively.
- Discernible improvement in the level of inter-agency collaboration among security agencies during the elections. The Police, Civil Defence and a few others were seen working together harmoniously;
- Prompt response to distress calls, as was the case in PU 005, Ward 3, Akoko South East LGA where thugs had hijacked SCR and ballot papers. The DPO quickly reacted by leading his men, in the company of INEC's Electoral Officer for the LGA and supervisor from Akure;
- Resort to aerial surveillance through the use of helicopters that flew round the LGAs during the election. This, together with other improvements, enhances people's feeling of safety and security during the election. People felt very safe and secure, safe and secure and somewhat safe and secure in 50%, 44.4% and 5.6% of the PUs visited by our observers.
- Provision of escort for the deployment of electoral materials and officers;

- Overall, the performance of security agents in the Ondo election was found to be very good in 61.1%; good in 33.3% and fair in 5.6% of the PUs visited by CLEEN Foundation's observers.

There were also some unhelpful trends in the deployment and conduct of security agents:

- A few cases of professional misconduct were reported by our observers. These include collection of 'brown envelop' from party agents and/or chieftains, drunkenness and inappropriate dressing;
- The welfare question again was very prominent as many security agents reportedly complained about their deployment without attention to their feeding and related allowances. Many of them resorted begging for money to eat;
- Poor response to some cases, particularly vote buying by party agents on the day of the election;

Recommendations

CLEEN Foundation is generally pleased and satisfied with the high level of professionalism, competence and general capacity demonstrated by INEC, political parties, security agencies, civil society organizations (CSOs), the electorate and related stakeholders in the administration of the 2016 Ondo election. The electoral processes and outcomes would appear to enjoy broad acceptability nationally and internationally. Nevertheless, there is still room for improvement. With respect to election security, our primary focus, CLEEN Foundation considers the following recommendations as pertinent:

- There is need to pay more attention to the welfare needs of security agents so as to get them fully motivated and committed to the tasks of electoral security;
- All security agents deployed for election duties should be made to sign and oath of allegiance to some ethical codes of conduct the violation of which would attract severe penalty;
- More professional and periodic training for security agents on the theory and practice of election security.

We commend the efforts of INEC, the Police and other security agencies for their outstanding performance towards ensuring that the Ondo gubernatorial election was peaceful and successful;

We also congratulate the people of Ondo State for their peaceful conduct during the election and after the release of the results;

The CLEEN Foundation is a non-governmental organization established in 1998 and registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC), to promote public safety, security and accessible justice. CLEEN Foundation is a member of several networks across the world and also has observer status with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. For more information please visit **www.cleen.org**