



# Observation of the Nationwide Continuous voters Registration Process and Emerging Concerns

11th August 2021

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) commenced the Continuous Voters Registration (CVR) exercise on 28 June 2021 with the online pre-registration process. The introduction of online registration created an opportunity for eligible voters to commence their registration process online and subsequently visit an INEC registration centre to complete their full biometric registration. The online registration saw a large number of citizens engaging the INEC CVR portal with a total of 1,609, 981 eligible voters concluding their

pre-registration as of 9th August 2021.

**To provide independent oversight over the CVR exercise, Yiaga Africa trained and deployed 171 Watching the Vote observers in six states selected from six geo-political zones and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).** The states were purposely selected based on the number of registered voters, political, religious and ethnic diversities and the upcoming off-cycle elections. **Accordingly, the observers will continue to observe**

**the process in all Local Government Areas of Anambra, Lagos, Rivers, Adamawa, Kano, and Plateau States and the FCT.**

Yiaga Africa's WatchingtheVote employs a mixed methodology consisting of stationary observation and mobile observation. For stationary observation, the observers on assigned days visit their preassigned LGA registration centre and observe the process from the opening of the centre until the last eligible voter for each day registered and the centre closed for that day. For mobile observation, the observers will observe and

document any critical incident witnessed and send in reports of the critical incidents observed.

This first report provides an update on the first two weeks of the CVR process based on Yiaga Africa's Watching the Vote observation of the process in 158 registration centres in six states and the FCT from the date of commencement of the physical process; Monday, 26 July 2021 to Friday 6 August 2021. Specifically, WTV observers deployed for stationary observation on July 26 and 29, and August 2nd, 4th & 6th, 2021.

## Summary of WatchingTheVote Findings:

### Early Commencement of the CVR Process in Centre's Visited:

**In a majority of the 158 registration centres observed, the average time for commencement of the process was 10 am in the first two weeks**



On the first day of the physical registration, INEC officials were present across most of the centres visited by 9:00 am indicating an early opening of registration centres. In addition, the Yiaga Africa WTV observers reported that in a majority of the 158 registration centres observed, the average time for commencement of the process was 10 am in the first two weeks. In addition, registration materials were sufficiently available across the registration centres observed.

## Poor Deployment of Security Personnel:

**There were no security officials in over half of the CVR centres visited**



A major finding from the observation in the first two weeks of the process is the poor deployment of security personnel at the registration centres. As reported by the WTV observers, while an average of 4 INEC registration officials was seen across most of the registration centres in the first and second week, no security officials were seen in over half of the CVR centres visited. For instance, there were no security officials in 26 of the 44 registration centres, in 11 of the 23 centres in Rivers State and in Anambra state in 7 of the centres visited. The INEC guideline on the CVR exercise had provided for the need for deployment of security personnel across the registration centres. This is particularly important with the level of attacks witnessed in the recent past on INEC facilities and offices and also in the light of the security threat across the country.

## Improvement in the Efficiency of the INEC Voter Enrolment Device (IVED):

On the first day of the CVR physical exercise, WTV observers reported that in some of the registration centres visited, the registration officials experienced some challenges with the INEC Voters Enrolment Device (IVED). However, there was an improvement in subsequent days of the registration with respect to the functionality of the IVED. For instance, in the first week of the process, the WTV observation report shows that it took over 5 minutes to process a registrant using the IVED. By the second week of the process, the WTV observers reported an improvement in the processing time of each registrant by the IVED as each registrant was processed between 2-5 minutes across a majority of the centres visited. Beyond this, INEC officials experienced some challenges in the use of IVED on the first day of the exercise (July 26th 2021) as reported by WTV observers. In Warawa, Gezawa, Albasu, Kano Municipal, Rogo and Bichi LGAs in Kano state, WTV observers reported that the IVED encountered network challenges, and the devices failed to receive/transmit any signal. A similar situation was experienced in Demsa and Guyuk LGAs of Adamawa state. In addition, on 26 July 2021, there were reports of registration officials not having an activation code to the IVED to enable usage in Ayamelum, Njikoka and Onitsha South LGAs in Anambra State, Eti-Osa and Oshodi/Isolo LGAs in Lagos and Barikin Ladi, Mangu and Langtang North LGAs in Plateau state and Ahoada West in Rivers State LGA. Also, in Njikoka LGA, Anambra state, the IVED stopped working and was sent back for replacement.

## **INEC Deploys a Gender-Balanced Registration Team:**

The WTV observers reported that on average 2 of the 4 registration officers deployed across the centres observed are women. This was specifically observed in 158 LGAs in Adamawa, Anambra, Kano, Lagos, Rivers, Plateau and the FCT.

## **Participation of Persons with Disability:**

WTV observers reported that priority registration was accorded to people with disabilities and the elderly in a majority of the centres visited during the first and second week of observation. In addition, WTV observers reported that efforts were made to ensure that the centres were more accessible to persons with disabilities as this was also observed in a majority of the centres visited.

## **Emerging Concerns from the First and Second Week of CVR Observation**

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### **Registration of Ineligible Citizens as Voters (Underage Registrants):**

Yiaga Africa observers reported the registration of underaged citizens as prospective voters on July 29 in Langtang North LGA in Plateau State and Madobi and Kano Municipal LGAs in Kano state.



### **Restriction of Movement Across Some LGAs in Anambra and Rivers States:**

WTV observers reported a slow start of the CVR exercise in some states due to some restrictions of movement affecting citizens' access to the registration centres. This was specifically observed across most LGAs in Anambra South Senatorial District of Anambra state on July 26. The restriction was due in part to a purported sit-at-home order declared by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). According to a WTV observer's report, the attempts to enforce the sit-at-home order led to confrontations between IPOB supporters and some state security operatives in the State. This hampered the commencement of the CVR exercise on July 26 in locations such as Ekwusigo, Ogbaru North, Ogbaru South, Onitsha North, Onitsha South and Orumba North LGAs. Yiaga Africa also observed on July 26, 2021, that the registration centres did not also open for the CVR exercise in Anaocha North, Idemili South and Njikoka LGAs in Anambra state. Besides from Anambra, the WTV observers also reported that in Eleme, Ogu/Bolo, Khana, Okrika LGA in Rivers state, the commencement of the

process was delayed as a result of protests that rocked the location. A major road was blocked by community people who were protesting the deplorable state of roads in their community. This hampered deployment of registrations officials and materials.

### **3 Slow start on Commencement Day in some States:**

Reports of centres not opening were received from Dawakin Tofa, Kura and Madobi LGAs in Kano State as well as in Mangu LGA in Plateau State on 26 July. Reports also received from Eleme, Ogu/Bolo, Khana LGAs in Rivers State revealed that registration officers failed to arrive at the registration centres on Monday, 26 July 2021. However, these centres were subsequently opened and the CVR exercise commenced before the end of the first week.

### **4 Challenges with the INEC Voters Enrolment Device (IVED):**

Yiaga Africa citizens observers reported a range of issues with the IVED, from officials not being able to access the device because of password issues, slow internet connectivity, slow performance of the device and malfunctioning of the device in some locations. Reports from the centres in Gombi, Jada, Mubi North & Mubi South LGAs in Adamawa State revealed that on Monday, July 26, the INEC registration officials could not use the IVED due to the challenge of poor internet connectivity. Other locations such as Akuku Toru, Port Harcourt, Tai, and Opobo/Nkoro LGAs in Rivers state registered only a few persons because the IVED took over five minutes to enrol each registrant. In Aguata LGA of Anambra state registration officials could not attend to the majority of the registrants before closing for the day, due to connectivity challenges during the course of registration. While the situation improved in the second week of observation, network challenges were still experienced in some centre's in Kano, Plateau, Rivers, Adamawa, Lagos and Anambra States. Specifically, in Eti-osa in Lagos State, Njikoka in Anambra State and Ikwerre in Rivers State the IVED had to be replaced.

### **5 Conflicting Information on Online Pre-registration and Physical Exercise:**

There seems to be conflicting information as regards the status of Nigerians who have commenced the pre-registration process via the INEC online portal and citizens who are accessing the physical process directly. For instance, Yiaga Africa received reports from Karu and Bwari Area Council registration centres suggesting that Registration Officials were only attending to registrants who had commenced the pre-registration process via the INEC portal. While this report was so far received from two locations, there is a likelihood that it may be the case in a few other centre's.

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### **Disinterest by Political Parties:**

Yiaga Africa observed the abysmally low participation of political parties in the CVR process indicated in the absence of political party-specific citizens mobilisation activities to increase participation and the absence of political party agents in the registration centres. Interestingly, while political parties are actively engaging in political permutations towards the 2023 general elections, they are failing in that important role of mobilising citizens to actively engage the CVR. This is also seen in absence of voter education activities either through media engagement via traditional media channels or on social media. In addition, political parties are only deploying their agents to very few CVR centres to observe the CVR exercise. From the 158 registration centres that WTV observers visited in the first and second week of the CVR, only 40 centres had political party agents present.

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### **Security Concerns:**

The reports of absence of security personnel at some of the registration centres is worrying given the different security concerns across most states of the Federation and the previous attacks to some INEC offices and properties in some LGA's. More so, the INEC's guidelines stipulate that at least two security officials should be stationed at each registration centre at all times during the registration hours. This is crucial in order to forestall any plan to disrupt the process.

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### **Observers NOT Allowed to Observe in Some Local Government Areas:**

Despite accrediting observers to observe the Continuous Voters Registration process, Yiaga Africa received reports that observers were not allowed to observe the CVR process in some LGAs despite showing evidence of accreditation. These LGAs include; Ojo, Mushin, Ajeromi/Ifelodun, Lagos Island, Alimosho and Ibeju Lekki LGAs in Lagos State. In Orumba North, Anambra State, Watching The Vote Observers were not allowed to observe the process.



# Recommendations and Conclusions

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Yiaga Africa commends INEC for the reasonable progress observed in the CVR exercise in the first and second week of the physical registration process across the LGA's in Nigeria. It is also commendable to observe INECs consistency with providing updated and disaggregated data on the online pre-registration exercise.

As the exercise continues, we call on INEC to ensure proper oversight over the process. Proper oversight will reasonably address the issue like the clarity on procedure for the registration of citizens who have commenced the process online and prospective voters who are accessing the process for the first time. In addition, it will ensure adequate technical support is provided to assist the officials, especially in the use of the IVED throughout the registration process. The full biometric capture of registrants is a crucial part of the registration process and must be done optimally in this phase of the CVR to achieve one of the core objectives of deploying technology to register voters. This is particularly important with the plan by INEC to improve on the deployment of technology to accredit voters on election day.

INEC should also investigate reports of underage registration and ensure that there is a proper system in place to verify the age of prospective voters who are flagged as possible underage registrants. In addition, registration officers should request for registrants who appear underage to provide their birth certificate or any document that co eligibility.

Security agencies should collaborate better with INEC to ensure adequate deployment of their personnel to the voter registration centres.

Political Parties should adopt the election cycle approach and ensure the deployment of their agents to oversee the registration process. The continuous voter registration process is a critical aspect of elections and parties whose sole interest is to win elections should adopt a voter engagement strategy that commences with engaging prospective voters during the voter registration process and also observing the process.

Finally, Yiaga Africa calls on Nigerians to take advantage of the Continuous Voters Registration exercise, register to vote and ensure their data is properly captured in the voter register for their Permanent voter's card (PVC) to be produced before the next elections.

Signed  
Cynthia Mbamalu  
Director of Programs, Yiaga Africa

