

14 February 2011  
Issue 2

National Assembly Elections: 2 April 2011  
Presidential Election: 9 April 2011  
Governorship/State Assembly Elections: 16 April 2011

Citizens of Africa's most populous country will go to the polls in April to elect their leaders for the fourth time since Nigeria's transition to civilian government in 1998-99. The National Democratic Institute (NDI) is conducting an international observation mission to analyze the electoral process before, during and after the elections. NDI fielded a pre-election assessment team in Nigeria from Oct. 10 to 15, 2010, and will deploy approximately 30 short-term observers for the presidential election. Observations in this newsletter are based on the findings of NDI's 12 long-term international observers, who are reporting on the country's electoral process in each of Nigeria's six geopolitical zones.

## EXTENSION OF VOTER REGISTRATION: INEC REGISTERS CLOSE TO 64 MILLION

Despite a series of logistical and technical problems over the last few weeks, nearly 64 million Nigerians have registered to vote in the April elections according to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). INEC Chairman Professor Attahiru Jega announced the total – 63,981,460 voters – at a conference sponsored by NDI on Feb. 10.



*A voter is registered in the South East.*

The problem-plagued process led INEC officials to keep registration centers open for an additional week across the country. Following this extension, centers were kept open for another 48 hours in states in which registration officials determined additional time was needed to register all qualified citizens.

Early on, INEC staff scrambled to resolve logistical and technical problems, including delayed delivery of “direct data capture” machines, malfunctioning fingerprint scanners, late openings and early closures of registration centers, lack of backup power supplies and staff protests over payment procedures.

Further problems surfaced as the process progressed. Many Nigerians complained that the number and location of registration centers did not reflect the distribution of Nigeria's population, resulting in extended waits at some centers, including in the capital, Abuja. INEC reportedly addressed this snag by sending additional machines to areas with long queues. Observers from NDI also noted shortages of laminated paper and ink for printing registration cards,

*(Continued on page 3)*

### Election Facts:

- Voter registration began on Jan. 15 in Nigeria's 119,973 polling units.
- The provisional register of voters will be displayed for claims and objections Feb. 14 to 18.
- The official register of voters will be published on March 2.
- Party lists of candidates were due to the Independent National Electoral Commission by Jan. 31, and official details on candidates were released on Feb. 6 for public scrutiny. Names of substitute candidates were due by Feb. 14 while final nomination forms will be submitted by Feb. 21.

## DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF CANDIDACIES EXPIRES: CONFUSION REMAINS

Political parties struggled to meet the Jan. 31 deadline for the submission of candidate lists in the face of lawsuits and malfeasance complaints growing out of primary elections held in early January. Of 63 registered parties, 43 submitted lists by the deadline. It is unclear how many candidate lists are being held up because of court orders or intraparty disputes.

In the past, the process surrounding primary elections has not been transparent, and all major parties have experienced internal disputes and protests over results. To curb this trend, the Electoral Act of 2010 required parties to select candidates based on either the direct vote of all party members or a convention at which democratically elected delegates vote for the candidates. While this provision aimed to increase internal democracy in the primary process, flaws have been alleged in many state primaries, and losing fac-



*Candidate information forms are displayed in front of the INEC office in Sokoto State.*

### **Presidential Candidates**

**Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN):**  
Nuhu Ribadu / Sunny Ugochukwu

**All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP):**  
Ibrahim Shekarau / John Odigie Oyegun

**Congress for Progressive Change (CPC):**  
Muhammadu Buhari / Tunde Bakara

**Peoples Democratic Party (PDP):**  
Goodluck Jonathan / Namadi Sambo

*Note: Talks between the ACN and CPC on a common ticket failed to reach agreement.*

tions have tried to use litigation, reruns or parallel primaries to ensure that their favored candidates succeed.

The 2010 Elections Act also gave the INEC greater supervisory authority over the primary process. INEC encouraged greater accountability and dispatched officials to witness a number of primaries, leading Nigerians to hope that the commission would be able to force parties to increase transparency. Based on its observations, INEC rejected candidate lists submitted by political parties in constituencies where the names submitted differed from the results witnessed by INEC officials and where INEC reports indicated irregularities in the conduct of the primaries. However, the courts can compel the commission to accept certain candidates, and some court cases may last longer

*(Continued on page 3)*

## CITIZEN OBSERVATION OF THE VOTER REGISTRATION PROCESS

NDI observers met representatives of many domestic observation groups and a limited number of political party poll watchers in registration centers. Project Swift Count, a coalition composed of four prominent civil society organizations, has issued interim reports on the conduct of the voter registration process. NDI is providing technical and financial support to Project Swift Count to observe the electoral process using innovative technology and a statistics-based approach. The coalition's findings, which are available at [www.pscnigeria.org](http://www.pscnigeria.org), documented numerous problems at the start of the registration process, but acknowledged prompt efforts by INEC to resolve many of them. While only 16 percent of observed centers opened by noon on the first day of registration, de-

spite a scheduled start time of 8 a.m., the group said, this figure rose to 93 percent open by noon by the end of the first week. In observed centers, the proportion of functioning registration machines increased from only 42 percent on Jan. 15 to 74 percent on Jan. 22.

The Alliance for Credible Elections, another coalition of citizen observation groups, supported by the United Nations Development Programme, also fielded observers in some states during voter registration. Nigerian media have actively reported on the process and brought significant problems to public attention. The extensive media coverage also encouraged greater participation by eligible voters.

## Security Report:

NDI observers reported that while registration centers remained mostly calm, they did witness verbal and physical attacks on INEC staff. Although security personnel have been responsive to requests for assistance, they are not present in many centers where INEC staff reported feeling unsafe.

A variety of election-related security concerns have been reported by the media, including the assassination of the ANPP gubernatorial candidate in Borno State, killing of an INEC staff person in Edo State, thefts of direct data capture registration machines in the Uyo local government area of Akwa Ibom state, and violent brawls during the PDP rerun senatorial primary in Delta North, Delta State. Security officials and local INEC officials are responding to these incidents.

## VOTER REGISTRATION (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

*(Continued from page 1)*

and insufficient space in the register of voters to manually record all registrants. In centers with high numbers of potential voters, computers were slow to save new entries and frequently had to be restarted. Observers heard allegations of stolen machines, attempts by political parties to manipulate the process and charges that in some areas INEC staff relocated



*Voters wait in line to register in the North West.*

registration centers to local politicians' homes. INEC and the police have pledged to investigate the allegations and prosecute offenders.

The Nigerian Senate summoned the INEC chairman to report on the process because of the number of complaints voiced in the first few days, as well as INEC's failure to release daily registration totals early in the process, which made it difficult to assess the progress of voter registration. The report submitted to the Senate near the end of the first two weeks of registration showed that after a slow start, the number of Nigerians processed each day increased once early hiccups were resolved. However, based on early projections of low registration totals, the INEC chairman asked the National Assembly to extend the registration period to ensure that all eligible Nigerians had an opportunity to register, which the assembly did by amending the 2010 Electoral Act.

While turnout decreased during the extension period, by the end of the registration process, INEC reported that the vast majority of Nigeria's estimated 70 million eligible voters were registered.

## SUBMISSION OF CANDIDACIES (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2)

*(Continued from page 2)*

than the time allotted for the candidate nomination process, which weakens INEC's authority to rule on the validity of primaries and final candidate lists.

The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) opted to conduct reruns to avert court challenges in some conten-

tious races. However, INEC warned that it would not accept any lists resulting from reruns held after Jan. 15, the final day of primaries. The electoral commission granted the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) an 11-day extension to replace its governorship candidate for Borno following the assassination of the previous flag bearer.

NDI is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, nongovernmental organization working to support and strengthen democratic institutions worldwide. NDI has worked in Nigeria since 1998. For more information, please contact NDI Senior Resident Director Carlo Binda ([cbinda@ndi.org](mailto:cbinda@ndi.org)).

*NDI's election support programs in Nigeria are possible through the generous support USAID and UK AID.*