



POLITICAL CONTEXT ANALYSIS: 2022 FCT AREA COUNCIL ELECTION

The Electoral Hub Political Context Analysis Number 5/2022

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About The Electoral Hub

The Electoral Hub, an organ of the Initiative for Research, Innovation and Advocacy in Development (IRIAD), is a multidisciplinary strategic think-tank which seeks to provide solutions to improve the credibility and integrity of the electoral process. The Electoral Hub complements the roles and activities of the different institutions, stakeholders and drivers of the electoral process and governance. The Electoral Hub's aim is to strengthen electoral governance and accountability in Nigeria through research, documentation, electoral education, policy and legal influencing and impact advocacy. We believe that the integrity of the electoral process is crucial in improving the electoral governance and sustaining democracy in Nigeria. We also believe in solutions rooted in the principles of justice and equity.

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	3
Acronyms.....	5
Introduction	7
Constitutional and Legal Background	8
FCT Electoral System.....	10
FCT Geography	14
FCT Electorate.....	16
Political Environment.....	18
Contesting Political Parties.....	22
Inclusion and Representation	23
Main Political Actors.....	27
Security	28
Efforts at Mitigating Violence.....	30
Civil Society Organisations	31
Role of INEC	33
Election Observers.....	36
Conclusion.....	38

List of Figures and Tables

Figure 1: Area Councils in the FCT	10
Table 1: Electoral Statistics of the FCT	11
Table 2: 2006 Population Figures Compared to 2022 Voter Register	16
Table 3: Chairmanship Positions.....	23
Table 4: Vice-Chairmanship Positions	23
Table 5: Councillorship Positions	24

Executive Summary

The FCT Area Council elections are scheduled to hold on 12 February 2022. In the run up to the election, the political and electoral landscape has been rife with voter apathy, intra-party rivalry, and insecurity. Given the status of the FCT as the seat of the federal government in the country, coupled with the fact that only local elections are held in the territory, the upcoming FCT Area Council elections are highly significant.

Against this background, The Electoral Hub, an organ of the Initiative for Research, Innovation and Advocacy in Development, has produced this political context analysis to help stakeholders understand the contexts in which the FCT election will be conducted. The following are our observations:

- Although the constitutional reform process is unlikely to be concluded before the FCT elections, it is unclear whether the electoral reform process will be completed. This means that while the FCT elections will almost definitely be conducted under the 1999 Constitution, it is unclear whether the Electoral Act 2010 or the Electoral Bill 2021 will be applicable.
- The geography of the FCT, particularly the development of slums and satellite towns in Bwari, Gwagwalada, Kuje, and Kwali Area Councils, and the growth of urban slums within AMAC, must be taken into account. This is because they have an impact on delivery of election materials and transportation of election officials.
- Intra-party rivalry has been rife within APC. This might give other parties, particularly PDP and APGA, a better chance of winning the elections.
- Based on the experience in the Edo and Ondo elections, there is a real risk that COVID-19 protocols will not be followed on election day. This is further worsened by the fact that Nigerians now go about their daily lives without following these rules, and in many public places these rules are no longer strictly enforced.
- The FCT has a trend of low voter turnout, particularly during local elections as opposed to presidential elections. This trend is likely to continue during these elections.
- There is a poor level of women and PWD representation among the candidates for the FCT elections. This raises serious questions about the core democratic principles

of inclusivity and representation. However, youth representation is particularly impressive.

- Insecurity has been rife in the country, and the FCT has not been left out. There have been reports of banditry, kidnapping, farmer-herder conflicts, among others. However, there are hopes that efforts by various stakeholders to mitigate violence will prove effective.
- Various stakeholders, including CDD, PLAC, Yiaga Africa, and The Electoral Hub, have been working to secure the integrity and credibility of the FCT elections. INEC has also approved 50 domestic observer groups and one international observer group to observe the election. Given that the acceptance of observers is evidence of the openness of the electoral process, there is hope that CSOs and observers, both local and foreign, will help ensure credibility and integrity.
- While INEC can be commended for innovations, particularly in increasing access to PUs, these innovations are being under-utilised by the public as up to 21% of the total polling units do not have any registered voter.
- There is a risk that the numerous court orders requiring INEC to substitute names of candidates will affect election logistics, especially in terms of printing ballot papers.

Acronyms

AA	Action Alliance
AAC	African Action Congress
ADC	African Democratic Congress
ADP	Action Democratic Party
AMAC	Abuja Municipal Area Council
APC	All Progressives Congress
APGA	All Progressive Grand Alliance
APM	Allied Peoples Movement
BVAS	Bi-Modal Voter Accreditation System
CDD	Centre for Democracy and Development
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
CVR	Continuous Voter Registration
FCT	Federal Capital Territory
FCTA	Federal Capital Territory Administration
ICCES	Inter-Agency Consultative Committee on Election Security
INEC	Independent National Electoral Commission
IRIAD	Initiative for Research, Innovation and Advocacy in Development
LP	Labour Party
NCDC	Nigeria Centre for Disease Control
NNPP	New Nigeria Peoples Party

NRM	National Rescue Movement
PDP	Peoples Democratic Party
PLAC	Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre
PRP	Peoples Redemption Party
PVCs	Permanent Voter Cards
PWDs	Persons with Disabilities
SCR	Smart Card Readers
SDP	Social Democratic Party
SIECs	State Independent Electoral Commissions
YPP	Young Progressives Party

Introduction

The Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Area Council elections are scheduled to hold on 12 February 2022. In the run up to the election, the political and electoral landscape has been rife with voter apathy, intra-party rivalry, and insecurity. Given the status of the FCT as the seat of the federal government in the country, coupled with the fact that only local elections are held in the territory, the upcoming FCT Area Council elections are highly significant.

Against this background, The Electoral Hub, an organ of the Initiative for Research, Innovation and Advocacy in Development (IRIAD), has produced this political context analysis. In line with the mission of The Electoral Hub to strengthen the electoral process, this pre-election analysis seeks to help stakeholders understand the contexts in which the elections will be conducted in the FCT.

This analysis contains an overview of the legal, socio-political and institutional factors and conditions that may affect the outcome of the election; the key actors and interest groups shaping events leading up to the election; the election management body and the electoral system; the threats and obstacles to a credible process; as well as the external and internal entities that can help strengthen and protect the integrity and credibility of the electoral process.

This analysis is based on unbiased research into the trends in previous elections and the tendency for relapse or change; the political and social dynamics currently within the country Nigeria in general and the FCT in particular; as well as the perception of political observers and the electorate about the upcoming election.

This analysis should serve as a stakeholder's guide to the distribution of power, the range and interests of the various actors, and the formal and informal rules that govern the electoral process; and how all these can either make or mar the electoral process.

Constitutional and Legal Background

The conduct of elections in Nigeria is governed by the provisions of the 1999 Constitution (as amended), the Electoral Act 2010 (as amended), and regulations and guidelines of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). Although elections at the local level are usually determined by state law and conducted by State Independent Electoral Commissions (SIECs), FCT is under the administration of the National Assembly, which means that national laws are applicable and elections in the territory are conducted by INEC.

The legal framework guiding FCT elections is in the process of being reformed by the National Assembly. In terms of constitutional reform, proposals have been made to establish a National Electoral Offences Commission charged with the responsibility of investigating and prosecuting electoral offenders. Proposals have also been made to establish independent candidacy so that candidates can contest elections without being sponsored by a party. These proposals are likely to improve the electoral process by promoting inclusion, representation, and accountability. However, it must be recognised that these amendments are highly unlikely to be passed before the FCT elections. This means that the elections will almost definitely be governed by the current provisions in the 1999 Constitution.

In terms of electoral reform, the Electoral Bill 2021, which aims to repeal and replace the Electoral Act 2010, has already been passed by both chambers of the National Assembly. The Bill has a number of provisions aimed at improving transparency, accountability, inclusion, and the overall integrity of the electoral process. These include measures to release election funds early, give INEC the powers to determine the mode of voting and results transmission, improve political party structure and operations, promote gender equality and social inclusion, clarify the definition of over voting, and adjust timelines in the electoral process.¹ Importantly, the Bill also seeks to increase the term of persons elected to the FCT Area Councils from three to four years.²

A few months ago, the Bill was sent to President Muhammadu Buhari for assent; however, the President denied assent primarily because of the mandatory requirement for parties to conduct direct primaries. Both the Senate and the House of Representatives have now amended the Bill to give parties the discretion to determine the mode of primaries to

¹ See The Electoral Hub. (2022). *Merits of the Electoral Bill 2021*. <https://electoralhub.iriad.org/merits-of-the-electoral-bill-2021/>

² Clause 108(1), Electoral Bill 2021

conduct, and the Bill has been transmitted back to the President. Since the requirement of direct primaries has been removed, it is highly likely that the President will provide assent. However, it is unclear whether this process will be finalised in the few days left before the FCT elections. This means that it remains uncertain whether the Electoral Act 2010 or the Electoral Bill 2021 will be the legal framework guiding the upcoming FCT elections.

In terms of INEC regulations and guidelines, the advent of COVID-19 also led to INEC issuing a new policy on conducting elections in the context of the pandemic.³ This policy set out guidelines for both election workers and staff to ensure that elections are conducted in line with COVID-19 protocols. Given that the FCT elections will hold in the context of the pandemic, this policy will also apply.

It is also worth noting that there have been calls for electoral reform in other areas including diaspora voting⁴ and early voting for Nigerians with election-day duties, such as poll workers, emergency workers, security agents, accredited observers, and journalists.⁵ Without these outstanding reforms, the legal and constitutional framework remains questionable and inadequate. Consequently, issues of inclusivity, disenfranchisement and fairness will continue to dog the legitimacy of elections in Nigeria. This is a contextual aspect of the forthcoming FCT Area Council elections which cannot be ignored.

³ INEC. (2020, May 21). *Policy on Conducting Elections in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic* (INEC Policy Number 01/2020). <https://www.inecnigeria.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/INEC-POLICY-ON-CONDUCTING-ELECTIONS-IN-COVID19.pdf>

⁴ INEC. (n.d.). *INEC, NASS Make Case For Diaspora Voting*. <https://inecnigeria.org/news-all/inec-nass-make-case-for-diaspora-voting/>

⁵ Obisesan, P. (2019, March 1). 2019 Presidential Election: improving the electoral process in Nigeria. *West Africa Think Tank (Wathi)*. <https://www.wathi.org/opinion-election-nigeria-2019/2019-presidential-elections-improving-the-electoral-process-in-nigeria/>

FCT Electoral System

Nigeria runs a federal system of government where power is shared among the federal government, the 36 state governments and the 774 local governments. It is worth noting that in the FCT, local governments are called area councils. As shown in the figure and table below, there is one senatorial district, two federal constituencies, six area councils, and 2,822 polling units (PUs) in the FCT. Candidates are put forward from the senatorial district to represent FCT in the Senate; from each federal constituency to represent FCT in the House of Representatives; and from each area council for representation at the local level.



Figure 1: Area Councils in the FCT⁶

⁶ News Agency of Nigeria. (2021, December 25). Yuletide: FCTA issues COVID-19 protection enforcement measures. *Peoples Gazette*. <https://gazettengr.com/yuletide-fcta-issues-covid-19-protection-enforcement-measures/>

SEN. DISTRICT	FED. CONST.	AREA COUNCILS	WARDS	PUs	VOTERS	
FEDERAL CAPITAL TERRITORY	Abaji/Gwagwalada/Kwali/Kuje	Abaji	10	135	63,734	
		Gwagwalada	10	338	169,706	
		Kwali	10	201	90,402	
		Kuje	10	262	127,444	
	1	4	40	936	451,286	
	Municipal/Bwari	Abuja Municipal	12	1,401	687,273	
		Bwari	10	485	234,933	
		1	2	22	1,886	922,206
	GRAND TOTAL	2	6	62	2,822	1,373,492

Table 1: Electoral Statistics of the FCT. Source: INEC⁷

⁷ INEC. (n.d.). *Name of Senatorial Districts, Federal and State Constituencies Nationwide*. <https://www.inecnigeria.org/downloads-all/name-of-senatorial-districts-federal-and-state-constituencies-nationwide/>; Communication with INEC Staff.

As alluded to in the previous section, FCT is not a state but a federal territory. To this end, it does not have some of the structures that states in Nigeria have. For instance, it does not have its own executive (headed by a Governor) or legislature (State House of Assembly). Rather, it is under the administration of the Federal Government (headed by the President) and the federal legislature (National Assembly). The Constitution also allows the President to appoint a Minister for FCT, and delegate powers to him or her.⁸ This means that in practice, the FCT is administered by a ministry called the Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA), which is headed by the FCT Minister.

Since there is no separate executive or legislature for FCT, only local elections are conducted in the territory. Section 103(1) of the Electoral Act 2010 gives INEC the power to conduct FCT Area Council elections. The elections are conducted for the positions of Chairman and Vice-Chairman of each area council (six in total), and Councillor for each electoral ward (62 in total). All officials are elected for a term of three years. However, as discussed earlier, the Electoral Bill 2021 seeks to increase this term to four years.

According to the Electoral Act 2010, a person shall only be qualified for election to an FCT Area Council if:

- he/she is a citizen of Nigeria;
- he/she is registered as a voter;
- he/she has attained the age of 25 years for Councillor, and 30 years for Chairman and Vice-Chairman;
- he/she is educated up to at least School Certificate level or its equivalent; and
- he/she is a member of a political party and is sponsored by that party.⁹

A simple majority system is used to determine the Chairman of FCT Area Council elections: the winner must have a simple majority (plurality) of the votes cast and at least 25% of the votes cast in each of at least two-thirds of all the wards in the Area Council. If no candidate meets these criteria, the top two candidates with the highest number of votes compete in a run-off election until a winner emerges. Councillors are also elected using a simple majority system.

Under the 2019 voter register, there were 1,344,856 registered voters in the FCT.¹⁰ This figure has now increased to 1,373,492. Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC) is of high

⁸ Section 302, 1999 Constitution of Nigeria (as amended)

⁹ Section 106(1), Electoral Act 2010 (as amended)

¹⁰ INEC Nigeria. (n.d.). *Total Registered Voters and PVC Collection for the 2019 General Elections*. <https://inecnigeria.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Total-Registered-Voters-PVC-Collection.pdf>

significance, as it has 687,273 registered voters – over half the total number of registered voters in the territory.

FCT Geography

The FCT was created in 1976 from parts of Nasarawa, Kaduna, Niger and Kogi States. It replaced Lagos as the capital of Nigeria in 1991. The FCT is located north of the confluence of the Niger and Benue rivers, and is bordered by Niger State to the west and northwest, Kaduna State to the northeast, Nasarawa State to the east and south, and Kogi State to the southwest.¹¹ Abuja, which is located around the centre of the FCT, is the capital city.

The FCT is located approximately at the centre of the country. It houses the three arms of government at the federal level, as the Presidential Complex (executive), National Assembly (legislature), and Supreme Court (judiciary) are all located within the territory. Two monumental rock formations in the FCT are the Zuma Rock and the Aso Rock.

One geographical feature that has started to arise in the FCT in recent years is flooding. In 2019, the FCT Emergency Management Agency announced that the increasing water level of River Niger portends a great threat to the FCT, with 74 local government areas in the country having a high probability of experiencing a flood.¹²

A few months ago, it was reported that flooding in areas across the FCT led to the deaths of four people and the destruction of at least 166 houses.¹³ The worst affected areas were the southern outskirts of Trademoore, Light Gold, Wisdom Estates and Lugbe.¹⁴ It has also been noted that the problem of flooding has been a recurring feature in Kwali Area Council, “with farmlands, residential houses and, most recently, a bridge connecting Dafa, Tunga and Gwomani communities washed away”.¹⁵

The development of slums and satellite towns, particularly in area councils such as Bwari, Gwagwalada, Kuje, and Kwali, has also become an increasing trend in the FCT. Even within AMAC, the high rate of migration has led to the development of urban slums side-by-side the city centre. These slums typically have poor road networks, with some areas completely inaccessible by vehicles.

¹¹ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. (n.d). Federal Capital Territory. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Abuja-federal-capital-territory-Nigeria>

¹² Premium Times. (2019, August 7). *Flooding: Rising River Niger water level great threat to FCT — Official*. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/345625-flooding-rising-river-niger-water-level-great-threat-to-fct-official.html>

¹³ European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations. (2021, 16 September). *ECHO Daily Flash of 16 September 2021*. <https://erccportal.jrc.ec.europa.eu/ECHO-Products/Echo-Flash#/daily-flash-archive/4303>

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ Akilu, D. (2021, September 25). *Mitigating Dangers of Flooding in FCT*. *Independent*. <https://independent.ng/mitigating-dangers-of-flooding-in-fct/>

These geographical features are important to consider, as they have an impact on election logistics, including access to polling units, delivery of election materials, and transportation of election officials. As discussed later in this paper, INEC has increased the number of polling units in the FCT by a large number, which should address the problem of access, particularly for voters who reside around areas with poor road networks.

Nevertheless, the transportation of election workers and materials to the various polling units remains an issue. Although Nigeria is not currently in the rainy season, which makes the likelihood of flooding low, areas with poor road networks will still pose a challenge. Adequate time should be given for longer transportation routes in those areas that are not easily accessible.

FCT Electorate

As shown in the table below, based on the 2006 census FCT had a population of 1,406,239. It should be noted, however, that these figures were highly disputed at the time, and in any case, they are now outdated since no census has been held since 2006. Given the fast rate of urbanisation and migration to the FCT, it is clear that the population is much higher today. This is evident in the fact that the registered voters in the table below far exceed the population figures recorded in 2006. Indeed, in some areas around Abuja city alone, the population is growing at a rate of 20-30 percent each year.¹⁶ Estimates suggest that by 2021, the population of the FCT had reached almost 3.5 million.¹⁷

S/N	LGA	Population (2006)	Male (2006)	Female (2006)	Voters (2022)
1	Abaji	58,642	28,860	29,782	63,734
2	AMAC	776,298	415,951	360,347	687,273
4	Bwari	229,274	115,346	113,928	234,933
5	Gwagwalada	158,618	80,182	78,436	169,706
6	Kuje	97,233	49,420	47,813	127,444
7	Kwali	86,174	43,413	42,761	90,402
TOTAL		1,406,239	733,172	673,067	1,373,492

Table 2: 2006 Population Figures Compared to 2022 Voter Register

Source: National Population Commission¹⁸ and INEC¹⁹

The indigenous inhabitants of the FCT are the Gbagyi (Gwari), with others in the area being Bassa, Gwandara, Gade, Dibo, Nupe and Koro.²⁰ However, given that the FCT is the

¹⁶ New World Encyclopedia. (n.d.). Abuja. <https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Abuja>

¹⁷ World Population Review. (n.d.). Abuja Population 2021. <https://worldpopulationreview.com/world-cities/abuja-population>; Macrotrends. (n.d.). Abuja, Nigeria Metro Area Population 1950-2022. <https://www.macrotrends.net/cities/21976/abuja/population>

¹⁸ Federal Republic of Nigeria Official Gazette. *Legal Notice on Publication of 2006 Census Final Results.* <https://gazettes.africa/archive/ng/2009/ng-government-gazette-dated-2009-02-02-no-2.pdf>

¹⁹ Based on communication with INEC staff

²⁰ Abubakar, B. (2020). *Origin and Meaning of Abuja the Capital City of Nigeria.* <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/345166243>

capital of the country, having been carefully positioned in a neutral location, inhabitants from all over the country also reside in the territory. Like the rest of the country, the official language is English. Estimates suggest that Muslims make up 50 percent of the FCT's population, Christians 40 percent, while the remainder adhere to indigenous beliefs.²¹

²¹ New World Encyclopedia. (n.d). *Abuja*. <https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Abuja>

Political Environment

The 2022 Area Council elections in the FCT will hold on 12 February 2022. It is important to note that FCT is the only place in Nigeria where elections at the local level have been held consistently since 1999.²² In the run up to the election, the political environment has been rife with voter apathy and intra-party rivalry. One unique feature about this election is that, unlike previous elections in the FCT, this election will be conducted in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. This section will explore these various features of the FCT's political environment and the implications for the elections.

COVID-19 Pandemic

The Edo and Ondo elections in 2020 were the first major elections to be conducted in Nigeria during the COVID-19 pandemic. In preparation for the elections, INEC and the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) released guidelines for the conduct of elections during the pandemic.²³ These guidelines included the mandatory use of face masks, social distancing, a two-tier queueing system for crowd control, use of sanitisers, and other COVID-19 protocols. Candidates and political parties were also encouraged to use digital forms of campaigning as opposed to organising large physical rallies. However, the reality is that these rules were hardly followed before, during, and after the elections.²⁴

Given that the FCT elections scheduled for 12 February 2021 will also occur in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, these guidelines are still applicable. There is a strong likelihood that the COVID-19 rules will be violated even more explicitly during this election. This is due to the fact that many Nigerians now go about their daily lives without following these rules, and in many public places these rules are no longer strictly enforced. With the FCT having recorded over 28,000 lab confirmed cases of COVID-19,²⁵ and the emergence of the Delta and Omicron variants of the virus in Nigeria, there is a real danger of a spike in cases following the election if the COVID-19 guidelines are not adhered to.

²² See The Electoral Hub. (2021). *Deepening Democracy: A Reflection on the 2020 Local Government Elections in Nigeria* (Electoral Hub Technical Paper 6/2021). <https://electoralhub.iriad.org/publications/technical-papers-briefs/deepening-democracy-a-reflection-on-the-2020-local-government-elections-in-nigeria/>

²³ INEC. (2020, May 21).

²⁴ See The Electoral Hub. (2020). *Deepening Democracy: Lessons from Edo State 2020 Governorship Election* (Electoral Hub Technical Paper 1/2020). <https://electoralhub.iriad.org/deepening-democracy-lessons-from-edo-state-2020-governorship-election/>; The Electoral Hub. (2020). *Deepening Democracy: Lessons from Ondo State 2020 Governorship Election* (Electoral Hub Technical Paper 2/2020). <https://electoralhub.iriad.org/deepening-democracy-lessons-from-ondo-state-2020-governorship-election/>

²⁵ NCDC. (n.d.). *COVID-19 Nigeria*. Retrieved February 2, 2021, from <https://covid19.ncdc.gov.ng/>

Voter Apathy

Another feature of FCT elections is voter apathy. During the council elections in 2019, there were numerous reports of poor turnout, with many polling units recording only a few voters.²⁶ In Bwari Area Council, out of 224,737 registered voters, only 44,250 were accredited (19.7% turnout).²⁷ A similar situation occurred in 2016, when only 54,940 out of 475,710 registered voters in AMAC were accredited (11.5% turnout).²⁸

This is reminiscent of the trend in many other states in Nigeria, where the electorate are less interested in local elections than governorship or presidential elections. Ironically, given that governments at the local level are closest to the people, the reverse should be the case. This calls for more efforts from INEC and civil society organisations (CSOs) to sensitise the electorate. Based on past trends, it is highly likely that voter turnout during the FCT elections will be poor. This raises concerns about participation and legitimacy of government.

Intra-Party Rivalry

In the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), the primaries have been relatively peaceful. The incumbent Chairmen of Bwari and Kuje Area Councils, John Gabaya and Abdullahi Sabo respectively, emerged as the consensus candidates for the chairmanship elections in their respective councils.²⁹ However, the process was less smooth in Gwagwalada, as PDP was accused of illegally substituting validly elected candidates during the primaries.³⁰ This allegation was made by Shuaibu Ibrahim, who stated that his name was substituted by his party even though he was duly elected as a councillorship candidate.³¹

²⁶ Odeyemi, J. (2019, March 9). FCT Area Council Election Records Low Turnout In AMAC, Bwari. *Daily Trust*. <https://dailytrust.com/fct-area-council-election-records-low-turnout-in-amac-bwari>; Vanguard. (2019, March 9). *Some polling units in FCT record low turn out of voters – NAN*. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2019/03/some-polling-units-in-fct-record-low-turn-out-of-voters-nan/>; Stakeholder Democracy Network. (2019, March 9). *Conduct of the 2019 Governorship, State Assembly and FCT Area Council Elections*. <https://www.stakeholderdemocracy.org/cssr-interim-statment/>

²⁷ Iroanusi, Queen Esther. (2019, March 10). APC wins three chairmanship seats in Abuja, two others declared inconclusive. *Premium Times*. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/regional/north-central/319126-apc-wins-three-chairmanship-seats-in-abuja-two-others-declared-inconclusive.html>

²⁸ Daka, T. and Anuforo, E. (2016, April 11). FCT elections: INEC declares AMAC, others inconclusive. *The Guardian*. <https://guardian.ng/features/fct-elections-inec-declares-amac-others-inconclusive/>

²⁹ The Eagle Online. (2021, April 23). *FCT council polls: Bwari PDP chairmanship primaries winner emerges*. <https://theeagleonline.com.ng/fct-council-polls-bwari-pdp-chairmanship-primaries-winner-emerges/>; Lashem, F. (2021, April 23). *FCT Area Council polls: Sabo wins Kuje PDP chairmanship primaries*. *News Diary Online*. <https://newsdiaryonline.com/fct-area-council-polls-sabo-wins-kuje-pdp-chairmanship-primaries/>

³⁰ Nze, E. (2021, July 6). *FCT council polls: PDP chieftain accuses party of candidate's substitution*. *Blueprint*. <https://www.blueprint.ng/fct-council-polls-pdp-chieftain-accuses-party-of-candidates-substitution/>

³¹ Ibid

The All Progressives Congress (APC) has had a more fractured process in some area councils. For instance, in AMAC, the APC primaries were met with dissatisfaction. Alhaji Suleiman Alhassan Gwagwa was announced as the winner of the elections with 110 votes.³² However, aggrieved party members argued that Honourable Murtala Usman Karshi was the rightful winner of the primaries with 115 votes.³³ They also alleged thuggery and intimidation during the elections.³⁴

In May 2021, INEC received a letter in which the party substituted Alhaji Gwagwa's name with Honourable Karshi's name.³⁵ Accordingly, Honourable Karshi was presented by INEC in the final list of candidates. This led Alhaji Gwagwa to resort to litigation. Although the FCT High Court upheld Honourable Karshi's victory, the Court of Appeal in December 2021 overturned the decision, stating that Alhaji Gwagwa was the rightful winner.³⁶

Similar situations occurred during APC primaries in Abaji and Gwagwalada. In Abaji, two persons – Alhaji Abubakar Abdullahi and Alhaji Muhammad Angulu Loko – each lay claim to the party's ticket. Again, this resulted in litigation. The party submitted Alhaji Abdullahi's name to INEC, which the Commission published in its final list of candidates. However, the FCT High Court disqualified Alhaji Abdullahi from contesting the election and declared Alhaji Loko as the rightful winner.³⁷ This decision was affirmed in the Court of Appeal.³⁸

In Gwagwalada, the incumbent Chairman of Gwagwalada Area Council, Alhaji Adamu Mustapha, and Jibrin Giri Abubakar both lay claim to the party ticket. Abubakar's name was submitted by the party to INEC, and in January 2022, Alhaji Mustapha was suspended from APC over anti-party activities. This followed reports of a cold war between Alhaji Mustapha and the party hierarchy in the FCT.³⁹ There were also reports of thuggery and violence during the APC primaries in Gwagwalada by persons suspected to be loyal to a

³² Yusuf, B. (2021, April 25). FCT council poll: Gwagwa emerges AMAC APC candidate. *Blueprint*. <https://www.blueprint.ng/fct-council-poll-gwagwa-emerges-amac-apc-candidate/>

³³ Oyoyo, I. (2021, April 26). Nigeria: FCT Council Polls - APC Members Want Karshi Declared Winner of AMAC Primaries. *All Africa*. <https://allafrica.com/stories/202104260791.html>

³⁴ Ibid

³⁵ Ochayi, C. and Eremosele, F. (2021, December 6). February 12 Area Council poll: A'Court declares Gwagwa APC candidate for AMAC. *Vanguard*. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2021/12/february-12-area-council-poll-acourt-declares-gwagwa-apc-candidate-for-amac/>

³⁶ Ibid

³⁷ Oyoyo, I. (2021, December). FCT Councils Poll: Court Disqualifies Abaji APC Chairmanship Candidate. *Leadership*. <https://leadership.ng/fct-councils-poll-court-disqualifies-abaji-apc-chairmanship-candidate/>

³⁸ Isah, A.S. (2022, January 10). FCT Polls: Appeal Court Affirms Loko As Abaji APC Chairmanship Candidate. *Daily Trust*. <https://dailytrust.com/fct-polls-appeal-court-affirms-loko-as-abaji-apc-chairmanship-candidate>

³⁹ Yahaya, H. and Isah, A.S. (2022, January 31). FCT Council Polls: APC Suspends Gwagwalada Chair, Presents New Candidate. *Daily Trust*. <https://dailytrust.com/fct-council-polls-apc-suspends-gwagwalada-chair-presents-new-candidate>

former Chairman of the Council.⁴⁰

All of these developments evidence the high level of intra-party rivalry, especially within APC. Indeed, the alleged moves within the party to substitute the names of duly elected candidates were acknowledged by the Chairmen of AMAC, Kwali, Abaji, and Gwagwalada Area Councils.⁴¹ In a letter of protest, these Chairmen warned that the imposition of candidates amounted to subversion and could cost the party the election.⁴²

Moreover, the frequent substitution of candidates serves as a barrier to INEC's activities. INEC released the final list of candidates after far back as July 2021. However, these numerous court orders requiring INEC to substitute candidate names affect the planning of the Commission and could result in logistical issues, particularly regarding the printing of ballot papers. Indeed, the case between Karshi and Gwagwa of the APC is still in the Supreme Court,⁴³ and another order to substitute a candidate's name this close to the election might be disastrous for the Commission.

⁴⁰ Uchechukwumgemezu, C. (2021, April 24). FCT council poll: Thugs disrupt APC primary election in Gwagwalada. *Today*. <https://www.today.ng/news/politics/fct-council-poll-thugs-disrupt-apc-primary-election-gwagwalada-360658>

⁴¹ Ajimotokan, O. (2021, June 6). FCT Council Chairmen Allege Imposition in APC Primaries. *This Day*. <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2021/06/06/fct-council-chairmen-allege-imposition-in-apc-primaries/>

⁴² Ibid

⁴³ Ajayi, O. (2022, January 22). FCT Council Polls: INEC meets Security Chiefs, Media Executives. *Vanguard*. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2022/01/fct-council-polls-inec-meets-security-chiefs-media-executives/>

Contesting Political Parties

Political parties are indispensable to the electoral process in Nigeria as membership of one and sponsorship by same is a requirement for running for political office. Candidates have been presented by fourteen of the eighteen registered political parties for the FCT elections. These are: Action Alliance (AA), African Action Congress (AAC), African Democratic Congress (ADC), Action Democratic Party (ADP), All Progressive Congress (APC), All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA), Allied Peoples Movement (APM), Labour Party (LP), New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP), National Rescue Movement (NRM), Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Peoples Redemption Party (PRP), Social Democratic Party (SDP) and Young Progressives Party (YPP).⁴⁴

APC has a large stronghold in the FCT, not least because it is the ruling party at the federal level of government, which sits in the FCT. Moreover, APC has produced the Chairmen of most of the FCT Area Councils since 2016 – five councils from 2016 to 2019, and four councils from 2019 till date.

PDP is also a strong party in the FCT. It used to be the dominant party, having produced the President from 1999 to 2015, and having produced the Chairmen of five of the six area councils in 2013. However, PDP's dominance has been reduced since 2015 when the APC produced the President and took control of the area councils a year later. PDP also did not produce any FCT Area Council Chairman in 2016; however, in 2019, it was able to produce the Chairmen of Kuje and Bwari Area Councils. This shows that the party still has a strong standing in the FCT.

APGA is also an important party in the FCT. Although it has never produced the government at the federal level, APGA produced the Chairman of Gwagwalada Area Council in 2013 and again in 2016. However, in the run-up to the 2022 elections, APGA has not been in the limelight. There is limited information available about the party's primaries, its candidates, and their campaigns. This lack of information might negatively affect the party's chances during the election.

Based on historical trends, APC, PDP, and APGA, which happen to be the three largest parties in the country, have the strongest chances of producing the Chairmen of the six area councils.

⁴⁴ Ugwu, R. (2022, January 10). INEC clears 110 chairmanship, deputies for FCT council elections. *The Sun*. <https://www.sunnewsonline.com/inec-clears-110-chairmanship-deputies-for-fct-council-elections/>

Inclusion and Representation

Inclusion and representation are key principles of a representative democracy. In Nigeria, women, youth and PWDs have largely been marginalised from the electoral process due to structural and socio-cultural barriers. A breakdown of the candidates contesting the FCT Area Council elections provides insights on the level of inclusion and representation of these groups.

Table 3: Chairmanship Positions

S/N	COUNCIL	CONTESTANTS	M	F	PWD	YOUTH*
1	Abaji	7	7	-	-	2
2	AMAC	14	13	1	-	3
3	Bwari	11	9	2	-	2
4	Gwagwalada	9	9	-	-	1
5	Kuje	6	6	-	-	1
6	Kwali	8	8	-	-	3
TOTAL		55	52	3	-	12

Source: INEC⁴⁵

Table 4: Vice-Chairmanship Positions

S/N	COUNCIL	CONTESTANTS	M	F	PWD	YOUTH*
1	Abaji	7	7	-	-	2
2	AMAC	14	9	5	-	6
3	Bwari	11	10	1	-	5
4	Gwagwalada	9	8	1	-	2
5	Kuje	6	6	-	-	2
6	Kwali	8	7	1	-	5
TOTAL		55	47	8	-	22

Source: INEC⁴⁶

⁴⁵ INEC. (2021, July 29). *Final List of Candidates: FCT Area Council Election, 12 February 2022.* <https://inecnigeria.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/LIST-OF-CANDIDATES-FCT-Area-Council-Elections-1.pdf>

⁴⁶ Ibid

Table 5: Councillorship Positions

S/N	COUNCIL	CONTESTANTS	M	F	PWD	YOUTH*
1	Abaji	40	40	-	-	15
2	AMAC	98	83	15	-	61
3	Bwari	71	65	6	-	27
4	Gwagwalada	59	53	6	-	33
5	Kuje	44	41	3	-	22
6	Kwali	51	50	1	-	37
TOTAL		363	332	31	-	195

Source: INEC⁴⁷

*In these tables, youth are defined as persons aged 35 or below.

From the tables above, it is clear that the level of inclusion and representation, particularly for women and PWDs, is abysmal. Only 5.5% of chairmanship candidates, 14.5% of vice-chairmanship candidates, and 8.5% of councillorship candidates are female. In Abaji Area Council, there is no single female among the seven chairmanship, seven vice-chairmanship and 40 councillorship candidates put forward by the parties.

Among all the groups, PWD representation is the worst, as there is no single PWD among any of the chairmanship, vice-chairmanship, and councillorship candidates in each of the area councils.

Nevertheless, youth representation is particularly impressive, given that 21.8% of chairmanship candidates, 40% of vice-chairmanship candidates, and 53.7% of councillorship candidates are youth (i.e. under the age of 35). The Electoral Act 2010 provides the enabling environment for youth inclusion, having stipulated that persons aged 25 and above can contest for councillorship positions, while persons aged 30 and above can contest for chairmanship and vice-chairmanship positions.⁴⁸ These relatively low age limits have allowed for youth inclusion.

It is worth noting, however, that the level of youth representation seems to reduce as we go further up the hierarchy of positions. For example, although over half of the councillorship candidates are youth, this figure reduces to 40% for vice-chairmanship candidates. When we get to chairmanship candidates, the figure is reduced by almost half to just 21.8%. It is

⁴⁷ Ibid

⁴⁸ Section 106(1)(c), Electoral Act 2010 (as amended)

therefore still necessary to advocate for youth inclusion at higher levels.

Moreover, it is one thing for a young person to be given the party ticket to contest elections, and quite another for them to be able to contest on a level playing field with their counterparts. During a townhall meeting organised by Yiaga Africa in November 2021, part of the challenges identified by young aspirants for elective offices were poor financial base and logistic support.⁴⁹ This reflects the fact that younger candidates are less likely to have as much access to financial resources or sponsorship as their older counterparts. Indeed, the same can be said for other marginalised groups, including women and youth. This is why, beyond advocating more women, youth and PWDs to contest elective offices, it is also important to address the financial challenges they face by reducing the influence of money in the electoral process.

According to the Electoral Act 2010, the maximum election expenses to be incurred by a person contesting for Chairman of an FCT Area Council is ₦10 million, while for Councillor it is ₦1 million.⁵⁰ The Electoral Bill 2021 seeks to further increase these limits to ₦30 million in the case of Chairman and ₦5 million in the case of Councillor. It is submitted that these increases in spending caps will further exclude marginalised groups and place them at a greater disadvantage. In order to level the playing field and give these groups a better chance of winning, we call on the National Assembly to undertake a downward review of these spending caps at the earliest opportunity.

In addition, INEC, political parties, CSOs, and the media have key roles to play in advocating for the inclusion and representation of marginalised groups. For its part, INEC has committed to providing priority voting and assistive devices to PWDs during the FCT elections.⁵¹ Some commendable advocacy efforts have also been made, such as the ‘Pink Vote Movement’ organised by the Engage, Empower, Educate Initiative, which aims to see 10 million more women actively participate in elections,⁵² and the ‘Run to Win’ campaign organised by Yiaga Africa, which aims to bring support to youth candidates in elections.⁵³ When combined with an enabling legal framework, these advocacy efforts are

⁴⁹ Ikpefan, F. (2021, November 20). FCT Area Council Elections 2022: Young aspirants list challenges. *The Nation*. <https://thenationonlineng.net/fct-area-council-elections-2022-young-aspirants-list-challenges/>

⁵⁰ Section 91(6) and (7), Electoral Bill 2021

⁵¹ New Agency of Nigeria. (2022, January 28). FCT Elections: INEC assures disabled persons of priority voting rights. *Peoples Gazette*. <https://gazettengr.com/fct-elections-inec-assures-disabled-persons-of-priority-voting-rights/>

⁵² This Day. (2022, February 1). AMAC: Meshack-Hart Seeks Participation of More Women in FCT Council Polls. <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2022/02/01/amac-meshack-hart-seeks-participation-of-more-women-in-fct-council-polls/>

⁵³ Amaza, M. #RunToWinNG: Yiaga Africa Galvanizes Support for Young Candidates Ahead of FCT Polls. *Yiaga Africa*. <https://yiaga.org/yiaga-africa-calls-for-more-youth-participation-in-politics-hosts-youth-and-women-candidates-in-the-2022-fct-area-council-elections/>

likely to yield more effective results.

Main Political Actors

Muhammad Musa Bello is the FCT Minister and head of the FCTA. As administrative head of the FCT, he wields significant power in the territory. He is an APC member, and his influence might give APC a strong standing during these elections.

Abdullahi Adamu Candido is the current Chairman of AMAC. AMAC is a highly significant area council, because it is the centre of government and business in the country, and also because it has over half of the entire registered voters in the FCT. As Chairman of AMAC, Candido possesses significant power. Although he is currently on his second term, which bars him from running for re-election, his power could give his party, APC, a strong footing in the election.

John Gabaya is the incumbent Chairman of Bwari Area Council, who is contesting for re-election. He is a member of the PDP. His emergence as consensus candidate shows widespread support for him within his party.

Abdullahi Sabo is the incumbent Chairman of Kuje Area Council, who is also contesting for re-election on the PDP platform. Like Gabaya, Sabo emerged as a consensus candidate, demonstrating widespread support for him among party members.

Danladi Chiya is the incumbent Chairman of Kwali Area Council. He is running for re-election on the platform of APC. His election was smooth and peaceful, as he emerged as the consensus candidate of the party.

Abdulrahman Ajiya is the incumbent Chairman of Abaji Area Council. He is currently on his second term, which bars him from seeking re-election. However, as Chairman of the council, he still wields power. Indeed, during the dispute around the APC primaries for the Abaji chairmanship candidate, Ajiya expressed support for Alhaji Muhammad Angulu Loko, who eventually emerged successful.

Adamu Mustapha is the incumbent Chairman of Gwagwalada Area Council. Although he was hopeful of contesting for re-election under his party, APC, the party's ticket was given to Jibrin Giri Abubakar. Mustapha's recent suspension from APC has further reduced his level of influence during these elections.

Security

In recent years, insecurity in Nigeria has become rife, and the FCT has not been left out. In December 2021, FCTA raised the alarm that bandits and other criminals being forced out of key Northern states are relocating to towns around Abuja.⁵⁴ This has resulted in increasing physical attacks by terrorists, especially in satellite towns such as Bwari, Kuje and Gwagwalada.⁵⁵

Another rising trend is kidnapping of persons in secondary schools and universities. In November 2021, the staff quarters of Junior Secondary School, Yebu, in Kwali Area Council, was raided and the Vice-Principal of the school was kidnapped.⁵⁶ In the same month, staff of the University of Abuja and their children were kidnapped from the university staff quarters.⁵⁷ Amidst these developments, some schools in the FCT told parents to keep their children at home for the time being.⁵⁸

Farmer-herder crises have also become a problem around the country. The FCT has borne part of the brunt of this problem. Following many incidents of conflict, many farmers in rural communities in the territory are now unable to access their farms due to fear of being kidnapped.⁵⁹

There have also been frequent reports of robbery and kidnapping along the Abuja-Lokoja highway, which passes through parts of Gwagwalada and Abaji Area Councils.⁶⁰ Indeed, the high level of insecurity in the FCT led the House of Representatives to summon the FCT Minister, Muhammad Musa Bello, in November 2021.⁶¹

Although none of these security incidents seem to be politically motivated, the general insecurity may nevertheless have an effect on election security. Ultimately, if the security situation is not addressed, it could affect the credibility of the FCT elections, and even stop

⁵⁴ Jimoh, A.M. and S, O. (2021, December 10). Abuja residents lament growing insecurity in nation's capital. *The Guardian*. <https://guardian.ng/news/abuja-residents-lament-growing-insecurity-in-nations-capital/>

⁵⁵ Ibid

⁵⁶ Tolu-Kolawole, D. (2021, November 3). NUT condemns kidnap of Abuja school vice principal. *Punch*. <https://punchng.com/nut-condemns-kidnap-of-abuja-school-vice-principal/>

⁵⁷ Are, J. (2021, November 5). Professors, children abducted from UNIABUJA staff quarters regain freedom. *The Cable*. <https://www.thecable.ng/breaking-victims-of-uniabuja-abduction-regain-freedom>

⁵⁸ Adewole, S. (2021, November 4). Insecurity: Some Abuja schools have told students to stay at home, says Shehu Sani. *Punch*. <https://punchng.com/insecurity-some-abuja-schools-have-told-students-to-stay-at-home-says-shehu-sani/>

⁵⁹ Mojeed, A. (2021, July 27). Abuja farmers lament impact of insecurity, herders' attacks. *Premium Times*. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/more-news/475895-abuja-farmers-lament-impact-of-insecurity-herders-attacks.html>

⁶⁰ Andrew, P., Sunday, T., and Iorchi, D. (2021, May 17). 15 years after: N42.3bn Abuja-Lokoja road still work in progress. *Blueprint*. <https://www.blueprint.ng/15-years-after-n42-3bn-abuja-lokoja-road-still-work-in-progress/>

⁶¹ Akpan, S. (2021, November 9). 'Abuja has never been this unsafe' — reps summon FCT minister over insecurity. *The Cable*. <https://www.thecable.ng/abuja-has-never-been-this-unsafe-reps-summon-fct-minister-over-insecurity>

them from holding completely. It is therefore imperative to take measures to prevent violence and de-escalate the situation.

Efforts at Mitigating Violence

In its usual practice, INEC has been conducting meetings with the Inter-Agency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES) to assess the security level and identify preventive measures. In January 2022, INEC met with representatives of heads of security agencies for final preparations and to identify flashpoints in the FCT.⁶²

The Council of Non-Indigene Chiefs in Bwari Area Council have also played a role. In a meeting with the leadership of the council in January 2022, they urged the leaders to maintain peace and unity among residents of the area during the elections.⁶³

Also in January 2022, the FCTA met with traditional leaders in the FCT urging them to maintain peace within their respective domains during the upcoming elections.⁶⁴ The FCTA further stated that it would not hesitate to hold traditional leaders responsible for their action or inaction in the event of breakdown of peace during the elections.⁶⁵

CSOs have also made peace interventions in the form of advocacy and engagement with stakeholders. An example is the International Visitor Leadership Programme Alumni Association, which organised a sensitisation programme for youth on non-violent participation in the upcoming FCT elections.⁶⁶

Given these numerous efforts from various stakeholders, there is hope that the FCT Area Council elections will be peaceful. Security agencies are urged to treat their role in maintaining peace and order during elections as sacrosanct.

⁶² Ajayi, O. (2022, January 22). FCT Council Polls: INEC meets Security Chiefs, Media Executives. *Vanguard*. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2022/01/fct-council-polls-inec-meets-security-chiefs-media-executives/>

⁶³ News Agency of Nigeria. (2022, January 31). Traditional chiefs sue for peace, unity during FCT elections. *Peoples Gazette*. <https://gazzetngr.com/traditional-chiefs-sue-for-peace-unity-during-fct-elections/>

⁶⁴ Ajimotokan, O. (2022, January 7). FCT Threatens to Sanction Monarchs for Breach of Peace. *This Day*. <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2022/01/07/fct-threatens-to-sanction-monarchs-for-breach-of-peace/>

⁶⁵ Ibid

⁶⁶ Okafor, C. (2022, January 16). Group sensitises FCT youth on nonviolent participation in elections. *Premium Times*. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/more-news/506148-group-sensitises-fct-youth-on-nonviolent-participation-in-elections.html>

Civil Society Organisations

Civil society organisations are key stakeholders in political and electoral processes in Nigeria. Their support and contributions to the overall enhancement of the electoral process is immeasurable: in research, voter education, advocacy for electoral reform, capacity building of key institutions and many other areas. Some of the CSO support and contributions towards enhancing the electoral process in the FCT include:

a) Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD)

CDD carries out work on elections through research, training, advocacy and capacity building. Prior to the FCT elections, CDD has been countering misinformation and disinformation which have the propensity to disrupt the electoral process through its “Fact Checker” publications on social media and its website. This will enable the electorate, including those in the FCT, to make proper and informed decisions. CDD has also been accredited to observe the FCT elections. This will be followed by a report on the conduct of the elections.

b) Situation Room

The Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room, convened by the Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC), is a coalition of more than 70 CSOs which maximise their various resources for information sharing, anticipation of problems during elections and responding rapidly when they occur.⁶⁷ Prior to the FCT elections, the Situation Room has been highlighting facts about key aspects of the election and encouraging citizens to vote. It has also been accredited to observe the elections.

c) Yiaga Africa

Yiaga Africa runs a variety of election-related programmes, including Run to Win, The Power of 18, Watching the Vote, and Fix Elections NG. Prior to the FCT elections, Yiaga Africa has been:⁶⁸

- Conducting voter education drives and community outreach to encourage people to vote.
- Assisting voters to locate their polling units.
- Discussing key issues with youth candidates in the upcoming elections through its radio show, Run to Win.
- Engaging with the FCT Resident Electoral Commissioner, Alhaji Yahaya Bello, to explore areas of collaboration to improve citizen participation during the upcoming

⁶⁷ Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room. (n.d.). *About Us*. <https://situationroomng.org/about-us/>

⁶⁸ Information gathered from Yiaga Africa’s Twitter page: <https://twitter.com/yiaga>

elections.

- Producing publications to inform stakeholders about the upcoming elections, including *Facts About the FCT 2022 Area Council Elections*, and *Factsheet on Women and Youth Candidacy in the 2022 FCT Area Council Elections*.

Yiaga Africa has also been accredited to observe the FCT elections.

d) The Electoral Hub

The Electoral Hub carries out work on elections through research, documentation, policy and law influencing, public education, and impact advocacy. In order to enable stakeholders understand the electoral landscape, power dynamics, and security situation in the FCT, The Electoral Hub has produced this political context analysis. The organisation has also been accredited to observe the FCT elections. This will be followed by a detailed report and results analysis to highlight strengths, weaknesses, and recommendations for the future.

These and other CSO-led programmes and activities are expected to enhance public confidence, accountability and the transparency of the electoral processes.

Role of INEC

INEC, by virtue of the power given to it under the Electoral Act 2010, will oversee and conduct the FCT Area Council elections. In preparation for the FCT election, INEC has done the following:

1. Introduction of BVAS

INEC introduced the Bi-Modal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) to replace the Smart Card Readers (SCR) which were used previously. Unlike the SCR which could only use fingerprint recognition, the BVAS makes use of two biometric features: fingerprint recognition and facial recognition. Furthermore, the BVAS serves three functions: voter registration, voter accreditation, and uploading of election results. The Anambra election was the first major election in which the BVAS was used, and INEC has confirmed that it will again be used for the FCT election.⁶⁹

2. Increasing Access to Polling Units

INEC also embarked on a project to increase access to polling units. In the FCT alone, as many as 2,260 polling units were added to the 562 that existed previously, making a total of 2,822. This new figure takes into account the vast population increase in the FCT since the polling units were created in 1996. It is aimed at ensuring easier access for voters and reducing long queues and wait times.

However, it has been reported that these new polling units are being under-utilised, as up to 593 of the 2,822 polling units (21% of the total) do not have voters.⁷⁰ This is reminiscent of the Anambra elections, where some of the new polling units had little to no voters on election day. In subsequent elections, it is imperative for CSOs and the media to highlight this innovation and encourage voters to transfer to the polling units that are closest to them.

3. Voter Registration

Having earlier suspended continuous voter registration (CVR) during the coronavirus period, INEC resumed the process prior to the elections. INEC innovatively began the CVR exercise virtually in June 2021 through the cvr.inecnigeria.org platform, before physical registration, biometrics, and distribution of Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs) in INEC's local offices resumed a month later. On 12 December 2021, INEC suspended CVR in the FCT,

⁶⁹ Omolaoye, S. (2022, January 18). INEC to deploy BVAS, IREV for FCT council poll. *The Guardian*. <https://guardian.ng/news/inec-to-deploy-bvas-irev-for-fct-council-poll/>

⁷⁰ Ajayi, O. (2022, January 22)

in line with the legal requirement that voter registration should stop not later than 60 days before an election.⁷¹

During the CVR process, 42,986 persons registered, and after verification and cleaning up of data using INEC's Automatic Biometric Identification System, 14,665 multiple registrants were identified and removed.⁷² This left 28,321 valid registrants. Accordingly, INEC printed 39,208 PVCs (accounting for newly registered voters, existing voters who applied for transfer from one area council to another or from another state to the FCT, and existing voters who applied for replacement of lost or damaged PVCs).⁷³ Distribution of PVCs began on January 10, and is scheduled to end on February 4 – eight days to the election.⁷⁴

4. Other Activities

Other activities of the Commission which are done in every election cycle include publishing the notice of elections, publishing the final list of candidates, engagement with stakeholders, election and party monitoring, accreditation of journalists and election observers, registration of party agents, and recruitment and training of ad hoc staff (about 12,000 will be deployed⁷⁵). Some of these processes were migrated online, as INEC created portals to enable interested journalists, election observers, and ad hoc staff apply online.

Some of the stakeholder meetings ahead of the FCT elections are outlined below:⁷⁶

- On 12 January 2022, INEC organised a townhall meeting with women groups and gender-focused CSOs.⁷⁷
- On 17 January 2022, INEC organised a sensitisation forum for broadcast media practitioners ahead of the FCT elections.
- On 18 January 2022, INEC trained visually impaired registered voters in the FCT

⁷¹ Section 9(5), Electoral Act 2010 (as amended)

⁷² Okocha, C. (2022, January 10). INEC Prints 39, 208 New PVCs for February FCT Polls. *This Day*. <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2022/01/10/inec-prints-39-208-new-pvcs-for-february-fct-polls/>

⁷³ Ibid

⁷⁴ Ibid

⁷⁵ Omolaoye, S. (2022, January 13). INEC to deploy 12,000 ad hoc staff for FCT area council poll. *The Guardian*. <https://guardian.ng/news/inec-to-deploy-12000-ad-hoc-staff-for-fct-area-council-poll/>

⁷⁶ Unless otherwise stated, this information has been gathered from INEC's Twitter page: <https://twitter.com/inecnigeria>.

⁷⁷ Ajayi, O. & Ukanwa, E. (2022, January 12). FCT Council Polls: INEC assures level playing ground for candidates, voters. *Vanguard*. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2022/01/fct-council-polls-inec-assures-level-playing-ground-for-candidates-voters/>

on the use of braille ballot guide for voting.⁷⁸

- On 18 January 2022, INEC organised a consultative meeting with political party leaders.
- On 18 January 2022, INEC organised a training on electoral security.
- On 19 January 2022, INEC organised a consultative meeting with CSOs.
- On 20 January 2022, INEC organised a consultative meeting with the Inter-Agency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES).
- On 21 January 2022, INEC had a consultative meeting with the media.
- On 29 January 2022, INEC organised the Election Monitoring and Support Centre (EMSC) Red Zone Implementers' Workshop, in final preparations for the FCT elections.

These engagements are aimed at ensuring a peaceful and credible election in the FCT. However, as discussed earlier, there is a risk that the numerous court orders requiring INEC to substitute names of candidates will affect election logistics, especially in terms of printing ballot papers.

⁷⁸ Ugwu, R. (2022, January 18). FCT Area Council poll: INEC trains visually impaired voters on braille. *The Sun*. <https://www.sunnewsonline.com/fct-area-council-poll-inec-trains-visually-impaired-voters-on-braille/>

Election Observers

Electoral observation is an integral part of democratic and electoral processes. Observers play important roles in enhancing the transparency and credibility of elections and, in the acceptance of election results.⁷⁹ Furthermore, the acceptance of observers is evidence of the openness of the electoral process. Observers' election assessment also legitimises elected administration.

INEC has approved 50 domestic observer groups and one international observer group for the FCT Area Council elections.⁸⁰ The international observer is International Foundation for Electoral Systems. The domestic observers are:

- Advocacy for Quality Leadership and Health Awareness Foundation
- Africa for Millenium Change Initiative
- Centre for Democracy and Development
- Centre for Environmental Sustainability and Development Awareness
- Center for Gender and Youth Civic Education and Rights in Africa
- Centre for Grassroot Development and Crime Prevention
- Centre for Positive Change and Civic Responsibility
- Centre for Strategic Conflict Management
- Centre for Strategy, Ethics and Value
- Centre for Transparency Advocacy
- Citizens Right for Peace and Non-Violence Initiative
- Citizens Rights and Leadership Awareness Initiative
- Conscience Women of Africa Initiative
- Christian Empowerment and Development Initiative
- Foundation for Sustainable Development
- Future Leaders Global Initiative
- Gamji Members Association
- Global Hope and Justice for the Less Privileged
- Grassroots Awareness & Volunteers Against Organized Crime
- Grassroot Development and Peace Initiative
- Grassroot Development Centre for Peace and Social Justice
- Humanity Advocacy for Sustainable Development Initiative

⁷⁹ African Union. (2013). *Election Observation Manual*. <https://www.eisa.org.za/pdf/au2014EOMmanual.pdf>

⁸⁰ INEC (n.d.). *List of Accredited Domestic and Foreign Observer Groups for FCT Area Council Elections Scheduled for 12th Feburary,2022*. <https://www.inecnigeria.org/list-of-accredited-domestic-and-foreign-observer-groups-for-fct-area-council-elections-scheduled-for-12th-february2022/>

- Ilimi Wal Hikmah Islamic Foundation
- Initiative for Promotion of Civic Obligation and Sustainable Peace
- Initiative for Youth Transformation & Positive Change
- Intercontinental Leadership Initiative
- International Standard Centre for Development
- International Organisation for Human Rights Development and Environment
- Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution
- JDPC, Catholic Caritas Foundation of Nigeria
- Lotus Initiative for the Blind
- National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies, National Assembly
- New Dawn for Development Initiative
- Nigeria Bar Association
- Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room (Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre)
- Nigeria Progressive Women and Youth Development Initiative
- Noble Coordinators Forum for the Advancement of Ethics and Values
- Northern Patriotic Front
- Organisation of Justice for Equity Sustenance
- Patriotic Women Foundation
- Reconciliation and Peace Development Centre
- Savera Africa
- Sustainable Initiative for Nurturing Growth (SING)
- The Electoral Hub
- Wave Foundation
- Womenfest for Better Living Initiative
- Womens Right and Peace Protection Initiative for Africa
- Women with Disabilities of Nigeria Support Foundation
- Yiaga Africa
- Youth Initiative for Better and Great Nigeria

Reports from observer groups are usually viewed as credible records of the conduct of elections.

Conclusion

From observations of the current dynamics in the FCT, it can be inferred that:

- a. It is unclear whether the Electoral Bill 2021 will be assented to by the President before the FCT Area Council elections;
- b. The geography of the FCT, particularly urban slums and satellite towns with poor road networks, must be taken into account for election planning purposes;
- c. Internal crisis within APC might give the other parties, such as PDP and APGA, a stronger standing during the election;
- d. There is a real risk that COVID-19 protocols will not be followed on election day;
- e. The trend of low voter turnout is likely to continue during this election;
- f. There is poor level of women and PWD representation among the candidates, but youth representation is impressive;
- g. There are obvious and logical concerns over plans for violent activities that may undermine public safety and security;
- h. There is hope that CSOs and observers, both local and foreign, will help ensure credibility and integrity; and
- i. While INEC can be commended for innovations, particularly in increasing access to PUs, these innovations are being under-utilised by the public.
- j. The numerous court orders requiring INEC to substitute names of candidates may also affect election logistics.

The Electoral Hub

... promoting electoral knowledge, accountability
and integrity



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