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20<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER, 2023



## **ELECTORAL AD-HOC STAFF EXPERIENCE SHARING ROUNDTABLE**

*..... participants call for policy improvements in the following areas: the recruitment of ad-hoc staff so only qualified persons should be recruited, the provision of adequate training, activation of RACs, remuneration of electoral ad-hoc staff, security, technological support infrastructure, and reverse-logistics. As there are potential adverse consequences if these are not addressed. The identified areas of needs also demands for concerted action by concerned stakeholders.*

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The Electoral Ad-hoc Staff Experience Sharing Roundtable was held on Friday, 15 September 2023, at De Silver Green Hotel, Abuja, and on Zoom. The Roundtable was organized to commemorate the International Democracy Day by the Electoral Hub, in partnership with the Madiba Foundation for Good Governance and with the support of the MacArthur Foundation through its Organizing for a New Nigeria (ONN) project. It was focused on providing an opportunity for them to share their experiences, document the experiences of former ad-hoc staff, educate participants about the electoral process, and propose policy improvements in ad-hoc staff management.

The Roundtable brought together critical electoral duty bearers, including, electoral ad-hoc staff that served in the 2023 general elections and the 2022 off-cycle governorship elections in Ekiti and Osun States, CSOs, and Academia. Specifically, the Roundtable had former INEC National Commissioners, Hajia Amina Zakari who chaired the Roundtable and Professor Okechukwu Ibeanu, the lead presenter. Also present were INEC FCT Administrative Secretary Alhaji Musa Husumu, Heads of Department, Ishaq Garba Aliyu, Antonia Idemudia, and Agness Sam-Akpe; Africa Director, MacArthur Foundation, Dr. Kole Shettima; and Programme Manager, Madiba Foundation, Ozoho Otonoku.

The Director of The Electoral Hub, Princess Hamman-Obels, in her welcome remark, outlined the objectives of the Roundtable as:

- document the rich and diverse experiences of these ad-hoc staff, using their valuable insights as lessons that will enlighten and guide electoral staff management.
- empower participants through comprehensive training on understanding the intricacies of the electoral process. This is to cultivate a cadre of electoral advocates who are not just informed but passionately committed to safeguarding the integrity of our electoral process.
- recommend policy improvements regarding the management of ad-hoc staff in our electoral process.

Key activities that formed a part of the Roundtable include reflections on election work led by Professor Okechukwu Ibeanu, general discussions on issues, challenges and recommendations

about the Nigerian electoral process, the role of electoral ad-hoc staff and their performance, and group work on ad-hoc staff recruitment and training, deployment and activation of Registration Area Centres (RACs), election day activities, election technology and post-election reverse logistics. Ultimately, the roundtable provided an opportunity for reflections on a wide range of issues affecting ad-hoc staff performance in particular, and the Nigerian electoral process in general with a view of proffering workable recommendations.

Participants at the Roundtable highlighted the crucial role of ad-hoc staff, as key stakeholders in the electoral process, responsible for protecting its integrity and capable of thwarting the process. Specifically, Professor Okechukwu Ibeanu, in his lead reflection likened the role of electoral staff to the two faces of the mythical Roman god, Janus. According to him, Electoral officials, like Janus, have both faces, the good one capable of making elections and the bad one, capable of marring the integrity of elections. He further pointed out in his lead reflections that for electoral ad-hoc staff to perform optimally and uphold the integrity of electoral process, three qualities are required - *knowledge, courage and carriage*.

Reflections on recently concluded elections were also offered, especially by FCT INEC HoDs that were present at the Roundtable. Ishaq Garba Aliyu, the HoD Electoral Operations highlighted the achievements of the 2023 general elections, underscoring the high level of preparations that went into the process and the logistics and technological challenges encountered. Antonia Idemudia, HoD ICT, pointed out the advancements made in applying technology to various aspects of electoral conduct in Nigeria as well as the limitations of technology. Agness Sam-Akpe, the HoD Voter Education and Publicity also highlighted efforts at voter education deployed by the Commission during the 2023 general elections and challenges with accessibility of local communities.

The Roundtable involved group reflections by various categories of participants of the Roundtable. There were reflections by Presiding Officers (POs) and Assistant Presiding Officers (APOs), Supervisory Presiding Officers (SPOs) and Collation Officers (COs), Registration Area Technical Support (RATechs), and Election Observers. These reflections focused on issues of recruitment and training of ad-hoc staff, deployment and activation of RACs, election day activities, election technology, and post election reverse logistics. Among other things, group members identified several challenges limiting the effectiveness of each of these areas of electoral conduct and ad-hoc staff management. Among the challenge identified were the recruitment of under-qualified personnel as ad-hoc staff, inadequate training, late activation of RACs, inadequate remuneration of electoral ad-hoc staff, inadequate security, technological failure and challenges stemming from inadequate support infrastructure, and challenge with reverse-logistics. Potential adverse consequences of these challenges create a need for concerted action by concerned stakeholders.

In conclusion, and having identified some key issues affecting the performance of ad-hoc staff, as well as limiting the quality and credibility of the Nigerian electoral process, The Roundtable proposed the following among other recommendations:

- There should be an upward review of remuneration of electoral officials and staff as a step towards encouraging them to uphold the integrity and credibility of the electoral process.

- Electoral officials, especially the Chairman and National Commissioners, should be considered for national honours and other forms of national recognition.
- All electoral staff, including ad-hoc staff, should be required to declare any conflict of interest before deployment on election duties.
- All malpractices and breaches of the electoral process, either by permanent or ad-hoc staff, politicians, security agents, and electorates should be punished in line with the legal provisions.
- INEC should establish a direct link with security persons posted to the various polling units. Information about the full deployment of security agents including PU posted for electoral duty should be available to INEC.
- INEC should revise duties of collation officers for the different elections to better manage collation time and performance as collators of National Assembly Election Results (consisting of the Senate and House of Representatives Elections) collate twice as much results as the collation officers of the Presidential Elections do.
- Security should be treated as a collective responsibility. Security agencies, civil society actors, ad-hoc staff, voters and all other stakeholders in the electoral process should take steps towards protecting electoral materials and personnel.
- Physical screening should be conducted before ad-hoc staff are recruited. This will present a stronger check against the recruitment of unqualified persons.
- INEC should ensure that recruited personnel possess the requisite educational qualification. This will address challenges with poor understanding of electoral process and duties by ad-hoc staff.
- The use of video and audio instruction materials is highly recommended to improve ad-hoc staff understanding of the election process, their roles, responsibilities and duties.
- The pre- and post-screening test with a recommended pass rate should be administered to ensure that recruits for ad-hoc staff duty are persons with adequate understanding of their duties and responsibilities.
- Registration Area Centres should be opened early and adequate security should be provided to ensure the protection of sensitive and non-sensitive electoral materials as well as electoral staff.
- Registration Area Centres should be made habitable. Adequate facilities including lighting, mattresses, convenience, etc. should be provided at RACs.
- Adequate provisions for logistics should be provided. This should include logistics considerations that address the needs of physically challenged, pregnant women, new mothers, aged, amongst others.

- The stipend paid to SPOs for transportation should be increased or transportation fare be paid to vehicle operators to convey SPOs across their areas of electoral duty. PU conducts impact SPOs work, and if transportation fare is not adequate, SPOs cannot function optimally.
- Consideration should be given to the recruitment of more SPOs as SPOs were observed to be overwhelmed by the number of PUs they needed to handle.
- The Commission should explore the possibility of engaging private logistics companies. Private logistics companies are driven by the profit motive and the persons at the top would not be willing to compromise on the quality of their business. As such, issues of logistics failure can be better addressed.

Various outputs from the Roundtable will shortly be released on The Electoral Hub's webpage: <https://electoralhub.iriadng.org>. [Stakeholders](#) in the electoral process are urged act on issues identified and the proposed recommendations as a step towards strengthening the credibility and integrity of the electoral process in Nigerian.

*#ElectoralAdHocStaffRoundtable #ElectionExperience #ElectoralWorkers  
#ElectoralAdHocStaffStories #IRIADElectionInsights*

### **Signed**

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