



NAIJA, YOUR VOTE YOUR POWER!

THE ELECTORAL HUB PRE-ELECTION STATEMENT ON NAIJA DECIDES 2023

The 2023 election is the seventh general election in Nigeria since the transition to democratic rule in 1999. The election is unique owing to the shift from a two-legged race to a four-legged race; it has also attracted a lot of attention both domestically and internationally largely due to the increase participation of the youth in the recently conducted voter registration and PVC collection exercise as well as the campaigns.

Another reason for the apt attention on the general election is the risks that threaten the success of the election. The Electoral Hub research conducted with support from OSIWA/OSF identified ten key threats to the election as: insecurity, poor management of tight Presidential and Governorship election, vote trading (buying and selling of votes), poor infrastructure, staff incompetence and sabotage within the EMB, conflicting court orders and controversial judgments, glitches and hitches of electoral technology, trust deficit in the electoral system, interferences with voters' access and voting rights and poor management of youth expectations in the electoral process.

For the past one year, we have been monitoring the electoral process and in the last two (2) months through our Electoral Volunteer Information Centre (EVIC). The Electoral Hub in line with its commitment to promoting electoral accountability, knowledge, and integrity and with support from the DAI/EU-SDGN launched the Electoral Volunteer Information Centre (EVIC) in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Kano and Lagos States. The EVIC project is primarily aimed at civic engagement and education in relation to the forthcoming 2023 General Election. This intervention is also in furtherance of engaging citizens and mobilizing voters for election being a pillar of the electoral process and deepening citizens' engagement to ensure electoral integrity. The EVIC objectives were: bringing electoral information close to the electorates/public/citizens, assisting citizens to know their PVC status and collection points, sensitizing citizens about their Polling Unit (PUs) locations and access, improving knowledge and understanding of the electoral process, procedures, INEC's new technology and promoting women, youths, and PWDs' participation in the electoral process. In other words, at the EVICs, citizens are provided with different electoral services such as assistance in checking for polling units, voters' registration status, PVC collection centers, as well as about the BVAS and other electoral information.

In line with our mandate, we have conducted other activities which include but are not limited to:

- Sensitization on citizens' rights and impact on security in the upcoming elections.

... promoting electoral knowledge, accountability, and integrity.

- Providing electoral service assistance to the public by helping citizens to check the status of PVC registration, allocated collection points, polling unit information, information about the BVAS as well as addressing complaints and challenges.
- Online digital advocacy on the need for compliance with the relevant institutional and regulatory framework.
- Training of observers on observing, documenting and reporting of Electoral Conduct and Misconduct during the election.
- Organising policy roundtables on electoral violence; the risks and threats for stakeholders to anticipate and prepare for.
- Promoting inclusion and the full participation of youth, women and People living with Disabilities (PWDs).
- Advocating for accountability and integrity among electoral stakeholders and staff to preserve the sanctity of democracy and rule of law.
- Deployment of accredited election observers and citizens observers across the country.
- Production of infographics and posters to educate voters on key things about the elections. These are available on our social media handles: @electoralhub on Instagram and Twitter, and @electoralhubng on Facebook.

The Electoral Hub has deployed observers across the states of the federation to observe the 2023 general election. Our observation will focus pre-electoral, electoral, and post electoral periods. We focus on issues such as: ***compliance with legal framework, RAC preparations and set-ups, security presence, fuel and currency scarcity impacts, youth, women and PWDs participation, malpractices including vote trading and electoral violence, election related -violence against women, ad-hoc staff performance, collation process management, and post collation electoral environment/conduct of key stakeholders.*** These key areas would serve as basis for our analysis on the conduct of the election.

In promoting a peaceful and credible election, we urge stakeholders and citizens to work according to their responsibilities for the success of the upcoming election. Most specifically, it is our expectations that;

- With the introduction of the new Electoral Act, INEC is more equipped to manage and monitor the electoral process adequately and ensure that the process is credible and in accordance with legal trends despite security challenges.
- Ad hoc staff and electoral officials should carry out their responsibilities effectively, ensuring that important ideals like knowledge of the voting procedure, voting equality, vote privacy, and an inclusive electoral process is preserved.
- Political parties should maintain the face of Nigeria's democracy and avoid electoral fraud and malpractices such as rigging, vote-buying and post electoral malpractices.

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- Security agencies should maintain integrity, be vigilant and alert to protect election officials, voters, election equipment, and the general election environment. They should not spare defaulters and violators of electoral laws.
- Civil society organisations and election observers should be attentive and highlight anomalies (if any), on election day.
- The media should report factual and provide relevant updates about the events on election day. They are expected to verify reports before informing the public.
- The electorate should participate effectively in the electoral process without inducements and biases. They should refrain from selling their vote on election day.

Each electoral stakeholder outlined is paramount to a successful election. We are optimistic that the different stakeholders will honour the electoral process, perform their statutory and civic responsibilities towards ensuring a successful election. As we go into the election, we urge Nigerians to come out massively to vote, as voting is their civic right and responsibility. It is important to note that voter's participation is one of the criteria in determining the credibility of elections and as such we encourage Nigerians to come out and cast their votes.

We also urge political parties to desist from causing chaos and violence in the election just to protect their personal interest. Similarly, we urge the youth not to allow themselves to be used by politicians to cause havoc in the election.

To attain a successful election, we must all work together to play our part by coming out to vote and protecting the institutional integrity of INEC as the national EMB in Nigeria.

We anticipate a free and fair, inclusive, and transparent election on February 25, 2023!

#NaijaDecides2023, #NigeriaDecides2023, #ElectoralIntegrityNG, #ElectoralCredibilityNG,
#ElectoralInclusivity, #NoToElectionViolence, #CitizenRight

Signed

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