

NILDS' DEPARTMENT OF DEMOCRATIC STUDIES' BRIEF
Means to Enfranchise Electoral and Security Personnel in the 2019 General Election
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Introduction

Elections are complex undertakings. Regardless of where they take place, election management bodies (EMBs) face numerous risks in organizing them. Such risks are linked to the legal, operational, technical, political, security, and other aspects of electoral processes¹. However, the complexities involved in managing elections should not be an excuse to deprive numerous qualified voters from voting.

It is a fact that, currently, the Nigerian electoral system is not only capital intensive, it is also extremely labour intensive, this explains why more than two million (2 million) eligible voters were disenfranchised in the 2015 general election because they were made to perform various types of election related duties on the days of the elections².

Similarly, according to the Chairman of INEC, the ad-hoc workers to be deployed for the 2019 polls, will be about 300 higher than the 700 engaged for the 2015 general elections. This means that about one million (1 million) ad-hoc staff will be disenfranchised in 2019³.

Since, it has been confirmed that more eligible voters, will be involved in conducting the 2019 election; it is therefore now very imperative that something need to be done immediately, hence this brief is interested in addressing this issue.

Deliberate Disenfranchisement is Illegal

The right to vote is both an international and a national issue. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted unanimously by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948, recognizes the integral role that transparent and open elections play in ensuring the fundamental right to participatory government.

In Nigeria, the right to vote is provided and protected in the Constitution (Section 77), the Electoral Act, (Section 12 (1)) and the Registration of Voters Act (Section 1 (2))⁴.

¹ Sead A. (2016). Risk Management in Elections. Sweden: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance.

² Agbo, H.N. and Okoli, R. C. (2016). Election Management and Disenfranchisements in 2015 General Elections in Nigeria: The Unexplored Issues. International Journal of Research in Arts and Social Sciences Vol 9, No.1, p: 78-98.

³ <https://punchng.com/2019-inec-to-recruit-one-million-ad-hoc-workers/>.

⁴ <https://punchng.com/1999-constitution-and-right-to-vote/>.

Hence, to all intents and purposes, to deliberately prevent any citizen of Nigeria to vote or be voted for without a valid legal reasons is unacceptable. This means, the fact that some Nigerian citizens have to work on election days should not be a reason for them to forfeit their right to vote.

In 2015 more than 2 million eligible voters were disfranchised, simply because they were made to perform various electoral jobs on the days of the elections. This number of voters are more than the registered voters in so many states. For instance, the not fewer than 750,000 ad-hoc personnel that were deployed in the 2015 election were more than the registered voters of states such as Bayelsa and Ekiti, which have 610, 373 and 732, 021 respectively⁵.

The Table below summarizes the categories of eligible voters that were disenfranchised in 2015, according to Agbo and Okoli⁶. This sets of eligible voters will still be disenfranchised in 2019 in a higher scale, if noting tangible is done.

Table 1: Categories of Voters that were technically disenfranchised in 2015

Nos	Categories	Numbers	Assignments covered
1	INEC ad-hoc staff	Not fewer than 750,000	Sundry election management
2	Security agencies (police, Civil Defense Corps, the Military, Customs, etc)	About 500,000	Security of voters and other electoral infrastructure.
3	Accredited observer groups	82 local observer groups	Election observation
4	INEC permanent staff	16,000	Election management
5	National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW),		Transportation of electoral materials and personnel
6	Media men		Observation, monitoring and education
7	Political parties agents in polling unites,		Monitoring of the voting processes

Source: Compiled by Author with data from and INEC (2015); Agbo, and Okoli (2016) and Nwachukwu (2018)⁷.

Cross-Country Analysis of How Electoral and Security Personnel are Enfranchised

Early voting or pre-poll voting or advance polling method is what has been designed by several democracies to enable election workers and others to vote before the days of general elections. This method of voting allows, election workers, health officials, security men, press people, observers and others to vote before election days so that they will not be officially disenfranchised.

Early voting is a part of the electoral system in Ghana, Australia, Canada, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Malta, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, United States, among others⁸.

In all these countries, early voting that enabled security personnel and others to vote before the days of the general elections is both a constitutional and a traditional matter. Hence, that of Nigeria

⁵ Agbo, H.N. and Okoli, R. C. (2016). *Election Management and Disenfranchisements in 2015 General Elections in Nigeria: The Unexplored Issues*. International Journal of Research in Arts and Social Sciences Vol 9, No.1, p: 78-98.

⁶ Ibid, p;94.

⁷ <http://dailypost.ng/2018/07/20/2019-inec-reveals-number-workers-needs-nigeria-election/>.

⁸ <https://www.afscme.org/news/...life/pdf/AFSCME-Retirees-Voting-in-November.pdf>.

should not be very different. More especially now that voter turnout is getting poorer and poorer every year.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Voter turnout has been declining across the globe since the beginning of 1990s. Declining voter turnout signals the deep problems democracies are facing today. Voter turnout is one of the crucial indicators of how citizens participate in the governance of their country⁹.

The fact that Nigeria is constantly and progressively experiencing poor voter turnout is no more a secret. According to the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), only 47.3% of eligible voters turn out to vote in 2015¹⁰.

This means that, Nigeria need to boost her voter turnout urgently. One of the means Nigeria can enhance her voter turnout is to make it officially mandatory for INEC staff and other election-related workers to vote. Therefore we recommend that:

- 1) All the election workers should be encouraged and allowed to vote before the real election days as it is done in most matured democracies. That is, pre-election method of voting should be used.
- 2) A proper orientation, public enlightenment should be done as regard this issue, this is because it will be new to many people and politicians may misinterpret the outcomes of the early votes.

Finally, it is a fact that more than two million people will be used officially to make the 2019 general elections possible, however, this high number of eligible voters should not be disenfranchised as it were before now. They should be allowed to vote in 2019 by all legal means possible.

⁹ Abdurashid S. (2016). *Voter Turnout Around the World*. Sweden: IDEA.

¹⁰ <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/country-view/231/40>.