

NILDS' DEPARTMENT OF DEMOCRATIC STUDIES' BRIEF
2019 Election and the Unclaimed Millions of Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs): the way Forward For INEC

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1) INTRODUCTION

Currently, in Nigeria, no adult can vote in an INEC organized election without a Permanent Voter Card (PVC. This means, a potential voter without a PVC has unilaterally disenfranchise his or herself in the forthcoming 2019 general elections. According to Ajayi¹ there are 66.5m registered voters; of this 54.43m have collected their PVCs while the uncollected PVCs are 7.8m and the unprinted PVCs are 4.23m.

Consequently this Brief is therefore interested in recommending strategies that will help INEC to resolve the challenge of unclaimed PVCs it is currently facing. This is important because, democracy will be in great danger by 2019 if the number of unclaimed PVCs keep increasing as the campaign for voters' registration intensifies to its climax at the end of this year.

2) MAJOR REASONS WHY PVCs ARE NOT COLLECTED

Table 1 below contain various reasons Nigerians gave on why those that have registered for PVCs have not collected them².

Major reasons why some Nigerians have not collected their PVCs
1) Deaths,
2) Relocation from place of registration,
3) Laziness
4) Disenchantment with INEC's inability to conduct free and fair elections
5) Fear of arrest because they are underage voters
6) Poor administrative arrangements put in place by INEC
7) Change of venue of collection points

Source: compiled by Author, (2018) from Akuki, (2017) and Gabriel, (2017).

3) SELECTED PUBLISHED DATA OF UNCLAIMED PVCs

¹ Ajayi, O. (2019). 2019: INEC and the Burden of uncollected, unprinted PVCs. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/04/2019-inec-and-the-burden-of-uncollected-unprinted-pvcs/> Vanguard (April 16, 2017). 2019: INEC and the Burden of uncollected, unprinted PVCs. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/04/2019-inec-and-the-burden-of-uncollected-unprinted-pvcs/>.

² Akuki, A. (March 30, 2017). INEC and Concerns over Unclaimed 7.8m PVCs. <https://independent.ng/inec-and-concerns-over-unclaimed-7-8m-pvcs/>.

The phenomenon of non-collection of PVCs is now a national issue. No region in the country is immune from the challenge. The following Table 2 contains selected number of unclaimed PVCs in some states as presented in the media recently³.

States	Number
Oyo	657, 267+
Delta	20,000+
Taraba	49,000
Ondo	370, 000+
Anambra	126,300+
Niger	132,985
Imo	370,000
Edo	460,000
Akwa Ibom	21,651+
Lagos	1.4m
Ogun	427,554

Source: Compiled by author (2017) from The Sun (2018); Akuki, (2017) and Gabriel (2017).

4) VOTERS' REGISTRATION METHODOLOGIES AROUND THE WORLD

How eligible voters are registered in developed democracies with various results or success stories are contain in Table 3⁴.

Countries	Methods of voters' registration	Remarks
USA	Citizens who are qualified to vote seek for means to register. The entire burden of registering to vote is on individual citizens.	One-quarter to one-third of all eligible Americans remain unregistered, hence they have disenfranchise themselves. Because they do not have "PVCs"
Argentina, Australia, Sweden, Canada, France, and the Canadian provinces of British Columbia, Ontario, and Québec	Voters' registration is decentralized and eligible voters are enrolled automatically and the necessary documents are sent to the qualified voters. sometimes they are called to come to different offices to collect the documents to vote	Ninety-three percent (93%) of eligible citizens are registered to vote. This is a success story.
Indonesia	The government conducts a nationwide enumeration by hiring temporary workers to go door-to-door, registering every eligible voter.	There are very few incidences of unclaimed voters' documents/materials

³ Gabriel, E (August 9, 2017). Edo REC raises alarm over unclaimed PVCs. Vanguard. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/08/edo-rec-raises-alarm-unclaimed-pvcs/>. Ujumadu, A. (April 27th, 2017). 126,300 PVCs yet to be collected in Anambra. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/04/126300-pvcs-yet-collected-anambra-inec/>. The Sun (January, 2018). Over 657,000 PVCs unclaimed in Oyo – INEC. <http://sunnewsonline.com/over-657000-pvcs-unclaimed-in-oyo-inec/>. More information are available.

⁴Jennifer S. R. and Margaret C. (2009). *Expanding Democracy: Voter Registration around the World*. N.Y: Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law.

Britain	Eligible voters are automatically registered and also some potential voters do go to registration points to register.	98% success.
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Source: Compiled by author (2018) from Jennifer and Margaret (2009)

5) CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

PVCs are like the meal tickets of democracy and democratic consolidation. This is because without a PVC, the right to vote, that will translate to the election of political leaders, in the local, states, and federal levels in Nigeria cannot be exercised in any form. Currently, the campaign for qualified Nigerians to get their PVCs is in top gear. This is why the millions of unclaimed PVCs in INEC’s custody should be a problem to all stakeholders.

As a result of the fact that the 2019 general election is already at the corner and also because most Nigerians that have not collected their PVCs usually blame INEC, the onus now rest on INEC to help the situation. Hence it is imperative that the following two strategies should be adopted to resolve the issue immediately, at least, before the 2019 general election:

- 1) INEC should immediately start to post unclaimed PVCs to valid owners that have left the areas (the communities) where they do their registration. For instance, some civil servants or bankers that registered in Lagos and Kano have been transferred to Abuja or Port-Harcourt. Therefore, INEC should make arrangement with the Nigerian Postal Service or others to post their PVCs to them. This means of distributing unclaimed PVCs to their owners will not be very expensive for INEC.
- 2) The Indonesia method of door-to-door registration and immediate issuance of “PVCs” should be adopted in all states once every year for those who turn eighteen years or for those who are eighteen and above but could not registered the previous year. For the sake of the 2019 election, INEC should embark on a house-to-house distribution of the unclaimed PVCs. Those who do immunization for the Ministry of Health in all states and local governments can help INEC to distribute the PVCs before the general election. The commercial banks can also help in this regard too.