

# **Election Administration in Nigeria: A Field Researcher's account of INEC's conduct of the 2015 General Elections in Ibadan South-East LGA of Oyo State**

By

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## **Abstract**

This paper argues that while INEC made elaborate preparations for the 2015 general elections across the country, the conduct of the elections in Ibadan South-East LGA of Oyo state was characterized by logistics, manpower and security challenges. Notwithstanding, the political doggedness of the electorates and dominant political parties in the LGA contributed to the success of the elections.

## **Introduction**

Election administration, construed as the management of “a parade of public affairs and events called the electoral process” (Agbaje 1999:91), dates back to 1923 in Nigeria. This was when election was conducted for the first time in the country for the purpose of electing members representing Lagos and Calabar in the colonial Central Legislative Council (Akanji 2014; Bamidele and Ikubaje 2004; Akinboye and Anifowose 1999). Since then election administration in Nigeria has expanded. However, the traditional mark of election administration in Nigeria, particularly since independence in 1960, except in the case of the June 12 1993 elections, has been poor conduct of elections, as they have largely been typified by malpractices and violence, undermining the credibility of the electoral process and election results. It is in view of this and the broader context of studying dilemmas in Nigeria's electoral cum democratic history that I set out to understand the dynamics and interplay of forces involve in the conduct of general elections in the country, using the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) conduct

of the 2015 general elections in Ibadan South-East LGA of Oyo state as a case study. My study focused on the role of INEC preparation; structure of the elections; the role and contribution of INEC permanent and ad hoc staff, and political parties and civil society involvement.

To properly address the focus of the study and achieve a balanced perspective, the following questions were formulated: (i) what was the nature of INEC's preparation for the 2015 general elections?; (ii) what was the structure of the elections?; (iii) how and in what ways did INEC's preparations and structure of activities affect the conduct and outcomes of the elections in Ibadan South-East LGA?; (iv) to what extent did political elite manipulate the electoral process through financial inducements of INEC permanent and ad hoc staff?; (iv) what challenges did voters face during the elections in the LGA, and how were they managed?; (v) what roles did security agents and political parties play?; and (vi) what factors contributed to the outcomes of the elections in the LGA? One overarching question in the study was whether the nature and outcome of the elections was a reflection/function of INEC's preparations.

Answers to the above questions, it was hoped would help us understand why elections in Nigeria have been problematic, and what can be done about it. From the outset of the study, a number of hypotheses were formulated. The researcher hypothesized (i) that elections in Nigeria failed because successive governments failed to address the divisive issues in them; (ii) that proper and adequate preparations by INEC led to the success of the 2015 elections in Ibadan South-East LGA; and (iii) that the inability of the political elite to hijack and manipulate the electoral process contributed to the way the elections were conducted in the LGA and the outcomes thereafter

Propositions were also set out to summarize the researcher's line of reasoning. These included: (a) that the recurrent lack of credibility of election results in a country presupposes the failure of governance and the absence of political culture on the part of the political elite and the electorates; (b) that the success of elections depends on the electorates' perception of the neutrality of the electoral body, and its level of preparedness for elections; (c) that when electoral officials, permanent and ad hoc, rebuff and reject all forms of inducements by political elites, the likelihood of credible election outcomes is high; and (d) that even if the administration of an election is flawed acceptable outcome/result is inevitable where political parties cooperate to remedy the flaws.

Based on this framework, the study investigates the conduct of the 2015 general elections in Ibadan South-East Local Government Area (LGA) of Oyo state, southwestern Nigeria. The paper is divided into five sections. The first focuses on historical analysis of elections and electoral administration in Nigeria. The second part examines the research methodology for the study. The third section interrogates INEC preparation for the 2015 general elections. The fourth and fifth sections respectively analyses the conduct of the 2015 general elections in Ibadan South-East LGA, focusing on the nature and dynamics of the elections, and examining the outcomes of the elections.

### ***Historicizing elections and election administration in Nigeria***

Elections and election administration in Nigeria date back to 1923. These were facilitated by the inclusion of an elective principle in the 1922 constitution introduced into Nigeria's body polity

by the colonial administration of Sir Hugh Clifford (Akanji 2014:38; Bamidele and Ikubaje 2004:4). Though no electoral body was formerly established, elections were conducted in 1923, and thereafter, every five year till 1938. The elections were for the purpose of electing four representatives into the Central Legislative Council in Lagos; three of whom represented Lagos while one represented Calabar. The elections of 1923, 1928, 1933 and 1938 were however limited to only those that fulfilled the constitutional provisions of one year residency and gross annual income of £100 (Bamidele and Ikubaje 2004:4; Akinboye and Anifowose 1999:240). Despite its restrictive nature, the elective principle of the 1922 constitution awakened political activities and encouraged establishment of political parties by Nigerian nationalists. These included Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) by Herbert Macaulay, and the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM), formerly Lagos Youth Movement by Ernest Ikoli, Samuel Akinsanya, J.C. Vaughan and H.O. Davies among others (Ngou 1989:90; Dare 1989:110). Until the 1940s, the NNDP and NYM dominated elections, albeit in the southern part of the country. While the NNDP dominated the elections in 1923, 1928 and 1933, NYM defeated NNDP in 1938 and dominated the polity until the introduction of another constitution in 1946 (Keay and Thomas 1986: 202).

Even though the 1922 constitution and its elective principle engendered electoral politics, it was defective. This was particularly because the constitution was effective only in the southern part of Nigeria, as the northern part was administered through proclamations of the colonial governor; electoral representation was limited to only Lagos and Calabar; and the suffrage system used for elections under the constitution was the limited male franchise (Akanji 2014; Osaghae 2002; Akinboye and Anifowose 1999; Keay and Thomas 1986). These defects affected Nigeria's

political and electoral development, because apart from excluding women and most men from electoral participation, it hindered the growth and development of electoral and party politics in northern Nigeria. In view of these, the constitution was replaced with another one in 1946 by the colonial government of Sir Arthur Richard.

The key features of the 1946 constitution were the creation of a central legislative council with powers covering the entire country; division of the country into three regions: northern, eastern and western regions; establishment of regional legislatures (Akanji 2014; Bamidele and Ikubaje 2004: 53; Keay and Thomas 1986: 178); and the retention of the elective principle, though with a reduction in the £100 franchise qualification to £50 (ERC 2008:82). However, like the 1922 constitution, the 1946 constitution did little to engender broad-based political and electoral participation in Nigeria, as women and un-propertied men in Lagos and Calabar, and women and men in other parts of the country were completely disenfranchised in the elections that took place between 1946 and 1951. It was however the relentless agitations by the nationalists for an inclusive government that led to the introduction in 1951 of another constitution to replace that of 1946.

The 1951 constitution broadened the political space in Nigeria by enlarging the Central Legislative Council and provided for the election of more Nigerians into the council. It also granted some measure of legislative power to the regional legislatures, and replaced the elective principle of the 1922 and 1946 constitutions with the one that enfranchised all adult tax-paying males, as well as introduced Electoral College system (Akanji 2014; Keay and Thomas 1986).

These engendered local participation in governance and encouraged the formation of political parties across the country.

Some of the political parties that emerged to take the opportunities created by the 1951 constitution were the Action Group (AG) and the Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC), both established in 1951; the Middle Belt Peoples' Party (MBPP), in 1953; and the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC), in 1954 (Ngou 1989; Dare 1989). These political parties and others existing at the time, such as the National Congress of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC), formed in 1946, and the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU), established in 1950 (Akanji 2014), changed the nature and character of elections and electoral and political participation in Nigeria. This was in view of the fact that elections in the country became fully multiparty and more competitive though more crisis prone than previously.

At the same time, the interface between ethnicity, sectionalism and politics in the country assumed a frightening dimension, as ethnic and sectional considerations became factors for victory at regional and general elections by political parties. This posed a very serious challenge to the unity and stability of Nigeria, as it, for example, underlined the threat of secession by northern Nigeria in 1953, following its declaration of an eight point programme of non-fraternization with the south, and violent protest in Kano, northern Nigeria, against the visit of southern political leaders to the region in August 1953 (see Akanji 2014; Albert 1998; Ngou 1989 for details).

Furthermore, Nigeria's political and electoral landscape was altered when the colonial administration of Oliver Lyttleton introduced a constitution in 1954 to remedy the defects in the 1951 constitution. The 1954 constitution however reintroduced the principle of direct election and further decentralized the electoral process. This was in view of the fact the constitution granted relative electoral autonomy to the regions, allowing them to formulate electoral rules and regulations and conduct elections into regional political offices. This gave rise to a situation where different electoral systems and regulations were adopted and used by the regions in the conduct of elections, both regional and federal. For example, while the Western region adopted and used the single member constituency system, the Eastern region used the multi-member constituency system for elections (ERC 2008: 83).

Also, while the Western and Eastern regions put in place electoral frameworks that accommodated the electoral and political rights of women, the northern regional electoral framework ignored women's electoral rights. The multiple approaches to elections, however, promoted ethnic politics, as it gave dominate political party in each region, usually the party formed and/or dominated by politicians of the ethnic coloration of the region, the opportunity to manipulate elections and political appointments, thereby undermining inter-ethnic relationship in the country. The practice of multiple approaches to election was however revised at the 1957 and 1958 constitutional conferences where a uniform electoral approach and a single election management body for federal elections was articulated and adopted.

It was based on this new framework that the 1959 federal elections were conducted. Part of the electoral guidelines for the 1959 federal election, for example, stated that "every person shall be

entitled to register as an elector and if so registered to vote at an election who on the qualifying date is ordinarily resident in Nigeria and... in Northern region a male” (cited in Oyekanmi 1999: 86). Also, the 1959 federal elections were conducted by a single election management body, the Electoral Commission of Nigeria (ERC 2008: 84, 94). Ever since then, management/conduct of elections into federal and state executive and legislative offices has been the responsibility of the national electoral body, which assumed different names at different times<sup>1</sup>, while States manage/conduct elections into local government councils. For example, under the Third Schedule, Part 1F of the 1999 [amended] constitution, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has the power to organize, undertake and supervise all elections into federal and state offices, while Part IIB of the same schedule of the constitution provides for the existence of State electoral commissions to conduct elections into local government councils (FRN 2011). This shows why INEC conducted the Presidential and National Assembly elections and the Governorship and House of Assembly elections across the country on March 28 and April 11 2015 respectively.

### **Research Methodology**

Studying election administration falls within archival/library, survey, and participatory research. While archival/library research refers to research-based activity that analyzes various types of documents and publications, survey encompasses administration of questionnaires, interviews of different kinds and observation of non-verbal clues, and participatory research requires the direct involvement of the researcher in what is being studied. Apart from library search that provided materials for the historical context of the study, analysis of INEC documents, interactions with

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<sup>1</sup> Some of the names are Federal Electoral Commission (FEC) (1964-1966); Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) (1979-1983); National Electoral Commission (NEC) (1987-1993); National Electoral Commission of Nigeria (NECON) (1994-1998); and Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) (1998-date)



INEC officials, and participant observation during the 2015 general elections helped the researcher to collect available information that implicitly reveals which factors underlined and contributed to the conduct of the general elections, and how the factors were represented. Between March 28 and April 11 2015, my 'official' position as INEC Registration Area/Ward Collation Officer (RA/Ward CO) provided the opportunity to gather information about the elections from INEC permanent and ad hoc staff members, security agents, party agents and voters. In my interactions with these categories of people, I paid close attention to verbal and non-verbal information. The research covered the twelve electoral Wards/constituencies in Ibadan South-East LGA, with particular focus on Wards 3 and 6 where the researcher served as INEC RA/Ward CO during March 28 and April 11 elections respectively. On returning from the field, library/archival data and field notes were analyzed by means of content analysis.

### **INEC and the 2015 general elections: general arrangement and structure**

INEC is the constitutionally empowered institution in Nigeria to conduct elections into federal and state executive and legislative offices. The offices are those of President/Vice President; Governor/Deputy Governor; National Assembly (Senate and House of Representatives); State Houses of Assembly; Chairmen/Vice-Chairmen of Area Councils in Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja; and Councilors of Area Councils Legislature in FCT (INEC 2015:8). In with this and constitutional requirement that in not earlier than one hundred and fifty (150) days and not later than thirty (30) days to the expiration of the terms of the substantive elected federal and state political office holders, INEC made arrangement for the conduct of the general elections in 2015. This was to fill the vacant positions of the posts of President/Vice President, members of the National Assembly (i.e. Senators and members of the House of Representatives), State

Governors/Deputy Governors and State Houses of Assembly, whose tenure expired on May 29, 2015. The 2015 General Elections in Nigeria was the fifth to be conducted by INEC in the country's fourth republic. As part of preparations, INEC developed a timetable and schedule of activities for the conduct of the elections. Unlike in the past, where elections were staggered in such a way that the presidential election was usually conducted last, the timetable for the 2015 general elections showed that the Presidential and National Assembly elections were paired, to hold on February 14, while the Governorship and State Houses of Assembly elections were to follow on February 28, 2015.

However, insurgency by the Boko Haram sect in the north-eastern part of the country, which had been on since 2009, necessitated a change in the election timetable at the last minute. INEC consequently postponed the elections by six weeks (Suleiman 2015). This meant that the Presidential and National Assembly elections were rescheduled for March 28, and the Governorship and State Houses of Assembly elections for April 11, 2015. Similarly, unlike previous elections in the country, INEC introduced the use of Permanent Voters Cards (PVCs), containing the biometric details and embossed passport photograph of voters, and Smart Card Readers to verify the authenticity of PVCs presented by voters. The introduction of both items by INEC was aimed at checking multiple voter registration, as only one card was issued to each registered voter, and to prevent multiple voting. This was intended to ensure the integrity of the elections.

Other arrangement for the elections was the adoption of the "Re-modified Open-Secret Ballot System" (REMOBS). In the system, voters were to thumb/finger-print on the ballot for the

candidates of their choice in secret and cast their votes in open (INEC 2015:8). Similarly, INEC delineated the country into 119,973 Polling Units (PUs), with Lagos having the highest number, followed by Kano, Katsina and Oyo States in the second, third and fourth place respectively (The Nation 2015). Each Polling Unit was expected to be manned by a Presiding Officer (PO) and three Assistant Presiding Officers (APOs) (INEC 2015:9). In large Polling Units (those with over 750 registered voters), Voting Points (VPs) were created. Each Voting Points was to be manned by four Assistant Presiding Officers (APOs) under the supervision of the Assistant Presiding Officer in charge of Voting Point (APO (VP)) (INEC 2015:9). Voting during the general elections was earmarked to take place at Polling Units/Voting Points, with the POs having the responsibility to carry out accreditation of voters, and prepare and issue ballot papers to eligible voters (INEC 2015:9). The POs were however allowed to delegate the responsibility, in the case of Voting Points, to the APOs (VPs).

Furthermore, apart from the POs, APOs and APOs (VPs), INEC's structure and preparations for the general elections included appointment of 9,000 Supervisory Presiding Officers (SPOs), one per registration area; Collation Officers (COs) of different categories<sup>2</sup>; 774 Electoral Officers (EOs), one per Local Government Area (LGA), assisted by Assistant Electoral Officers (AEOs), and thirty-seven (37) Resident Electoral Commissioners (REC), one per State and one for Federal Capital Territory, Abuja (INEC 2015:15). While the SPOs supervised the activities of the POs in their registration areas, and the EO took charge of the management and conduct of general elections in the LGAs in each State, the RECs coordinated activities of the EOs and other electoral officials in the States and the FCT. In addition to permanent staff that made up the

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<sup>2</sup> These include Registration Area/Ward Collation officers, and LG Collation officers

ranks of RECs, EOs, and AEOs, INEC recruited ad hoc staff from members of the National Youth Service Corp (NYSC), to serve as POs; first degree holders as APOs, Master degree holders/those registered for PhD as SPOs, and academic and non-academic staff of universities and allied institutions as Ward/LGA/State Collation Officers.

Also, INEC scheduled and undertook training of its ad hoc officials. The ad hoc staff members were trained by permanent INEC staff in the way and manner to conduct the elections, the professional and ethical conducts of officials on election duties, the process of collation, computation and declaration of election results, and security and safety tips on election days. As part of the general preparation, security of election officials, both permanent and ad hoc, and of election materials was important to INEC. As a result, the Commission collaborated with government security agencies such as the Nigeria Police, State Security Service (SSS), and Customs and Immigration service. While the use of military personnel in the general elections was barred by the court, they were nonetheless deployed to safeguard election materials, as it was observed by the researcher at the Ibadan South-East LGA of Oyo state.

Besides INEC contracted members of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) to transport election materials and personnel, including youth corps members and CO. Though some concerns were raised about the privatization of the transportation of election materials and personnel, because of the fear that NURTW members could be manipulated by politicians to compromise the integrity of the elections, the arrangement saved INEC a lot of money that could have been used to purchase vehicles that would be of little or no use after the elections.

## **The 2015 General Elections in Ibadan South-East LGA**

Ibadan South-East LGA was among the LGAs where the 2015 General Elections took place in Nigeria.<sup>3</sup> The LGA is one of the thirty-three (33) LGAs in Oyo State in the southwest part of the country. Like in other States, the LGAs in Oyo state were structured into three Senatorial Districts, with Ibadan South-East LGA in Oyo South Senatorial District and one of the biggest LGAs in the State. Though one of the LGAs that constitute the city of Ibadan, the capital of Oyo state, Ibadan South-East LGA covers large part of the interior/core (what may be called the ancient areas) of Ibadan. The LGA, headquartered at Mapo, covers such interior parts of Ibadan as *Oranyan*, part of *Molete*, *Kobomoje*, *Elekuro*, *Eleta*, *Aperin Oniyere*, *Agbongbon*, *Odinjo*, *Idi Aro*, among others. The LGA was however known for the political consciousness of its people, its mixture of cosmopolitan and rural outlook, and being the traditional electoral flash point in Ibadan.

### ***Preparations for the 2015 General Elections***

Preparations for the 2015 general elections in Ibadan South-East LGA, along with other LGAs in Oyo State, were coordinated by the office of the INEC's Resident Electoral Commissioner (REC) in the State. The preparations included recruitment, training and deployment of ad hoc electoral personnel, alongside permanent INEC staff. As part of the preparations, ad hoc personnel were trained at different times and venues on how to conduct the elections. Ad hoc officials were educated on the use of the election kits; they were also trained on the nature of the elections, how to collate and compute results, how to set up polling units, and on safety and security during the elections. While corps members/members of the NYSC and university first

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<sup>3</sup> The general elections did not take place in some LGAs, including some in the northeast of the country

degree holders that applied for recruitment were trained on the jobs of POs and APOs respectively, university lecturers and non-academic staff of universities and allied institutions that indicated interest to serve as ad hoc election officers were trained on how to collate election results in order to serve as Ward/Registration Area (RA)/LGA/State Collation Officers. During the training of the ad hoc staff, particularly the Collation Officers, the INEC officials, numbering about four, who conducted the exercise showed the participants the various types of materials available for the elections such as Forms EC8A, EC8A (1), and EC8A (II) for Presidential, Senatorial and House of Representative elections. The training of the ad hoc election officials was for two days in the first instance, and one day in the second instance, at designated centers for those who applied as collation officers (COs), but two days only for POs and APOs.<sup>4</sup> Thus, applicants for PO and APO positions were trained for the two batches of the elections at once, at Baptist High School Ogbomosho.<sup>5</sup> However, training of applicants for CO was in two phases.

The first training of COs was for the Presidential and National Assembly elections scheduled for 28 March 2015. It was held on Monday and Tuesday 23 and 24 March 2015 from 9.00am to 5.00pm at Faculty of Arts Large Lecture Theatre of University of Ibadan. A retraining session was organized for the Governorship and State Houses of Assembly elections on Wednesday 8 April 2015, between 10.00am and 12.00noon at the same venue. Apart from refreshing the memories of those who served as COs during the Presidential and National Assembly elections, the retraining session before the Governorship and Houses of Assembly elections was meant to recruit new COs to replace those who had withdrawn after the first batch of election or found to

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<sup>4</sup> While the researcher was involved in the training for collation officers, information about the training of POs and APOs was sourced from participants at the training at Baptist High School Ogbomosho.

<sup>5</sup> Information was supplied by two participants at the training.

be inefficient during the elections. The researcher observed that more people showed up for the retraining session than in the training sessions for the Presidential and National Assembly elections. This was due to two reasons: the relatively peaceful nature of the first batch of the elections (Presidential and National Assembly) and the remuneration package of the COs who participated in the elections.

One of the major considerations of most people, including the researcher, before the Presidential and National Assembly elections was that of insecurity and violence during the elections. Many had anticipated that the elections would be chaotic and violence-ridden given the history of elections in the country. This however was not the case in the Presidential and National Assembly elections, at least in the State. Similarly, there was uncertainty as to the actual remuneration package for COs before the Presidential and National Assembly elections. This discouraged some of the people that could have participated in the training sessions. The criticality of the issue of remuneration was evident during the training sessions, as participants demanded to know from INEC officials how much the electoral body had earmarked for them.

However, information about the remuneration of CO, which showed that each was entitled to the sum of seventy-seven thousand naira per electoral exercise, was not released until 27 March, a day to the commencement of the elections. Consequently, it was only those who were ready to brave the odds that accepted the offer of COs after the training for the Presidential and National Assembly elections. This was however not the case at the commencement of the training session for Governorship and House of Assembly elections, as the remuneration package had become

known to the public. This, the researcher observed in the course of interactions with participants, attracted people to the training session for the Governorship and House of Assembly elections.

Furthermore, participants at the training sessions for the Presidential and National Assembly elections were asked to make an oath/affirmation of neutrality during the elections by filling and signing the form on Oath/Affirmation of Neutrality for Election Personnel. This was presented as a prerequisite for appointment as CO. This aspect was however omitted in the retraining session for the Governorship and State Houses of Assembly elections, except for those recruited anew as COs after the retraining session. The last part of the preparation for the general elections in Oyo State was the distribution and posting of those selected for election duties among the participants at the screening and training sessions. Expectedly, some of those selected were designated RA/Ward COs, and LGA COs, among others.

The release of the posting after the screening and training for the Presidential and National Assembly elections showed that Ibadan South-East LGA had twelve (12) registration areas (RA)/wards. As a result, twelve RA/Ward CO and one LGA CO were posted to the local government for the Presidential and National Assembly elections. The same number of RA/Ward COs, but two LGA CO, was posted to the local government after the retraining session for the Governorship and House of Assembly elections. By INEC design, each RA/Ward comprised a number of polling units, with some also having voting points. Wards 3 and 6 in the LGA, for example, comprised 8 and 28 polling units respectively. Furthermore, each RA/Ward had three identifiers: a name/number for the ward, a code and a collation center. For example, the name/number, code and collation center of Ward 3 in Ibadan South-East LGA, where the



researcher served as RA/Ward CO during the Presidential and National Assembly elections, were S2A, 003, and *Oranyan* Maternity Center respectively. The identifiers for Ward 6, where the researcher was the RA/Ward CO during the Governorship and House of Assembly elections were S4A, 006, and Public Day School *Elekuro*. The identifiers, which appeared on the sensitive election materials for the RAs/Wards were, as the researcher gathered during the training sessions, unique to each RA/Ward, and part of INEC strategies to ensure the credibility of the elections by preventing electoral malpractices.

However, the list of the posting of ad hoc staff was not released on time. The list of postings of COs, for example, was not released until almost the twilight of the day penultimate to each of the elections. In the case of the Presidential and National Assembly elections, the list of posting of COs was released at 1.45pm of March 27, and in the case of Governorship and House of Assembly elections, at noon of April 10. This greatly affected the COs, especially those posted to far locations outside of Ibadan metropolis. As observed by the researcher, such COs had little time before nightfall to travel to their duty stations and settle down properly for the elections. Even for the COs, including the researcher, posted to locations within Ibadan metropolis, the late release of the list caused some discomfort. This was because it was after the release of the list that many of COs, some of whom were not indigenes of Ibadan or long residents of the city, had to locate the headquarters of their local government of assignment and, the EO in charge. The discomfort was compounded by the unusually chaotic transport situation in the city, caused by the vehicular restriction order that federal government had imposed on the days of the elections, forcing people to make frantic efforts to, among other things, do last minute shopping for essential household needs. Also, as a result of the late release of list of selected ad hoc staff for

the Presidential and National Assembly elections, the premises of INEC office at Ibadan South-East LGA was unduly jam-packed with people, many, apart from NYSC members, were out to ascertain if they were selected and where they were posted to serve.

### ***The Conduct of the Elections and the Outcomes***

The two components of the 2015 General Elections took place at Ibadan South-East LGA on 28 March and 11 April 2015 in line with INEC arrangement and schedule of activities. The conduct of the Presidential and National Assembly on 28 March in the local government was however a little bit different from that of the Governorship and House of Assembly elections of 11 April. The difference was that the Presidential and National Assembly elections were characterized by serious logistical and manpower problems. Foremost was the slow start of the elections. Though ad hoc officials on election duties as SPOs, POs, APOs, and APOs (VP) had dispersed as early as 7.00am from the LGA headquarters at Mapo to various designated areas to set up polling units and voting points in preparation for accreditation of voters, election materials were in short supply in some of the polling units. As a result, the researcher observed that accreditation did not fully start or had been stopped due to the malfunctioning of Card Readers in some polling units at the time it was about ending in others. The intensity of the problem, evidenced by several frantic telephone calls by officials at polling stations about the absence of election materials such as result sheets and Card Readers and malfunctioning of Card Readers, prompted the EO at the LGA headquarters to move to the field to personally inspect the situation.

However, while the step taken by the EO proved successful, as the short supply of materials was remedied, leading to accreditation of voters and voting in the affected polling units/voting points,

it engendered another: late commencement of collation of results in the LGA. The researcher observed that as a result of the absence of the EO from the LGA headquarters, all arrangements, particularly concerning briefing about logistics, distribution of materials for collation of results and transportation of collation officers (the RA/Ward CO) to collation centers, were left hanging. This situation continued until about 6.45pm-7.00pm, much after voting had ended and some POs and APOs had concluded counting and were waiting for the RA/Ward COs at the collation centers. This, especially as night drew nearer and there was no sign of the EO and materials for collation of results had still not been distributed, created serious confusion among the RA/Ward COs and the LGA CO. Besides, there was no permanent INEC official at the LGA headquarters that could offer any logical and reasonable explanation as to why COs were left unattended to at a time when voting had officially been concluded in many polling units. This situation angered the COs, many of whom complained bitterly about the ineffectiveness of the EO for failing to delegate matters relating to distribution of collation materials to any of the AEOs.

As a result, and as the situation lingered, the RA/Ward COs decided among themselves that collation of results would better be done at the LGA headquarters at Mapo, where they had been waiting for the EO, as opposed to INEC designated collation centers. This decision was informed partly by the fact that the LGA headquarters was big, adequately protected by military personnel on election duty and well illuminated, with a power generator on the standby. On the other hand however, the decision was informed by concerns for personal safety and security at the collation centers since it was obvious that collation of result would linger till late in the night. The security concern was due to the fact that the LGA was notorious for violent crimes and criminal activities by youth. For example, a week after the March 28 election, a Division Police Officer (DPO) was

murdered by some youth at *Adekile* area of *Orita Aperin* in the LGA (National Mirror 2015). Moreover, some of the RA/Ward COs who, while waiting for the EO, strolled out to the polling units and collation centers around the LGA headquarters reported the absence of adequate security in the neighborhood as they encountered hoodlums, popularly called Area boys, smoking Indian hemp in the open, breaking bottles and threatening to injure or kill anyone that opposed them. The security concerns expressed by the RA/Ward COs were corroborated by the police and security officials in the LGA headquarters, though none of them wanted to be quoted or dragged into the heated arguments that later ensued between the EO and the RA/Ward COs over the matter.

Consequently, the late arrival of the EO at about 6.45pm and the decision of the RA/Ward COs about collation, which generated heated arguments, with the EO insisting that collations should be done at designated centers, further delayed the distribution of materials for collation of result and transportation of officials to collation centers. It took the intervention of the LGA CO, who cleverly brokered a truce between the EO and RA/Ward COs by promising that no RA/Ward CO would be compelled to collate in a collation center where his/her security and personal safety could not be guaranteed. It was after this that the RA/Ward COs, alongside the LGA CO, left the LGA headquarters at about 8.30pm in a convoy of two buses to drop each RA/Ward CO at his/her collation center. As agreed, the convoy started with the farthest collation centers and ended with the collation center closest to the LGA headquarters. In the process, at least before the researcher was dropped at his collation center at Ward 3 (*Oranyan* Maternity Center), one of the closest to the LGA headquarters, one RA/Ward CO, a woman, was not allowed to disembark from the bus because of security concerns arising from the lack of electricity and perimeter fence

and ominous threats of attacks by hoodlums in her collation center. Also, two RA/Ward CO were observed by the researcher on returning to the LGA headquarters at around 2.00am collating results at the headquarters. This shows that at least three RA/Ward CO did not collate results at their collation centers, which underscored the issue of insecurity earlier raised.

Another major aspect of the conduct of the March 28 elections was the attitude and approach of the youth corps members, who served as PO at polling units and voting points. From observation by the researcher at his collation center and interactions with other RA/Ward CO, many of the POs were ill-informed and uneducated on how to tally votes and enter scores on the result sheets. There were therefore many wrong calculations and misrepresentation of numbers on result sheets submitted to RA/Ward CO for collation. This, as the researcher garnered from communication with permanent INEC staff, was because many of the youth corps members failed to pay close attention to details during the training sessions organized for them before the elections. The youth corps members were accused of being uninterested in the training sessions, as they were more engrossed in ping-pong and texting on their mobile phones than taking notes and listening to the trainers.

Contrariwise, interactions with the youth corps members on duty as POs revealed that the main reason for their lackluster attitude and poor performance at tallying and recording votes was the nature of the elections, which, in addition to being two in one at each time it occurred, continued in some cases to late in the night, thereby causing stress, strains and fatigue. This, the POs further revealed, was exacerbated by failure of INEC to provide them with some incentives, particularly snack and water. Despite these challenges, the Presidential and National Assembly

elections in the LGA was successful conducted, as it was relatively peaceful and the results were duly declared as at when due and in line with laid down provisions.

However, the conduct of the Governorship and House of Assembly elections on April 11 in the LGA was better than that of the Presidential and National Assembly elections, as many of the challenges that characterized the March 28 elections were conspicuously absent. First and foremost, there were no serious cases of short supply of election materials to the polling centers, and where such occurred it was properly managed. Also, materials for collation of results were distributed on time, and RA/Ward CO commenced the process of collation as early as 6.30pm, which was the case in the researcher's collation center instead of 10.30pm during the March 28 elections.

Nevertheless, the conduct of both the March 28 and April 11 elections in the LGA was similar in many respects. One, some of the non-sensitive materials such as biros, calculators, rechargeable lamps, stamps and stamp pads and prescribed official cellophane bags/nylons for carrying collated results were either unavailable or insufficient. For example, while some RA/Ward CO were not given rechargeable lamps, because they were not enough, those who got, including the researcher, either used their telephones as lamps or the personal lamps they brought from their houses, because the INEC rechargeable lamps were new and had not been charged and so went off as soon as collation started. Similar problem was encountered by RA/Ward COs with INEC calculators, which, where they were available and given out, stopped working as soon as it was dark, because they were solar powered, and there was no provision for battery as alternate source of power. Consequently, RA/Ward COs, including the researcher, used their mobile telephones

and personal calculators for the collation exercise. Two, there was no improvement in the performance of the youth corps members who served as POs, as there were many errors in their calculations and tallying of votes during the two elections.

Three, there were also cases of altercations between the EO and RA/Ward CO during the April 11 elections, like in the March 28 elections, on whether to use the officially designated collation centers for collation of results or to improvise. Some of the RA/Ward CO, including the researcher, for example, wanted to collate election results in either the LGA headquarters or the nearest and secured collation center because of fears that their lives were not safe in the officially designated collation centers. This was however rejected by the EO. Though attempts to improvise with collation centers were frustrated by the EO's vehement opposition and objection to it, events later justified the security concerns of the RA/Ward CO. For example, at Public Day School *Elekuro*, the official collation center for Ward 6, where the researcher was the RA/Ward CO, news of imminent attacks by hoodlums (*Area boys*) led to an abrupt and hurried closure of the center at around 11.30pm while collation was still ongoing.

The decision to stop the collation process was taken after security operatives had on three occasions informed the RA/Ward CO that they could not guarantee the security of everyone present at the center if the collation lingers deep into the night. This was in spite of the fact that the collation center was a stone throw from a police station, and that a sizeable number of people, including political party agents, youth corps members who served as election officials; SPO, and police and Customs and Immigration officers, were present at the center. The reasons the security operatives gave, which were obvious and were why the RA/Ward CO had earlier

demanding to improvise, was that the collation center, a dilapidated public primary school, was too porous to be effectively secured, having no perimeter fence and electricity and located in an area notorious for violent crimes. Efforts to convince the armed plain-clothed security operatives to allow the collation of results to continue, at least since there were only results from three polling units left, was aborted by news that hoodlums had gathered at a building close to the collation center and were about coming. This led to stampede.

During the stampede the generating set that supplied electricity to the collation center was disconnected, throwing the center and its neighborhood into total darkness and creating more serious stampede and panic. In the midst of the chaotic situation, with everyone trying to board available vehicles in order to escape from the center, gun shots were heard a number of times. Also, within a short while military personnel deployed to the area on accounts of its notoriety for violence and a number of anti-riot police vehicles blaring siren rushed into the collation center to rescue election officials and election materials from the hoodlums. Consequently, collation of results for Ward 6 was completed at the LGA headquarters in the presence of party agents and security operatives. These challenges notwithstanding, the April 11 elections were successfully conducted in the LGA, as they relatively peaceful and the collated results duly declared.

### ***Why the Outcomes?***

The outcomes of the March 28 and April 11, 2015 General Elections in Ibadan South-East LGA were due to a number of factors. One was the resilience of the voters to protect their votes. In seven of the twelve collation centers in the LGA that the researcher visited during the two elections, voters were seen waiting after elections to ensure that their votes were counted and



collated. At polling units, for example, voters were seen around POs while counting of votes was taking place. The researcher observed that as the POs read out the figures, the voters around echoed it. Alongside this was the readiness of the dominant political parties in the LGA to ensure that the right thing was done by electoral officers and to create the right environment for the elections. The dominant political parties in the LGA by virtue of popularity among the electorates and history of performance at elections were the ACCORD party, All Progressive Congress (APC), Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP), and Labour Party (LP).

Apart from being present at polling units/voting points and collation centers, participating in the process of counting and collation of results and monitoring the movement of (literally policing or following after) RA/Ward COs everywhere, agents of the dominant political parties in the LGA provided conducive environment at collation centers. Reports from RA/Ward COs and personal observations at Wards 3 and 6 during the two elections at the LGA revealed that while INEC failed to provide alternative sources of electricity at collation centers, party agents remedied the situation by cooperating among themselves to provide generators and fuel to power them. On the whole, communications with RA/Ward COs in the LGA showed that party agents cooperated with them during the elections. The approach of the political parties, as demonstrated by their agents and the attitude of the voters, gave little, if any at all, room for electoral malpractices in the LGA, at least as far as manipulation of figures and results was concerned.

Similarly, there was the presence of security agents in seven of the twelve collation centers in the LGA visited by the researcher during the two elections. Also, polling units around the vicinity or at collation centers had security agents attached to them. However, the security agents were

disproportionally distributed. While there was heavy security presence at some collation centers, including Ward 3 during the March 28 elections, it was light in others such as Ward 6 during the April 11 elections. At the LGA headquarters at Mapo, which served as the base of INEC in the LGA, security was extraordinarily heavy, with the presence of military, police, Department of State Security Service and Customs and Immigration personnel. This prevented the extent to which politicians and hoodlums or political thugs could foment trouble. The presence of police officers at polling units and collation centers, and on the streets, and the deployment of soldiers to volatile areas such as *Adekile* contributed to the relatively peaceful conduct of both the March 28 and April 11 elections in the LGA. Also, ability of INEC permanent staff to address some of the serious problems that plagued the March 28 elections contributed to the successful conduct of April 11 elections in the LGA. This manifested in the timely distribution of election materials and transportation of election officials to their locations of assignment during the April 11 elections, as opposed to the delay that characterized the March 28 elections.

Furthermore, the outcomes of the conduct of the elections at the LGA were not unconnected to the level of sensitization and mobilization of ad hoc election personnel, particularly the CO to the need to be transparent and shun financial inducements by politicians. During the pre-elections training sessions, the COs were advised against receiving gratifications, in cash and in kind, from politicians. Also, in the course of the elections, COs were inundated with telephone text messages reminding them of the role bribery plays in truncating democratic processes and the need to avoid being used by politicians to compromise the integrity of the elections. Two of the text messages read thus:

“Half-A-Word: Take no bribe. Respect other workers and agents. Be vigilant. Record rightly. Be diligent. Be faithful to figures. Be neutral. Return with pride” (Coordinator of INEC Collation Officers, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, 1.10pm, 11April 2015)

“Bribery is not a One-Way road. Reject being compromised. Avoid being joined in avoidable litigation. Security reports point at a number of LGs and COs. Beware” (Coordinator of INEC Collation officers, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, 7.51pm, 11 April 2015)

Besides, measures were taken when it was observed that politicians were making frantic efforts to lure CO with money during April 11 elections. These included the recall of some CO from their duty stations,<sup>6</sup> because they were suspected to have been bribed by politicians, and threats to make public names of CO that compromised the integrity of the elections. A telephone text message to all CO about the issue read as follow:

“Save your institution’s name. Reject offers in cash and kind. Our job is to count, not to connive with Enemies of order. We will publish names of bribe takers” (Coordinator of INEC Collation Officers, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, 6.18pm, 11 April 2015)

Though the text messages were sent to all COs in the State, one-on-one interactions and communications with majority of the RA/Ward COs at Ibadan South-East LGA headquarters on April 11 and 12, 2015 revealed that they were aware and in support of the measures. The RA/Ward CO in the LGA were also observed to be disgusted at the fact that politicians attempted to bribe CO.

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<sup>6</sup> The researcher reliably gathered from four CO, three from Ibadan South-East LGA and one from Ola Oluwa LGA, that some CO suspected to have compromised were recall back from Ogbomosho and its environs. One informant, who was close to the Coordinator of the coalition officers at University of Ibadan confirmed the information as well

## **Conclusion**

There is no gainsaying the fact that management of elections is but a difficult task, given the plethora of activities and events that are involved. The role of the electoral umpire and its officials, both permanent and ad hoc, is however critical to the outcome of any election. As the case of the conduct of the 2015 General Elections in Ibadan South-East LGA has shown, where the electorates are mobilized politically about the importance of their votes, and political parties are committed to the elections, the failings or shortcomings of electoral management body would easily be mitigated. Integrity of elections is also assured when and where electoral personnel are adequately motivated, and mobilized and sensitized against inducements by politicians, and where those who compromise or attempt to compromise are punished.

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