



ANEEJ Field Observation Report on CVR and PVC Collection Exercise in Edo State

Introduction

The Africa Network for Environment and Economic Justice (ANEEJ), a core member of the Edo State Situation Room, a group monitoring the Edo State 2024 Governorship Election process, deployed field officers to observe the continuous voters' registration (CVR) and Permanent Voter Card (PVC) collection exercise across different locations in Edo State. The exercise took place across the wards in the State from May 27th – June 5th, 2024 as scheduled by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). The timeline was later extended till June 9, 2024.

At the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) Edo State headquarters, the CVR and PVC collection was not conducted even though people were visiting the place to register and collect their PVCs as announced. However, INEC officials at the headquarters were re-directing them to the specific centres where the exercise was going on.

Upon arrival, the team established that the CVR and PVC collection process in the centres was ongoing at the time of the observation exercise. Some of the active centres were INEC Office along Customs Road, Ikpoba Okha LGA; George Idah Secondary School, Ihama, Oredo Ward 2, Oredo LGA; INEC Electoral Office, Ekehuan, Oredo LGA; Oliha Primary School, Oliha, Ward 5, Oredo LGA; Idia college, Urubi, ward 4 Oredo local government area; Ministry of Education, Urubi, Ward 6, Oredo local government area, Payne Primary School, Oredo ward 7 and Aunty Maria School, Egor ward 2.

On Friday June 7, 2024, our team observed that there were no machines on ground at Idia college, some officials were seen using their phones to capture peoples but by Sunday June 9, 2024, officials were seen using machines at the centre.

Deployment and Efficiency of INEC Officials:

At INEC LGA office in Ikpoba-Okha there were over 10 officials and 8 machines on site to manage the registration process of hundreds of registrants. George Idah Centre had about 4 INEC staff who took charge of the process with 2 registration machines working efficiently. Other staff were seen assisting with documentation and printing of slips for newly registered persons. At INEC LGA Oredo office located at Ekehuan road, the team observed that 4 officials and 2 machines were on site managing the request of over 25 people at the time of the monitoring exercise.

The team noted 1 machine and 3 INEC officials at the CVR centre in Oliha Primary School. Despite limited staff and material, the officials responded well to registrants' needs and maintained a functional

registration process. At Aunty Maria School, Egor ward 2, officials and machine were working but the crowd of prospective registrants was overwhelming.

Availability of Materials, Equipment Functionality, and Server Performance

Materials and equipment were adequate at some the centres visited, with functional servers ensuring no significant delays. According to testimonies from registrants, the speed of the server was good and technical challenges were not noticed as of the time of our observation. However, some of the centres had queues indicating that by the end of the deadline, some people would still not be registered.

Public Participation and Voter Turnout

Our monitors observed a good number of registrants in each centre visited. At the Ikpoba-Okha INEC centre, there were two queues: one within the compound and the second outside the office. The number of the crowd inside is estimated to be about 50-70 whereas the outer queue was about 120 – 150. At INEC LGA Office in Ekehuan road, there was a crowd of over 20 persons at the time of the monitoring exercise. At the CVR centre in Oliha Primary School, we noted over 20 persons in the queue. From observation at George Idah Centre, the influx of eligible registrants was quite encouraging as more persons were seen coming to the venue to register with over 30 – 40 persons at the centre. Long queues were also observed at many other centres.

Presence of party members

The team also observed the overwhelming presence of party agents in all of the CVR centres. While presence was conspicuous in Ikpoba-Okha centre, they were mild in Ekehuan and Oliha. At George Idah, party agents of the PDP, APC and LP were visibly on ground mobilising people for the registration process and assisting in filling out their forms. Buses were also on ground to move people in and out of the venue to register, courtesy of political parties.

Atmosphere and Security During the Registration Process

The CVR process in all the centres and offices monitored were calm, peaceful and orderly. Ikpoba Okha INEC Office maintained order through heavily armed police officers managing the crowd whereas, the centres at George Idah, Ekehuan and Oliha had little security presence. In spite of that, order was still maintained. The process was peaceful, there was no fighting of any kind in both centers. The registration and card collection went on in an orderly and coordinated manner.

Conduct and Professionalism of Officials

At the INCE Ikpoba Okha office, officials were respectful and managed the process efficiently despite being understaffed. INEC officials at both Ekehuan and Oliha Primary School displayed professionalism and competence, contributing to a smooth registration process. At George Idah, INEC staff were very busy and responsive to everyone they were attending to at the time of our observation. At the Ministry of Education and Idia College, officials conducted themselves in a professional manner.

Summary and General Observation

- While the INEC headquarters at Aduwawa redirected registrants, the Ikpoba-Okha office managed the process efficiently despite being understaffed.
- The Ekehuan office demonstrated a well-organized and professional registration environment, while the Oliha Primary School faced challenges due to limited equipment.
- The CVR process at George Idah Centre was seamless with no form of violence perpetuated by any party delegate present. The machines worked smoothly without hitches and there was enough manpower (INEC staff) seen at the venue. There was also an encouraging number of registrants at the venue who acted responsibly and followed instructions to avoid hitches. Everyone was attended to on a first-come-first-serve basis.
- The turnout was low initially but later improved. By the last day of the CVR exercise, many people were still waiting to be registered. Some people interviewed were calling on INEC to further extend the duration of the exercise.
- There was no special consideration for persons with disabilities, pregnant women and other vulnerable persons.
- There was a heavy presence of political party members at the centres visited. Depending on their areas of strength, PDP had more people in certain areas while APC also dominated some other areas. It was observed that political party members were bringing people and directing them to register in a particular ward, thereafter, the peoples would write down their names in the party leader's book. This was prominent in Egor LGA, ward 7, Siluko road.
- INEC should be commended for engaging some NGOs to undertake sensitization across Edo State.
- Some of the officials engaged by INEC had capacity gap as they had difficulty using the machine efficiently. This resulted in delays and long queues in some centres.
- Our observers exchanged notes with other observers. In Edo Central and Edo North, it was learnt that many of the centres had just one machine with many persons waiting to be attended to even on the last day of the exercise.

Recommendations

- The continuous voter registration exercise should be done continuously and not for just few weeks close to election. Those who attain the right age of 18 year should be able to walk freely into and designated centre to register and collect their PVCs
- The application for replacement of damaged cards and transfer of polling units should be done online so that people can conclude the exercise in the comfort of their homes.
- There should be priority lines (queue) for persons with disabilities, pregnant women, aged persons and other categories of vulnerable persons, to facilitate their ease of participation in the exercise.
- Officials should be properly trained to improve the efficiency of the exercise.
- For subsequent exercises, only one-party agent should be allowed to be at the registration centre to avoid a situation where a particular party would undermine the credibility of process.



Monitoring exercise of CVR process at George Idah Centre, Ihama Road, Benin City



Monitoring exercise of CVR process at INEC office, Ekehuan Road, Benin City



Monitoring exercise at INEC Electoral Office Along Customs Road, Ikpoba Okha LGA

About ANEEJ

The Africa Network for Environment and Economic Justice (ANEEJ) is a non-governmental organization whose goal is to amplify the voice of the weak, the less privileged and the marginalized groups in the society including women, youths, and People Living With Disabilities in order to increase their participation in the democratic decision-making process. As its basis, ANEEJ believes in a democratic system for managing human interest and operates within two broad areas namely environmental and economic justice. ANEEJ advocates the importance of supporting the Nigerian national government and state governments in delivering equitable services the citizens.

For about 25 years, ANEEJ has been working in Nigeria (Niger Delta region and other parts of the country) and other parts of the World, designing and managing projects that addresses poverty, inequality, corruption, injustice, environmental degradation, democracy and governance challenges and access to WASH services among other. Working with local communities, civil society organizations (both local and international), the private sector, State, national and foreign governments, our focus has been on asset recovery and management, Debts and Structural Adjustments, sustainable development, institutional building, the alleviation of poverty and economic empowerment among others areas.

Since inception, ANEEJ worked with over 100 civil society organisations while hosting the Secretariat of the Publish What You Pay (PWYP) Campaign, Nigeria from 2004 to 2008 and the Nigerian Network on Stolen Assets. ANEEJ led the Jubilee Debt Movement in Nigeria campaigning for the cancellation of the nation's odious debt. This yielded a major result in 2005 when Nigeria got debt cancellation from the Paris and London Club of creditors. The organisation also coordinated CSOs that were involved in monitoring repatriated money looted by Late General Sani Abacha under the Public Expenditure Management and Financial Accountability Review (PEMFAR), a tripartite agreement involving The World Bank, Civil Society Organisations and Nigerian government. ANEEJ in 2003 established the Society for Water and Sanitation (NEWSAN), a coalition of over 300 CSOs working in the area of Water and Sanitation. ANEEJ is currently monitoring the utilisation of \$322.5M recovered Abacha loot now been used for National Social Investment Programme in Nigeria.

Additionally, ANEEJ is a founding member and currently the Chairperson, Board of Trustees of the Reality of Aid (RoA) Africa, a Sub-sect of Reality of Aid International. ANEEJ also chaired RoA International from 2016-2019. It is currently the Nigerian focal point for Civil Society Organisations Platform for Development Effectiveness (CPDE) and has contributed chapters to the Reality of Aid Global and Africa editions since 2004. At the country level, ANEEJ mobilises other CSOs to engage the National Planning Commission (NPC) on development effectiveness and has over the years represented a very strong voice for more effective, people-centred aid regime which guarantees transparency and accountability on both donors and the Nigerian government sides.

ANEEJ has been granted Special Consultative Status of Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) by the United Nations with all attendant privileges and has managed (and still managing) projects funded by many donors including USAID, DFID, EU, British Council (including J4A, FOSTER, RoLAC, Palladium/MODAC), UNDP/UNODC, McArthur Foundation, OSIWA, Royal Norwegian Embassy, Canadian and Swiss Embassies, Heinrich Boel Foundation, Global Green Grant, Action Aid, EED (Now Bread for the World,) among others.