

**Nigeria: Too Rich for Dignity and the Law?  
Perspectives after the 2007 elections**

**International Conference, Evangelische Akademie Loccum  
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**In co-operation with Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC), Church  
Development Service (EED), German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) Nigeria, Heinrich  
Boell Foundation, Konrad Adenauer Foundation, sponsored by Federal Ministry for  
Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Berlin**

**2007 General Elections in Nigeria  
Voter and Civic Education Experience**

**By Alhaji Ibrahim Biu  
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It is a great pleasure for me to be here in the city of Loccum Germany to participate in this very important international conference. I commend the organizer of this event and also for giving me the opportunity to present this paper which focuses on some of the recent experiences of my organization the Independent National Electoral Commission of Nigeria (INEC). Indeed I must mention that the organizers and Sponsors of this conference have been in the Vanguard of "promoting international democratic development and peace worldwide". This workshop therefore is a manifestation of the German vision and commitment to the global growth of democracy.

As you must have been informed through the international media, my country, Nigeria has just gone through a period of general elections. On April 14, State legislative and Gubernatorial elections were conducted. While on April 21, National Assembly and Presidential Elections took place. This gave the Nigerian voters the opportunity to elect a President, Vice-President, 36 Governors and their Deputies, 109 Senators, 360 Members of the House of Representatives and 880 Members of State Assemblies. Already the elected executives and legislators have been sworn in and Nigeria has successfully undergone a transition from one civilian administration to another, for the first time in the history of the country.

Specifically, I have been asked to speak on the experience of Voter and Civic Education in the 2007 General elections in Nigeria. In discussing the topic, Let me explain certain facts about our electoral history, the nature of the present electoral body and the management of the 2007 elections as well as the challenges of undertaking voter and civic education activities within our socio-political environment that involves differences of language, Religion and culture.

### **Brief History of Electoral Commissions in Nigeria**

The existence of electoral bodies in Nigeria date back to the period before independence. By the time Nigeria became politically independent in 1960, the Federal Electoral Commission (FEC) was established and it conducted elections in 1964 and 1965. The Military coup d'etat of 1966 led to its dissolution. In 1978, the then Military administration established another Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) which conducted transitional elections in 1979 and the general elections in 1983. Again another military coup in December 1983 terminated the Commission. In 1987, the National Electoral Commission (NEC) which conducted elections in 1987, 1990, 1991, 1992 and 1993. In 1995, the National Electoral Commission of Nigeria (NECON) was established and it conducted local council and National Assembly Elections. The present Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) came into being in August, 1998. Thus INEC is a successor to those electoral bodies which existed before and after independence

### **Composition and Structure of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)**

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) was established in August 1998 and it has conducted general elections thrice i.e. in 1999, 2003 and 2007. It is comprised of a Chairman, Prof Maurice Iwu and 12 National Commissioners who are drawn from the six geo-political zones of the country. The Chairman and members of the Commission are appointed by the President in consultation with the National Council of States. The appointment of the members of the Commission is subject to confirmation by the Senate. INEC also has a Secretary who is the head of its internal bureaucracy and about 12 Directors heading various Departments.

The Commission has an office in each of the 36 States and the Federal Capital Territory. Offices are also maintained in all the 774 Local Government Areas. Each State Office is headed by a Resident Elec-

toral Commissioner while the local government offices are headed by Electoral Officers who are staff of the Commission.

### **Duties of the Commission**

The Nigerian Constitution confers on INEC the powers to: among others

- organize, undertake and supervise all elections to the offices of the President, and Vice President, Governors and Deputy Governors and to the membership of the Senate, House of Representatives and the House of Assembly of each State.
- register political parties (we have 50 political parties now in Nigeria).
- Arrange and conduct the registration of persons qualified to vote and prepare, maintain and revise the register of voters.
- Monitor political campaigns and provide rules and regulations which shall govern the political parties.

### **Conduct of Elections in Nigeria**

- For the office of President of Nigeria, a Person is qualified for election if he is a Nigerian citizen, he has attained the age of 40 years, he is a member of a political party and is sponsored by that party and has been educated up to at least school certificate level.
- For the National Assembly, a person is qualified for election if he is a Nigerian citizen, has also been educated up to at least school certificate, he is a member of a political party and sponsored by that party and in respect of the Senate, he is up to thirty five years while for the House of Representatives, he is up to thirty years old.
- For the office of Governor of a State in Nigeria, a person is qualified if he is a citizen and up to thirty five years, is a member of a political party which sponsors him for the election and is educated up to at least school certificate level
- For House of Assembly of a State, a person is qualified for election if he is also a citizen, up to thirty years, educated to school certificate level and is a member of a political party.
- For Local Government Elections, a person is qualified if he is a citizen, educated up to School Certificate level, is sponsored by his political party and in the case of councillorship position, he has attained the age of 25 years while for Chairmanship election, he has attained 35 years.

### **INEC'S Approach to the 2007 Polls**

In order to ensure free and fair elections, INEC produced a credible voter's register. The Commission introduced the Direct Data Capture System to register voters. With this the voters register contained the particulars and photographs of registrants. This register helped immensely to stamp out multiple voting during the elections.

## **The challenges of Voter and Civic Education in Nigeria**

Distinguished participant, I attempted to brief you about salient aspects of Nigerian electoral process. I will now dwell on the experience of voter and civic education and the challenges we faced in enlightening our people during the 2007 elections.

It is important to state that voter and civic education was essentially not a core duty of INEC. It was undertaken mostly by other agencies especially International organizations. However with the new Law (Electoral Act 2006) now empowered the Commission to organize voter and civic education on a national scope.

It is in the light of this that the Commission formally established the Voter Education Directorate with a mandate to

- Develop concepts and literature for effective voter and civic education at all levels in the country. Create and implement strategies for voter and civic education delivery, Nationwide.
- Partner with relevant organizations involved in voter and civic education
- Organize and conduct field voter education activities, workshops, seminar etc

In order to achieve its goals, the Voter Education Directorate under my leadership immediately identified and developed messages in various areas such as:

- The Role of voters in the electoral process e.g why do we vote, who can vote, how to vote and where to vote.
- Secrecy of vote during elections.
- Electoral code of conduct during Elections
- The rights of eligible Voters, obligations and responsibilities during elections.
- Election offences and penalties
- Voting procedures
- Resolution of electoral disputes
- Understanding INEC, its structure and operations.

The messages developed were then conveyed through various media to the voters all over the country.

### **The nature of the voters and the strategies for educating the,**

The relative homogeneity in many parts of the developed world is absent in many African countries, especially Nigeria. The heterogeneous nature of my country posed considerable challenge to implementation of voter education activities. Nigeria is made up of more than 200 linguistic groups, with distinct cultures. The country also comprises Christians and Muslims in considerable proportions.

With this, we had to use various languages to communicate with our people in their localities. Languages like Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo Pidgin English and English were effectively used. The problems of illiteracy in parts of the country restricts the extent to which English could be used. Of Course, all these brought considerable strain on our resources.

Despite this problem we were able to reach out to the voters by using the following strategies:

#### **a. Voter Education through Electronic media**

In Nigeria, the electronic media is very powerful. We have about seventy TV stations and more than one hundred Radio stations, many of them operating within a network. This wide radio and TV cover-

age provided us ample opportunities to air jingles and drama sketches and also participate in radio and TV Programmes such as interviews, discussions, Talk-shows in English and local languages.

#### **b. Voter Education through Print Media**

Considerable voter and civic education took place using the print media. A lot of messages such as date, venue, timing as well as voting procedures were advertised in Newspapers and magazines (we have more than 20 News Papers and magazine in Nigeria). More than this, messages were disseminated through posters, flyers pamphlets, stickers, badges, street billboards, handbook, notebooks, Exercise book for school children (to advise their parents to come out and vote during election).

#### **c. Voter Education Through Various Providers**

During the period of elections, we collaborated with various voter education providers in the country such as governmental institutions, civil society organizations, and non-governmental organizations. These agencies received factual election information from INEC which were communicated to the public. I am proud to say Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Nigeria played an active role in interacting on daily basis with our officials as well as sponsored Radio Programme on voter and civic education in the country.

#### **d. Voter Education through workshops, forums and field shows**

We also engaged in voter and civic education by organizing fora and briefing sessions for critical segments of our society such as Traditional Rulers, Academic Community, Religious leaders, journalists, In addition, we organized road shows stakeholders etc. (Carnival) to effectively educate and enlighten voters in various parts of the country as well as distribute election materials to the public.

### **Voter Education Assistance from International Community**

At this juncture, it is important to mention that considerable assistance was received from the international community. The Joint Donor Basket Fund established by the EU, DFID, CIDA and UN provided support in the production of our posters and buying of airtime for exposure of jingles on radio and TV as well as sponsored Newspaper advert on the elections. The International foundation for Election System (IFES) also helped in sponsoring workshops for capacity building of our staff. Konrad Adenauer Foundation provided a Forum at Regional Radio Stations at Kano, Ibadan and Port-Harcourt to openly discuss matters of election, democracy and peace by all stakeholders.

### **Effect of Voter Education**

It should be stressed that the efforts of the Nigerian electoral body at educating the voters yielded positive results as the level of awareness of voters about their rights and privileges has improved. The direct effect of this was the massive turn-out during the elections.

Voters also acquired adequate knowledge about voting procedures and the need to keep away from various malpractices, and voters recognized the importance of the elections as a necessary prerequisite for consolidating Nigeria's democracy

### **The future of Voter Education in Nigeria**

Well, the general elections in Nigeria have come and gone. To continue the development of democracy, our voter and civic education activities will continue. We intend to ensure that the study of the electoral system shall be a permanent part of the school curriculum in Nigeria. Once children learn the basic tenets of the electoral system in schools early in life, it will be easy for them to function as de-

mocrats. We also intend to continue organizing workshops and seminars for various segments of the society, especially professional organizations Religious Groups, women and Youth groups during the post election period.

## **Conclusion**

Distinguished participants it has been worthwhile, discussing issues relating to my country's electoral system and the experience of voter and civic education. Nigeria is 46 years as a nation, and our democracy is relatively young. The disruptive effects of military rule have probably limited the heights that we should have attained. However, by constantly educating our people, especially voters, we shall grow and become a very successful democratic nation in the near future.

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### Subject

Nigeria, the demographically largest country with the most extensive oil resources in Africa has become an important power in the region despite its conflict-ridden history. Economic interests dominating the use of resources from outside, large-scale poverty stirring ethnic-religious rivalries about social and political participation, and also disparate structures of government, administration and the security sector have created complex tensions between controversial perspectives of the stakeholders involved.

The ways in which Nigeria will enable itself to deal with the causes of the conflicts make the country an important case of scholarly and political interest far beyond its borders.

Short after the local and federal elections in Nigeria in April 2007, the conference aims at discussing the following issues: How to empower the various segments of the Nigerian population, politically and economically, enhance good governance, fight rampant corruption, conduct appropriate methods of conflict resolution and implement conflict-sensitive codes of conduct for international corporations? How much responsibility, in close cooperation with Nigerian players, for a policy focussed on human security, peace and justice may be assumed by external governmental and non-governmental initiatives?

Our hope is to provide a forum for Nigerian players such as politicians, scholars and analysts along with representatives of civil society to discuss their views with German and international organisations involved in development and conflict resolution. We encourage people with expertise in these fields to share their knowledge and to help identify future areas of cooperation.

Dr. Corinna **Hauswedell**, Director of Studies for International Politics

### Program

#### Friday, June 15, 2007

Welcome and opening of the conference

Dr. Corinna **Hauswedell**, Loccum

Nigeria After the Elections

Introductions to the conference

Prof. Attahiru **Jega**, Präsident, Bayero Universität Kano

Heinrich **Bergstresser**, Journalist, Köln

World Order - Africa - Nigeria

Dr. Denis **Tull**, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Berlin

**Saturday, June 16, 2007**

Representative of the Nigerian Embassy in Germany

Introductions to the Workshops

Federalism, Governance and Security

Prof. Dr. J. Isawa **Elaiwu**, Jos

Responsible Use of Resources

Bunu **Lawan**, Principal Accountant, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Abuja

Ethnic-religious Dimensions of Political Conflicts

Prof. Dr. Klaus **Hock**, University Rostock

Workshop I: Democracy and Security - Issues of Participatory Governance

Chair: Dr. Andreas **Heinemann-Grüder**, BICC, Bonn

Prof. Attahiru **Jega**, Vice Chancellor, Bayero University, Kano

Ibrahim **Biu**, Director Voter Education, Independent National Electoral Commission Headquarters (INEC), Abuja

Heinz **Jockers** / Ralph-Michael **Peters**, Core-Team, European Union Election Observation Mission (EUEOM), Hamburg

Dr. Etham **Mijah**, Nigerian Defense Academy, Kaduna (to be confirmed)

Olufunmi **Olayinka**, Deputy Governor candidate for Ekiti State, Lagos

Dr. Klaus **Pähler**, Representative to Nigeria, Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Abuja

Workshop II: Too Much of Plenty - Too Little to Share?

Issues of Responsible Resource Use and Economic Development

Chair: Kristina **Steenbock**, German Watch, Berlin

Abbia **Udofia**, Chief Legal Officer, Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC), Abuja

David **Ugolor**, African Network for Environmental and Economic Justice, Lagos

Dr. Rose **Ngomba**, University of Göttingen, Germany

Dr. Stefan **Cramer**, Director, Heinrich Boell Foundation, Lagos

Dr. Andreas **Dally**, Academy Loccum

Yahaya **Ahmed**, Development Association for Renewable Energies Kaduna, Bonn

Workshop III: Beyond North and South - Ethnic, Religious and Social Dimensions of Conflict

Chair: Dr. Lidwina **Meyer**, Academy Loccum

Ms Hauwa **Ibrahim**, Abuja

Rev. Habila **Istifanus**, General Secretary of ACLA; Justice, Peace and Reconciliation Movement, Jos

Rev. Ike **Okorie**, General Secretary, Christian Council of Churches in Nigeria, Lagos

Fr. Dr. George **Ehusani**, former General Secretary, Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, Lagos

Dr. Nick **Idoko**, Centre for Peace in Africa, Lagos

Future Perspectives I:

How do the different players in Nigeria articulate, position themselves and co-operate on the issues at stake?

Round table feedback from the workshops

Facilitator: Dr. Corinna **Hauswedell**

**Sunday, June 17, 2007**

Future Perspectives II:

How to address a policy focussed on human security, peace and justice through external initiatives and in close cooperation with Nigerian players?

Panel discussion

Facilitator: Dr. Corinna **Hauswedell**

Dr. Viktor **Matz**, Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, Berlin

Gabriele **Groneberg**, MP/Social Democratic Party, Berlin

Hartwig **Fischer**, MP/Christian Democratic Union, Berlin

Bunu **Lawan**, ECOWAS

Dapo **Oyewole**, Centre for African Policy & Peace Strategy (CAPPS), London & Lagos