



## **REPORT FROM JDPC ONITSHA ARCHDIOCESE ON THE CONDUCT OF THE PRESIDENTIAL AND NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS HELD ON 23<sup>RD</sup> FEBRUARY 2019.**

We appreciate INEC's commitment on the preparation and support to JDPC Onitsha Election Observation Mission (EOM), providing kits for the election observers. The rate of voter education was also massive. Despite the fact that the election was shifted from the original date, INEC showed determination and readiness to conduct a violence free, fair and credible elections. We also commend Catholic Caritas Foundation of Nigeria (CCFN) for facilitating INEC's accreditation and for the first time, provision of mobile app used for the election observation.

JDPC Onitsha trained and deployed election observers in the 10 LGAs in Anambra State. In addition to this, about 10 others used 3 JDPC printed vehicles for roving observation. JDPC Onitsha also consolidated INEC's enlightenment campaign by carrying out voter education across all boards. Though, there were few challenges in the polling units across 10 LGAs in Anambra state covered by JDPC Onitsha, the election as conducted by INEC and observed by JDPC Onitsha covered on the 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2019 was adjoined free, fair and credible.

1. **Arrival of INEC Officials and Election Materials:** Some of the polling unit officials arrived quite on time across the polling units with non-sensitive materials. But in some areas within Onitsha North LGA, a good number of them arrived even after 9am.
2. **Commencement of Accreditation and Voting:** Between the hours of 8.30am and 9.30am, voters have already queued for accreditation and voting while INEC officials were setting up the polling units. This was in exception where the election process commenced late due to card reader malfunctioning. In most cases, verification and authentication were stifled but eligible voters whose names were on the voter register were allowed to vote.
3. **Presence and Conduct of Security Personnel:** There were thin presence of security personnel in some wards across LGAs but without recorded incidence of security challenges. Voters were courageous and went about their business of voting without fear of harassment and intimidation. In some wards in Ayamelum LGA, there were no security personnel in some polling units and where they were present, no more than 2 security men manned a centre with more than 4 voting points. In Nsugbe ward 1, between the hours of 9.25pm and 9.35pm the SPO who did not want to count the ward result at the centre asked party agents and observers to follow her to INEC office in Otuocho for counting and declaration. This incurred the wrath of village boys and vigilante men who took away the materials from her and set them ablaze.
4. **Voters' Turnout:** Eligible voters came out in numbers to their respective polling units to cast their votes, defying all odds akin to harsh weather conditions. Voters stayed even after voting to ensure that their votes counted.
5. **Conduct of Party Agents and Observers:** In some polling units, party agents were not easily identified with their identity tags. In some other wards, especially in Inland town Ward 11, units 004, 005 and 006 one of the party agents was seen distributing N10, 000 to each of the

INEC POs in the respective units. In Oye hall Ojoto, units 017 to 020 party agents were freely distributing money to voters alike. In Ifite Agbaje Abatete 021, 022, and 023, one of the party agents distributed voter cards to some people in the polling units for the purpose of using them to cast votes, and realizing the presence of JDPC observers felt threatened and launched an attack.

6. Challenges: One of the major challenges faced by INEC in the conduct of this election was non-authentication of eligible voters with the use of card readers. In most of the polling units in Onitsha North, Onitsha South, Anambra East, Anambra West, Oyi, Idemili North, Idemili South, Ayamelum, Ogbaru and Dunukofia LGAs where JDPC Onitsha observed elections, cards readers brought for the verification and authentication were malfunctioning leading to manual authentication. There were instances of late replacement of card readers while voters waited for a long time before commencement of accreditation and voting.

Another is associated with time for closure of the poll. In some places where INEC officials commenced voting late, they insisted on regulation time for the poll instead of making up for the lost time. Even though voting was to commence between the hours of 8am and 2pm, INEC officials in some units stopped election by 2pm whereas eligible voters were still on queue before 2pm. Nevertheless, JDPC observers intervened to allow the poll officials to issue tag to those already on the queue and allow voting to continue.

7. Recommendation: INEC should as a matter of ensuring a more transparent election identify strongly with credible election observers to achieve more success. It is recommended that some of the poll officials be draft from the non-partisan and credible civil society groups who drive common course for a sustainable democracy.

INEC should also adopt a common technology system that will make its work easier. INEC should equally mobilize their ad hoc staff as we received complaint of non-incentive to enhance their work.

Rev. Fr. Edwin Udoye  
Executive Director

Chuka Okafor  
Project Manager