

**APRIL 2019**



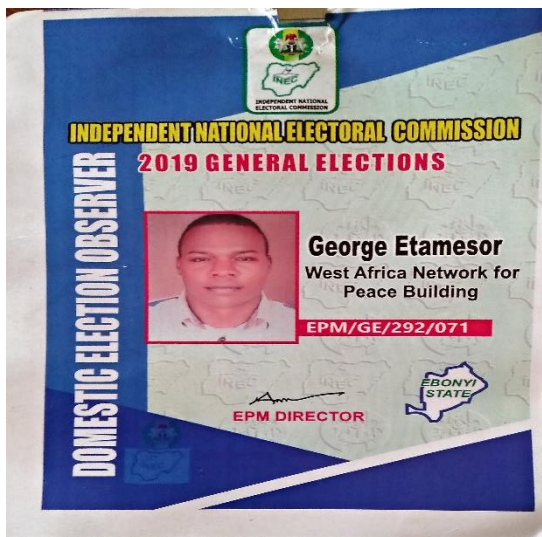
# **REPORT OF THE 2019 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN EBONYI STATE**

**AS OBSERVED BY HUMAN RIGHTS AND  
CONFLICT RESOLUTION CENTER (HRCRC),  
ABAKALIKI**

As part of activities in her **Peaceful Electioneering in Ebonyi State** project, funded by Irish Aid and St Patrick's Missionary Society, Human Rights and Conflict Resolution Center Observed the conduct of the elections in the state by training and deploying 35 citizens observers and 5 roving observers around the state for both elections. Analysis of reports received from observers suggest that whilst the presidential elections were relatively peaceful around the state, with isolated incidences of glitches in card readers functioning, low voter turnout and other logistical challenges, the gubernatorial elections was marred by a host of glitches, violence and malpractices fundamental enough to render the elections in the state invalid.

## INTRODUCTION

Human Rights and Conflict Resolution Centre Observed the conduct of the 2019 General Elections in Ebonyi State under the accredited aegis of West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP); and as part of activities of our 2019 Peaceful Electioneering in Ebonyi State Project, with funding support from Irish Aid and St Patrick's Missionary Society.



*INEC accreditation tag*



*HRCRC's George on Observation duty*

## DISCLAIMER

Human Rights and Conflict Resolution Centre is a *not-for-profit non-partisan* Non-Governmental-Organization committed to upholding the tenets of justice, freedom and peace; with a preferential option for the poor. With over 23 branches across the state, we have a unique grassroots presence and reach in the state.



*HRCRC Branch members who doubled as citizen election observers in the state during the pre-election briefing at HRCRC Theresa Ozor Conference Room*

## PRE-ELECTION ACTIVITY



Amongst other activities by HRCRC which included meetings and trainings for critical electioneering stakeholders in the state such as INEC, security agencies, youths and their leaders, women and their leaders, citizens observers, town hall meetings and advocacies, INEC Ebonyi, in collaboration with CSOs in the state embarked on a door to door voter

sensitization to curb voter apathy and teach the new voting process. HRCRC was tasked to sensitize *Ohaukwu* Local Government Area of the state. This was done quite successfully by our organization and other CSOs who participated in the process.

## FINDINGS FROM OBSERVATION

### POSTPONEMENT OF ELECTIONS

The rescheduling of the elections was both a blessing and a curse. Prior to the elections, there was a palpable build-up of tension and intimidation techniques employed by political parties and their players. HRCRC election Observer in *Ikwo* Local Government Area of the State reported that on the evening before the originally scheduled date, on his way home, he ran into a vehicle conveying young men armed with various weapons parked beside the road.

However, the rescheduling of the elections helped douse the tension that had built up in the state prior to the elections; and also give security agencies time to deal with and come up with contingency plans for the threat of violent eruptions they were confronted with. Nonetheless still, it was a major contributing factor to the voter apathy and low voter turnout during the elections. Many voters who had originally travelled to their registration wards before the elections were rescheduled expressed disappointment and unwillingness to make the trip again on the new dates.



On all the briefings by INEC in preparations for the elections, it was posited that the commission was fully ready for the election business.

### **PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS**

The Presidential Elections in Ebony State was largely peaceful. On the eve of the elections though, there was a violent attack on innocent civilians in a drinking bar in *Ndiegwu Amagu* village of *Ikwo* Local Government Area. The attack occurred close to a polling unit and the news did not get to the general public until the next day; hence the misinformation that a polling unit was attacked and several people were killed.



*Scene of the attack close to the polling unit, a spent shell casing from the attack, dried blood in the sand where the victims fell and the polling unit near the attack scene*

The names of the victims are:

#### **Deceased**

- Sunday Nwancho Ebude
- Igwe Ukwa

#### **Wounded**

- Ejike Simon
- Alo Nwabo
- Simon Ewo

Interacting with some survivors of the attack, they alleged that the unprovoked attack was politically motivated and that they knew some of the aggressors; some of whom were putting on military camouflages.

## CONDUCT OF THE ELECTIONS

The Elections was conducted relatively peaceful but was fraught with card reader glitches in the early hours of voting. Voting commenced averagely at about 9:40am and there was a very low voter turnout all around the state, with less than thirty-five percent of registered voters actually turning out to vote. This is attributed to the last minute rescheduling of the elections by INEC.

## GUBERNATORAL ELECTIONS

In this elections, there was more at stake; thus there was more tension.

There was an unhealthy militarization of the process. There were military check points in junctions across Abakaliki metropolis. However, In *Nkwoagu* Military Cantonment, there was a military road block that prevented all commuters – including policemen on Election duty, duly accredited Election observers

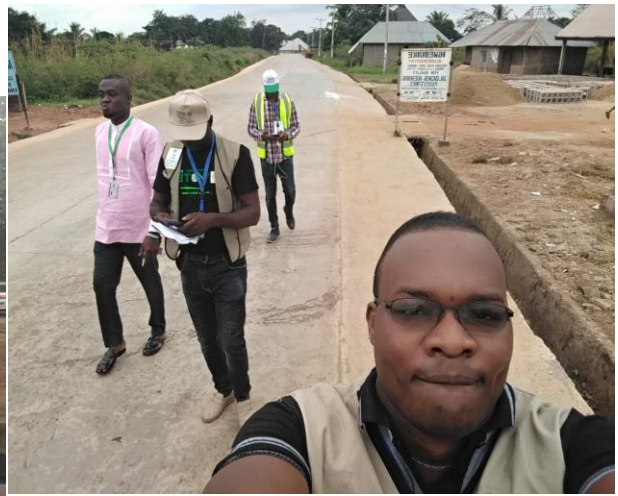


*Scene of the roadblock at Nkwoagu Military Cantonment, Abakaliki on election morning*

Whilst there was the usual delay in kick-off of voting processes across the state, voting kicked off averagely at about 9:25am. We noticed glitches in card reader operations and observed that there were some polling units that didn't use the card readers – and used varying forms of manual accreditation.

## INTERNATIONAL MEDIA AND FOREIGN OBSERVERS

We observed that these media and observers did not really go round to observe the conduct of elections, they only went to the incumbent's polling unit and waited until the governor came to vote, then proceeded to the opposition's unit and did same. The implications of this are far reaching; especially when there are conflicting reports about the conduct of the elections.



*Foreign Media observers in the polling unit of the opposition candidate and BBC correspondent in green vest in the incumbent's polling unit*

## **MALPRACTICES AND VIOLENCE**

Also, we noticed various forms of malpractices which included voter inducement, not pasting results, collation units not used, and even bizarre practice of party agents of the two major opposition parties agreeing to share the ballot papers between themselves in agreed percentages so they can thumbprint indiscriminately.



*A security personnel joining in the sorting of ballot papers prior to counting in Edda of Afikpo LGA*

There were many reports of violence during the elections – especially in the northern part of the state. *Udazi* and *Akanu* in Afikpo recorded cases of intimidation of INEC *ad hoc* staff, ballot snatching in *Okposi Umuaghara*, voting materials destroyed in other parts of *Afikpo*, amongst other unhealthy practices. Also in *Oriuzor*, there were reports that the school building where the voting materials were kept was burnt; along with several motorbikes.





*Ballot materials and other sensitive materials scattered during a violent outburst in a polling station in Udazi and Akanu wards of Afikpo and a Senator Elect with an Armed Guard at a polling station.*

### **DISPARITY IN NUMBER OF REGISTERED VOTERS**

One aspect of the elections in Ebonyi that made nationwide news was the difference in the number of registered voters in both elections. In the two weeks that separated both elections, the number of voters increased or reduced in all the local government areas except for one – Abakaliki Local Government Area - which remained constant. Here is a list of the local government areas and their number of registered voters for the presidential and gubernatorial elections:

<b>Local Government</b>	<b>Number of Registered Voters during Presidential Elections</b>	<b>Number of Registered Voters during Gubernatorial Elections</b>	<b>Disparity</b>
Afikpo South	72343	75767	Increase by <b>3424</b>
Afikpo North	101456	101599	Increase by <b>143</b>
Ivo	61247	60523	Decrease by <b>724</b>
Ohaozara	84079	84683	Increase by <b>604</b>
Ebonyi	111917	109593	Decrease by <b>2324</b>
Isielu	111251	104387	Decrease by <b>6864</b>
Onicha	95631	108457	Increase by <b>12826</b>
Ohaukwu	155895	150303	Decrease by <b>5592</b>
Ezza North	94344	98188	Increase by <b>3844</b>
Ezza South	90115	89330	Decrease by <b>785</b>
Izzi	149198	150534	Increase by <b>1336</b>
Ikwo	180117	151701	Decrease by <b>28416</b>
Abakaliki	147440	147440	<b>No Variance</b>

## CONCLUSION

Overall, compared to the amount of tension and fear that trailed the elections, the elections went relatively well. However, the tension increased an already growing sense of apathy amongst voters. Thus there was a very low turnout of voters on both elections, with an average of 25 percent of voters turning out.

Also, the process was flawed with a lot glitches in both the machinery and people involved in the process.

Security was either too emphasized or not enough as they were either compromised to observe and even participate in the malpractices in some polling units.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

From observing this elections, we recommend that:

- The prospect of electronic voting be vigorously pursued to reduce human contact and interface in the process of electioneering to guard against voter inducement, compromised staff and security personnel, violence and other forms of malpractice.
- INEC *ad hoc* personnel be more trained to possess integrity, be more patriotic and professional in their conduct during elections.
- That continuous voter education be carried out to forestall last minute rush to cram into voters the ideals and best practices of electioneering.
- That the card reader be improved to detect multiple voting as it does not have this check now.
- That manual accreditation complaints be verified from the card readers and not by word of mouth from INEC Presiding Officers.

Finally, HRCRC is grateful to IRISH AID and St Patrick's Missionary Society for Funding to carry out this Election Observation and the Peaceful Electioneering Project in Ebonyi State.



## Sample Checklist for HRCRC domestic observer



**After you arrive, fill in the forms below and begin answering the questions in the checklists.**

Observer's name :

Name of the polling station:

Telephone number of the polling station

Address of the polling station:

Time of your arrival :

Time at the polling station opened :

Time which the polling station closed :

Time of your departure from the polling station :

Name of the chairman of the polling station commission:

Name of the deputy chairman of the polling station commission:

Number of members of the polling station commission present:

Number of voters on the list

Final number of voters:

**Please check the following before the beginning of the voting process:**

	Are the necessary materials, ballots, paper and pens available to the members of the commission	
	Is there an adequate number of ballots?	
	Were the ballot boxes empty before they were sealed?	
	Were the ballots boxes stamped in the presence of poll workers and observers?	
	Do the voting booths ensure the secrecy of the ballots?	
	Were marks put next to the names of early voters on the voter list?	
	Were the ballots from early voting taken out of their envelopes and placed in the ballot boxes in front of poll workers?	
	Is the chairman or deputy chairman of the polling station election commission present?	

**Please check the following during opening and the voting process:**

	Was the polling station opened on time?	
	Is there a special place reserved for observers to observe the voting process?	
	Is there any other propaganda materials in the polling station?	
	Is there an orderly queue in front of polling station premises?	
	Is the voting procedure well organized by commission?	
	Are voters signing the voter list before ballots are issued to them?	
	Are voters voting only for themselves?	
	Is the secrecy of voting maintained throughout the day?	
	Can the ballot boxes be seen by members of election commission and observers?	
	Is there adequate lighting and space in the voting booths?	
	Do the chairman and secretary of election commission respond to questions, concerns and complaints?	
	Do the actions of the members of the election commission appear impartial?	
	Do all observers follow observer's code of conduct?	
	Do observers accompany the mobile ballot boxes?	
	Is the voting process running without incident?	
	Are representatives of the mass media present?	
	Are other national and international observers present?	
	Do you see evidence of any illegal tampering with the ballot boxes?	
	Do you see any evidence of intimidation, bribery or interference in the voting process?	
	Is there any intimidation or pressure on observers or proxies?	

Observer's name \_\_\_\_\_

Nº of polling station Nº of electoral district

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**Please check the following during the closing of the voting process:**

	Was anyone permitted to vote during the closing of the voting process?	
	Did the polling station close on time?	
	Were the ballot boxes kept still sealed before the vote count?	
	Were unused ballots counted and cancelled before the opening of the ballot boxes?	
	Was the vote counting process done only by poll workers?	
	Were the ballot boxes unsealed in the presence of poll workers and observers?	
	Was the vote counting process done in the presence of observers?	
	Was the vote counting process orderly?	
	Did the precinct election commission make a decision on invalid ballots?	
	Were two original copies of the protocols made?	
	Were the protocols filled out in ink?	
	Were the complaints and decisions of the election commission attached to the first copy of protocol?	
	Were both copies of the protocol signed by a majority of poll workers?	
	Was the first copy of the protocol sent to the district election commission?	
	Was the second copy of the protocol immediately displayed for public?	

	Did the sending of protocols, ballot boxes, and election materials to the higher election commission take place after the compiling voting results?	
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Observer's name \_\_\_\_\_

**The Voting Results**

1. Number of voters on the voter list
2. Number of ballots received by INEC
3. Number of ballots issued at the polling station on Election Day
4. Number of ballots issued to early voters
5. Number of cancelled ballots
6. Number of ballots in the stationary ballot boxes
7. Number of ballots in the mobile ballot boxes
8. Number of valid ballots
9. Number of invalid ballots

**The results of voting according to the party list**

Party	Number of votes received
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	

Name and signature of the observer \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



**George Etamesor**  
*Acting Director*  
 HRCRC  
 06/04/2019