



INTERFAITH DIALOGUE FORUM FOR PEACE

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Communique

Communiqué issued at the end of the Two-Day Sensitization and Capacity Strengthening Workshop for Religious Leaders, Civil Society Organizations and Policymakers towards Peaceful 2023 General Elections held at Ajuji hotel, Abuja on 30th November and 1st December 2022.

Introduction:

The development and design of the workshop on Sensitization and Capacity Strengthening for Religious Leaders, CSOs and Policymakers on Violence Prevention Campaign towards Nigeria's 2023 General Elections was initiated by the Interfaith Dialogue Forum for Peace (IDFP) and supported by KAICIID Dialogue Centre. The workshop took place in Abuja with representation from the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), the Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA), the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR), the Nigerian Police Force (NPF), Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), National Council of Muslim Youth Organizations (NACOMYO), Youth Wing Christian Association of Nigeria (YOWICAN), Federation of Muslims Women Association in Nigeria (FOMWAN), Women Wing Christian Association of Nigeria (WOWICAN), CSOs and key members of the IDFP. The workshop aimed to increase collaborations between policymakers, security, CSOs and religious leaders in promoting non-violent electoral processes towards achieving peaceful elections and stable democracy in Nigeria.

The workshop focused on six key themes:

- a) Violent Conflict Landmines and Peace Landmarks in 2023 General Election in Nigeria;
- b) Peaceful conduct of the elections: The role of security agencies;
- c) Voting procedures, electoral offences and penalties;
- d) Gender/inclusivity and citizens' participation in electoral processes;
- e) Perspectives of civil society on the current electoral processes;
- f) Action planning and development of next steps.

The participants during the two-day workshop raised the following concerns:

- i. Voter Education:
 - Inadequate voter education and awareness by INEC and stakeholders;
 - Inadequate knowledge of the Electoral Act 2022;
 - Low investment on voter education by the INEC and other stakeholders;
 - Over reliance on foreign donors to fund voter education;
 - Delayed voter education and awareness;

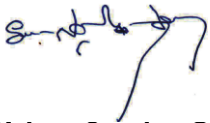
- Inadequate knowledge on how to guide people with disability during the elections/voting.
- ii. Bimodal Voters Accreditation System (BVAS):
- Inadequate knowledge of the use of BVAS by voters and some INEC Adhoc Staff;
 - Low awareness of the BVAS in elections by majority of citizens;
 - The fear for the BVAS efficacy in areas of low internet coverage which could compromise voters' data and election results.
- iii. Electoral Offences:
- Continuous trend on vote buying/selling, and underage voting;
 - Multiple and underage voter registration;
 - Snatching of ballot boxes and assault on INEC officials;
 - Rising incidences of attacks and arsons on INEC offices.
- iv. Diaspora voting:
- According to Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (NIDCOM), there are over 17 million Nigerians in Diaspora without voting right;
 - They contribute over 20 billion Dollars in 2021 to the economy above Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). This staggering number and contribution of Nigerian Diaspora community should necessitate the review of the Electoral Act to consider Diaspora voting in the near future.
- v. Divisive Political Campaigns:
- Hate speeches permeated throughout the campaign period by political parties and their supporters;
 - Negative profiling of religious and ethnic groups which further deepens the divide among Nigerians;
 - Unacceptable level of physical and online violence perpetrated against individuals and groups;
 - Rise in fake news creating disunity, tension, suspicion etc.
- vi. Pre-existing Conflicts and Security Threats in key states:
- Existing tensions and violence in states affected by farmer-herdsmen conflicts, terrorism, banditry/kidnapping may trigger electoral violence if unchecked;
 - Protection of citizens before, during and after the elections are critical issues to be considered by deploying adequate, trained and fully equipped security forces.

Our prayers:

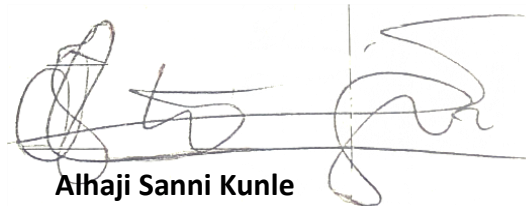
- Seek the unwavering commitment of all stakeholders in the electoral process including citizens to ensure peaceful, credible and transparent elections;
- Call for effective collaboration among all critical stakeholders before, during and after the elections with regards to planning, deployments, voter education, monitoring and information sharing;
- Reduce incidences of electoral violence through full implementation of the electoral act and adequate deployment of security forces to identified vulnerable locations;
- Urge the security agencies to collaborate with other stakeholders in the communities for intelligence gathering to strengthen rapid response mechanism and avoid breakdown of law and order;

- Improve funding, timeliness and effectiveness of voter education and awareness for citizens especially in the grassroots by INEC and other stakeholders;
- Enjoin religious leaders, traditional rulers and faith communities to live up to their responsibilities as custodians of community values and peaceful coexistence;
- Recommend that future electoral acts should be modified to consider giving Nigerians in the Diaspora the right to vote;
- Appeal to INEC to ensure every Nigerian who duly registered to vote receives his/her voter's cards in his/her respective polling units before the elections;
- Call on INEC to conduct adequate trainings on the use of the BVAS by their personnel including providing adequate internet facility to ensure uninterrupted connection to the server. Additionally, provide prompt alternatives to faulty BVAS where necessary.

For Interfaith Dialogue Forum for Peace



Bishop Sunday Onuoha
Co-Chairman, Executive Council
Signatories?



Alhaji Sanni Kunle
Co-Chairman, Executive Council

For: National Council of Muslim Youth Organizations (NACOMYO)
Sani Suleiman, President

For: Youth Wing, Christian Association of Nigeria (YOWICAN)
Amb. Enwere Belusochukwu, National Chairman

This project is supported by:

