

YOUTH ANTI-CORRUPTION SOCIETY

ANALYSIS ON ELECTION OBSERVATION GROUPS 2023 General Elections



ELECTION OBSERVATION

Election Observation is critical to modern day elections. It is used to describe a process where independent non-partisan groups from a domestic or international organization and accredited by the Electoral Commission, are deployed to observe elections and voting processes and give reports on the outcome of their observations.

As election is important part of democracy, people are encouraged through elections to elect their leaders into political offices. Leaders elected are then vested with power to make decisions expected to drive the growth and development of the society they are meant to preside over.

The very purpose of election is the same for every country including Nigeria. As a country that practice democracy, the next General Election in Nigeria is slated for 25th of February 2023. On this day, Nigerians are required to turn out in their numbers to vote leaders who will become their President, Members of Senate and Members of the House of Representative. Nigerians are once again faced with the pressure of decision making and the world is asking – “will Nigerians get it right by electing leaders with strength in Character to lead the Nation?”

Over time, elections in Nigeria have suffer malpractices and characterized by violence. There have been issues of stolen mandates, voters’ oppression among others. These issues have greatly compromised election processes and interferes with election outcomes.

For over a decade, election observation in the country has checkmate electoral processes. It has brought about a better understanding of the quality of elections in the country which has aided the government to work to improve how elections are conducted. Some areas fostered by observation include the participation of electorates in elections, recommendations for inclusion of marginalized groups in electoral processes and suggestions that has resulted to the initiation of credible policies to drive free and fair elections in the country.

Election Observation is thus a necessity for improvement of election processes in Nigeria. Participation by election observers in electoral processes has also aided in fostering integrity and transparency in the system thus, observers as tools can aid in building the trust of the electorates on an election where it is credible. Reports from non-patrician observer groups’ exposes tricks used to undermine electoral processes by various actors. This helps the government, CSOs and foreign organizations to focus their efforts on addressing critical challenges in vote trading, election rigging, voters’ oppression etc.

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Considering the current state of Nigeria's Economy, the Nigerian people especially the youths are demanding for free, fair, credible, peaceful and successful election. The call to elect leaders with strength in character has also gain major attention in the political atmosphere. Thus, there is a need for election observers to pay close attention to the 2023 General Election, promote transparency, expose corruption in the process and determine if the process meets national and international expectations.

ON THIS ANALYSIS

Election malpractices can be tagged as corruption in election which harper the credible flow of democratic processes and transfer of power. Election Observation can deter manipulation and fraud, or expose such problems if they do occur. When observers issue positive reports, it builds trust in the democratic process and enhances the legitimacy of the governments that emerge from elections. Thus, observers groups can be perceived as a representation of the eyes of the masses to observe the credibility of an election. The need for a well suited election observation system for the 2023 General Election is indispensable. The observation system is expected to comprise of observer groups with previous exposure to elections observation, nonpartisan, sensitive to happenings and experience in presenting detailed reports of international standard. Corruption is multi-dimensional and always changing. Approaches used by election fraudsters can undergo some modifications as well as introduction of new strategies. To successfully observe and identify corruption in the process, groups must be well equipped with past exposure to the conditions, approach and possible tactics of election manipulators including those that are difficult to detect.

With the above under consideration, accredited Observer groups for 2023 General Elections are expected to have participated in a similar General Election in the last decade notable 2015 General Election and 2019 General Election.

Objective:

The analysis will help us know the level of recent exposure of accredited observer to observing a General Election using a 10 years criteria.

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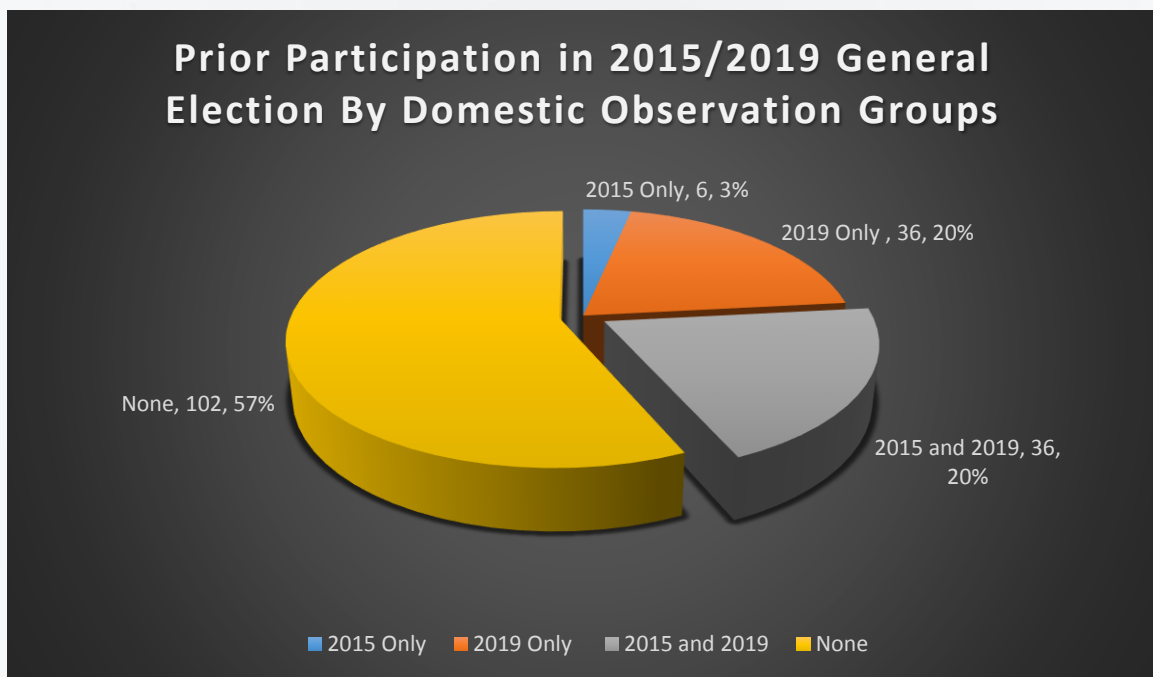


METHOD

This analysis was done by comparing accredited observers group for 2023 General Election against 2015 and 2019 General Election accredited Observation groups. An Excel Sheet was used to carry out this comparism. Accredited groups for 2023 that appeared in 2015 and/or 2019 was noted. Percentage was then developed against the general finds for Domestic and Foreign Observer Groups.

FINDINGS

DOMESTIC OBSERVERS GROUP



In the chart above, a total of 180 domestic observation groups were accredited by INEC to observe the 2023 General Election. Of these groups, only 43% has been exposed to observing a General Election with 3% observing in 2015 alone, 20% observing 2019 alone while another 20% observed both 2015 and 2019 General Elections. 102 Accredited Domestic Observer Groups making 57% has no recent exposure to a general election observation.

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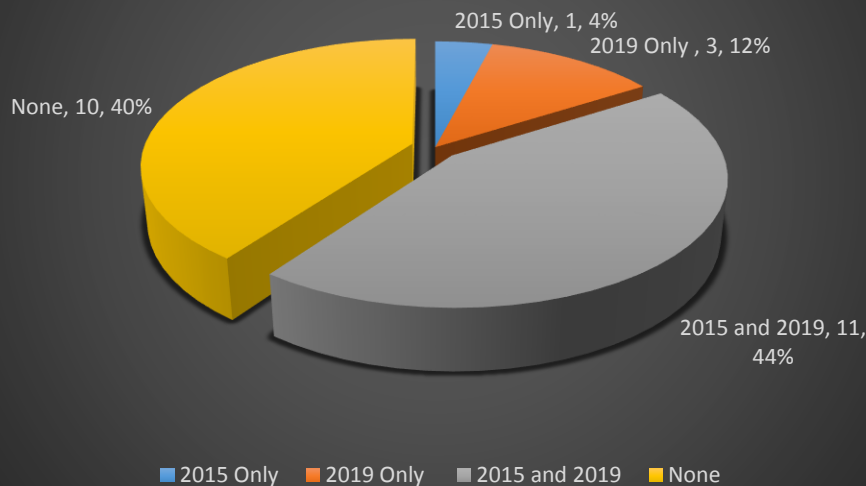
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FOREIGN OBSERVATION GROUPS

Prior Participation in 2015/2019 General Election By Foreign Observation Groups



2023 General Election recorded 25 foreign organizations with EU appearing on Accredited Observer group and Invited Organization by the Commission (thus 25 Organisations). Of these, 4% had recent exposure to only 2015 and 12% to only 2019 General Election in Nigeria. 44% of the Foreign groups were present in 2015 and 2019 while 40% were neither present during 2015 nor 2019 General Elections.

CONCLUSION

Only a total of 43% of accredited domestic organization are exposed to observing General elections in the last 10 years while 60% of accredited foreign organization are exposed to observing General elections in Nigeria in the last 10 years.

The purpose for domestic organisations without exposure to general election in last decade occupying 57% of accredited domestic group remains unclear. Except for call for application, there was also no available data to show the accreditation process and how it was followed – How individual organisation performed in assessment that led to their accreditation.

This then suggests the following:

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1. That the INEC has not given major attention to the importance of observer groups to fostering credible elections.
2. That the accreditation process can encourage corruption and compromise the resulting output of the observation system.
3. That this could be a deliberate act by the electoral commission to compromise the transparency in 2023 general elections.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Just like detectives, election observers must be sensitive to elections they observe and should have a mind-set that suggest there might be invisible corruption that they seek to expose. To advance election observation in Nigeria

1. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) must focus on accrediting more organizations that have observed a General Elections within 10 years and should occupy not less than 70% of accredited observer organisations for domestic observer groups while others without prior or recent exposure to Observing General Elections can occupy less than 30% or lesser for a General election.
2. The process of accreditation should be transparent and visible to the public.
3. There should be clear information on accredited foreign groups and their experience in observing a general election in the last 10 years.