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TAF Africa
...Disability Inclusion Champion

2023
OFFCYCLE

ELECTION REPORT



ELECTION OBSERVATION
FROM A DISABILITY INCLUSION PERSPECTIVE

CONTENTS

TABLE OF

- ⊕ Executive Summary
- ⊕ Objectives
- ⊕ Strategies Employed
- ⊕ Observation Methodology
- ⊕ Findings
- ⊕ Recommendations
- ⊕ Conclusion
- ⊕ Appendix

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Executive Summary

In the 2023 General Elections, a significant milestone was achieved on disability inclusion, where INEC distributed assistive devices for the participation of PWDs, using the aggregated data of PWDs based on the CVR conducted in 2022. Though, the assistive devices were not adequately provided, the November 11 off-cycle governorship elections in Bayelsa, Imo and Kogi presented an opportunity for INEC to consolidate on gains recorded and implement learning from the 2023 general elections.

This report encapsulates the election observation mission conducted by TAF Africa during the off-cycle governorship elections held in Bayelsa, Imo, and Kogi States on the 11th of November 2023. Rooted in the core principles of transparency, inclusivity, and accessibility, TAF Africa's engagement aimed not only at evaluating the procedural integrity of the electoral process but also at championing the cause of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) through innovative initiatives like the TAF Election Observer App.

The recently observed elections in Kogi, Bayelsa, and Imo states have shown promising strides in ensuring accessibility, inclusivity, and transparency in the electoral process. The majority of polling stations across the three states witnessed timely arrivals of INEC officials, with some minor delays attributed to logistical challenges.



Accessibility for persons with disabilities (PWDs) has been a key focus, and the observations revealed that a significant proportion of polling stations covered (80% in Kogi, 75% in Imo, and 67% in Bayelsa) prioritized voting rights for PWDs. The deployment of assistive tools, including braille ballot guides, EC30E PWD POSTERS, and magnifying glasses, was widespread, especially in Kogi state where 77% of observers reported their effective use.

The accreditation of PWDs across the observed polling stations was successful, with 138 individuals accredited in total. The breakdown by disability types, such as albinism, hearing impairment, and physical disabilities, provides a detailed understanding of the diverse needs accommodated during the elections.

Despite these positive aspects, there are areas for improvement, particularly in ensuring the effective use of assistive devices by PWDs. While Bayelsa reported 69% effective use, Kogi and Imo states lagged behind with 37% and 31%, respectively, signaling a need for increased attention to this crucial aspect of accessibility.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The overall conduct of the election received favorable reviews from TAF Africa's 90 observers. The voting process, from accreditation to the peaceful environment of polling stations, was commended. However, variations were noted in the transparency of certain procedures. For instance, the open counting of votes was more prevalent in Kogi (96%) compared to Imo (85%) and Bayelsa (71%).

The use of technology, such as the BVAS for accreditation and result transmission, contributed to shorter wait times, with an average of 0 to 4 minutes across all three states. The transparency extended to the recording of results in form EC 8A, where Kogi demonstrated a higher percentage (96%) than Imo (85%) and Bayelsa (71%). The display of form EC 60 E and the collection of PWD information using form EC 40 H, were generally well-implemented, with higher percentages in Kogi compared to Imo and Bayelsa.

While the elections showcased commendable efforts towards inclusivity, the findings underscore the importance of continued attention to effective use of assistive devices and consistent transparency across all stages of the electoral process. These insights serve as valuable considerations for further refining electoral procedures and ensuring the democratic participation of all citizens, regardless of their abilities.

Objectives of the Election Observation

- i. Evaluate the level of participation of persons with disabilities in the election.
- ii. Assess the provision and use of assistive devices such as braille ballot guide for persons with visual impairment, magnifying glasses and large font graphic posters for persons with albinism and sight impairment.
- iii. Evaluate the general administration of the election and INEC conduct during the election.
- iv. Assess the extent of priority voting accorded voters with disabilities as provided in the electoral guidelines.
- v. Examine the accessibility of polling stations for voters with various forms of disabilities.

Strategies Employed

ABLE2VOTE SENSITIZATION CAMPAIGN

TAF Africa launched an extensive voter education campaign tagged Able2Vote, reaching a total of 270 PWDs in the three states (Bayelsa=80, Imo=110 and Kogi=80), aimed at not only informing them of their voting rights but to also sensitize them on the importance of participating in the election. Security Issues around Disability and Prevalent Gaps in Electoral Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Priority Voting, Access to Polling Units, Voting Requirements, Voter Apathy and Individual Cluster Needs, were discussed. The voter education campaign took the form of a panel discussion, with panelists drawn from INEC, CSOs and OPDs.

TAF Africa collaborated with INEC, JONAPWD and the media to ensure that voters with disabilities become aware of the provisions made for their participation in the elections, including provision of assistive devices such as braille ballot guide for the blind, magnifying glasses for persons with albinism.

To track the effect of the Voter Education campaign (Able2Vote), TAF Africa called the participants 2 days to the election and a follow up call after the election to find out if they will vote and whether they voted. In Bayelsa, 52 PWDs affirmed that they will vote, but after the election 44 PWDs confirmed they voted. In Imo state, 45 PWDs said they will vote, but 62 confirmed they voted. In Kogi state, 61 PWDs affirmed that they will participate in the election, whereas only 45 PWDs could confirm that they voted. Out of the 270 PWDs reached with the voter education campaign in the 3 states, a total of 158 persons said they will vote, only 152 persons could confirm that they voted, while 94 and 97 participants could not be reached before and after the election respectively. Reasons given by the participants for not voting included security concerns, some were engaged as INEC ad-hoc staff or observers, lack of PVC etc

The table below shows the outcome of the calls before and after the elections.

ABLE2VOTE PARTICIPANTS TRACKER REPORT

STATE	Able2Vote Participants	PRE -ELECTION CALLS - Will you vote?				REMARK	POST -ELECTION CALLS - Did you Vote?				REMARKS	SUMMARY
		YES	NO	Not reachable	Total		YES	NO	Not reachable	Total		
Bayelsa	80	52	4	21	77	1 - no PVC, 1 - INEC ad -hoc staff, 1 - fear of insecurity, 1 - not sure	44	1	32	77	No reason	80 PWDs were reached with the Able2Vote campaign, when contacted few days to the election through phone call, 52 said they will vote, 4 said they will not vote, after the Election 44 persons confirmed that they voted.
Imo	110	45	2	61	110	The 2 PWDs who said no attributed their response to fear of insecurity	62	12	36	110	2 had no transport, 1 not on register, 1 is data clerk for TAF, 3 were ill, 1 was afraid of insecurity, 2 had no interest in voting.	110 PWDs were reached with the Able2Vote campaign. when contacted few days to the election through phone call, 45 said they will vote, 2 said they will not vote, after the Election 62 persons confirmed that they voted.
Kogi	80	61	7	12	80	1 is an observer, 1 has no transport, 2 are ad -hoc staff, 1 is out of town, 1 security concerns, 1 no pvc	46	5	29	80	2 INEC Ad -hoc Staff, 1 sick, 1 has no PVC	80 PWDs were reached with the Able2Vote campaign. when contacted few days to the election through phone call, 61 said they will vote, 7 said they will not vote, after the Election 46 persons confirmed that they voted.

IDP VOTER EDUCATION SENSITIZATION CAMPAIGN

TAF Africa recognized the significance of including IDPs in the electoral process. By conducting sensitization sessions for IDPs in Bayelsa state, the organization not only conveyed the importance of their participation but also wants to ensure that their voices are considered in the electoral decision-making process. This demonstrates TAF Africa's holistic approach to promoting inclusivity in elections. Over 100 IDPs who are of voting age were sensitized on their rights to participate in the Bayelsa Governorship off-cycle election.



Media Engagement

TAF Africa Engaged in strategic advocacy visits to major media organizations in the 3 states, facilitating discussions to sensitize journalists and media professionals on the nuances of disability-inclusive reporting.

Recognizing the influential role that media plays in shaping public opinion and disseminating information, TAF Africa proactively engaged with media organizations in the three states where the elections were held. They conducted advocacy visits to key media houses, including NTA Lokoja, Imo Broadcasting Corporation (IBC), Bayelsa State Broadcasting Corporation, and all the State chapters of the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ). The primary goal of these visits was to foster partnerships with media outlets and encourage disability-inclusive election reporting. By doing so, TAF Africa aimed to enhance media coverage of PWDs' participation in the electoral process and promote awareness of disability-related issues.

OBSERVER RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING



TAF Africa rigorously recruited and provided comprehensive training for 90 observers (30 in each state) with a nuanced understanding of electoral processes, inclusivity challenges, and the specific needs of PWDs. Simulation exercises and real-world scenarios into training modules to enhance observers' ability to identify and report on accessibility issues was integrated. Observers were trained on the use of the TAF Election Observer app to report on election day.

Upgrade of Observation Tools

Download our new app!

Scan me

Google Play

Download on the App Store

TAF Election Observer app is TAF Africa's initiative, a user-friendly platform designed for our trained election observers to provide real-time updates on the participation of persons with disabilities (PWDs) in an election. The app also has an EYE WITNESS feature that would allow the general public to report incidences related to persons with disabilities in their areas.

<http://bit.ly/taf-app>

TAF ELECTION OBSERVER APP

EU SDGN

IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

DAI, IGA, PLRC, KURAJI, IPG, CEEDESI, TAF Africa, SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES, DecHER

In a move to keep the PWD election dashboard updated and improved, TAF Africa revamped and deployed an upgraded version of TAF Africa's Election Observation Dashboard and the Election Observation App, incorporating additional features, capabilities, and enhanced data visualization for more comprehensive reporting.



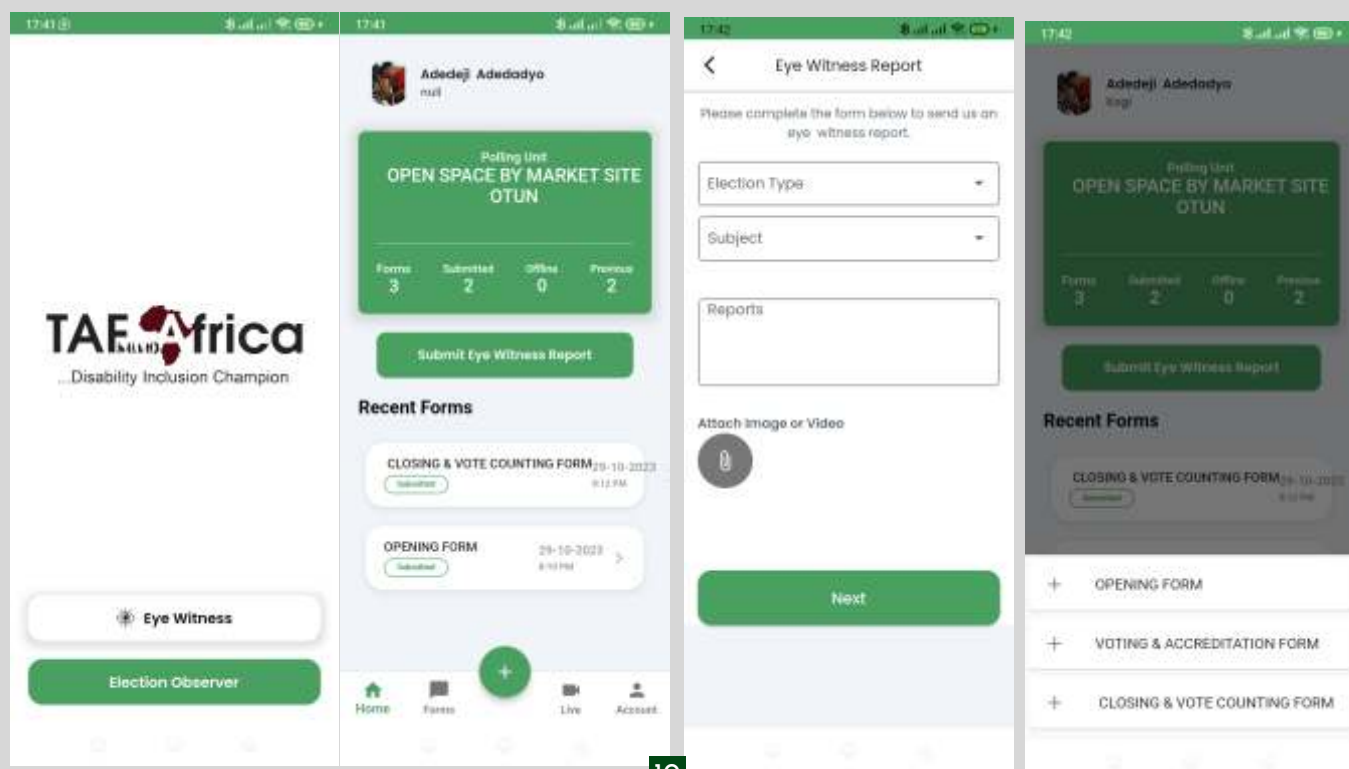
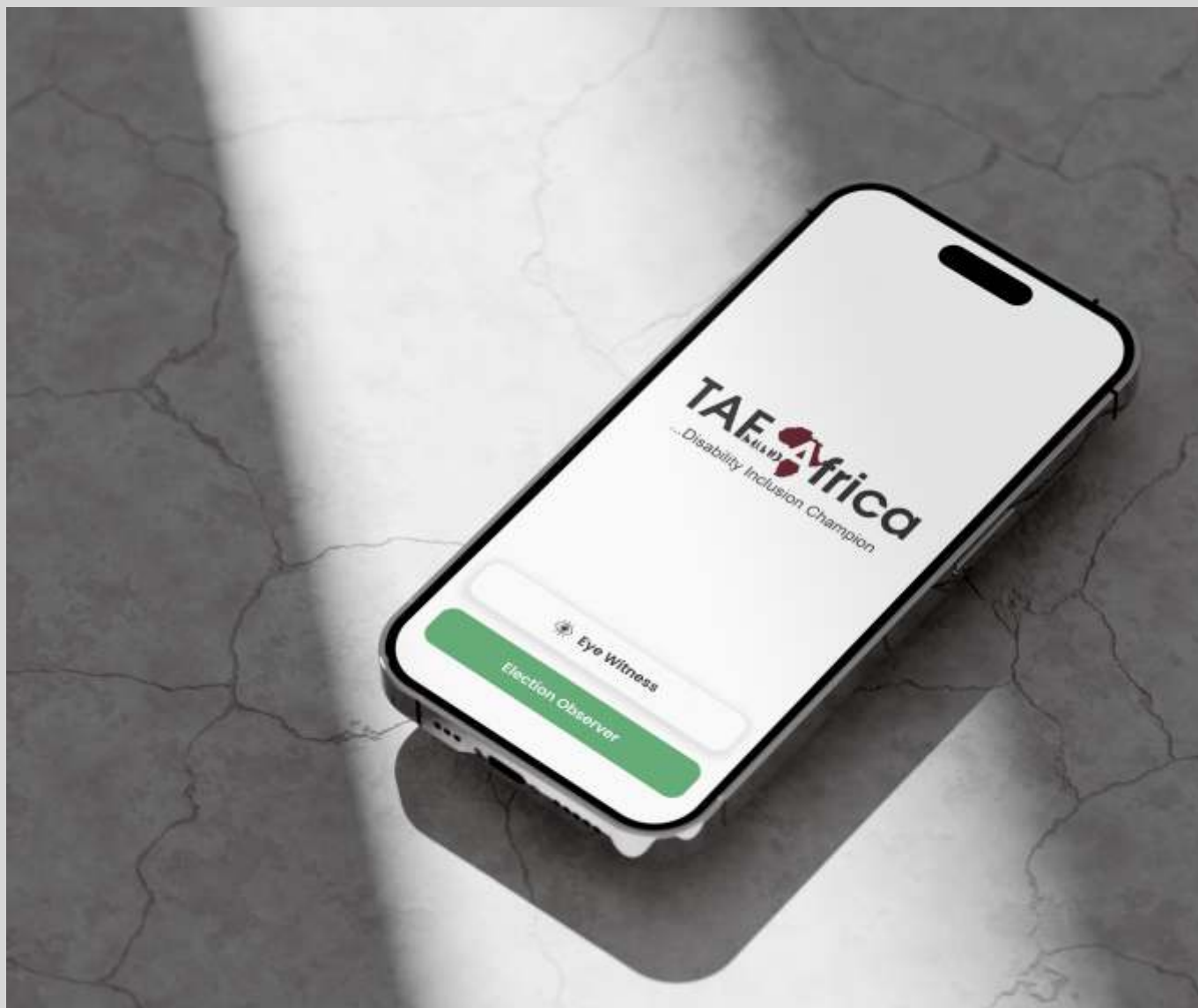
Establishment of TAF Africa's PWD Election Hub for the Off-Cycle Elections.

During the 2023 general elections, TAF Africa spearheaded the establishment of a PWD Election Hub during the 2023 general elections, marking a pioneering initiative in the country. This hub served as a centralized repository, playing a pivotal role in the collection of invaluable, real-time insights regarding the participation of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in the electoral process. The hub delivered essential data insights, encompassing PWDs' access to polling units, priority voting rights, the provision of assistive devices, PWD voter turnout and other PWD pertinent election-related information.

These data insights were made possible through the utilization of the TAF Election Hub Technology. Data was seamlessly transmitted by field observers via the Election Observer App, and this information was promptly displayed in real-time on the Election Monitoring Dashboard within the hub. Prominent guests such as the British and Canadian Ambassadors visited the TAF Africa PWD Election Hub, as well as other Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Media houses, among others.

In preparation for the 2023 Off-Cycle elections in Kogi, Imo and Bayelsa states, TAF Africa established a PWD election Hub in each off-cycle state, totalling three PWD election hubs. The activities of each hub commenced with a Pre-Election Press Conference which took place on November 10th, 2023. Following this, was an Election Day Press Conference on November 11th, with a Post-Election Press Conference on November 12th, 2023. Key Personnel at the HUB included the Hub Manager, Data Clerks/Analysts, Media, and other guests.

DASHBOARD AND APP IMAGES



OBSERVATION METHODOLOGY

TAF Africa strategically deployed 90 trained observers to targeted polling units with registered voters with disabilities identified through data-driven analysis. TAF Africa leveraged the upgraded Election Observation Dashboard and App to collect real-time data on the accessibility, functionality, and overall experiences of PWDs during the electoral process.

For each state 30 polling units have been selected based on the following:

- The presence of PWDs with emphasis on persons with hearing impairment, persons with visual impairment and persons with Albinism: In view of the specific assistive devices to be supplied by INEC
- Availability of Internet connection: TAF Africa's Election Observation is driven by technology which requires internet connectivity.
- Security concerns: Areas prone to insecurity are carefully avoided for the safety of the observers in the field.





DID YOU KNOW?

#BayelsaDecides2023
#ImoDecides2023
#KogiDecides2023

That you can report your experience and Election incidences at your polling unit most especially, incidences that affects the peaceful conduct, challenges and experience of persons with disabilities.

To report, kindly download our app from the Google play store or IOS App store and make use of the EYE WITNESS feature to get in touch with us



TAF ELECTION OBSERVER

(Formerly The Albino Foundation)



<http://bit.ly/taf-app>

In preparation for the 2023 General elections in Nigeria, TAF Africa launched a first of its kind Person with Disability (PWD) Dashboard which shows the distribution of all registered voters with disabilities across polling units nationwide, desegregated by type of disability. The dashboard also displayed all contesting PWDs during the elections, and an election monitoring dashboard which displayed data submitted by on-site observers through the TAF Observer App. Alongside this dashboard, TAF Africa also launched an Election Observer App designed for field observers tasked with monitoring elections from a PWD lens. A noteworthy feature of this app is the eyewitness reporting component, enabling members of the general public who download the app to submit firsthand accounts of the election day, specifically focusing on the participation of PWDs.

The implementation of this technology during the 2023 general elections yielded remarkable results, enabling the real-time collection of data from the field which was promptly transmitted to the TAF PWD Election Hub and focused on critical aspects of PWD participation, including the provision of assistive devices, priority voting, and polling units' accessibility, among other factors. Building on this success, TAF Africa made the strategic decision to enhance its technology to accommodate the off-cycle elections in Kogi, Imo, and Bayelsa States.

The PWD Dashboard now allows users to select the type of elections being conducted at a given time, such as off-cycle elections, general elections, among others. Furthermore, the system is designed to adapt to additional elections as circumstances require. Notably, TAF Africa has updated its logos for both the PWD Dashboard and the Election Observer App, as well as uploaded the logos of its donor and project partners on the platform. The PWD Dashboard can be accessed through the website electionhub.org.ng, while the corresponding mobile application is available for download from both the Google Play Store and Apple App Store. To locate the app, simply search for "TAF Election Observer" on either platform.

The arrival of INEC representatives and the start of the poll

Of the 90 voting stations that TAF's Observers witnessed in all three states, the majority (73%) indicated that INEC officials had arrived early than the 8.30 am deadline. In Bayelsa (58%) and Imo (55%) respectively, these percentages were lower. However, INEC personnel are sometimes running late at certain polling locations. This might be due to a few logistical issues.

AVAILABILITY OF ELECTION MATERIALS

Election materials were available at the polling units observed by TAF observers.

ACCESSIBILITY OF THE POLLING UNIT BY THE PWDS

The polling stations observed in the 3 states were accessible to PWDs, however, one polling unit was reported to be inaccessible.

PERCENTAGE OF PRIORITY VOTING GIVEN TO PWDS

80% of the polling units observed accorded priority voting rights to PWDs in Kogi state, 75% in Imo State and 67% in Bayelsa state.

DEPLOYMENT OF ASSISTIVE TOOLS

The majority of Kogi state observers (77%) reportedly used assistive devices such as braille ballot guides, EC30E PWD POSTERS, and magnifying glasses. In Bayelsa State, according to 67% of the observers, assistive tools were deployed, whilst in Imo State, 55% of the polling stations visited stated that assistive tools were deployed.





OBSERVATION FINDINGS

Increased PWDs Participation

The Able2Vote campaign witnessed commendable success, resulting in a visible increase in the participation of PWDs across all three states. Real-time feedback from observers highlighted positive sentiments among PWDs who felt more informed and empowered to exercise their voting rights.

Effective Provision of Assistive Devices

INEC's distribution of assistive devices, including braille ballot guides, magnifying glasses, and large font graphic posters, was consistently implemented, significantly improving the overall voting experience for PWDs.

Media Inclusivity

Media organizations demonstrated a commendable commitment to disability-inclusive reporting, with a notable shift towards human-interest stories that portrayed the diverse experiences of PWDs during the election. The collaboration with media outlets proved instrumental in dismantling stereotypes and fostering a more informed public discourse.

VOTING AND ACCREDITATION REPORTS

In the three states where elections were held, 90 observers were deployed to selected polling units with registered voters with disabilities. It was observed that 139 (one hundred and thirty-Nine) PWDs accredited in all the observed polling units, 42 in Kogi state , 39 in Imo, and 57 in Bayelsa.

A total of 136 people with disabilities were allowed to cast ballots in the polling stations observed.

ASSISTIVE DEVICES PROVIDED EFFECTIVELY USED

The majority of Bayelsa state observers (69%) reported that PWDs used assistive devices such as magnifying glasses, EC30E PWD POSTERS, and braille ballot guides properly, but in Kogi and Imo states, 37% and 31% of the observers respectively reported the use of assistive devices by PWDs.

PEACEFUL ENVIRONMENT

Our observers in Bayelsa State observed that the voting areas were largely peaceful. The majority of observers in Kogi state, which represent 92%, attested to the fact that Kogi State had a peaceful voting environment, while 19% of the observers confirmed that there was violence around some polling units in Imo State.

ALTERNATIVE METHODS OF VOTER'S ACCREDITATION

The majority of our observers in each of the three states (92%), observed that the primary source of accreditation was BVAS. which complies with the updated INEC election regulations.

Breakdown of PWDs who came to vote according to their states

PWDs	Bayelsa	IMO	Kogi	Total
Albinism	11	15	6	32
Hearing Impairment	12	1	4	17
Other Disability	14	22	5	31
Physically Impaired	22	35	18	75
Visually Impaired	11	14	10	35
Total	57	39	42	139

The above figures only covered the 90 polling stations observed in the 3 states.

AVERAGE ACCREDITATION USING BVAS

In all three states, the average wait time for voters to use their right to vote is zero to four minutes, which is a very short wait. This confirms that wait times have decreased as a result of the employment of modern technologies, such BVAS, during the elections.

DISPLAY OF FORM EC 60 E

Majority (96%) of the observer in Kogi state noticed that INEC displayed form EC 60 E for the voters in the polling units covered. The percentage was lower in Imo state with just 85% reporting it was displayed. It was much lower in Bayelsa state with just 61% of the observers reporting that form EC 60 E was displayed after the election.

COLLECTION OF PWDS INFORMATION USING FORM EC 40 H

Majority (90%) of the observers in Kogi state noticed that INEC Collected the information of PWDs using form EC 40 H for the polling units covered. The % was lower in Imo state with just 69% reporting that the information were collected in form EC 40 H. For Bayelsa, Just 50% was observed to have used the form EC 40 H.

INEC COUNTING OF VOTES OPENLY.

TAF observers noticed that counting of votes were done openly in 96% of the polling units in Kogi state. It was lower in Imo state and Bayelsa State with 85% and 71% respectively. Which implies that there was high transparency in the entire process which is Commendable.

INEC RECORDING OF RESULTS IN FORM EC 8A

Majority (96%) of the observers in Kogi state reported that INEC recorded the result after the polls closed and the votes counted, in form EC 8A in the 90 polling units covered. The % was lower in Imo state with just 85% of the observers reporting that election results were recorded in the Form. It was much lower in Bayelsa state with just 71% of the observers reporting that election results were recorded.

RESULT TRANSMITTED THROUGH BVAS

Report from observers revealed that results were transmitted using BVAS. 77% of the observers in Imo state reported that the result was transmitted, 75% in Bayelsa and in Kogi 68%.

RESULT UPLOADED TO IREV

It was revealed that results were uploaded to IREV at 69% of the polling units observed in Imo state, 67% polling units in Bayelsa state and in Kogi State it was 60%.

CLOSING OF POLLS

The report shows that voting ended between 2:00pm - 4:00pm in 77% of the polling stations in Imo state. In Kogi and Bayelsa states, voting ended between 2:00pm - 4:00pm in 68% and 58% of the polling stations respectively.

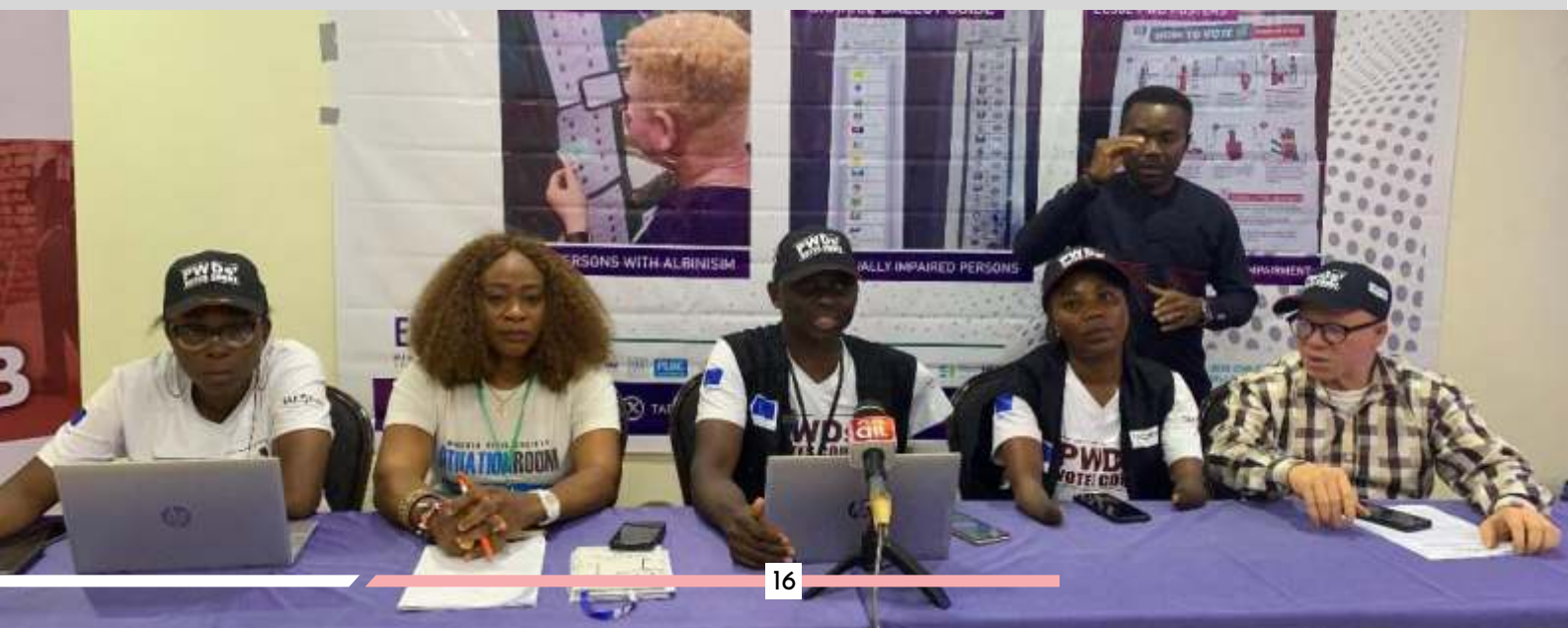
CONCLUSION

The 11th November, 2023 off-cycle governorship elections in Bayelsa, Imo and Kogi states shows increase in the participation of Persons with Disabilities and that can be attributed to the voter education campaign for persons with disabilities conducted by TAF Africa, prior to the Election. INEC has shown some improvement in its general conduct especially as it concerns timely arrival of its staff. Assistive devices were distributed across polling units in the three states, however, more needs to be done to ensure even and adequate distribution of assistive devices based on up to date data. There were security concerns which affected general voter turn out, especially in Imo state. A pocket of violent attacks were recorded in Imo state, which confirmed the concerns expressed by voters.



RECOMMENDATIONS

1. INEC should put modalities in place to ensure Continuous Voter Registration (CVR) that is truly continuous, to ensure an updated data of voters with disabilities at every election for an even and adequate distribution of assistive devices.
2. INEC should work on providing Sign Language Interpreters at Polling stations with registered voters with hearing impairment.
3. INEC should collaborate with organizations such as TAF Africa to continue and expand voter education campaigns, particularly for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs). The success in increased PWD participation in the recent elections highlights the importance of such initiatives.
4. Develop and disseminate educational materials in accessible formats, such as braille, audio, and easy-to-read materials, to ensure that information reaches all segments of the population.
5. INEC should conduct a thorough and up-to-date assessment of the distribution needs for assistive devices across polling units. This should be based on the most recent data on the prevalence and specific needs of PWDs in each area.
6. Strengthen coordination with relevant stakeholders to ensure an even and adequate distribution of assistive devices, addressing any identified gaps in accessibility.
7. Security agencies must intensify efforts to address security concerns, particularly in areas with a history of violence. Collaborate with local community leaders, and intelligence agencies to preemptively identify and mitigate potential security threats.
8. Train all security agents providing security during elections on disability inclusive election security and ensure a visible and active security presence at polling units to instill confidence in voters and deter any attempts at violence or disruption.
9. INEC should conduct a comprehensive post-election evaluation to identify areas of success and areas requiring improvement. Solicit feedback from voters, electoral officials, and other stakeholders to inform future planning and decision-making. Share the findings of the evaluation publicly and transparently, demonstrating a commitment to continuous improvement and accountability.
10. Foster closer collaboration between INEC, security agencies, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders involved in the electoral process. Regular meetings, joint training exercises, and information sharing can contribute to a more seamless and secure electoral environment.



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IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

