



RULE OF LAW AND EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVE  
also known as **PARTNERS** WEST AFRICA NIGERIA



NATIONAL  
ENDOWMENT  
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DEMOCRACY

SUPPORTING FREEDOM AROUND THE WORLD

# Gender-Based Pre-2023 Election Security Threat Assessment In Nigeria

**Editors:**

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# CONTENTS

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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### CHAPTER 1

#### THEMATIC ASSESSMENT OF FEDERAL LEVEL INSTITUTIONS AND AGENCIES

Maurice Ogbonnaya 1

---

### CHAPTER 2

#### GENDER-BASED PRE-2023 ELECTION SECURITY THREAT ASSESSMENT FOR SOUTH EAST GEO POLITICAL ZONE

Freedom Onuoha 5

---

### CHAPTER 3

#### GENDER-BASED PRE-2023 ELECTION SECURITY THREAT ASSESSMENT FOR SOUTH SOUTH GEO POLITICAL ZONE

Solomon Akpanufot 11

---

### CHAPTER 4

#### GENDER-BASED PRE-2023 ELECTION SECURITY THREAT ASSESSMENT FOR SOUTH WEST GEO POLITICAL ZONE

Tolu Ojeshina 16

---

### CHAPTER 5

#### GENDER-BASED PRE-2023 ELECTION SECURITY THREAT ASSESSMENT FOR NORTH CENTRAL GEO POLITICAL ZONE

Peter Sesan 21

---

### CHAPTER 6

#### GENDER-BASED PRE-2023 ELECTION SECURITY THREAT ASSESSMENT FOR NORTH EAST GEO POLITICAL ZONE

Chris Kwaja 27

---

### CHAPTER 7

#### GENDER-BASED PRE-2023 ELECTION SECURITY THREAT ASSESSMENT FOR NORTH WEST GEO POLITICAL ZONE

Chukwuma Okoli 30

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Rule of Law and Empowerment Initiative also known as Partners West Africa Nigeria (PWAN) has since inception been involved in the advocacy for gender mainstreaming across the criminal justice and governance sectors in Nigeria. Since 2018, PWAN has specifically been engaging in the discourse for increased participation and representation of women in governance. Over the years, PWAN has observed that targeted violence against women and insecurity are deliberate towards undermining their role and significance in the political process. This is among the greatest factors that impede their participation, as all other factors can be categorised as elements that contribute to the insecurity of women.

Given Nigeria's commitment to several international frameworks for the achievement of gender equality, the upcoming 2023 general elections provide another opportunity to focus on addressing the underlying issues and ensuring that women's voices are heard.

It is based on this that PWAN seeks to provide capacity building for security agencies on the effective management of security and integration of gender-sensitive protection strategies in the elections. The first step in achieving this is the production of this report which is a pre-election gender-based security threat assessment in Nigeria. It aims to highlight likely security threats undermining the participation of women in events leading up to the elections. This is with the view of promoting accountability among state and non-state actors in the electoral process before the elections.

The development of this report would not have been possible without the support of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). PWAN seeks to express its gratitude to the institution for its continuous support for democratic reforms in Nigeria. The six geopolitical zones of the country were assessed alongside a thematic assessment of threats to women who will be deployed for election duties. The report was made possible by a team of researchers, working in collaboration with PWAN. They are Freedom Onuoha, Solomon Akpanufot, Tolu Ojeshina, Chris Kwaja, Chukwuma Okoli, and Peter Sesan. We would also like to appreciate Maurice Ogbonnaya for the thematic assessment and for providing the expertise.

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The assessment is within the framework of a 1-year project, "Beyond Voting: Increasing Women's Participation in the Political Process – Phase 5" (2022-2023) implemented by PWAN with support from the National Endowment for Democracy NED.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Despite the experience of having six successive elected governments since the return to democracy in May 1999, Nigeria's democratic experience has not expanded opportunities for meaningful participation and representation of women in politics and governance. In the 2019 general elections, for instance, out of the 109 Senatorial seats, women occupied seven and out of the 360 seats in the House of Representatives, women occupied only 11 seats. This is against the background of women accounting for about 47.14 per cent (39,598,645 million) of the 84,004,084 million registered voters nationwide in 2019.

Violence and insecurity, among other factors, contribute to the low level of women's participation in politics and decision-making in Nigeria. Every election in Nigeria presents peculiar security threats and different scenarios, especially for women. In 2019, two political women leaders were killed and some female election officials, as well as security personnel, were raped. The 2023 elections may not be an exception. Highlighting the issues will draw attention to the urgent need to address the threats. This report assesses security threats that women in Nigeria are likely to face before the 2023 general elections. The assessment focused on general security threats that women face as voters, candidates, election observers, election officials, and election security officers, among others. Conducted across the six geopolitical zones, the assessment covered March to October 2022, which is the period that the political parties held their party primaries and subsequently flagged off their official political campaigns.

### Findings

The assessment found that threats such as political intimidation, harassment, abductions, kidnapping and ritual killings may impede women's participation in the 2023 election process as voters, candidates, election observers, election officials and security officers. Other threat factors identified include sexual violence, discrimination, alienation, attacks by armed groups and drug abuse. The assessment also found that violence against women, which tends to impede their participation in the election processes, has remained largely unpunished due to the absence of an Electoral Offences Commission or Tribunal.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were proffered:

- The Federal Government should overhaul Nigeria's security architecture to ensure the inclusion of more women both in the security institutions and in the process of designing and implementing security responses to current and emerging threats in the region.
- INEC should ensure the inclusion of more women in the Inter-Agency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES) at the federal, state and local government levels. It should also

develop and disseminate the implementation plan and framework for the revised INEC Gender Policy, which provides concrete guidelines for promoting effective and safe participation of women in the elections.

- National Assembly should enact legislation to establish an Electoral Offences Commission to deal with the rising incidence of election violence, especially against women.
- Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), including the media, should mount pressure on security agencies to be more accountable and gender-sensitive in security provisioning. They should also partner with development partners and security experts to design and deliver bespoke security awareness training packages for female candidates to prepare them to effectively anticipate, respond and manage the risk of violence.
- CSOs, political parties and security agencies should collaborate to ensure a proper gender disaggregation of election observers, election officials and election security personnel to be deployed on election duty.
- Political parties should ensure that their candidates abide by the provisions of the Political Parties Code of Conduct and the Electoral Act that prohibit violence.

# THEMATIC ASSESSMENT OF FEDERAL LEVEL INSTITUTIONS AND AGENCIES

**Maurice Ogbonnaya**

## **Context**

Shortly after the 2011 general elections, The Economics, in a feature piece asserted that results in Nigerian elections come in two separate columns. One records the votes cast at polling stations; the other, the number of people killed around the time of the election. The import of the assertion is that elections in Nigeria precipitate violence, which includes any act perpetrated in the course of political activities during the pre, during and post-election periods. The violence is indicated by acts of political thuggery, use of force to disrupt political meetings and voting at political stations, use of dangerous weapons to intimidate voters and other electoral actors, as well as the cause of bodily harm or injury to any person or persons connected with the electoral process. Election violence also includes violent clashes between political party supporters that take place at campaign events, attacks on or assassination of existing or aspiring politicians, and burning and destruction of political structures, and campaign posters, among others.

Generally, the Nigerian Civil Society Situation Room (NCSSR) has identified factors that give rise to and sustain election violence including.

- The wider insecurity across the country and the tendency for causal social forces to exploit political processes in pursuit of their interests, has continued to negatively impact the electoral process.
- The dependency of Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) on security agencies to provide security during elections could lead to such agencies being overstretched, particularly in a large country like Nigeria with 155,000 voting points and 9,000 collation centres: and
- Ignorance of electoral personnel about security issues like crowd management, dealing with suspicious persons, risk management, recognition of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) etc.
- Other factors also that may give rise to and sustain electoral violence are
- Irregularities from INEC, political parties, and citizens in the voting process such as operational and logistical issues
- Inadequate training of ad-hoc staff on the election process which sometimes may result in irregularities.

Sustained insecurity that precipitates violence hinders the effective participation of women in the electoral process as voters, candidates, election observers, election officials, and election security officers, among others. They undermine the legitimacy of electoral processes and the acceptability of outcomes. Thus, a major challenge to elections in Nigeria, has since the return to constitutional order in 1999, remained the conduct of violence-free elections. Against this background, security agencies and government institutions, collaborate with the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to deploy individuals, including women as election observers, election officials and election security officers to manage and monitor the process.

## Agencies and Institutions Deploying for Observation and Election Duties

In the 2023 general elections, security agencies, under the aegis of Inter-Agency Consultative Election Security (ICCES), will deploy their personnel on election security. Structurally, 19 agencies constitute the ICCES, as shown in Table 1:

**Table 1.1: Composition of the Inter-Agency Consultative Election Security**

Security Agencies			Non-Security Agencies
Intelligence Community	Armed Forces and Police	Para-Military	
Office of National Security Adviser (ONSA)	Nigeria Army	Nigeria Immigration Service	Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)
Department of State Service (DSS)	Nigerian Navy	Nigeria Correctional Service	Police Service Commission
National Intelligence Agency (NIA)	Nigeria Air force	National Drug Law Enforcement Agency	Ministry of Interior
	Nigeria Police Force (NPF)	Nigeria Customs Service	Ministry of Police Affairs
		Federal Road Safety Corps	National Youth Service Corps (NYSC)
		Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC)	
		Federal Fire Service	

Source: Author's Compilation

According to the NCSSR, the general essence of the ICCES is to review past elections, towards lessons learnt, discuss forthcoming elections, to prepare a general plan for all the security challenges anticipated at such elections. All security issues are deliberated upon and strategies for combating security challenges are formulated towards having a violence-free election. Security agencies would before each election, provide the ICCES with a security assessment, the location of hot spots, as well as steps taken to deal with identified hotspots. Furthermore, each security agency provides an operational plan, which is jointly reviewed by ICCES and sometimes amended to ensure the best results are achieved.

Similarly, other government institutions that will deploy their personnel as election observers in the 2023 general elections may include:

- National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS), Kuru
- National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS), National Assembly, Abuja
- Nigerian Institute for International Affairs (NIIA), Lagos
- Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR), Abuja

Government institutions deploy election observers before, during and after the elections to collect data on a range of issues of interest to them, including the deployment and conduct of election security officials, the conduct of political parties and their candidates and agents, the conduct of INEC and its officials, as well as the extent to which the processes comply with regulatory standards and guiding principles of elections. On the other hand, security agencies deploy their personnel to ensure that political party agents, candidates, voters, election observers and officials conduct themselves within the confines of the provisions of the legal frameworks.

### **Threats to Women Deployed as Election Observers, Election Officials and Election Security Officials**

While the percentage of women likely to be deployed as election observers, election officials and election security officials by the agencies and institutions listed above, compared to their male counterparts, may not be ascertained, however, the women that would be deployed may face the following threats:

#### ***Fear of Violence***

Women as election observers are always afraid of the outbreak of violence while in the field. Election observation, as a respondent who spoke to Partners West Africa Nigeria (PWAN) on condition of anonymity observed, is a male-dominated process.

The same applies to women who serve as election officials and security personnel on election security duty. In February 2019, a female INEC ad-hoc staff in Rivers State was hit by a "stray bullet" during the Presidential and Parliamentary Election. Similarly, a female Police Officer and two others were killed in violence that ensued during the by-election for Ekiti East Constituency 1 in the State House of Assembly in March 2021.

the Public campaigns by political parties towards the 2023 elections kicked off on 28 September 2022, and so far, the political environment is becoming heated with violence, hate speeches, indicting comments, cyberbullying, etc. since the beginning of the campaigns, there have been several attacks on campaigners and INEC structures in some states. This has brought about the fear of violence ahead of the elections and may affect the participation of election officials deployed for the elections.



### ***Excessive Presence of Security Agencies***

Other female election observers feel threatened by the presence of security personnel during elections. Some noted that their presence creates fear of looming violence. This situation may be due to general mistrust of security officials. As the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) noted on the 2020 Ondo State gubernatorial election, "law enforcement officers, election officials ... tended to look the other way in the face of glaring acts of impunity, such as vote buying and related shades of electoral malfeasance near or at polling sites on Election Day." In 2019, a local election observer was shot dead in Enugu State by a Police Officer during the gubernatorial election. Such incidence tends to create fear in female election observers.

The implication of the foregoing is that such developments as highlighted above tend to dissuade women from participating in election processes either as observers, election officials or election security officials. Most fundamentally, violence against women, which tends to impede their participation in the election processes, has remained largely unpunished due to the absence of an Electoral Offences Commission or Tribunal. Implicitly, therefore, it is safe to state, based on previous experiences that the number of women likely to be deployed as election observers, election officials and election security officials by security agencies and other government institutions will be less than that of their male counterparts.

### **Recommendations**

Considering the findings, the following recommendations were proffered:

- Security agencies should investigate pre-election violence, especially gender-based ones, and bring perpetrators to book.
- Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), political parties and security agencies should collaborate to ensure a proper gender disaggregation of election observers, election officials and election security personnel to be deployed on election duty.
- The National Assembly should enact legislation to establish an Electoral Offences Commission to deal with the rising incidence of election violence, especially against women.

## CHAPTER 2

### **GENDER-BASED PRE-2023 ELECTION SECURITY THREAT ASSESSMENT FOR SOUTH EAST GEO POLITICAL ZONE**

#### **Freedom Onuoha**

The Southeast zone is made up of five States: Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo. According to the 2006 census, the population of the region is 16,395,555. The zone, however, has the highest population density compared to other zones in Nigeria and is predominantly inhabited by the Igbo-speaking tribe. Since independence, the zone has witnessed various episodes of large-scale violence and security crisis. The Nigerian Civil War remains the most devastating outbreak of large-scale violence in the history of the zone. In the 1990s, however, the region experienced a high level of insecurity occasioned by activities of armed robbers and violent criminal gangs that terrorised the commercial cities of Aba, Owerri and Onitsha. The situation led to the establishment of various vigilante groups, many of which have survived or evolved. The succeeding years saw the return to relative peace in the zone until the rise of separatist groups following the return to democracy in 1999. The agitation for a sovereign State of Biafra in the zone further intensified since 2015. The situation further degenerated with the September 2017 proscription of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), as a terrorist organisation.

The region has recently become an epicentre of security crises, evidenced by a spike in assassinations, kidnapping for ransom (K4R), drug abuse, rape, cultism, violent separatist agitations, farmer-herder clashes, and more recently violence by a group commonly referred to as "Unknown Gunmen" (UGM). In response to insecurity, state governors in the Southeast zone floated a regional security framework, the Ebubeagu. However, loosely structured and poorly regulated elements of the Ebubeagu, largely operative in Ebonyi and Imo States, have been accused of engaging in incessant harassment, intimidation and extra-judicial killings.

#### **Situation Analysis of Women and 2023 General Elections in the Southeast**

As of October 2022, the INEC is yet to merge the old voters register with the new registration it conducted in 2022 to produce a comprehensive breakdown of registrants in terms of state and gender. However, a nationwide breakdown of the newly registered 9,518,188 voters by gender shows that 50.82% (4,836,915) were female and 49.18% (4,681,273) were male. Although the completed registration had a state-by-state breakdown, it did not further break down the state registrants by sex. The breakdown for the Southeast is as follows: Abia (196,683), Anambra (217,636), Ebonyi (161,447), Enugu (182,304) and Imo (172, 538).

For the 2023 general elections, women's candidature in the Southeast zone is unimpressive, as indicated by the outcome of party primaries by political parties to elect their flagbearers for the 2023 general elections. For the Presidential elections, men swamp women by a 17:1 ratio; and there is no female candidate for the Vice President. The results of the primaries show an insignificant number of

women as political candidates in the Southeast region. Table 1 shows some key elective positions and the number of contestants about gender in the region. It reveals the very insignificant number of female candidates contesting with male candidates for the 190 available positions.

**Table 2.1: Final List of Candidates for National and State Elections in 2023: Southeast Zone**

Office	Seat Available	Contestants/Candidature by Gender	
		Male	Female
Senate	15	146	16
House of Representative	43	367	61
Governor*	5	44	4
Deputy Governor*	5	36	12
State House of Assembly	126	1289	236
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>1882</b>	<b>329</b>

Source: Author's compilation from the Final List of Candidates for National and State Elections in 2023 released by the INEC (2022).

\*The available position for the Governor and Deputy Governor is 3 respectively, due to off-cycle elections in Anambra and Imo States

In Abia State, out of the 18 contestants for the Governorship seat, only two are women: Dr. Ngozika Johnson Ogbunike of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and Barr. Lancaster-Okoro Nnennaya Ngwamma of the People's Redemption Party. Of the 17 and 12 gubernatorial contestants in Enugu and Ebonyi States, respectively, there is only one woman in each state. There is an equally notable gender disparity regarding contestants for the 129 available seats in the State House of Assemblies in the region (see Appendix 1). The implication is that the chances of having more women occupy key elective positions in the region are very slim. Regarding the number of women likely to be deployed as election observers, election officials, and election security officials in the zone, it is difficult to arrive at any definite figure. However, it is safe to project that the number of women deployed in these capacities, especially as election security officials, may be small given that Nigeria's security sector is male-dominated.

### **Mapping Security Threats to Women's Participation in the Southeast**

In the build-up to the 2023 general elections, women in the southeast region are likely to face a plethora of security threats. These existing and emerging security threats, which have the potential of hampering or retarding women's participation in the forthcoming elections, include direct/physical threats (hard drugs consumption, operations of criminal groups known as unknown gunmen, rape, verbal abuse, etc.), structural threats (discrimination, alienation, etc.), and psychological threats (hate speech, false accusation, blackmail, etc.).

### ***Drug Abuse***

Intake of hard drugs by females, especially young girls and ladies in the region is a major security threat to women as voters in the forthcoming 2023 election. Several young ladies in the region are exposed to the intake of hard drugs like cocaine, heroin and Methamphetamine, popularly called "Mkpuru mmiri". There is a high tendency that more ladies will be exposed to these dangerous drugs before election time. The consumption of these drugs has implications for the physical and mental health of women in the region and could hamper their participation in the election. It is reported that some young persons, including young girls and ladies, have gone mad on account of the abuse of such drugs. This will likely limit their effective participation in political activities before the 2023 general elections.

### ***Attacks by Armed Groups***

Another threat to women's participation as voters, candidates, election observers, election officials and election security officials before the 2023 general elections in the zone is attacks by a criminal group popularly known as "unknown gunmen". In the last two years, the group has terrorized the zone, leading to heightened tension, deaths and destruction of property. Between January and May 2022, 287 people died due to insecurity in the zone. The majority of these deaths resulted from attacks by UGM. For instance, during the Continuous Voter Registration (CVR) exercise at Community Primary School Umuopu in Umuozzi Ward 19 of Igboeze North Local Government Area (LGA) of Enugu State, UGM attacked and dispersed registrants and registration officials. In the ensuing stampede, one of the female staff of the LGA sustained injuries. A similar incident also happened at a voter registration centre at Nkwo Ihitte Polling Unit 004 in Amakohia Ward (RA 02) of Ihitte-Uboma LGA of Imo State, where gunmen attacked a female INEC official and other people at the registration centre. They seized materials used for the CVR exercise, disrupted the registration process and forced people to lie on the ground. Some of the victims, including women, were flogged with machetes. The menace of UGM remains a big security threat in the region and women will be very vulnerable to them as campaigns and political activities intensify before the 2023 general elections.

### ***Political Intimidation/Harassment***

Intimidation and harassment of women by politicians or those in power is a major threat to women's participation in politics in the zone. In Ebonyi State, for instance, the President of Umuada (Home and Diaspora) was attacked by the Ebubeagu operatives alongside other women on August 20, 2022, while they were meeting at the People's Club, Abakiliki, for allegedly holding the meeting. Some women were arrested, taken to the government house and beaten up. More such incidents are expected to occur across the zone in the build-up to the 2023 general elections.

### ***Discrimination/Alienation***

Discrimination and alienation through stereotyping, blackmail and bullying are some of the threats that may retard women's participation during the pre-2023 election phase in the region. Women who

are involved in ongoing political campaigns across the region face heightened exposure to various kinds of violence like bullying, verbal abuse, blackmail, and sexual harassment. Regarding politics of insult, for instance, women in the southeast have been faced with the casting of aspersions on female politicians and they will still face that before the 2023 elections. Male politicians in the region are likely to berate women for engaging in politics. Sometimes, women are verbally abused at party meetings and accused of being promiscuous and it is most times believed that the reason they attend political party gatherings is to 'look for rich men.' Single women are particularly vulnerable to abuse.

### ***Sexual Violence***

Rape is a notable security threat to women as voters, candidates, election observers, election officials and election security officials in Nigeria, including in the southeast zone. According to Amnesty International, despite the Nigerian authorities' declaration of a "state of emergency" on sexual and gender-based violence, rape persists at crisis levels with most survivors denied justice, rapists avoiding prosecution, and hundreds of cases of rape going unreported due to pervasive corruption, stigma and victim blaming. In the Southeast zone, cases of rape cases have been reported in recent times. For instance, on May 2, 2022, a young lady was viciously raped by two men in Enugu Ezike in Igboeze North LGA of Enugu State. Similarly, in Nkwelle Awkuzu Anambra State, the Police in July 2022 arrested a 30-year-old man for raping a 75-year-old woman. There are also several cases of rape recorded in other states of the zone, especially those masterminded by Fulani herdsmen. Women in the region who have fallen victim to rape may not be in the right frame of mind to participate optimally in the 2023 election, especially as regards voting.

### ***Ritual Killings***

Ritual killing is another security threat that may undermine the participation of women as voters, candidates, election observers and election officials in the zone. Some girls and women in the region have lost their lives to ritualists. For instance, on March 8, 2022, five female students between 15 and 19 years, of Akwakuma Girls Secondary School, went missing without a trace. A Commander of the Eastern Security Network (ESN), the militia wing of IPOB, Emeoyiri Benjamin, allegedly confessed to how his gang fortified themselves with charms prepared with the heads of 10 young girls abducted in Imo State. Similarly, politicians are known to engage in ritual killings in a bid for self-protection and to enhance their chances of emerging victorious in the polls. Some suspects and witch doctors apprehended in connection with ritual killings in the past have mentioned politicians, government officials and wealthy businessmen as their sponsors. The threat will likely increase as the elections draw nearer. Conceivably, young girls and women may cut down on their level of political engagements such as community mobilisation or campaigns that could expose them to ritualists in the process.

### ***Abductions/Kidnapping***

In the Southeast zone, cases of K4R within the period were in this order: Abia state (8 incidents, 17 victims and 2 casualties), Anambra state (15 incidents, 24 victims 22 casualties), Ebonyi state (2 incidents, 1 victim and 1 casualty), Enugu state (3 incidents, 12 victims and 2 casualties) and Imo state (14 incidents, 19 victims and 9 casualties). As campaigns for the 2023 elections intensify, women will likely fall victim to K4R within towns and along major roads in the zone. The prime target in this regard will likely be women who are participating as candidates and election officials.

### **Recommendations**

The rising spate of security threats to women in the zone has enormous implications for their overall participation in the pre-election activities in the region. Security threats compromise women's capacity to participate in public life in general and politics in particular. As a result of the worsening security situation, the zone is likely to record a low level of women participation as voters, candidates, grassroots mobilisers and campaigners in the 2023 general elections. A precedent exists already. During the campaigns for the November 2021 gubernatorial election, Anambra State recorded 52 cases of violence against women in politics. The drop in women's participation in the gubernatorial election was attributed to violence against women in the form of threats, hate speech, assault, blackmail, intimidation, attempted murder, and psychological violence. Regarding voting in the 2023 elections, the Southeast zone is likely to witness reduced participation of women as voters due to fear of harm, intimidation and death. Women election officials, campaigners and election observers will as well be exposed to security threats like assassination, abduction/kidnapping, sexual violence, intimidation and threats, amongst others.

Pieces of evidence in the zone indicate that both state and non-state actors were sources of threat to women's participation in politics. Given the above findings, the following actionable recommendations are proffered:

- The Federal Government should overhaul Nigeria's security architecture to ensure the inclusion of more women both in the security institutions and in the process of designing and implementing security responses to current and emerging threats in the region.
- INEC should ensure the inclusion of more women in the Inter-Agency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES) at the federal, state and local government levels.
- State Government in the Southeast Zone should contribute to the capacitation of security agencies, especially the police, through equipment programming, adequate training and proper equipping of security officers, to ensure prompt response to security threats in the region, especially against women.
- Traditional authorities in the region should involve more women in decision-making processes and community-level peacebuilding processes.

- CSOs, including the media, should mount pressure on security agencies to be more accountable and gender-sensitive in security provisioning. They should also partner with development partners and security experts to design and deliver bespoke security awareness training packages for female candidates to prepare them to effectively anticipate, respond and manage the risk of violence.

### Appendix 2.1: Final List of Candidates for National and State Elections in 2023 concerning the Southeast Zone

Off Southeast Elections		Available Seat (Southeast)	No. of Male Candidates	No. of Female Candidates
President		1	17	1
Vice President		1	18	0
Senate	Abia	3	30	3
	Anambra	3	22	6
	Ebonyi	3	28	1
	Enugu	3	25	4
	Imo	3	41	2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>16</b>
House of Representative	Abia	8	69	12
	Anambra	11	82	15
	Ebonyi	6	43	8
	Enugu	8	65	7
	Imo	10	108	19
	<b>Total</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>367</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>State Elections</b>				
Governor	Abia	1	16	2
	Anambra	1	0	0
	Ebonyi	1	12	1
	Enugu	1	16	1
	Imo	1	0	0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>4</b>
Deputy Governor	Abia	1	14	4
	Anambra	1	0	0
	Ebonyi	1	11	2
	Enugu	1	11	6
	Imo	1	0	0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>12</b>
State House of Assembly	Abia	24	280	25
	Anambra	30	253	53
	Ebonyi	24	210	36
	Enugu	24	228	60
	Imo	27	318	65
	<b>Total</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>1289</b>	<b>239</b>

Source: Author's compilation from the Final List of Candidates for National and State Elections in 2023 released by the INEC (2022).

## CHAPTER 3

### **GENDER-BASED PRE-2023 ELECTION SECURITY THREAT ASSESSMENT FOR SOUTH SOUTH GEO POLITICAL ZONE**

#### **Solomon Akpanufot**

There are six states in the South-south zone: Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo and Rivers. It has a population of about 26 million people and encloses much of Nigeria's Niger Delta. Conflict in the zone is largely induced by the unwillingness of foreign oil corporations and successive Nigerian governments to sustainably address the concerns of the people as regards the impact of oil exploration and exploitation in the region. Many ethnic groups within the region feel exploited, marginalized, and abandoned by the government and oil firms. This feeling resulted in ethnic and political unrest which have remained a recurring decimal in the region despite the return to democratic governance. Thus, it is important to state that the struggle for resource control, environmental justice, and sustainable development has fuelled violence and birthed ethnic militia groups in the region. Since 1994, the crisis of insecurity in the region has been manifesting mostly in the form of piracy and kidnappings, dovetailing into electoral violence from 1999.

Elections in the South-South zone are high stakes, often characterised by violence and increased tension, with far-reaching implications for women. Violence during elections takes varied dimensions, namely, sexual, physical, psychological, threats and coercion. In the zone, this is manifest in the form of "shootings in elections, the resurgence of armed gangs, carting away of ballot boxes, arms race in the electoral process, gangsters, thuggery and hooliganism".

In terms of political participation, women in the zone are largely marginalized. This has led to political underrepresentation since 1999. The political process, largely dominated by men, manipulates resources to the exclusion of women. Recently, the zone has been devastated by floods which displaced hundreds of households and brought untold hardship to the people. As a result, most women and girls were moved to IDP camps where they are subjected to hunger and starvation and experienced all manner of violence including rape. Again, sporadic violence has brought about increased tension and States insecurity in some States in the zone. On 1 November 2022, an unidentified group killed an estimated 10 people in Akoko Edo, Edo State. In an election-related event, 120 people have been killed and kidnapped in election violence in the zone between 2014 to 2022. an unidentified group killed an estimated 10 occurred in Akwa Ibom, 20 in Bayelsa, 11 in Cross River, 20 in Delta, 3 in Edo, and 56 in Rivers States.

Election violence in the zone is mostly perpetrated by men, which often works against women. Whether it is arson, assassinations, thuggery, snatching of ballot boxes, coercion, forceful disruption of the electoral process with the use of arms at the polling station, kidnapping, hate speech-induced crises, shooting, intimidation of voters, vandalization of electoral materials, threats to rape female electoral officials or any other form of physical assault, women bear the brunt. Attack on INEC facilities is a recent dimension of electoral violence. In the south-south geo-political zone, five such attacks have been recorded in Akwa Ibom State while four occurred in Cross River State. Sources of threat to



election security in the South-South region are militant/cult groups, Political parties, politicians, candidates, political thugs, disorderly party rallies, processions, and campaigns. Other likely causative factors are. Before every election period in the region under review, militant groups often perfect plans to deploy their members in polling units across the zones. The presence of militant groups threatens the deployment of women as election observers, officials, or election security officials because it is assumed that men are physically stronger and capable of resisting threats.

### **Threats to Participation of Women in Election in the South-South Zone**

Threats to women's participation and fulfilment of their electoral rights are multi-faceted. However, some of the threats include:

#### ***Violence and Insecurity***

The region is most likely to experience widespread violence and insecurity emanating from inter and intraparty clashes. In almost all the South-South states, opposition parties are gearing up vehemently to unseat the ruling parties in power. In some cases, members of the rising opposition were inner caucus members of the government in power. They have amassed humongous wealth and are ready to match the government in power money for money and cash for cash. The level of boldness and readiness to unleash violence as brazenly displayed by opposition parties in Akwa Ibom, Cross River, and Delta States, for example, has never been experienced before now. Where money, court cases, and political sagacity cannot give the required results, politicians may resort to politically motivated killings, assassinations, ritual killings, social unrest, and perverse shootings. Cult-related violence will be utilized as political weapons against opponents. Though these are not new to the region, it is however expedient to note that where such occurrences become the order of the day, women are at the receiving end: the cultists will rape and murder women, ritualists will look for women body parts for sacrifice, women voters/candidates/election observers, etc will avoid campaign or election venues for fear of safety. Put differently, most women will refuse to participate in the 2023 election whether as contestants, voters, electoral administrators, or election observers.

Generally, electoral violence adversely impacts women more than men. When the political system is characterized by violence, thuggery, inter and intra-cult rivalries, uncertainty, fear, harassment, and marginalization of women in the electoral process, the quest for societal growth and development becomes an exercise in futility. Women's contribution to the electoral process is critical to the institutionalization of a government that will engender growth and development within the region. Where they are threatened to forgo this fundamental process of nation-building, growth, and development, the region will continue to witness a rise in militancy, cultism, drug abuse, crime, and other social vices. If the region must progress in line with the 21-century reality, our women must not be harassed out of the electoral process.

### ***Disenfranchisement and Uneven Contest***

Even before the election proper, the foundation has been laid across the region to ensure that women are not given equal opportunity to vote and be voted for. Political parties especially the 3 majors (APC, PDP, and LP) have already schemed out the women from holding any elected position in the region using the instrumentality of their political platforms. This is evident in the recently released INEC's list of candidates for Governorship, State Houses of Assembly as well as National Assembly elections. As could be seen in tables 1 and 2 below, women are left with little or no choice but to vote for men in the forthcoming elections. When a woman is featured as a candidate, she is placed in a political party that is largely unknown and lacks the financial and political weight to withstand male hegemony and compete favourably with frontline political parties.

**Table 3.1: Number and Percentage of Male And Female Candidates in 2023 National Assembly Elections**

Office	State	No of Male Candidates	No of Female Candidates	Total	%Male	%Female
Senate	Akwa Ibom	33	8	41	80.5	19.5
	Bayelsa	27	3	30	90.0	10.0
	Cross River	27	2	29	93.1	6.9
	Delta	37	2	39	94.9	5.1
	Edo	28	2	30	93.3	6.7
	Rivers	33	5	38	86.8	13.2
House of Representatives	Akwa Ibom	108	11	119	90.8	9.2
	Bayelsa	47	8	55	85.5	14.5
	Cross River	62	10	72	86.1	13.9
	Delta	80	13	93	86.0	14.0
	Edo	62	8	70	88.6	11.4
	Rivers	110	18	128	85.9	14.1

Source: Author's compilation from INEC's Final List of Candidates for National Assembly elections 2023.

The Table indicates that 88% of candidates contesting for the national assembly elections in 2023 in the South-South geo-political zone are males while only 12% are female. Disaggregated data shows that for the house of representatives, women constitute just 11% of the total contestants while the percentage of women contesting for the senate seats in the region is 13%.

Comparatively, Akwa Ibom State has more women (19.5%) contesting for the senate seats than any other state in the region while Bayelsa State has the highest percentage of women contesting for the House of Representatives seats. The table also depicts that the 2023 elections will be a male-dominated contest. The situation is not different from that of the Governorship contest as shown in table 2 below. What is more pathetic is that none of the 3 frontline political parties (APC, PDP, and LP) features female candidates.

**Table 3.2: Number and Percentage of Male and Female Candidates in 2023 Governorship Elections**

Office	State	No of Male Candidates	No of Female Candidates	Total	%Male	%Female
Governorship	Akwa Ibom	15	2	17	88.2	11.8
	Bayelsa	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
	Cross River	10	1	11	90.9	9.1
	Delta	15	2	17	88.2	11.8
	Edo	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
	Rivers	16	1	17	94.1	5.9

**Source:** Author's compilation from INEC's Final List of Candidates for National Assembly elections 2023.

### **Banning of Political Rallies in Public Places**

One strategy the male-dominated government of the region is using to sustain its hegemony in the forth-coming elections is to block access to campaign venues for opposition parties. It is in the record that Akwa Ibom State has two (2) female governorship candidates, Cross River has one (1) Delta has two (2) while Rivers has one (1), which are in opposition parties. Recently, Nyesom Wike, Governor of Rivers State, signed Executive Order 21 directing political parties to pay the sum of five million Naira (N5m) to the State Government for security before getting approval to use public schools for political campaigns. Female candidates may not afford such an amount for just a venue and a candidate or political party other than PDP attempts to disobey that Executive Order will meet with brute force from the government.

Similar situations occur across the zone. For example, the Akwa Ibom State Government recently denied YPP and its governorship candidate access to public venues for political campaigns/rallies, including access to a church building in Onna Local Government Area for a thanksgiving service. According to the spokesman of the party "we requested to use Ibom Hall, we were denied, we requested to use Ikot Ekpene Stadium, we were also denied. As I speak to you, the Apostolic Church

in Onna has just suspended a Pastor for hosting YPP. So, we are facing serious persecution, but we are not deterred". This impedes women's participation because female candidates from opposition parties.

### **Recommendations**

To mitigate threats to women's participation in the election, the following recommendations are proffered:

- Politicians within the region must internalize political ethics and be guided by it in all that they do. There should be adequate legal education to curtail violence against women. Political parties must liaise with INEC, NOA, NGOs, and other relevant stakeholders to sensitize the people, especially those in rural areas, on the democratic procedure. To do this more effectively,
- INEC must rise to play a leading role. Messages to this effect must be cascaded to the people at the community level using various means of communication including the use of local languages.
- INEC, political parties, candidates, government and other actors must comply strictly with the Electoral Law, 2022. Participation in the electoral process whether as a candidate, voter, observer, security personnel or whatever must be guided by the provision of the relevant laws guiding Nigeria's electoral process.
- Professionalism and morality must also be the watchword by media professionals covering electoral processes before, during, and after the elections. The media must be professional and above-board in its electoral reportage. The consideration of morality by media professionals in electoral reportage is very important. The press must completely jettison the publication of hate speeches, misinformation and disinformation

## CHAPTER 4

### GENDER-BASED PRE-2023 ELECTION SECURITY THREAT ASSESSMENT FOR SOUTH WEST GEO POLITICAL ZONE

Tolu Ojeshina

The Southwest region is made up of six states: Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, and Oyo states primarily inhabited by the Yoruba ethnic group. According to the 2006 population census, the population of the region is 27,722,432; Lagos is the economic hub of the country, and most populous with a population of 9,113,605, and Ibadan, the capital city of Oyo state, is the country's largest city by geographical area.

**Table 4.1 - Population of States in Southwest Nigeria based on the 2006 census**

State	Male	Female	Total
Ekiti	1,215,487	1,183,470	2,398,957
Lagos	4,719,125	4,394,480	9,113,605
Ogun	1,864,907	1,886,233	3,751,140
Ondo	1,745,057	1,715,820	3,460,877
Osun	1,734,149	1,682,810	3,416,959
Oyo	2,802,432	2,778,462	5,580,894

Source: National Population Commission

The security of the region has been impacted by robbery attacks, cultist activities, ritual killings, and kidnappings over the years. Lagos state has been known to be primarily affected by violence from cult groups. Conflicts involving farmers and herders have also increased since 2014 - Two people were reportedly killed and six injured in an attack linked to herdsmen in Ekiti state in 2016. In 2018, the Director of the Department of State Services (DSS) in Ondo State spoke of incessant killings and destruction of farmlands by herdsmen in several farming communities in the State.

The death of no fewer than 11 people was also recorded at Igangan town, in Oyo State in June 2021. Also in 2021, five people lost their lives while many sustained injuries in clashes that happened in Imeko, Afon local government area (LGA) of Ogun State.

Based on the security challenges, the Southwest Governors forum in 2020 established the security th network known as "Operation Amotekun" to strengthen security in the region. On June 5 , 2022, unknown gunmen invaded St. Francis Catholic Church, Owo, Ondo state opening fire on the congregation, and detonating explosives as worshippers scampered for safety. According to reports, the total casualty figures from the attack was 127, including 40 dead. This attack changed the dynamic of the security situation in the region, with many suggesting that the attack was perpetuated by the terrorist group Islamic State West African Province (ISWAP).

For the most part, the growing violence has strained social cohesion and threatened regional security and stability leading to heightened calls for secession and the creation of the Yoruba nation. A group called the Yoruba Self-Determined Movement (YSDM) has also recently written to President Muhammadu Buhari, seeking a "peaceful break away" of Yorubas from Nigeria.

### **Situation Analysis of Women and 2023 General Elections in the Southwest Region**

Analysis of the recently concluded off-cycle elections in the Southwest region, specifically in Osun state revealed an increased level of gender parity in the deployment of electoral officials by the commission. The Gender and Election Watch (GEW) of the Nigerian Women Trust Fund (NWTF) commended the commission on its almost equal representation of young women as electoral officials – 48% to men's 52%. FIDA Nigeria also reported that a larger percentage of the polling units visited - about 76% - had more than 2 female electoral officials.

The Nigeria Police Force, as the primary security institution responsible for election security management, is also seen to be taking steps towards fulfilling its mandate. The Inspector General of Police (IGP) recently disclosed that no fewer than 10,000 newly recruited police officers will be deployed to their localities before the conduct of the 2023 general elections. The NPF is also upskilling over 400 officers in election security management in collaboration in partnership with sister agencies. Considering that the NPF's gender policy (although outdated), aims to reduce the gender gap within the force, it may be right to assume that gender parity will be considered in deployment for election duties. However, this may not be the case for multiple reasons, including the already low recruitment of female officers largely due to the policy of disqualification of eligible female candidates due to their marital status.

### **Women as Candidates**

An analysis of the data on women's participation in the 2023 elections under the 18 political parties has revealed that even if all the female candidates contesting win, Nigeria will still have less than 10% of women in elective positions. The current average of female candidates across all positions is 7.89%. In the Southwest region, based on the final list of candidates published by INEC, there are currently 404 female candidates out of the total of 2,432 candidates across all positions – Presidential, National Assembly, Gubernatorial, and State House of Assembly. Women make up only 17% of the total candidates from the region.

**Table 4.2: Breakdown of candidates across all positions in the Southwest region**

Position		Candidates		
		Male	Female	Total
Presidential Elections	President	5	0	5
	Vice President	0	0	0
National Assembly	Senate	130	18	148
	House of Representatives	357	70	427
Gubernatorial Elections	Governor	42	3	45
	Deputy Governor	22	23	45
State House of Assembly	State House of Assembly	1,472	290	1,762
<b>Total</b>		<b>2,028</b>	<b>404</b>	<b>2,432</b>

Of the states in the region, Lagos state is leading with the most female candidates across all positions, followed by Ogun state. Ogun state also has the highest number of female deputy governorship candidates in the region.

**Table 4.3: Breakdown by the state of male and female candidates across all positions in Southwest Zone**

States	Senate			House of Representatives			Governor			Deputy Governor			State House of Assembly		
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
Ekiti*	18	3	21	31	6	37	0	0	0	0	0	0	155	38	193
Lagos	23	5	28	135	27	162	14	2	16	7	9	16	323	71	394
Ogun	28	4	32	86	8	94	13	0	13	5	8	13	240	60	300
Ondo*	21	3	24	58	6	64	0	0	0	0	0	0	181	27	208
Osun*	28	2	30	65	13	78	0	0	0	0	0	0	215	50	265
Oyo	30	4	34	128	10	138	10	1	16	10	6	16	358	44	402

## Women as Voters

INEC reported that 12.2 million new voters were registered in the continuous voter registration exercise which ended on 31st July 2022 causing the total number of registered voters in Nigeria to increase from 84 million to 96.2 million. The South-West, previously having 16.29 million registered voters, increased to 18.3 million, having added over 2 million new registered voters. However, INEC has since updated the above statistics based on the identification of millions of fake voters using the commission's Automated Biometric Identification System (ABIS). According to reports presented at the third quarterly meeting with political parties, the total number of newly registered voters is now 9,518,188. There is currently a slightly higher number of female (4.8 million or 50.82%) newly registered voters than male (4.6 million or 49.18%) voters.

The regional disaggregation of the updated voter registration data, as well as gender disaggregation by region, is currently unclear.

## **Threats to Women's Participation in the Southwest**

There has also been a history of violence towards women within the electoral and political space in Nigeria. Women actively in the political space via elections or appointments, women and girls who have a familial association with politicians, women who are political activists or those who are involved as officials or ad hoc staff of electoral bodies have been directly targeted. The current security situation of the Southwest region exacerbates the already existing vulnerabilities, placing women in an even more precarious position. The following are some of the existing security threats and implications for the safety of women in the Southwest region leading up to the 2023 general elections:

### ***Harassment, Sexual and Physical Violence***

There have been numerous incidents of violent attacks, rape, and killings in the region over the years. Recently, in Lagos state, a young lady was found dead after boarding a BRT bus in the state. A female police officer in Osun state was also recently attacked by a superior after refusing sexual advances. These incidents have adverse effects on women's participation in the elections – as candidates, voters, and even electoral officials, as they only discourage women from actively participating, considering that elections and electoral processes already have a history of violence.

### ***Bullying and Intimidation by Political Counterparts***

The refusal of some members of the national assembly to support the gender bills presented earlier in the year, speaks to the position of a good number of political elites as it relates to women's participation in politics. For instance, supporters of the APC in Lagos state at a recent campaign event recently referred to the Deputy Governorship candidate of the PDP, Funke Akindele as an 'ant'. The presidential candidate of the APC Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu corroborated this sentiment by stating that it is 'an insult to mention her name in his presence. This kind of divisive language will only put the deputy governorship candidate at risk and will continue to reinforce the rhetoric that female politicians are not to be taken seriously.

### ***Ritual Killings***

There has been an upsurge in the rate of ritual killings affiliated with either financial gain or related to cultism. Three teenagers were arrested recently for beheading and burning the head of Sofiat Kehinde, a young lady for money ritual purposes. Another suspect was apprehended by the security outfit Amotekun in Ondo state, in possession of human body parts. In time past, ritual killings have been linked to politics, and the electoral process, as a way of making the large sums of money required to politick effectively in Nigeria. This has implications for the safety of women in the region, as the campaign season is now ramping up.



## **Recommendations**

To mitigate the threats to women's safe participation in the Southwest region as candidates, electorates, and electoral officials the following recommendations are proffered:

1. **Implementation of the INEC Updated Gender Policy:** While the gender policy provides concrete guidelines for promoting the effective and safe participation of women in the elections, an implementation plan is necessary. INEC is urged to produce and disseminate the implementation plan/ framework referenced in the updated gender policy to ensure adequate representation of women as electoral officials during the 2023 general elections.
2. **Capacity Building for Election Security Officials On Gender Issues:** It is important that efforts to upskill security officials towards deployment during the 2023 general elections, should include gender perspectives, and how to ensure women voters are kept safe during the election period.
3. **Political Parties Code of Conduct:** Political parties must caution their members from verbally abusing, bullying, and intimidating female politicians. The campaign process need not malign political counterparts, especially female politicians who are already often underestimated and disregarded.
4. **CSO Gender Prioritization:** Civil society organizations must ensure that observation missions in the 2023 elections pay keen attention to the gender dimensions at the polls. This provides data and statistics that can inform policy and practice changes, to improve subsequent elections.

## CHAPTER 5

### **GENDER-BASED PRE-2023 ELECTION SECURITY THREAT ASSESSMENT FOR NORTH CENTRAL GEO POLITICAL ZONE**

**Peter Sesan**

The North Central comprises six States namely Kogi, Kwara, Benue, Nasarawa, Niger, and Plateau. These states are largely heterogeneous both in terms of religion, and ethnicity and have become multi-party states, especially owing to the preparation towards the 2023 general elections. Unlike the previous elections where states are dominated predominantly by a party or two, this time it has moved to the multi-party style, especially with the emergence of the Labour Party which has become a formidable movement among the populace in the region. The existing People's Democratic Party (PDP) and All Progressive Alliance (APC) have scaled up the opportunity for people to choose among the electorate within the political sphere.

There is a unique thing regarding the 2023 election that may not have been popular in the past, individuals are now rooting for personality and not party affiliation. One person has different people to vote for in the elections from the State house of Assembly to the President and all the people are not in the same party, therefore the era of following a party is taken a different dimension in the preparation for the general elections in 2023.

In Nigeria, the extant National Gender Policy (NGP) recommended 35% affirmative action instead and sought a more inclusive representation of women with at least 35% of both elective political and appointive public service positions respectively. Nigerian women's political representation is below the global and African average and one of the lowest in the world. Their representation in national parliament has continued to dwindle in recent times and falls below global standards. Women's representation in the national parliament fell from 6.5 per cent in 2015 to 4.17 per cent in 2019. This is in spite that women make up 47 per cent of registered voters. While many countries across the globe are making conscious efforts to bridge inequalities between men and women in the political space, Nigeria has kept falling short even when women constitute almost half of the voting population. Again, the 2015 voters' registration exercise reveals more women than men.

The total number of registered voters was put at 68,833,476, out of which men were 22,944,984 and women amounted to 45,888,984. Thus, women accounted for 67 per cent of the total registration while men made up the remaining 33 per cent. Despite women's numeric strength, results from previous elections showed a decimal number of women in political positions compared to men. For instance, in 1999 there were only three women out of the 109 members representing 2.8 per cent of the members of the Senate and 12 out of 360 members which were about 3.3 per cent. In 2003, four (4) (3.7%) and twenty-one (21) (5.8%) women were elected to the Senate and House of Representatives. In 2007 the number increased to eight (7.3 per cent) and twenty-six (26) (7.2%) in the House of Representatives. However, there was a decrease from eight women in the senate in 2007 to seven in 2011 which is 6.4 per cent and from 26 to twenty-five (25) (6.9%) in the House of Representatives. In 2015, eight (7.3 per cent) senators and 19 (5.3 per cent) secured seats in the House of Representatives.

The underrepresentation of women in political participation gained root due to the patriarchal practice inherent in our society, much of which was obvious from the pre-colonial era till date. However, the re- introduction of democratic governance has witnessed once again an increase in women's political participation both in elective and appointive offices. This has further called for women's participation in governance both at the local, State and Federal levels.

### **Women's Participation in Politics**

The number of women in politics in Nigeria has not been encouraging due to several factors ranging from cultural practices and long history of political exclusion has continued to keep women out of the electoral process generally and in North Central in particular. Politics involves a lot of sacrifices and is time-consuming which may have been inhibiting factors for women to be deeply involved. For instance, several meetings are held while engaging in politics, sometimes the meetings can take a person out of the state where such a person lives, and they can also be impromptu meetings. Women that are married may not find it easy to engage in such meetings. This is seen as violating the code of ethics for marriage in our traditional belief system. Sometimes, such engagement can encroach into the nights whereby such meetings may not be too convenient for women to be part of. On the other hand, women's participation in voter registration, campaign rallies, political advocacies and candidates during elections has not translated to leadership in governance. The outcome of the election shows that Nigerian women are only active in voter registration, election rallies and campaigns, voting and contesting hence their activities have not translated into actual governance.

Another impediment is financial involvement in politics. Generally, politics requires huge resources to prosecute especially in this part of the world where issues are considered from the perspective of the financial muscle of the actors in politics. Women may not find it quite easy to compete favourably with their male counterparts to engage in contests due to a lack of financial strength. The total number of registered voters for the 2023 general elections stands at 93.5million. North Central amount to 15.6 million voters. Generally, according to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) 381 (8.9%) women among the total of 4,259 contestants for the presidential and the National Assembly seat in next year's polls.

**Table 5.1: Female Contestants for Senate**

S/N	State	Position	No Of Female Candidates	Overall Number Of Candidates	Percentage
1.	Benue	Senate	1	30	3%
2.	Kogi	Senate	2	30	7%
3.	Kwara	Senate	4	36	11%
4.	Nasarawa	Senate	1	28	4%
5.	Niger	Senate	2	35	6%
6.	Plateau	Senate	1	30	3%

Source: INEC 2022

From the above table, out of 189 contestants for the position of Senate in all the senatorial districts in all the six states in North Central, only 11(6%) contestants are women across all the political parties for the 2023 senatorial elections.

**Table 5.2: Contestants for House of Representatives in North Central Nigeria**

S/N	State	Position	No Of Female Candidates	Overall Number Of Candidates	Percentage
1.	Benue	Reps	11	96	12%
2.	Kogi	Reps	1	79	1%
3.	Kwara	Reps	5	62	8%
4.	Nasarawa	Reps	1	50	2%
5.	Niger	Reps	6	99	6%
6.	Plateau	Reps	4	65	6%

Source: INEC 2022

From the above, 28(6%) female candidates for the House of Representatives in North Central out of 451 contestants across all the political parties and various constituencies.

**Table 5.3: Gubernatorial Candidates and Deputies**

S/N	State	Governorship Candidates	Running Mates	Political Parties	Percentage
1.	Benue	2	6	8	
2.	Kogi	-	-	-	-
3.	Kwara	1	3	4	
4.	Nasarawa	-	3	3	
5.	Niger	-	3	3	
6.	Plateau	-	5		

Source: 2023 INEC list

From the above, only 3 contestants for the position of governorship in all the States in North Central except Kogi State whose election for governorship is a 'standalone election' coming up in November 2023.

**Table 5.4: Houses of Assembly**

S/N	State	Position	No Of Female Candidates	Overall Number Of Candidates	Percentage
1.	Benue	House of Assembly	41	382	11%
2.	Kogi	House of Assembly	26	231	11%
3.	Kwara	House of Assembly	47	283	17%
4.	Nasarawa	House of Assembly	18	232	8%
5.	Niger	House of Assembly	14	313	5%
6.	Plateau	House of Assembly	13	232	6%

Source: INEC 2022

From the above, 159 (10%) female contestants for Houses of Assembly in North Central out of 1,673 candidates across all the political parties and constituencies.

### **Women in Election Security, Monitoring and Observation**

Generally, election monitoring and security are delicate aspects of elections, especially in violent-prone environments. This is why women are usually not too many in most of the election assignments. However, besides from state actors who engage in elections monitoring, INEC ad hoc staff and permanent staff also engage in elections monitoring across the nation. The mandates of election security rest on the Police who have the mandate for internal security. Police are saddled with the responsibility of collating and distributing security personnel during elections. Other sister agencies (Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps-NSCDC, Nigeria Custom Service-NCS, Nigeria Immigration Service-NIM, Nigeria Correctional Service (NCoS), and Nigeria Fire Service among others) usually send their list to the Police, while the Police will distribute them to various local governments within the State and constituencies as the case may be. In the ethics of security, there are neither males nor females. Everyone is seen as male.

Therefore, getting an authentic distribution list by gender is not allowed. However, other sister agencies that disclosed their numbers and statistics show that females among the election security personnel are usually quite low compared to the men. For instance, in Plateau State, Correctional Service sent 302 personnel for election monitoring, Males (261) and females (41). Police deployed 5465 personnel for the 2019 General elections. NSCDC gave a percentage of 30% as females deployed during the 2019 general elections while men take 70%. This is also because of the sensitive nature of the assignment in case of violence and thuggery. Generally, in other states within the North Central, the situation is virtually the same. Police have the responsibility of deploying personnel on election duty during elections.

## **Women as Voters, Candidates and Mobilizers**

When all members of a society irrespective of gender are free to participate in and influence political processes and decisions without suffering discrimination or reprisal, democracy is more likely to develop and endure. There is strong evidence that as more women are elected, there is a corresponding increase in policymaking that reflects the priorities of families, women, and traditionally marginalized communities. When women can take vocal roles in politics and elections as activists, voters, party members, or government officials, their inclusion guarantees that policy and practice will reflect a broader spectrum of citizens' experiences and concerns.

Elections are an essential democratic process that, when conducted inclusively and credibly, empower citizens to select representatives who best reflect the will of the people and determine who has the right to govern. They also provide a mechanism to peacefully resolve the transfer of power. However, women's historical absence from political systems means that too often they are not empowered by- elections. Instead, they are often unable to take advantage of the opportunities that elections provide for equal advancement, protection or rights, or to access the paths that electoral processes open to political power. Despite the benefits of women's participation, they continue to face a wide range of barriers to their participation as equals in the political sphere, including legal, physical, structural, financial, social, and cultural challenges to exercising their right to vote, run, and work in elections. In addition, women are at a heightened risk of widespread violence and experience disproportionate impacts in tense electoral situations, including insufficient information on avenues for recourse when their rights are infringed, often because they occupy a subordinate status in society.

Violence targeting women because they participated in key electoral activities, such as working as election officials or attending campaign rallies, or simply their commitment to vote, is a significant barrier to women exercising their voice and agency in electoral processes. This can manifest in different ways, from misogynistic and sexist verbal attacks to the most commonplace acts of harassment and sexual harassment - much of it increasingly online - or even gender-related killings. Sometimes, cultural discrimination against women can water down the spirit and zeal to participate in electoral processes. Some have said that only irresponsible women participate in politics, this kind of utterance can send a negative signal to women, hence they are discouraged from participating in politics. Other forms of political violence against women that discourage them from political participation could *be physical, sexual, psychological, and economic*. Religion has its fair share of discouraging women from the electoral process. In North Central that are predominantly Muslim, the idea of women leading is still not at home with most religious actors in North Central Nigeria.

The requires constant sensitization for women to be allowed to take part in politics otherwise the political processes will be left to male politicians alone.

## **Women as Election Observers, Election Officials and Election Security Officials**

Virtually all the agencies concerned in the zone have never deployed beyond 30% of women of the total number of people to be deployed to the field including women organizations that are predominantly women. Men are usually more in number due to the delicate nature of the assignment.

### **Recommendations**

Political parties should introduce a legal requirement to have a minimum representation of women candidates for political offices. This can be a mandated percentage of women or a recommended percentage of women as considered by a political party. This should include using a regulatory body to monitor compliance and non-compliance and sanction accordingly as prescribed by the law of the regulatory body.

To achieve political equity for women, political parties should engage in training and mentorship of female members of the party especially those who wish to contest for political office. This act will help to boost their self-confidence and leadership skills. New women politicians and candidates would be more encouraged when being mentored by more experienced female politicians and more likely help to stimulate their leadership qualities.

As a result of the abysmally low number of women candidates in National elections, the executive arm of government should ensure compliance with the minimum 35 per cent affirmative action in appointive positions into public offices, in conformity with the National Gender Policy and the judgment of the Federal High Court; this will further scale of women participation in governance.

Election monitoring and observer agency must continue to recruit women into the mission to ensure their full participation despite the security threats the assignment might pose to women, with time advocacies will further strengthen the awareness of women into engaging in election-related assignments.

## CHAPTER 6

### GENDER-BASED PRE-2023 ELECTION SECURITY THREAT ASSESSMENT FOR NORTH EAST GEO POLITICAL ZONE

**Chris Kwaja**

Nigeria's Northeast zone has, over the last decade, been embroiled in an insurgency associated with Boko Haram, which has resulted in a severe humanitarian crisis. According to a 2017 report from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 14 million people across the six states in the zone were estimated to have been affected by the conflict. Recent statistics by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) puts the figure of people in need of humanitarian assistance at 7.1 million. Thousands of lives have been lost and about 2 million people are internally displaced.

Since 2013, women and girls in communities attacked by Boko Haram have been subjected to abduction, imprisonment, rape, 'forced marriage' and forced conversion. Many men have also been kidnapped or killed. Paths of recruitment to Boko Haram have involved multiple factors, including proselytization, forced abduction, conscription, economic inducement, social and commercial links (marriage, family, business associates), grievances against the government's inadequacies and security abuses, and the need to stay safe and protect one's family.

Other sources of violence in the three states that are mostly affected by the insurgency – Adamawa, Borno and Yobe include conflict over natural resources between pastoralists and farmers. In addition, the states have significant incidences of rural banditry (especially cattle theft), other forms of violent crime, and gender-based violence. Taraba, Bauchi and Gombe States are also not immune to the conflicts in the region.

#### 6.1 Flashpoints of the Current State of Insecurity in the Northeast Zone

Nature of Insecurity	State
Insurgency	Adamawa, Borno and Yobe
Organised Crimes (Banditry)	Adamawa, Taraba
Farmer/Herder Conflict	Adamawa
Communal Conflict	Adamawa, Bauchi and Taraba,

The primary objective of this assessment is to examine the factors that are likely to hinder or impede women's participation in politics across the Northeast zone before the 2023 general elections. Over the years, the issue of women's political rights and participation in electoral politics has been a dominant one in Nigerian politics. The principle of equality of men and women has been in key policy documents such as the United Nations Charter (1945), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), as well as the 1999 Nigerian Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. These notwithstanding, the issue of women's participation continues to bedevil political systems and countries throughout the world. Pieces of evidence indicate that women still constitute a disproportionately small proportion of those participating in political decision-making and leadership roles in the electoral and political processes.



There is sufficient evidence to support the assertion that women have potential, which can be tapped to meaningfully enhance the social, economic and political development of nations. This awareness has led to efforts by governments, complemented by civil society organisations (CSOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), multilateral institutions and individuals at all levels to actualize these potentials through sustained programmes on women empowerment. Though efforts by civic actors and groups have, in some instances, yielded positive results, there is still much to be done to ensure that women contribute their skills and talents to the political, social and economic enhancement of their nations and communities.

As regards the participation of women and men in the five top positions of leadership and in the executive structures of some of the big political parties such as the All Progressive Congress (APC), Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Labour Party, Social Democratic Party (SDP); which indicate the hierarchy of women and men in leadership positions in the top five positions: National Chairperson, Vice National Chairperson; Secretary General; as well as Organising Secretary, all the positions are occupied by men. In the context of states within the northeast region, the situation is not different, most of the positions reserved exclusively for women across the states are that of women leaders.

The most prominent case of women's bold attempt at engaging the electoral process was the election of Aishatu Binani as the flag bearer of the APC in the gubernatorial election in Adamawa State. Unfortunately, after a series of controversies within the APC, Binani's candidature was nullified by a high court in Adamawa State. The APC has resorted to an appeal of the judgement, which might either reverse or sustain the judgement of the high court.

There is a sense in which the high costs associated with the sale of expression of interest and nomination forms might have been a primary cause of women's disempowerment in the electoral process. With costs pegged to the advantage of the men against the women, many women that might have presented themselves for the elections were not able to do so. The monetization of the party primaries further compounded the situation of women, due to the costs associated with the payments made to delegates in exchange for their votes during the primaries.

## **6.2: Costs for Expression of Interest and Nomination Forms in the Two Dominant Parties as per the 2023 Elections**

S/No	Positions	APC	PDP
1	President	₦100,000,000.00	₦40,000,000.00
2	Governor	₦50,000,000.00	₦21,000,000.00
3	Senate	₦20,000,000.00	₦3,500,000.00
4	House of Representative	₦10,000,000.00	₦2,500,000.00
5	State House of Assembly	₦2,000,000.00	₦600,000.00

Source: Author's compilations from the websites of the political parties

## **Deployments for the Security of Elections**

The systematic deployment of security agents to guarantee security during elections constitute the central logic of election security. In the context of Nigeria, while the police are the lead agency for election security, other security agencies, as well as the military, are deployed to ensure the effective and holistic containment of any form of emergency or security breach during the elections. For these security agencies, the deployment of women is viewed as part of the broader security deployments, in the light of the fact that they are viewed as having the same roles and stakes as their male counterparts.

While the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) announced that 30,000 of its personnel will be deployed for the 2023 elections across the country, the number has not been disaggregated as per the ratio of men to women. On its part, the Nigeria Police Force has commenced the training of its personnel on election security, ahead of the 2023 elections. Though, no figures have been released concerning the number of personnel to be deployed for the elections.

## **Recommendations**

- Political parties should provide sufficient financial support for women candidates to enable them to take part in the electoral process, based on the merit of the enormous social mobilization power they possess. Such support should be used for women-related mobilization towards voting and voter education.
- Political parties should make their selection and nomination processes transparent to have more women involved in party politics because they are biased against women in that 'male characteristics' are emphasized and often become the criteria for selection.
- INEC should develop and implement customised training on leadership and governance to enable women to acquire the communication, fundraising, advocacy and professional skills to participate in electoral politics, more effectively.
- Political parties should create a support network for prospective aspirants by pairing them with established women politicians who will be playing a key role as mentors and provide capacity building for young or aspiring female politicians to enhance and develop them ahead of subsequent elections.
- Political parties and civil societies should provide free legal assistance for women who seek legal redress over the conduct of political parties and other issues relating to the electoral process.
- PWAN and other civil society actors should work with the relevant security agencies in ensuring a proper gender disaggregation of the personnel to be deployed during election duty.

## CHAPTER 7

### **GENDER-BASED PRE-2023 ELECTION SECURITY THREAT ASSESSMENT FOR NORTH WEST GEO POLITICAL ZONE**

#### **Chukwuma Okoli**

The northwest region of Nigeria comprises seven of the thirty-six states that constitute the country, namely: Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, and Zamfara. The region is the epicentre of Nigeria's Islamic culture, with a preponderance of Muslims that subscribe to the conservative Salafist precepts of unequal gender relations. In northern Islamic Nigeria, prevailing traditions order society so power is unequally distributed between sexes. Almost all institutions and social processes in the region reproduce and exert the dominance of men over women, with existing dominance in Nigeria rooted in Salafism. This is a version of Islam that rejects religious novelty and perpetuates unequal distribution of power between men and women.

In addition to its conservative Islamic tradition, northwest Nigeria is characterized by some socio-cultural, socio-economic and political indices that also hold critical implications for gender-political relations. A relevant report published in 2013 indicates that the region hosts five of the eight states in Nigeria with the worst records of girl-child education. Such an awry situation has been worsened by the combined threat of banditry and terrorism, which has aggravated the social vulnerabilities of women and girls in the region. For instance, the incessant abduction of schoolgirls by bandits in the region has posed a particular threat to safe schooling, driving many girls out of school and premature marriage.

Northwest Nigeria is typically a patriarchal setting where male dominance is an entrenched societal norm. In that context, structures of patriarchy are reproduced in the form of harmful or abusive traditional practices such as girl-child marriage, girl-child labour, and sexual violence against women and girls. A recent report by HumAngle publication indicates that the incidence of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is highest in northwest Nigeria. Such a trend holds vital implications for the state and future of women's participation in the civic space.

#### **Mapping of Women's Roles in the Electoral Process in Northwest Nigeria**

Women participate in the electoral process either as candidates, voters, or on-duty personnel. As candidates and voters, they are, by so doing, exercising their democratic franchise: the right to vote and be voted for. As on-duty personnel, they are participating variously as electoral officials, security agents, election observers/ monitors, or party agents. Since the focus of this report is on the threats which women face in their specific undertakings in the electoral process, it is apposite to attempt a gender-mapping of their representation in the various electoral roles in the focal region.

Based on records elicited from the Independence National Election Commission (INEC), the total number of registered voters in Nigeria is 20, 158, 146. Out of this figure, 9, 230, 894 persons are women, representing over ninety per cent. The latest records in this respect (for the 2023 general elections) are undergoing internal technical validation at INEC currently; hence, it is not available for this report. Table 1 gives a gender distribution of the voters according to the seven states that make up the region.

**Table 7.1: Gender Distribution of Registered Voters in Northwest Nigeria: 2019**

State	Male	Female
Jigawa	1, 094, 332	1, 016, 774
Kaduna	2, 136, 210	1, 796, 282
Kano	3, 035, 683	2, 422, 064
Katsina	1, 649, 766	1, 580, 644
Kebbi	985, 834	820, 397
Sokoto	1, 096, 234	806, 932
Zamfara	929, 192	787, 936
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>10, 927, 251</b>	<b>9, 230. 936</b>

Source: INEC (2020, pp.79-80).

The figures show that women constitute, potentially, a critical mass of voters in the focal region. This suggests that a significant number of women will likely vote in the coming 2023 elections. It is to be noted, however, that despite their huge numbers in terms of the registered voter population, women may suffer systematic suppression and oppression in the electoral process, largely as a result of a myriad of threats to be discussed shortly in this report.

Concerning women's stake as contestants in the electoral process, INEC's records for the 2023 elections indicate that only 118 female candidates have been elected as candidates of their various political parties to run for different elective positions in northwest Nigeria (see Table 2). This is an abysmal fraction of over three thousand available positions for the elections.

**Table 7.2: Number of Women Candidates for 2023 Elections in Northwest Nigeria**

Category of Position	Number of Women Candidates
Governorship	4 of 201
Deputy governorship	13 of 201
State Assembly	78 of 2, 131
Senate	6 of 196
House of Representatives	19 of 713
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>118 of 3, 204</b>

Source: INEC (2022).

Fact-specific data regarding the deployment of women as electoral officials, election observers/monitors, as well as security personnel were not readily accessible at the time of compiling this report. It is, however, envisaged that women will be disproportionately under-represented in such roles given two factors:

- The gender distribution of the personnel deployed in election duties by INEC and other participating organisations is, generally, skewed against women. This is partly attributable to the small numbers of women personnel in the organisations. For security agencies, the representation of women is estimated to be around 10%.
- The apparent hazardous nature of election duty in Nigeria may warrant the deployment of more men than women. This is because of the perceived higher vulnerability of women to election-related risks and mishaps.

### **Threats to Women's Electoral Participation in Northwest Nigeria**

The context and process of electoral participation in Nigeria are not sufficiently safe, equitable, and inclusive. They are often characterized by some conditions and occurrences that inhibit free and fair participation. Some of the inhibiting factors are gender-specific in essence and import. They are likely to affect the involvement of women in the forthcoming 2023 general elections. In northwest Nigeria, there are various threats to women's participation in the electoral process. Some of the threats are structural and are rooted in the workings of the societal systems. Others are circumstantial, arising principally from the hazardous occurrences associated with electoral politicking, which affect women in some specific ways.

The structural threats include impediments originating from the patriarchal societal norms, among which are harmful or abusive traditional practices that hold women subjugated to men. The northwest part of Nigeria is largely a male-dominant and sexist milieu whose deep-seated patriarchal worldviews have been reinforced by conservative Islam to reproduce systemic gender discrimination against women. A case in point is the 'pudah system' whereby a category of women are held in a domestic condition that limits their social visibility and mobility. Patriarchal cultures promote sexual and gender-based abuses against women in the context of marital, familial, communal, and societal relations. This is because of the wrong notion that men are superior and more entitled than women. It is, therefore, not surprising that women in such cultures can suffer gender-specific sexual, psychological, and physical violence or victimization in the electoral process.

The patriarchal tendencies manifest in most aspects of party politics and partisan relations. This is evidenced in the male-dominant structures and practices that define the activities of political parties in the region. Women are scarcely represented in the leadership positions of most political parties in the region. The practice of political godfatherism enables big party stalwarts to high-jack the affairs of the parties for personal aggrandizement. In effect, godfathers exclusively determine and select party candidates for various elections, based on their personal, capricious considerations. This may entail weird instrumental gratifications, including exploiting women aspirants sexually.

In addition to structural and cultural impediments, women in northwest Nigeria also contend with threats that are economic and socio-biological. The demands of 'money politics' place women in a disadvantaged position with their male counterparts. Women's limited wherewithal in terms of economic endowment and empowerment in that context hampers their objective and effective participation in the electoral process. Most of them cannot afford to buy votes to win tickets at the primary elections. Socio-biological conditions, such as pregnancy and child-rearing, can limit women's liberty to participate in the electoral process significantly.

For instance, a nursing mother may be too preoccupied with baby care that participating in an election becomes secondary to her. This poses a challenge because the women in the region bear a high volume of children and are saddled with the responsibility of domestic care and sometimes financial provision for them. Such a situation puts them in a disadvantaged position and hinders their participation in the political process.

Other factors that constrain the participation of women in the electoral process in the focal region include the prevailing security challenges, electoral violence, and gender-based victimisation. Scores of women and girls have been abducted in Kaduna, Katsina and Zamfara states in a manner that smacks of gendered victimhood. Electoral violence in the region does not necessarily target female actors. Nonetheless, women have been generally more vulnerable to such an occurrence than men. Table 3 highlights the nature and patterns of the likely threats to women's participation in the electoral process in the northwest region.

**Table 7.3: Likely Threats to Women's Electoral Participation in Northwest Nigeria**

Nature	Pattern (s)	Likely Victims
Prevailing security threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Terrorism</li> <li>• Banditry</li> <li>• Farmer-herder crisis</li> </ul>	All categories of female participants: voters, candidates, electoral officials, security personnel, election observers/monitors, and party agents.
Electoral violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thuggery</li> <li>• Police brutality</li> <li>• Militarization</li> </ul>	Female voters, candidates, electoral officials, security personnel, election observers/monitors, and party agents.
Religious impediments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pudah system</li> <li>• Salafist extremism</li> </ul>	Female contestants and party agents.
Patriarchal norms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Male dominance syndrome</li> <li>• Female inferiority complex</li> <li>• Sexist prejudice</li> </ul>	Female contestants and party agents.
Gender-based victimization/violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rape</li> <li>• Sexual harassment</li> <li>• Gender bullying</li> <li>• Gender labelling</li> </ul>	Female voters, candidates, electoral officials, security personnel, election observers/monitors, and party agents.
Socio-biological inhibitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pregnancy</li> <li>• Child-rearing</li> </ul>	Pregnant and nursing mothers.

Source: Author's compilation (Desk Study, 2022).

Table 3 shows that exposure to threats is contingent upon one's role in the electoral process. Also, threats can be physical, psychological or systemic. Subtle sexist intimidation or prejudice expressed by way of hate speech, labelling or slandering against women can be as detrimental as physical assault or abuse. This is equally true of any entrenched traditional, social, or social practices that largely derive from the societal patriarchal norms.

### **Implications for Women's Participation**

The various threats identified and discussed in this report are inimical to democratic participation and inclusion. They are also detrimental to the concerns of gender equity and general electoral security. Generally, the threats reinforce conditions for gender inequality, inequity and exclusion, thereby making the electoral process less inclusive and not sufficiently democratic. As voters, women tend to respond to threats by withdrawing systematically from electoral and democratic participation. They are afraid of falling a victim to electoral violence or gender-based victimizations associated with politicking. This brings about voter apathy as well as general passivity in politics among women. As candidates, women are dissuaded from venturing into electoral contests for fear of being mistreated, violated, or assaulted. This limits their chances of clinching elective positions in party politics. This explains the gross under-representation of women in government in the region.

As observers, party agents, polling officers and security agents in an election, women face some gender-specific threats that not only affect their safety but also undermine electoral security. In such roles, they may be intimidated, harassed, molested or victimized in a manner that exploits their gender vulnerability as actors in the context of a male-dominant process. The ultimate effect of the foregoing is the entrenchment of a male dominant electoral democracy where the rights and dignity of women are treated with wanton abuse.

### **Recommendations**

To mitigate the various threats militating against the effective participation of women in the electoral process in northwest Nigeria, several measures need to be taken, especially in the areas of policies, reforms and programmatic interventions.

- Political parties should be more deliberately gender-sensitive and affirmative in their operations. Conscious internal democratic reforms should be geared towards democratizing the internal workings of political parties that are expedient. This effort should include an intentional move to leverage the potential for gender equity and inclusiveness in the structures and activities of the parties.
- Gender-specific contingency measures must be taken to protect the women involved in all categories of election processes to mitigate their peculiar vulnerabilities.

- There is an urgent need for the formulation and implementation of the Violence Against Women in Election (VAWIE) policy in Nigeria. This will provide the much-needed legal instrument for the protection of the female actors in the electoral process from common gender- based abuses.
- The media, civil society organizations (CSOs) and other relevant government agencies should undertake civic education campaigns aimed at sensitizing the electorate and electoral stakeholders on issues of electoral rights, gender sensitivities and best practices to bring about the desired attitudinal change in that regard.
- Harmful or abusive traditional and religious practices that encourage gender inequality and discrimination should be reformed in a manner that makes for gender inclusion and equity.



## **CONCLUSION**

Despite considerable progress over the last decade to promote the participation of women in politics in Nigeria, there are evident gaps related to their roles in decision-making within political parties and the electoral process. The electoral process in Nigeria has, therefore, not been sufficiently gender friendly. Across the various zones, it is characterized by conditions and occurrences that impede safe and effective women's participation as voters, contestants, or on-duty personnel. The factors that undermine the electoral participation of women derive from a variety of socio-economic, socio-cultural, political, and socio-biological systems of society.

From across the zones in the country, this assessment, which explored the context, nature, patterns and implications of the prevailing threats to women's participation in the electoral process ahead of the 2023 polls, suggests that having women in key and strategic leadership roles has a positive effect on their ability and capacity to influence and the process and outcome of the electoral process in the run-up to the 2023 elections. Considering the manifestations of such threats vis-à-vis the various roles played by women in the electoral process, it is posited in this report that women in such contexts are exposed to multiple gender-based vulnerabilities, which impede their safe and effective involvement. There is a need for a reform of the electoral process to guarantee women's participation without fear or hindrance, the prospect of democratic participation and inclusion in Nigeria in the coming 2023 general elections will remain wishful thinking.

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