



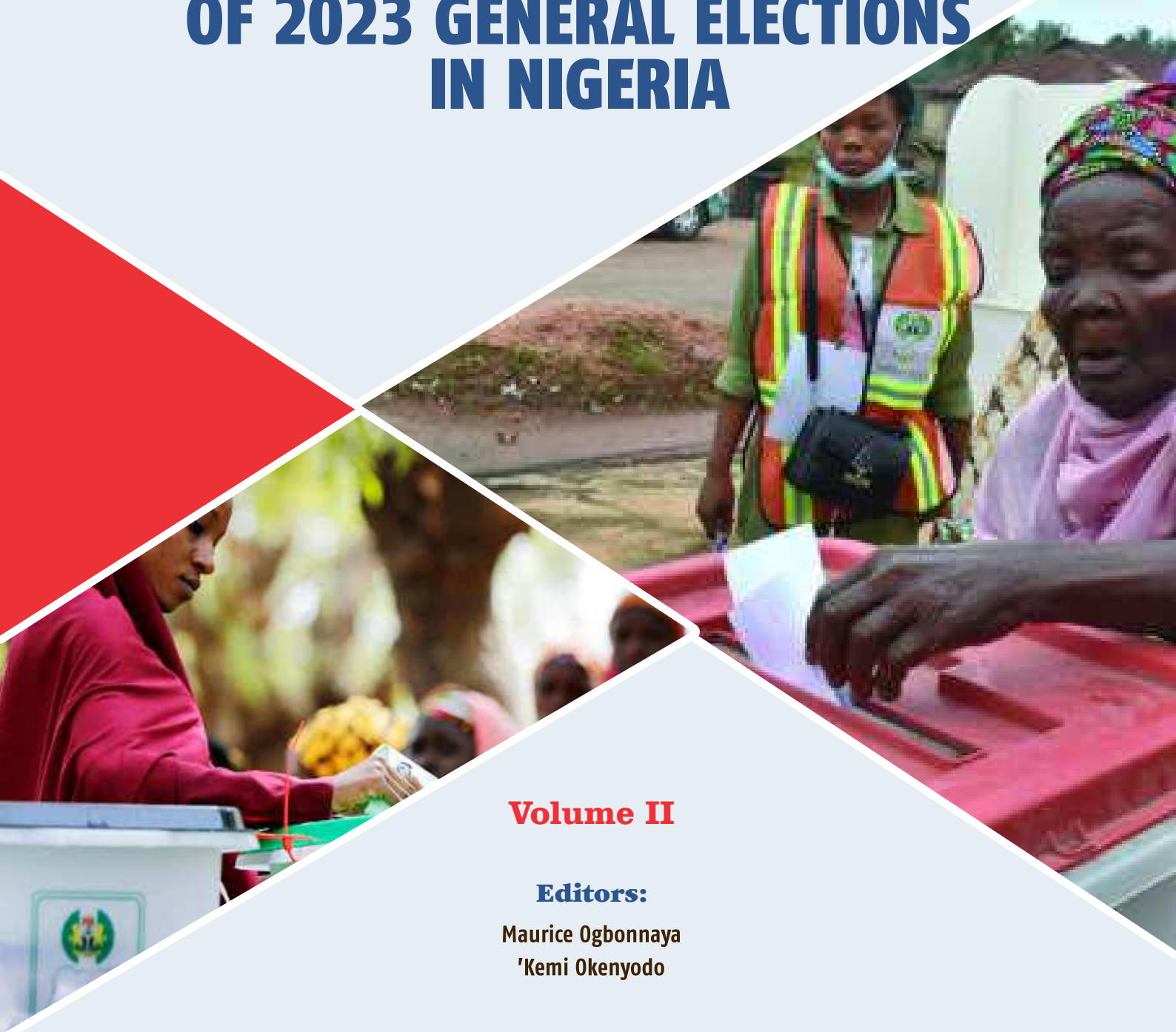
RULE OF LAW AND EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVE
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GENDER-BASED SECURITY THREAT ASSESSMENT OF 2023 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA



Volume II

Editors:

Maurice Ogbonnaya

'Kemi Okenyodo

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Gender-Based Security Threat Assessment of 2023 Election In Nigeria: Volume II

Executive Summary

This report is a follow-up on the Gender-Based Pre-2023 Election Security Threat Assessment in Nigeria: Volume 1. It examined threats to women's participation in the elections as voters, candidates, security agents, observers, and election duty officials in the February 25 Presidential and National Assembly elections, and in the March 18 Governorship and State Houses of Assembly elections in Nigeria. Based on desk research, the study covered the six geopolitical zones of the country between November 2022 and April 2023, the period of electioneering campaigns and the actual elections.

Findings

- Across the country, women participated in the electoral process as voters, candidates, observers, security and election duty officials. The majority of them participated as voters; as women constituted about 47.5% of the total registered voters and about 10% of the total number of candidates in the elections.
- Women remain significantly marginalised in Nigeria's political space. Out of 15,307 candidates featured by the 18 registered political parties for the general elections, women were 1,553, representing 10.1% of the total number of candidates. 1,487 female candidates (representing 96% of all contestants) lost, while 76 (representing about 4%) won.
- Women constituted about 40% of election duty officials deployed by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). Women also constituted about 10% of election observers deployed by women's rights groups, local and international observer missions to about 11 States, including the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). Similarly, they constituted about 10% of over 500,000 security personnel deployed across the 36 States and the FCT by the Armed Forces, Police, para-military agencies and the intelligence community under the framework of the Inter-Agency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES).
- The low level of women's participation in the elections, especially as candidates, accounts for the underrepresentation of women in elective positions. In 2023, only 3 women were elected as Senators, 14 as Members of the House of Representatives, 7 as Deputy Governors and 48 as Members of State Houses of Assembly. This is a negation of the principle of Affirmative Action, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and national statutory guarantees for equality and inclusivity.
- Physical attacks, violence, suppression and intimidation, especially in Cross River, Kano, Kogi, Lagos and Rivers States, as well as a scarcity of Naira banknotes and fuel, were fundamental threats to women's participation in the elections. Other threats included anti-women cultural practices and the excessive monetisation of the electoral process by political parties.
- The use of political thugs by political parties to intimidate and suppress political opponents is a negation of the provisions of the 2018 Political Parties Code of Conduct that commits them to zero tolerance for violence by their functionaries, candidates and supporters.

Recommendations

- ✦ The ICCES should evolve a robust contingency and incident response plan to swiftly attend to security breaches, especially those with the potential to compromise the safety and security of women as voters, candidates, election observers, election officials and security agents in future elections.
- ✦ INEC and security agencies should evolve context-sensitive deployment plans that give women the opportunity to take up positions they are qualified for.
- ✦ Security agencies should ensure gender-based disaggregation of personnel to be deployed on election duty, with specific reference to highlighting the extent of gender consideration in such deployments.
- ✦ National Assembly should enact a legislation to establish the Electoral Offences Tribunal/ Commission to deal with incidence of election violence, especially those inordinately directed at women.
- ✦ Women-rights organisations should collaborate with political parties and the National Assembly to enact a legislation to de-monetise the electoral process in Nigeria.
- ✦ Political parties should adhere to the provisions of the 2018 Political Parties Code of Conduct that commits them to zero tolerance for violence by their functionaries, candidates and supporters.



Gender-Based Security Threat Assessment of 2023 Election In Nigeria: Volume II

1. Introduction

Maurice Ogbonnaya and 'Kemi Okenyodo

On all indicators, the 2023 general elections in Nigeria fell below expectations for improving the level of women's participation in politics as candidates, election security officials, election observers, and election officials. Although women's participation as voters in the election was comparatively significant, having constituted 47.5 per cent of the total registered voters, they constituted a paltry 10 per cent of the total number of candidates in the elections. Out of 15,307 candidates featured by the 18 registered political parties for the general elections, women were 1,553, representing 10.1 per cent of the total number of candidates. While 1,487 of them, representing 96 per cent of female contestants, lost out in the elections, only 76, representing about 4 per cent, won. Three women were elected as Senators, 14 as Members of House of Representatives, 7 as Deputy Governors (Adamawa, Akwa Ibom, Ebonyi, Kaduna, Ogun, Plateau and Rivers States), and 48 as Members of State Houses of Assembly.

The development not only fell short of the 2015 and 2019 statistics. For instance, there are seven female Senators and 13 female Members of the House of Representatives in the 9th Assembly. That number has shrunk to three female Senators-elect and seven female Members-Elect of the House of Representatives for the incoming 10th Assembly. The development is also a negation of the principle of Affirmative Action, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and all national statutory guarantees for equality and inclusivity in Nigeria's political and governance processes, as women remain significantly marginalised in Nigeria's political space.

As election security personnel and observers, the participation of women was fundamentally insignificant. They constituted about 10 per cent of over 500,000 security personnel deployed across the 36 States and the FCT by the Armed Forces, Police, para-military agencies, and the intelligence community, under the framework of the Inter-Agency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES). Similarly, they constituted about 10 per cent of election observers deployed by women-rights groups, local and international observer missions, including the European Union (EU), Commonwealth Group, ECOWAS Commission, International Republican Institute (IRI) and the National Democratic Institute (NDI). This was despite the deployment of all women groups by pan-women political organisations under the aegis of Women in Politics Forum, which deployed over 100 women to 11 States, Abia, Adamawa, Benue, Cross-River, Kogi, Kaduna, Kwara, Nasarawa, Plateau, Sokoto and the FCT.

However, the participation of women as election duty officials was encouraging. Women constituted about 40% of election duty officials deployed by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) across the country at both the national and state elections, including the run-off elections that were held on April 15, 2023.

Threats to Women's Participation

Despite the seemingly adequate deployment of security personnel across the country, women experienced the following threats as voters, candidates, observers, security and election duty officials.



Members of the National Youth Service Corps

Physical Violence: In the South East, women were exposed to attacks by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and the armed group widely described as “Unknown Gunmen” in the period leading to the February 25 elections. Days before the Presidential election, reports from parts of Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo States alleged that IPOB attacked citizens in attempts to enforce the February 23 – 28, 2023 sit-at-home order issued by the leader of the Autopilot faction of the group, Simon Ekpa. This accounted for over 100 NYSC members trained as Electoral Officers and Assistant Presiding Officers in three Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Imo State withdrawing their participation from Presidential and National Assembly elections.

The region also witnessed increased attacks on security agents, government facilities, and prominent individuals by Unknown Gunmen shortly before the elections. In December 2022, a video showed a female lieutenant in the Nigerian Army being abducted in her home in Ihube, Abia State and tortured by Unknown Gunmen. Another attack was targeted at female security agents in the region. At the Umulokpa headquarters of the Uzo-Uwani LGA, Enugu State, thugs who attacked INEC's office also shot and killed a female police officer on election day.

In the South West, one Jennifer Seifegha, a voter, was violently attacked in Surulere, Lagos State, during the election.

In the South-South, a security official shot and killed an INEC staff member and Corps members on election duty in Asaba on February 25, 2023. In Etim Ekpo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State, two people were also killed, which led to the postponement of elections in two wards. Similarly, a voter, popularly called “Put On Me”, was shot and killed in Bekwara Local Government Area of Cross State.

In the North West, attacks by bandits were recorded. On February 4, 2023, 41 people were killed, 50 cows

and 30 sheep stolen by bandits in Kankara, Katsina State. This was a major incident ahead of the Presidential and National Assembly elections. In Kaura Local Government Area of Kaduna State, the Woman Leader of the Labour Party, Victoria Chintex, was murdered on November 21, 2022, in election-related violence. In Tudun Wada Local Government of Kano State, three people were burned during the Presidential and National Assembly when suspected political thugs set the campaign office of the New Nigerian Peoples Party (NNPP) in the area on fire. An official of INEC was also attacked in Takai Local Government Area of the State.

In the North East, Gwoza Local Government Area of Borno State recorded two women who sustained different degrees of injuries when Boko Haram fighters fired several gunshots from the Mandara Mountains, targeting voters on election day.



Comrade Chief Beatrice Itubo, the only female contestant for Governor in Rivers State in the 2023 elections

Suppression and Intimidation: Women also suffered intimidation and suppression before and during the election, including political thuggery and denial of access to public spaces for political rallies. This resulted in disenfranchisement and an uneven contest.

In the South East, women election observers and unarmed women security agents who manned polling units were either bullied or intimidated by party agents, party supporters, and thugs. In Imo State, EFCC's election monitoring team, which included female officers on duty at Unit 001, Mann Primary School behind Cherubim Junction were attacked by gunmen in two black Prado SUVs and one white Hilux outside the polling unit. Also, in Polling Unit 003, Central School Asaba 11 in Uzo-Uwani Local Government Area of Enugu State, female security officers were intimidated and suppressed by aggrieved voters for conniving with party agents and election officials to rig the election in the area. In Ebonyi State, the State Government denied opposition parties and their candidates including women the use of public spaces for rallies and meetings.

In the South West, intimidation of female voters occurred in Mafoluku, Amuwo Odofin, Oshodi, Surulere, Ijaiye, Ijaniki, LASU Iba, Iyana Shashi, Ikorodu, Fadeyi, Ojota, Ogombo, Badagry, Sangotedo, and Lekki areas of Lagos. Political thugs affiliated with a particular party disrupted the voting process and destroyed election materials in polling units in the aforementioned areas. Elections were disrupted in these areas, and electoral officials and voters dispersed for fear of bodily harm and injury. In Ogun State, gunmen invaded a polling unit in



While the monetary policy hampered the effectiveness of INEC logistics and the disenfranchisement of many voters who needed to travel to polling stations, including INEC ad hoc staff, voters and election observers, the paucity of banknotes created significant hardship, especially for women, rendering a significant number of them vulnerable to vote buying. Women in rural communities were mostly affected.





Top L-R: Kogi State Governor, Yahaya Bello, and top female aspirant, PDP candidate for the Kogi Central Senatorial District, Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan.

Below: The excavated road and the accident alleged to have resulted from it.

Photo credit: Royal News, <https://royalnews.com.ng/road-cutting-strategy-to-protect-kogi-from-terrorists-yahaya-bello-reacts/>

Ayegbami, Ikenne Local Government Area, destroyed a ballot box and disrupted the voting process.

In the South-South, while the Akwa Ibom State Government denied two female governorship candidates access to public spaces, Rivers State Governor, Nyesom Wike, signed Executive Order 21, directing political parties to pay the sum of N5 million to the State Government to use public schools for political campaigns. It was difficult for Beatrice Itubo, the only female gubernatorial candidate, to pay the amount for just a venue.

In North Central, the Kogi State Government engaged a Chinese construction company, CCECC, to cut off the road leading to Okehi Local Government Area to prevent officials of the INEC, security agents and other stakeholders from accessing the Senatorial District during the Presidential and National Assembly elections. The road leads to the stronghold of Kogi Central Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) senatorial candidate, Barr. Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan.

Scarcity of Naira Banknotes and Fuel: The coming into effect of the naira swap policy of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) in January 2023 resulted in the scarcity of the Naira banknote. The policy posed significant threats to the participation of women as voters, candidates, election observers, and election duty officials before and during the election. The extent of the impact of the developments was typified by the February 7, 2023 visit of the Chairman of INEC, Prof. Mahmood Yakubu, to the Governor of the CBN, Dr Godwin Emeifele, to demand concessions for purposes of operational logistics during the elections.

The naira swap policy coincided with a lingering scarcity of fuel which resulted in an unofficial increase in the pump price of fuel across the country. While the monetary policy hampered the effectiveness of INEC logistics and the disenfranchisement of many voters who needed to travel to polling stations, including INEC ad hoc staff, voters and election observers, the paucity of banknotes created significant hardship, especially for women, rendering a significant number of them vulnerable to vote buying. Women in rural communities were mostly affected.

Implications of Threats

The various security threats that women who worked as election officers, observers, and election security faced during the 2023 Presidential and National Assembly elections heightened the attention they paid to safety and security, a possible explanation for the low participation in the Governorship and House of Assembly elections held on March 18, 2023.

First, some of the women ad hoc staff and election observers who conducted elections and monitored election activities on February 25, 2023, could have withdrawn from participating in future elections in the region for fear of insecurity. Secondly, as a corollary to the above, the low level of visibility and participation of women as security and law enforcement officers, as well as election observers, could have caused female voters to lose confidence in the electoral process, resulting in voter apathy. Similarly, sustained threats may discourage female candidates from continuing to participate in the process, further reducing the already low level of women's involvement as candidates in the electoral process.

2. South East

 Freedom C. Onuoha

Women participated in the electoral process in several ways – voters, candidates, observers, or security officials. The majority of them participated as voters, as women and youth form over 75 per cent of registered voters for the 2023 elections.¹ The February 25 Presidential and National Assembly elections, and the March 18 Governorship and State Houses of Assembly elections, were not without some incidence of violence in the South East, with implications for women.

Prior to the general elections, women in the zone had been victims of security threats like attacks by herdsmen, trafficking, domestic violence, rape, attacks by unknown gunmen and IPOB members, ritual killing, and kidnapping/abduction among others.² During the general elections, some women who participated in the electoral process in the region were victims of attacks, especially by political thugs. However, their exposure to violence was particularly high during the March 18 elections.

Deployment of Women by Security Agencies and Government Institutions

Apart from women participating as voters in the election, women were deployed as part of security and law enforcement detachments for election duties. Security agencies that deployed women for the election include the police, the National Security and Civil Defence Corp (NSCDC), the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), the Nigeria Correctional Service (NCS), the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC).

For instance, the Inspector-General of Police, Usman Baba, reportedly revealed that the Police would deploy 310,973 of its personnel to the over 176,846 polling units nationwide for the 2023 election exercises. The personnel consisted of conventional policemen and women, the Mobile Police, the Special Counter-Terrorism Unit, Special Forces, the Intelligence Response Team and other sections of the police.³ This number is reportedly augmented with 51,000 personnel from the NSCDC, 11,336 from the NCS, 9,447 from the NDLEA and 350 officials of the EFCC. Also, the FRSC deployed 21,783 personnel nationwide for the exercise.⁴

In addition, a substantial number of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) staff and ad hoc staff (particularly members of the National Youth Service Corps, NYSC, and other selected trainees) who took part in the election were female. Also, several women belonging to various community-based groups, civil society organisations, and local and international unions/organisations were deployed to

1. Thomas-Odia, J. (2023, January 28). Mainstreaming gender concerns ahead of 2023 general elections. *The Guardian*. <https://guardian.ng/features/gender-politics/mainstreaming-gender-concerns-ahead-of-2023-general-elections/>

2. Aljazeera. (2023, March 18). Nigeria local elections open in shadow of contested national vote. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/3/18/nigeria-local-elections-open-in-shadow-of-contested-vote;>

3. Abdullahi, M. (2023, March 19). Thuggery, voter apathy taint Nigeria's election for new governors. *HumAngle*. <https://humanglemedia.com/thuggery-voter-apathy-taints-nigerias-election-for-new-governors/>

4. Angbulu, S. (2023, February 16). Police to deploy 310,973 personnel, 1,240 patrol vans for election, Punch. <https://punchng.com/police-to-deploy-310973-personnel-1240-patrol-vans-for-election/>

monitor the election. An instance of these organisations is a pan-women political organisation under the aegis of *Women in Politics Forum*, which deployed 100 observers to monitor the election in eleven states: Abia, Adamawa, Benue, Cross-River, Kogi, Kaduna, Kwara, Nasarawa, Plateau, Sokoto and the FCT.⁵ Similarly, the European Union EU deployed 100 election observers to the 2023 polls, including women as team members.⁶ However, the number of women deployed as election officials, election observers and security officials to the South East was infinitesimal.

Threats to Women as Observers, Election Officials and Election Security Personnel

Women deployed as election observers, election officials and election security officers, especially in the southeast region, were exposed to security threats/attacks by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and Unknown Gunmen in the period leading to the February 25 elections.

A few weeks before the election day, threats came from the Simon Ekpa-led faction of the IPOB declaring that elections would not take place in the zone. Days before the Presidential election, there were reports in some parts of the region, precisely Imo, Ebonyi and Enugu about attacks allegedly by IPOB members who wore masks and shot sporadically, warning people not to come out from February 23rd to 28th, as the affected days have been declared a sit-at-home in the region.⁷ This majorly accounted for why over 100 NYSC members trained as Electoral Officers and Assistant Presiding Officers in three Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Imo State withdrew their participation in the February 25 general election, citing insecurity.⁸ Some other ad-hoc staff in other states of the region, especially females, also withdrew from election activities for the same reason.

Furthermore, the South East witnessed increased attacks on security agents, government facilities and prominent individuals by a criminal group popularly known as “Unknown Gunmen” shortly before the February 25 elections. For example, in late December 2022, a video showed a female Lieutenant in the Nigerian Army being tortured by unknown gunmen terrorising the South-East part of the country. The officer was abducted in her home in Ihube, Abia State. In the clip, one of the Unknown Gunmen threatened to kill the officer. The officer was stripped naked, and her hands and legs were tied.⁹ This was one notable example of attacks targeted at female security agents in the region. Besides, gunmen murdered the senatorial candidate for the Labour Party (LP) in Enugu East on February 23. The incident in Enugu and similar killings across the region heightened apprehension by election officials, especially women.

5. Eromosele, F. (2023, 17 February). 2023: FRSC to deploy 21,783 personnel, 769 patrol vehicles, 139 ambulances. *Vanguard News* <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2023/02/2023-frsc-to-deploy-21783-personnel-769-patrol-vehicles-139-ambulances/>

6. The author saw two women in NDI Observer Team that visited Polling Unit (PU) 37-06-01-025 and PU 37-06-01-148. See also Habib, G. (2023, January 31). EU to deploy 100 election observers. *Punch*. <https://www.google.com/amp/s/punchng.com/eu-to-deploy-100-election-observers/%3famp>

7. Njoku, L. (2023, February 18). IPOB and web of election boycott order in southeast. *The Guardian*. <https://guardian.ng/saturday-magazine/ipob-and-web-of-election-boycott-order-in-south-east/>

8. Vanguard. (2023, February 23). Over 100 corps members withdraw from Saturday's election in Imo- REC. <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.vanguardngr.com/2023/02/over-100-corps-members-withdraw-from-saturdays-election-in-imo-rec/amp/>

9. Sahara Reporters. (2022, December 29). Unknown gunmen strip, torture female soldier in southeast Nigeria for Christmas holiday, warn Igbo youths against joining army, others. <https://saharareporters.com/2022/12/29/unknown-gunmen-strip-torture-female-soldier-southeast-nigeria-christmas-holiday-warn>

Although cases of violence were minimal during the Presidential and National Assembly elections, there were reports of shootings at the Umulokpa headquarters of the Uzo-Uwani LGA of Enugu State by thugs who attacked INEC's office. Four of the thugs and a female police officer died during the gun battle with security operatives.¹⁰ Additionally, women election observers and unarmed women security agents who manned some polling units in the region during the February 25 election, were either bullied or intimidated by party agents, party supporters and thugs.

In Imo State, for instance, some female election officers and election observers were reportedly intimidated and bullied by thugs who attacked some polling units to either disrupt the election process or steal ballot boxes. In most polling units where attacks happened in Imo State, the security officers, especially women officers, were helpless because they were unarmed and were just two or three in number. In some instances, they got help from security agents on patrol. An example is the case where the EFCC's election monitoring team on duty at Unit 001, Mann Primary School behind Cherubim Junction, which included female officers, were attacked by gunmen in two black Prado SUVs and one white Hilux outside the polling unit. The EFCC team on patrol responded, forcing them to flee the scene.¹¹ Also, in Polling Unit 003 Central School Asaba 11 in Uzo-Uwani Local Government Area of Enugu State, there were reports that security officers, which included women police officers, were allegedly attacked by aggrieved voters for conniving with party agents and election officials to rig the election in the area.¹²

The Governorship and State Assembly elections were characterised by violence in the South East. INEC Spokesperson in Imo State, Chinenye Chijioke, disclosed that at least 19 ad hoc electoral officials were kidnapped and later rescued, while election materials were lost. In Ebonyi, a female observer with a civil society group, Uzodimma Lucy Ogodo, was brutally attacked for refusing to vote for a particular party. In Enugu, two domestic observers with the Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room were attacked by political thugs in Obiagu, Enugu North LGA. Similarly, thugs snatched BVAS and disrupted the voting process at a polling unit in Union Primary School, Nsukka, forcing voters, election observers and INEC officials to flee for safety. A civil society group, Connected Development (CODE), observed that there was no adequate presence of security personnel deployed across most of the polling units visited by most of its election observers. It noted that women including as election observers were harassed and manhandled by suspected political thugs while the security agencies appeared indifferent.¹⁵

10. *The Punch*. (February 26, 2023). NigeriaElections2023: Killings, BVAS, ballot box snatching mar polls. <https://www.google.com/amp/s/punchng.com/nigeriaelections2023-killing-bvas-ballot-box-snatching-mar-polls/%3famp>

11. *Vanguard*. (February 25, 2023). Thugs attack EFCC's election monitoring teams in Abuja, Imo. <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.vanguardngr.com/2023/02/thugs-attack-efccs-election-monitoring-teams-in-abuja-imo/amp/>

12. Author interview with a voter in polling unit 003 central school Asaba 11 in Uzo-Uwani LGA, Enugu State, who stated that two men of NSCDC and a female police officer, were attacked by aggrieved voters for conniving with party agents and election officials to rig the election in the area in favour of PDP.

13. Kola, O. (2023, March 18). Nigeria counts votes in governorship elections marred by scattered violence. 19 electoral commission staff kidnapped, later rescued in southeastern Imo state, official says. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/nigeria-counts-votes-in-governorship-elections-marred-by-scattered-violence/2849565>

14. Jannamike, L. (2023, March 18). Guber polls: Attacks, suppression of voters marred election, CODE alleges. *Vanguard*. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2023/03/guber-polls-attacks-suppression-of-voters-marred-election-code-alleges/>

15. Jannamike, L. (2023, March 18). Guber polls: Attacks, suppression of voters marred election, CODE alleges. *Vanguard*. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2023/03/guber-polls-attacks-suppression-of-voters-marred-election-code-alleges/>

Conclusion and Recommendations

The numerous threats faced by women who worked in the South East region during the Presidential and National Assembly elections heightened the attention they paid to safety and security in the Governorship and House of Assembly elections in the region. Some of them withdrew their participation in the Governorship and House of Assembly elections in the region. It is expected that future elections in the region may witness further decline in the level of women participation, especially as candidates, voters, observers and election duty officials. The experience of widespread violence and thuggery during the 2023 elections would equally impact on the confidence of women security and law enforcement officers in future election.

In view of these, the following recommendations are made to address the threats and boost the participation of women in electoral processes as candidates, voters, observers and election duty officials:

- i. The leadership of police, security and law enforcement officials should evolve a robust contingency and incident response plan to swiftly attend to any security breaches, especially those with the potential to compromise the safety and security of women as voters, candidates, election observers, election officials and security agents in future elections.
- ii. The INEC and Security agencies should evolve context-sensitive deployment plans that take into consideration the vulnerable hotspots in the region and minimise the posting of women in such volatile locations.
- iii. The Federal and state governments should prioritise the provision of adequate security in the southeast region. Security forces should step up intelligence-led operations against armed groups and political thugs in the region to significantly incapacitate them before the March 11 elections.
- iv. The Nigerian police should vigorously and diligently prosecute all those arrested for perpetrating electoral violence during the 2023 general elections to serve as a deterrent to those who may plan to use violence during future off-cycle and general elections.

3. South South

Solomon Akpanufot

Elections in the South South region are high stakes, often characterised by violence and tension, which take varied dimensions, including sexual, physical, psychological, threats and coercion, with implications for the participation of women in the process. Across the region, the 2023 general elections witnessed different forms of violence, especially shootings in elections by armed political thugs, coercion and intimidation of voters, forceful disruption of the electoral process and vandalization of electoral materials, as well as kidnapping, hate speech and vote buying. Thus, the participation of women in the process was largely low, resulting in underrepresentation. There were also attacks on the facilities of the Independent National Electoral Commission. Five of such attacks occurred in Akwa Ibom State and four occurred in Cross River State.

In the build-up to the 2023 general elections, election-related violence was reported in the South South region. In Cross River State, the Commissioner for Women Affairs, Gertrude Njar, was abducted on February 1, 2023 in Calabar. On February 5, 2023, gunmen ambushed the convoy of the People's Redemption Party (PRP) gubernatorial candidate in Cross River, Pastor Usani Uguru Usani, and killed two of his supporters. There were also several incidents of intimidation, attempted assassination and destruction of properties/campaign venues of rival political parties in Rivers State. In Port Harcourt, gunmen in police uniforms shot at the car of Abiye Sekibo, the Director-General of PDP Presidential campaign in the State. In Delta State, unidentified armed group ambushed soldiers and killed four in Ndokwa East, on February 9, 2023. A traditional ruler in the community was also beheaded by the assailants.

Threats to Women's Participation in South South

Disenfranchisement And Uneven Contest

Political parties in the region did not provide favourable and equal opportunity for women to participate as candidates or contestants. The lists of candidates and contestants for Governorship, National and State Houses of Assembly, as shown released by INEC indicate very low number of women as candidates. On the whole, women constituted on 12 per cent of the candidates for the National Assembly elections in the region, i.e. 11 per cent for House of Representatives and 13 per cent for Senate. Comparatively, Akwa Ibom State had more women (19.5 per cent) contesting for the Senate than the other States. Similarly, Bayelsa State had the highest percentage of women contesting for the House of Representatives (see Table 1). The data depicts that the 2023 elections as male-dominated. The situation is not different from that of the Governorship contest as shown in table 2 below. None of the three frontline political parties (APC, PDP, and LP) featured female candidates.

In the South South, 10 female law makers were returned elected in Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta and Rivers States. Akwa Ibom topped the chart with 4 female lawmakers, Bayelsa and Delta had 2 each, Cross River and Edo States had 1 each. The excessive militarisation of politics in Rivers State hindered women from winning elections in the State, except the Deputy Governor, Dr. Ipalobo Harry-Banigo, who was elected for Senate on the platform of PDP. For the State Houses of Assemble elections in the South South region, four women were elected in Akwa Ibom State, two in Bayelsa State, one in Cross River State, two in Delta State, and one in Edo State. For the governorship elections, no woman was elected across the region. However, women were elected as Deputy Governors in Akwa Ibom and Cross River States.

Table 3.1: Percentage of Male and Female Candidates in 2023 National Assembly Election

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	118	128	85.9	14.1

Source: Compiled from INEC's Final List of Candidates for 2023 National Assembly Elections

Table 3.2: Percentage of Male and Female Candidates in 2023 Governorship Election

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: Compiled from INEC's Final List of Candidates for 2023 National Assembly Elections

Banning of Political Rallies in Public Places

Another threat to women participation in the political process was the banning of political rallies in public spaces by some State authorities in the region. There were two female governorship candidates in Akwa Ibom State, one in Cross River State, two in Delta State and one in Rivers State. However, all of the female candidates were in opposition parties. Thus, the signing of Executive Order 21 by Rivers State Governor, Nyesom Wike, directing political parties to pay the sum of N5 million to the State Government for security before holding rallies in public schools, among other public spaces impacted on the opportunity of female candidates to campaign for supports. Similar developments occurred in Akwa Ibom State where the YPP and its governorship candidate were denied access to public venues, including in the churches, for political campaigns and rallies.

Political Thuggery

During the elections, political thugs, largely sponsored by the ruling political parties in Rivers, Edo, Akwa Ibom, and Delta States, intimidated voters, destroyed ballot papers and other electoral materials, snatched Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) machines and disrupted voting processes. There were also instances of open intimidation in which voters were threatened to go home if they know they will not vote for the party of choice by the state government. In many of those scenarios, most female voters and security officials deserted the venues while those who dared sustained different degrees of injury.


Most female INEC officials were threatened not to leave the voting points until they upload the results on the INEC IREV while others were physically attacked and injured in the process by irate voters/supporters.


Challenge with the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System

In a few instances across the region, BVAS malfunctioned, resulting in the delay of the voting processes. Some female electorates with PVCs were not recognised by the BVAS and as such could not vote during the election. Worse still, INEC systems BVAS and IREV performed below expectation leading to no uploading of election results from the polling units to the IREV as was expected. The implication of this was that most female INEC officials were threatened not to leave the voting points until they upload the results on the INEC IREV while others were physically attacked and injured in the process by irate voters/supporters.

Shooting, Violence, and Killings During Elections

On the evening of the Presidential and National Assembly elections, violence erupted at the Igwuruta axis of Ikwerre Local Government Area, Rivers State, as angry youths took to the streets to protest an alleged attempt to tamper with the presidential election results. The protesting youths fired sporadic shots and vandalised vehicles travelling along the Igwuruta-Elele-Airport Road. Two persons were reportedly killed in Ward 12, Ubimini community, in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State. Members of the local vigilante group also fired gunshots, which led to the death of a woman.

In Delta State, the State Resident Electoral Commissioner, Monday Tom, confirmed that an INEC staff on duty was killed and corps members injured while returning to Asaba to deliver election results. In Akwa Ibom State, two persons were shot dead while two others sustained injuries in Etim Ekpo Local Government Area during the Presidential and National Assembly elections. There were gunshots as early as 8 am in the area which scared away the INEC staff, observers, and other officials. Elections did not hold in Wards 5, 6 and 7 in the LGA.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In the build-up to the 2023 general elections, election-related violence reported in several States across the South South region had implications for the participation of women in the process as candidates, voters, observers and election duty officials. This raised the imperative of conducting elections in ways that ensure social inclusivity and gender sensitivity. Electoral process that gives primacy to women and guarantees their safety as candidates, voters, observers and election duty officials, would promoted their participation in the process. Against this background, the following recommendations are proffered:

- I. Politicians within the region must internalise 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 sensitise 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.
- ii. INEC, political parties, candidates, government, and other actors must comply strictly with the Electoral Act, 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.
- iii. Professionalism and morality must also be the watchword by media professionals covering electoral processes during 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.
- iv. INEC as an electoral umpire must live up to expectations. It must be seen to be neutral in all instances. INEC should not promise the people one thing and does another.

4. South West

Tolu Ojeshina

According to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), 44,414,846 representing 47.5 per cent of total registered voters for the 2023 general elections, were female. In the South West, 8,798,268 registered voters were female, compared to 9,160,698 male registered voters. Ekiti, Ogun, Osun and Oyo States recorded more female registered voters. However, gender disaggregation of the number of women who voted in the region remains indeterminate.

Based on the final list of candidates published by INEC, 404 female candidates out of a total of 2,432 candidates across all positions—Presidential, National Assembly, Gubernatorial, and State House of Assembly contested in the elections. In the South West, women constitute just about 17 per cent of the total candidates from the region. At the February 25 Presidential and National Assembly elections, only two women were elected in the region; Dr. Idiat Adebule, former Deputy Governor of Lagos State, and now Senator-Elect for Lagos West Senatorial District, and Adewunmi Onanuga who was re-elected for the Ikenne/Sagamu/Remo North Federal Constituency of Ogun State.

There is a reduction in the number of female federal lawmakers between the current (9th) assembly, and the incoming (10th) assembly. The current assembly has 7 women in the Senate, 2 of which are from the South West region, while the House of Representatives has 13 women, 4 of which are from the region. However, in the 2023 general elections, the number of female Senators-Elect and Members-Elect of House of Representatives have shrunk to 3 and 7 respectively, with the Southwest region having only 1 woman in each Chamber of the National Assembly.

The results at the March 18th Gubernatorial and State House of Assembly elections were slightly better than the National Assembly elections - the South West produced the highest number of female lawmakers with a total of 16 women elected from five of the six states in the region. Ekiti State topped the list with 6 female lawmakers-elect, Lagos and Ondo have 3 each, while Ogun and Oyo have 2 each. Osun State does not have a female lawmaker.

Table 4.1: Candidates and Winners Across Positions in South West Region

Position	Candidates				
	Male	Female	Total	Winners (Female)	
Presidential Elections	President	5	0	5	0
	Vice President	0	0	0	0
National Assembly	Senate	130	18	148	1
	House of Representatives	357	70	427	1
Gubernatorial Elections	Governor	42	3	45	0
	Deputy Governor	22	23	45	1
State House of Assembly	State House of Assembly	1,472	290	1,762	16
Total		2,028	404	2,432	19

Source: Author's compilation from INEC Database

1. Qosim Suleiman (2023), 2023 Polls: Youth population tops age distribution chart as INEC presents list of 93.4 registered voters, Premium Times, January 11, <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/575140-2023-polls-youth-population-tops-age-distribution-chart-as-inec-presents-list-of-93-4-registered-voters.html>
2. Gift Habib and Ted Odogwu (2023), N'Assembly female membership drops as 11 lose re-election, Punch, March 9, <https://punchng.com/nassembly-female-membership-drops-as-11-lose-re-election/>
3. Daily Trust (2023), Meet 48 Women Who Made It to State Assemblies, March 25, <https://dailytrust.com/meet-48-women-who-made-it-to-state-assemblies/>

Security Agencies and Government Institutions That Deployed Women

The following agencies and institutions deployed women to the South West region include:

- i. Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) – In the Southwest region, INEC deployed women as State Collation Officers, and Constituency Returning Officers.
- ii. National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) – The NYSC is said to have deployed 200,000 corps members as ad hoc staff for the general elections. The gender disaggregation of this deployment is however unclear.
- iii. Nigeria Police Force (NPF) – The Inspector-General of Police, at policemen prior to the Presidential and National Assembly elections, expressed that police men and women, would be deployed for the elections. However, the number of female officers deployed is unclear.
- iv. Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) – The Director of Public Relations announced the deployment of 102,000 personnel to monitor elections across the country, including officers from the female squad.

Although the institutions and agencies did not provide a clear gender disaggregation of deployment, it was gathered that three women were deployed as State Collation and INEC Returning Officers in the Presidential and National Assembly; Professor Folasade Ogunsola was Osun State Collation Officer of the presidential elections, Professor Adenike Oladiji was Lagos State Collation Officer, and Professor Virgy Onyene was INEC Returning Officer for Surulere Federal Constituency, in Lagos State. While exact figures are unavailable, assessment of polling units in the region shows that NYSC deployed a considerable number of female corps members as election officials.

Threats to Women as Voters, Candidates, Election Observers, Election Officials, and Election Security Officers in the Zone

In the South West region, the issues that constituted threats to women as voters, candidates, and electoral officials included electoral violence and voter suppression. Female voters in Lagos were particularly affected by electoral violence during the February 25 Presidential and National Assembly elections. An example that stands out, is the attack on Ms. Jennifer Seifegha, a female voter from Surulere, Lagos State. She has been applauded as a hero of democracy, for returning to the polls to vote even after she was brutally attacked and injured by political thugs. The late arrival of election officials to the polling unit, thereby delaying the electoral process and forcing voting to continue well into the night. Threats of violence also led to voter apathy, causing the voter turnout to be low in most polling units across the region. The sources and causative factors of the threat included inter- and intra-party conflict, inciting statements and hate speech, as well as ethnic discrimination and intolerance.

Threats to Women as Election Observers, Election Officials and Election Security Officials

Major threats to women deployed as election observers, officials, and security officials in the region included electoral violence, and voter intimidation, especially in Lagos State. During the presidential elections, political thugs disrupted the voting process and destroyed election materials in polling units in Mafoluku, Amuwo Odofin, Oshodi, Surulere, Ijaiye, Ijaniki, LASU Iba, Iyana Shashi, Ikorodu, Fadeyi, Ojota, Ogombo, Badagry, Sangotedo, and Lekki areas of the state. The disruption of the elections led to the dispersal of election officials and voters for fear of bodily harm and injury. In Ogun State, gunmen invaded a polling unit in Ayegbami, in the Ikenne Local Government Area, destroyed a ballot box, and disrupted the election process. Incidents of voter intimidation and suppression also occurred in Lagos State. In some polling units,

persons affiliated to a particular party were seen threatening voters with intentions to vote other parties or candidates. This disrupted the voting process and negatively impacted the effectiveness of election officials.

Violent incidents during the Presidential and National Assembly elections had a negative impact on voter turnout in the Gubernatorial State Assembly elections. Many voters, especially women feared that the State election might be more violent, which was sadly the case. In Lagos State, for instance, incidents of violence and voter intimidation occurred in polling units in Surulere, Oshodi, Mile 12, Ejigbo, Bucknor, Oke-Afa, Bolade Oshodi, Amuwo Odofin, Berger, Ojo, Agiliti, Ago Palace Way, Okota, and Mushin, as well as Igando, Ibeju Lekki, Alimosho, Ijegan, Ijesha, Ikeja, Magodo, Elegushi and Fadeyi. The violence was reportedly occasioned by political thugs to attacked voters and disrupted the voting process.

There were also targeted attacks on female public figures, including Nollywood actress, Chioma Chukwuka, who was violently attacked at a polling unit during the gubernatorial elections for allegedly sharing video evidence of a violent at a polling unit during the Presidential elections. An election observers in Lagos State deployed by ElectHer, a women-led civil society organisation, were attacked at a polling unit in Allen Avenue by political thugs. The elections were also marred by ethnic profiling, as some voters of Igbo origin, or even those who were suspected to resemble persons Igbo, were either denied access to their polling units or even violently attacked in some cases.

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An election observers in Lagos State deployed by ElectHer, a women-led civil society organisation, were attacked at a polling unit in Allen Avenue by political thugs.
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Election violence and voter suppression in the region, were occasioned by a number of factors, including inter-party conflict, inciting statements and hate speech, and ethnic discrimination. The ruling All Progressives Congress (APC)'s strong hold on the region, especially in Lagos State, where the party's Presidential candidate hails from, was challenged by Labour Party (LP), resulting in violent attempts by APC to retain the State, especially in the State elections. The attacks assumed an ethnic dimension when residents of Igbo origin were attacked because the Presidential Candidate of the LP is Igbo. Some of the attacks were fueled by inciting statements on social media.

Female electoral officials that have experienced these threats may be reluctant to participate in electoral duties in subsequent elections, and this will negatively impact electoral inclusivity and diversity. The disruption of the electoral process in some areas also prevented female electoral officers from effectively carrying out their electoral duties.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The implication of threats to women's participation as voters is voter apathy. While female voter registration has increased compared to the previous elections, continued threats at the polls may lead to voter apathy,

discouraging female voters from coming out to the polls for fear of safety, and/or distrust in the system. As candidates, continuous violence, and inconsistencies in the electoral process may further reduce the dwindling level of women's participation in the electoral process. The following recommendations are proffered

- i. Security agencies should improve their response to incidents of electoral violence, in order to effectively deescalate violence during elections.
- ii. Political parties and their candidates should emphasize the importance of a peaceful, inclusive election to supporters, and publicize a zero tolerance for electoral violence.
- iii. INEC should ensure that voting process is seamless, by ensuring that all equipment functions effectively, all materials are made available, and voting commences and concludes on schedule.

5. North Central

Sesan A. Peter

The 2023 general election was unique in a way. The Electoral Act (2022) provided for the technological innovations, including the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS), which combines fingerprint and face biometrics to verify voters' identity, and the electronic transmission of results from polling units directly to the INEC Result Viewing (IREV). In the North Central region, the build up to the election was relatively calm especially from January 2023 when the new Naira banknotes became scarce, which defined the political terrain and permutations. The scarcity contributed in the reduction of kidnapping and abduction for ransom. Thus, hope of increasing women participation in the elections as voters, security personnel and as election observers was quite high.

Across political parties, there were 28 female candidates for House of Representatives in North Central, representing 6 per cent of the 451 contestants. Of the 189 contestants for Senate, only 11, also representing six per cent, were women. Two Senatorial Districts and 11 Federal Constituencies were won by women, in North Central Nigeria. For the governorship elections, only Plateau State elected a female Deputy Governor. However, the region produced 10 female Members of the State Houses of Assembly; Kogi (2), Kwara (4), Plateau (2), Benue (1) and Nasarawa (1).

Women Deployed as Election Officials, Observers and Security Officials

Several institutions are saddled with the responsibility of deploying people for the purposes of election engagement on Election Day. First among them is the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), which has two categories of staff to work on election days. The first are the permanent staff of the Commission and the ad hoc staff, who are recruited differently through several collaborations. The ad hoc staff are drawn from the universities through the National University Commission and the Youth Corps through the National Youth Service Corps, which usually recruits staff of the universities, both academic and non-academic, on election duty. Also, INEC recruited other staff through an online portal that was not directly recruited through the affiliated institutions to also engage in election duty. In doing this, women are at liberty to apply.

Observation on the day of elections also shows that women are seen either as INEC ad hoc staff, security personnel, elections observers, or Youth Corps members working with INEC. Other organisations involved in election monitoring as observers include the INEC, Justice and Development Peace Commission (JDPC), National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS), Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Nigeria Bar Association (NBA), International Leadership Initiative, and other related organisations in North Central Nigeria. Women were seen during the elections as observers from different organisations in several polling units.

For security agencies, the Nigeria Police has the mandate to collate the names of security personnel from different security institutions such as the Nigeria Police Force, the Nigeria Correctional Service, the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS), the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), and the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS). Others include the Federal Road Service Corps (FRSC), and Nigeria Fire Service (NFS), among others. The Nigerian Army and Nigerian Air Force are also part of the election security personnel drafted to be part of the election security. Security agencies will not disclose the number of female officers among them because every officer is addressed as a man. There is no difference between male and female officers. However, by observation during the elections, most of the polling units had female security

personnel working within the polling unit, except in cases where the unit is seen as a flashpoint, men were directly deployed. This is to reduce the risk of women being caught up in cases of electoral violence.

Threats to Women as Election Observers, Election Officials and Election Security Officials

Kidnapping, Abduction and Attacks on Communities

In the build-up to the presidential elections, there were security threats to the elections generally in the North Central, such as kidnapping or abduction for ransom and attacks on communities in Plateau State, Benue State and Nasarawa State. These attacks portended danger for the conduct of the elections and were especially triggers to discourage women from participating in the elections as observers during the main elections.

Election Violence and Lack of Issue-Based Campaign

The second stage of the threat began when the campaign kicked off on September 28, 2022, with more than 50 reports of election-related violence in the first month of the campaign, including more attacks on INEC offices, especially in the south. This also added to the existing fear in the minds of the people because of the fear of escalation in the northern part of Nigeria. This became a formidable threat to women who actively participated in the 2023 general elections in North Central Nigeria.

The various political parties, their candidates, and especially their spokespeople were spreading inflammatory rhetoric and did not focus their campaigns on substantive issues. Instead of issue-based campaigns, they were rather attacking their various personalities, and the polity became heated up despite signing a pledge in September 2022 to campaign peacefully. This also created a sort of fear in the entire political system. The Peace Accord signed by the parties and their candidates did not have enforcement on the parties and their candidates; it is mere agreement without enforcement.

Hate speech and incitement to violence led to the killing of the Woman leader of the Labour Party (LP) in Kaura Local Government Area of Kaduna State, Mrs Victoria Chintex, on Monday, the 21st of November 2022. Her death further escalated fears in the psychology of women in the North Central Zone as women became scared of participating in the 2023 general elections. This eventually translated to low turnout during the elections, as many voters did not come out to vote partly because of the fear of being attacked, including women whose families did not want them to participate in the election monitoring observer, security, and electorate because of fear of electoral violence. In some instances, parents called their children, especially the National Youth Service Corps members, to abandon the assignment, especially Corp members from the South whose parents saw the disruptions of elections and violence that took place in the South.

Fake News In the Sopollingedia

Social media constituted another threat to the buildup to the elections as several unverified pieces of information were posted online without considering the negative implication on the nation, which also posed threats to the 2023 general elections and the outcome of results as results were collated and announced by social media retuning officers. Meanwhile, the constitution and specifically the Electoral Act 2022 (as amended) give the power to announce results to INEC and no other person. Also, inflammatory statements by political actors could set the system on fire, especially in conflict fragile environments where negative comments about religion, ethnicity, and other sensitive comments were made without verifying the authenticity of the source.

The rescheduling of the governorship and State Houses of Assembly further escalated propaganda in states like Plateau, where people were sending messages on social media that depicted ethnic and religious sentiments. The propaganda was seen where parties and supporters were seeking power through their vested interest whereby fake news were flying and that could further divide the fragile peaceful existence in the state.

Naira Redesigned Policy and Fuel Scarcity

There were two major challenges that came up in late 2022 that further threatened the elections, the scarcity and unofficial increase in fuel pump prices by the fuel stations (motor vehicle fuel) in most parts of the country since late 2022, especially in the North Central Zone, and the scarcity of cash following the federal government's introduction of redesigned banknotes in December. These issues hampered the effectiveness of INEC logistics and disenfranchised many voters who needed to travel to polling stations. Some of these people were either INEC ad hoc staff, voters or election observers in the North Central Zone. The paucity of currency has already created significant hardship, which could make a greater number of voters vulnerable to vote buying and ratchet up election tensions even further. Many of the people affected were women in rural communities who did not have the knowledge to engage in online transactions or do not have bank accounts at all. The impact was made manifest as women were seen complaining about the impact of the two problems at the receiving end.

Attitude of Political Leaders

The situation in Kogi State, where the state government hired a construction company known as CCECC to cut-off the road leading to Okehi Local Government Area in a bid to hinder the INEC official from accessing the local government and their communities for the purposes of the elections, was a wrong signal towards the 2023 general elections. It was a wrong signal; such a dastardly act can be replicated in other states if nothing is done to address issues like this.

Inability of BVAS to Upload Results

Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) failed in many parts of the nation. Photo: Business Day

This was a common experience in North Central where the INEC officials at the various polling units could not upload results after voting. That was the experience of many of the poling units across the nation



including Abuja. This act reduced the trust that Nigerian women had in the electoral process and also transparency of the electoral process. Although, there was an improvement during the gubernatorial and House of Assembly elections where the BVAS deployed worked well but this time, the disappointment from INEC during the Presidential elections already discouraged the voters coming out in large number to cast their votes. The rippling effects were seen when people refuse to come out during the gubernatorial elections in the various states. This account for why the total numbers of votes cast in states within the North Central were lower than the votes cast during the Presidential elections.

Implications of Threats to Women Participation

In the region, threats to women participation in political processes emanated from several sources. Some are created by the presence of Non State Armed Groups (NSAGs) while others are structural in nature. The inability of the government to address the issues of security holistically led to physical threat where armed groups such as bandits and kidnapers use small and light weapons to carry out their nefarious activities. This has become a potent threat that made women participation in politics a dreadful one. The other part that is structural in nature has to do with the level of finances of women to favourably compete with men in the current dispensation. Most women have no financial capacity to buy electoral forms and run campaign alongside their male counterparts in the political spheres.

The implication of the threat to women participation is that it has deprived women to actively participate as a result of fear and potential intimidation from electoral processes. The vulnerable nature of women has made it difficult for women to cope in the face of violence, insecurity and suppression. For instance, in Katsina State, on 6 February, the APC cancelled its presidential road show after an armed group attacked villages in Bakori local government area, killing more than 100 people in the various communities. This made women to restrain themselves during the general elections because of the fear that such situation may not repeat itself in one form or another. Again, in the face of political uncertainty, families cautioned their female family members from involving in the electoral process because of the fear of the unknown. The threat recorded during the presidential elections was seen on the part of INEC's inability to upload results to the IREV and this became the major reason why there was low turnout during the State's elections.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Women constitute a key component of the society in every sector; therefore, there is a need to create an enabling environment for all to participate in electoral process. With a conducive environment, women will be able to actively participate as candidates, voters, and security and election observer. Without women's active participation in governance and politics, no nation can achieve sustainable development, considering their population in the economy. True democracy can never be achieved with the exclusion of women or their low participation in the electoral process. Only women can genuinely and adequately advocate and ensure equality of both sexes. Participation facilitates women's direct engagement in public decision-making and is a means of ensuring better accountability for women. Having said that, the following recommendations were proffered:

- ✦ Security agencies should address such matters and ensure there is no repeat of snatching of ballot boxes, harassment and suppression of voters so as to have free, fair and credible elections. This is the only way credible elections can be guaranteed.
- ✦ Political parties should engage in advocacy to teach the potential voters on how to vote and engage communities and stakeholders on the danger of electoral violence in their various communities and the nation at large.

- ✦ Government and other stakeholders should begin to sensitise the various communities on the danger of identity politics that played out during the general elections in order to reduce the tendencies for violence in the aftermath of the general elections.
- ✦ Non-state actors should embark on post-election reconciliation among the stakeholders in order to de-escalate the already-pilled animosity resulting from the elections. This will help post-election community cohesion.

6. North East

Chris Kwaja

Nigeria's Northeast region has, over the last decade, been embroiled in an insurgency associated with Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (JAS, widely known as Boko Haram), which 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 region 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, almost the population of Gambia - are internally displaced, in a region with 12.8 million registered voters, based on the official report that was released by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

Since 2013, women and girls in communities attacked by JAS have been subjected to abduction, imprisonment, rape, forced 'marriage' and forced conversion. Many men have also been kidnapped or killed. Paths of recruitment to JAS have involved multiple factors. These include 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 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. For states such as Taraba, Bauchi and Gombe, they are not immune to the conflicts highlighted above. The heterogeneous nature of these states, in terms of ethnic composition, has been a major challenge for the management of diversity.

Table 6.1: Ethnic Groups and Flashpoints of Insecurity in the North East Region

States	Major Ethnic Groups	Nature of Insecurity
Adamawa	Batiye (Bachama), Fulani, Kilba, Margi, Mishika,	Insurgency, identity / communal conflicts, as well as farmer and herder conflicts.
Bauchi	Fulani, Hausa, Sayawa, Ribina,	Identity / communal conflicts
Borno	Bura, Kanuri, Shuwa	Insurgency
Gombe	Bolewa, Fulani, Tangale, Tera, Tula, Waja	Identity / Communal conflicts
Taraba	Chamba, Fulani, Ichen, Jukun, Kuteb, Mumuye, Tiv	Identity / Communal conflicts, farmer and herder conflicts
Yobe	Babur, Bade, Kanuri, Ngizim	Insurgency

Table 6.2: Flashpoints of Current State of Insecurity in the North East Region

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

Women and the Electoral Process in the North East Region



Election officials on duty. Photo credit: Premium Times

The primary objective of this assessment is to examine the factors that hinder or facilitate women's participation in politics across the North East region. Over the years, the issue of women's political rights and participation in electoral politics has dominated Nigerian politics. In fact, 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), and the Nigerian Constitution of 1999 [as amended].

Notwithstanding the international declarations affirming the rights and equality between men and women, the issue of women's participation continues to bedevil political systems and countries throughout the world. Available literature shows 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 that can be tapped to meaningfully enhance social, economic and political development of nations. This awareness has led to efforts by governments, complimented by civil society organisations (CSOs), non-governmental organisations (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 in fact, contribute their skills and talents to the political, social and economic enhancement of their nations and communities.

As it relates to 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 north east region, the situation is not different, most of the positions reserved exclusively for women across the states is that of women leader.

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

high court by the court of appeal. In response to the APC's choice of a women as the gubernatorial candidate, the Adamawa State Governor, Ahmadu Fintiri picked a women, Prof Kaletapwa Farauta as his running mate, under the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), which makes Adamawa State the only state with women contesting for governorship and deputy governorship positions in the north east region. The Governor Ahmadu Fintiri and his running mate, Prof. Kaletapwa Farauta were declared winners of the gubernatorial election on the 18th April 2023 by the INEC.

The high costs associated with the sale of expression of interest and nomination forms might have been a primary cause of women 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.

Table 6.3: Costs of Expression of Interest and Nomination Forms APC and PDC For 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 Political Parties' Websites

Deployments for 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 is the lead agency for election security, other security agencies, as well as well as the military, are deployed in order 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 stake with 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 conducted training for its personnel on election security, ahead of the 2023 elections.

In line with their respective mandate of either taking the lead on election security, in the context of the police, or supporting the police, as it relates to the role of other security agencies, women have played visible and active roles as part of security agents deployed on election duty. Though, data regarding the number of women deployed on election security duty were not made public by any of the security agencies.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Despite considerable progress over the last decade to promote the participation of women in politics in the North East region, there are evident gaps related to their roles in decision making within political parties and the electoral process in general. However, this report suggests that having women occupy strategic leadership roles has a positive effect on their ability and capacity to influence the process and outcome of the electoral process in the run up to the 2023 elections.

The emergence of either the governorship candidate of the APC, or the deputy governorship candidate of the PDP in Adamawa State, represents a major feat, as it relates to women's involvement in politics. While their emergence might be on elective positions, more attention should be given to advocacies that targets appointments into positions, outside the usual Ministry of Women Affairs that are often the exclusive positions for women.

Pre - Elections

- (i) Political parties should provide sufficient financial support for women candidates to enable them take part in the electoral process, based on the merit of the enormous social mobilisation power they possess. Such support should be used for women-related mobilisation towards voting and voter education.
- (ii) Political parties should make the selection and nomination processes transparent in order to have more women involve in party politics because they are biased against women in that 'male characteristics' are emphasized and often become the criteria for selection.
- (iii) INEC should develop and implement customised trainings on leadership and governance to enable women to acquire the communication, fundraising, advocacy and professional skills to participate in electoral politics, more effectively.
- (iv) Political parties should create a support network for prospective aspirants by pairing them with established women politicians who will be playing key roles as mentors and providing capacity building for young or aspiring female politicians as to enhance and develop them ahead of subsequent elections.
- (v) 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.
- (vi) 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 on election duty.



More attention should be given to advocacies that targets appointments into positions, outside the usual Ministry of Women Affairs that are often the exclusive positions for women.

Post-Elections

- (I) PWAN and other women-led organisations should push for political parties to provide sufficient financial support for women candidates to enable them to deploy party agents towards ensuring

their votes count during the voting, counting and declaration of results.

- (ii) PWAN should work with other civil society organisations, legal aid groups and political parties towards the provision of free legal assistance for women who seek legal redress over the conduct of the elections, with a specific focus on post-election litigations, which are often out of reach of most women, due to their poor financial standings.
- (iii) Security agencies in ensuring a proper gender disaggregation of the personnel to be deployed during election duty, with specific reference to highlighting the extent of gender consideration in such deployments.

7. North West

AI Chukwuma Okoli

The North West region comprises seven states; 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 addition to its conservative Islamic tradition, northwestern Nigeria is characterised 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. The combined threat of banditry and terrorism, which has aggravated the social vulnerabilities of women and girls in the region worsened such an awry situation. 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.

Northwestern 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 indicates that the incidence of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is highest in northwestern Nigeria. Such a trend holds vital implications for the state and future of women's participation in the civic space.

Security Agencies and Government Institutions that Deployed Women in North West

An election is an important security undertaking. Its safe conduct requires the involvement of security agencies at various levels. For the 2023 general elections in North-West Nigeria, all the security agencies in Nigeria were either fully or selectively mobilised to take up various roles in the process. All the agencies enlisted their female personnel for various forms election duties. Table 1 highlights the various security agencies involved in the elections along with their major roles.

Table 7.1: Security Agencies that Deployed Women for 2023 Elections in Northwest

Security Agency	Role
The Police Force (NPF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintenance of the electoral law and order Control of electoral violence (thuggery, riots, etc) Protection of voters and polling officials Protection of voting materials, etc.
The Nigerian Army (NA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rapid response strike operations in support of election security
Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enforcement of curfew Enforcement of public safety and order Anti-vandalism operations
The Nigerian Air Force (NAF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aerial reconnaissance in support of election security
The Nigerian Navy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reinforcement of internal security on the marine frontiers
Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Target border surveillance during the election
Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reinforcement of internal security Crowd and traffic control
Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anti-vote-buying surveillance and operations
Nigerian Intelligence Agency (NIA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anti-sabotage espionage and surveillance
Directorate of State Security Services (DSSS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intelligence operations on election proceedings
Federal Fire Service (FFS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anti-arson surveillance and response

Source: Author's compilation (Desk Study, February 2023)

There are also a number of government institutions (other than security agencies) that are directly or indirectly involved in the elections. Chief among these institutions is the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), which was saddled with the responsibility of conducting the elections. The rest are government departments, agencies, or parastatals that played different roles in the electoral process. Some of them offered different forms of support services to INEC while others participated variously as monitors, observers, or facilitators of the process. All of these institutions deployed women for different roles in the elections. Table 2 shows some of these institutions, along with the kinds of roles they played.

Table 7.2: Government Institutions that deployed Women for the 2023 Elections

Institution	Nature of Role
Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN)	Media stakeholder/facilitator
Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN)	Strategic Partner
Nigerian Television Authority (NTA)	Media stakeholder/facilitator
The Electoral Institute (TEI)	Monitor/Observer
National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS)	Monitor/Observer
National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Institute (NILDS)	Monitor/Observer
National Assembly Service Commission (NASC)	Monitor/Observer
All state-owned media organisations	Media stakeholder/facilitator

Source: Author's compilation (Desk Study, February 2023)

Percentage of Women Deployed as Observers, Electoral Officials and Security Personnel

Fact-specific data regarding the deployment of women as electoral officials, election observers/ monitors, and security personnel in the elections was not readily accessible at the time of compiling this report. It is, however, gathered that women were disproportionately under-represented in such roles. This outcome is possible for a number of reasons:

- I. 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 the security agencies, the representation of women is estimated to be around 10 per cent.
- ii. The apparent hazardous nature of election duty in Nigeria may warrant the deployment of more men than women. This is in view of the perceived higher the vulnerability of women to election-related risks and mishaps.

Most on-duty female security personnel in the elections were posted to INEC offices or polling stations for the purpose of stationary and protective surveillance. Male security personnel were mostly involved in patrols, rapid response operations, and the policing of sensitive materials and their movements. All physically disposed female personnel of the major security agencies were deployed in one dimension of election duty or another, although not all of them worked on the field.

With regard to the roles of election observers, monitors, and party agents, women were also significantly represented. Appreciable numbers of women were involved in civil society-level monitoring and observation in the urban centres of Kano, Kaduna, Zaria, Katsina, Sokoto, et cetera. It was, however, observed that most of the women in such roles were largely non-indigenes of the states in the focal region. An observation was

made concerning the role of women as party agents in the focal region. It was generally observed across the focal areas that women were grossly underrepresented in such roles. This outcome could have arisen from the widespread male-dominant patriarchal and sexist traditions that characterise the prevailing political culture of the region.

Threats to Women's Electoral Participation in North-West

The context and process of electoral participation in northern Nigeria have not been sufficiently safe, equitable, and inclusive. They are often characterised by some conditions and occurrences that inhibit free and fair politicking. Some of the inhibiting factors are gender specific in essence and import. These factors manifested in various fashions to undermine the involvement of women during the 2023 general elections.

Among these factors were the structural impediments originating from the patriarchal societal norms, among which are harmful or abusive traditional practices that hold women subjugated to men. A case in point was the 'purdah system' whereby a category of women is held in a domestic condition that limits their social visibility and mobility. In the context of the 2023 elections, the consequences of such practice found expression in gender-specific sexual, psychological, and physical hindrances suffered by female voters in some contexts. A prominent local politician in Kano was alleged to have insisted that his three wives and many daughters should stay at home while he and his sons would go and vote on their behalf.

Other factors that constrained the participation of women in the just conducted general elections in North West Nigeria included the prevailing security challenges in the region. The threat of bandit attacks forced women and girls to stay indoors during the elections in some parts of Kaduna, Katsina, and Zamfara States. The fear was a result of multiple incidents of abduction where women had hitherto been prime victims. It is important to note that violent occurrences such as banditry do not necessarily target female actors. Nonetheless, women have been more vulnerable to such an occurrence than men. Just like in the case of banditry, threats of electoral violence, such as thuggery or riots, also contributed in endangering the participation of women in the elections.

Bandit attacks were recorded on the day of the governorship election in Kaduna and Katsina states. Cases of thuggery and electoral violence in Sokoto and Kano. Although these incidents were more isolated than widespread, they nevertheless highlighted the hazardous nature of Nigeria's polls. Also, although the hazards are not necessarily women-specific, vulnerability to harm in the face of them is deemed to be higher on the side of women. The patriarchal reasoning that holds women as objectified extensions of their husbands and fathers means that some of the women were likely to have suffered some measure of family-imposed restrictions with regard to their participation in the elections.

Despite the fact that empirical evidence is largely lacking to buttress the fact that women's political participation in the context of the 2023 general elections was inhibited by gender-specific factors, corroborated anecdotes and local narratives garnered from the focal area suggest some of the women must have suffered one form of structural inhibition/ characterisations or another. An informant opined that the turnout of women in most polling units as voters, observers, or election officials was generally low.

Table 7.3: Threats to Women in 2023 General Elections in North West Region

Sources of Threat	Cause(s)/ Patterns
Security threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insurgency/ Terrorism • Banditry
Electoral violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thuggery • Police brutality • Riots
Gender-based victimisation/ violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rape • Sexual harassment • Gender bullying • Gender labeling

Source: Author’s compilation (Desk Study, February 2023).

It is pertinent to note that electoral violence generally is not a respecter of persons or gender categories. That notwithstanding, it is a trite that field-based hazards and vulnerabilities associated with the election processes are, more often than not, gender-determined. For instance, while any voter, no matter his/ her sex, can suffer any physical attacks in the course of an election, women and girls are, additionally, likely to suffer sexual harassment and/ or assault in that context. Also, the impact of thuggery, bullying or intimidation is likely to be more significant among women/ girls than it is among men/ boys. This is because the male category (arguably unlike their female counterparts) is more physically resilient to withstand such threats.

The factors highlighted in the foregoing specifically affected the characterisation and participation of female officials in the 2023 general elections. For instance, only a handful of women elected to be enlisted as electoral or security personnel in localities with life-threatening occurrences. Even mobilisation and posting of women to such volatile places were subjected to extra consideration in order to ensure that they were not exposed to difficult situations in view of their apparent vulnerabilities.

Implications for the Participation of Women

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 observers, party agents, polling officers and security agents in an election, women faced some gender-specific threats that not only affect their personal safety but also undermine electoral security. They were intimidated, harassed, molested, or characterised in a manner that exploited 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-dominated electoral democracy where the rights and dignity of women are treated with wanton abuse.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This report, among other things, has shown the peculiarity of women as a sort of endangered social category in the electoral process. This is in view of the multi-dimensional hazards that women are exposed to in that context. It is fair enough to conclude from the foregoing that the electoral process in Nigeria is not sufficiently gender friendly and inclusive. It is characterised by conditions and occurrences that impede safe and effective women's participation as voters, contestants, or on-duty personnel.

From the standpoint of the experience of northwestern Nigeria, this report explored the threats to women's

participation in the electoral process during the 2023 general polls. Considering the manifestations of such threats vis-à-vis the various roles played by women as voters as well as officials in the electoral process, it is observed that women were exposed to multiple gender-based encumbrances, which impeded their safe and effective involvement. The submission arising from the foregoing is that women in the focal area suffered structural cum situational limitations which highlight their gendered vulnerability and victimhood in the context of elections.

1. Election security in Nigeria needs to be conceptualised in order to reflect concerns and priorities for gender affirmation in favour of women who are often more vulnerable to election-related threats.
2. Government's counter insurgency/ terrorism/ banditry strategies should embody strategic measures to mitigate the vulnerabilities of women in such situations.
3. To reduce women's vulnerability to societal structures of exploitation, victimization and intimidation, there is a need for a conscious and deliberate effort at empowering women morally, socially and economically.
4. Gender-specific contingency measures must be taken to protect the women involved in all categories of election duties in order to mitigate their peculiar gender vulnerabilities in that context.
5. There is an urgent need for the formulation and implementation of 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.

8. Conclusion

Maurice Ogbonnaya and 'Kemi Okenyodo

This security threat assessment, which examined the context, nature, patterns and implications of prevailing threats to the participation of women in the 2023 general elections, was underpinned by empirical realities and evidence-based studies across several climes that having women in key and strategic leadership roles has a positive effect on their ability and capacity to influence the process and outcome of developmental, including political processes. In Nigeria, however, despite considerable progress over the last decade to promote the participation of women in the political process, there are evident gaps related to their roles in decision making within political parties and the electoral process.

Although women participated in the 2023 general elections in different capacities, the outcome, on all indicators, fell below expectations of improving the level of women participation in politics as candidates, election security officials, election observers and election officials. Thus, women remain significantly marginalised as the electoral process in Nigeria is still largely male dominated. Across the various regions, the 2023 general elections were characterised by conditions and occurrences that impede safe and effective

participation of women as voters, contestants, or on-duty personnel. These include, among other things, physical attacks, violence, suppression and intimidation, as well as the impact of scarcity of Naira banknotes and fuel, were major threats to women participation in the process.

These conditions and occurrences, which undermine the electoral participation of women, are rooted in economic, socio-cultural and political imperatives that are dominant in the Nigerian society. These factors, not only expose women to multiple gender-based vulnerabilities, which impede their safe and effective involvement and participation in the political process, they also negate the principles of the Affirmative Action, Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, as well

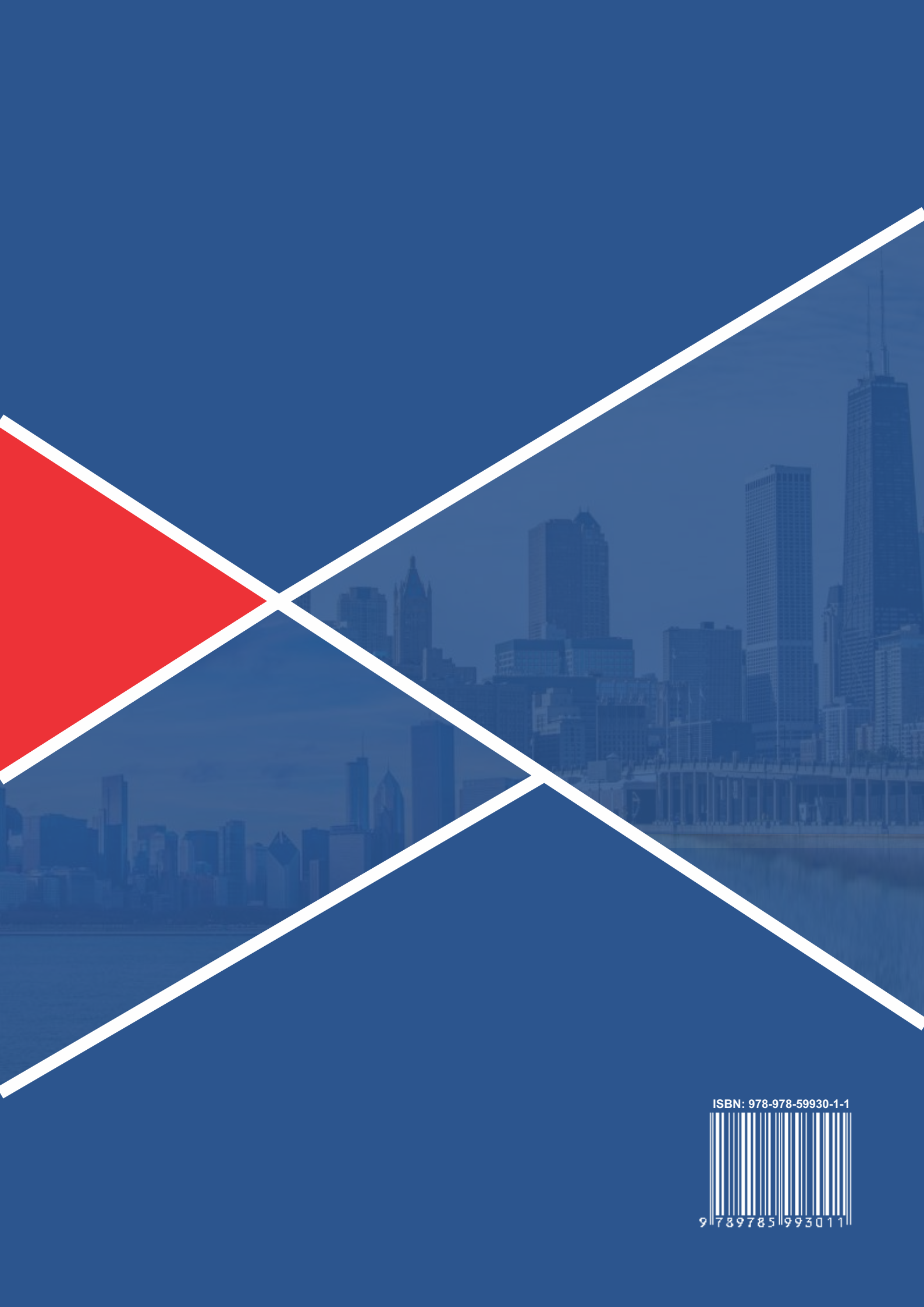
as all national statutory guarantees for equality and inclusivity in Nigeria's political and governance processes. The development calls for urgent interventions by all stakeholders to the electoral process that will guarantee the adequate participation of women in the political and governance processes.

This study is part of the effort at the intervention. Conducted across the six geopolitical zones of the country and the Federal Capital Territory, the study has made far reaching recommendations and measures relevant for electoral reforms, political party inclusivity and security provisioning by state actors. It has also recommended the need for programmatic interventions by civil society organisations. The whole essence is to mitigate the various threats that militate against the adequate participation of women in the electoral process in Nigeria.

Although women participated in the 2023 general elections in different capacities, the outcome, on all indicators, fell below expectations of improving the level of women participation in politics as candidates, election security officials, election observers and election officials.

The study there concludes with the following recommendations:

- ✦ The ICCES should evolve a robust contingency and incident response plan to swiftly attend to security breaches, especially those with the potential to compromise the safety and security of women as voters, candidates, election observers, election officials and security agents in future elections.
- ✦ NEC and security agencies should evolve context-sensitive deployment plans that give women the opportunity to take up positions they are qualified for.
- ✦ Security agencies should ensure gender-based disaggregation of personnel to be deployed on election duty, with specific reference to highlighting the extent of gender consideration in such deployments.
- ✦ National Assembly should enact a legislation to establish the Electoral Offences Tribunal/Commission to deal with incidence of election violence, especially those inordinately directed at women.
- ✦ Women-rights organisations should collaborate with political parties and the National Assembly to enact a legislation to de-monetise the electoral process in Nigeria.
- ✦ Political parties should adhere to the provisions of the 2018 Political Parties Code of Conduct that commits them to zero tolerance for violence by their functionaries, candidates and supporters.



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