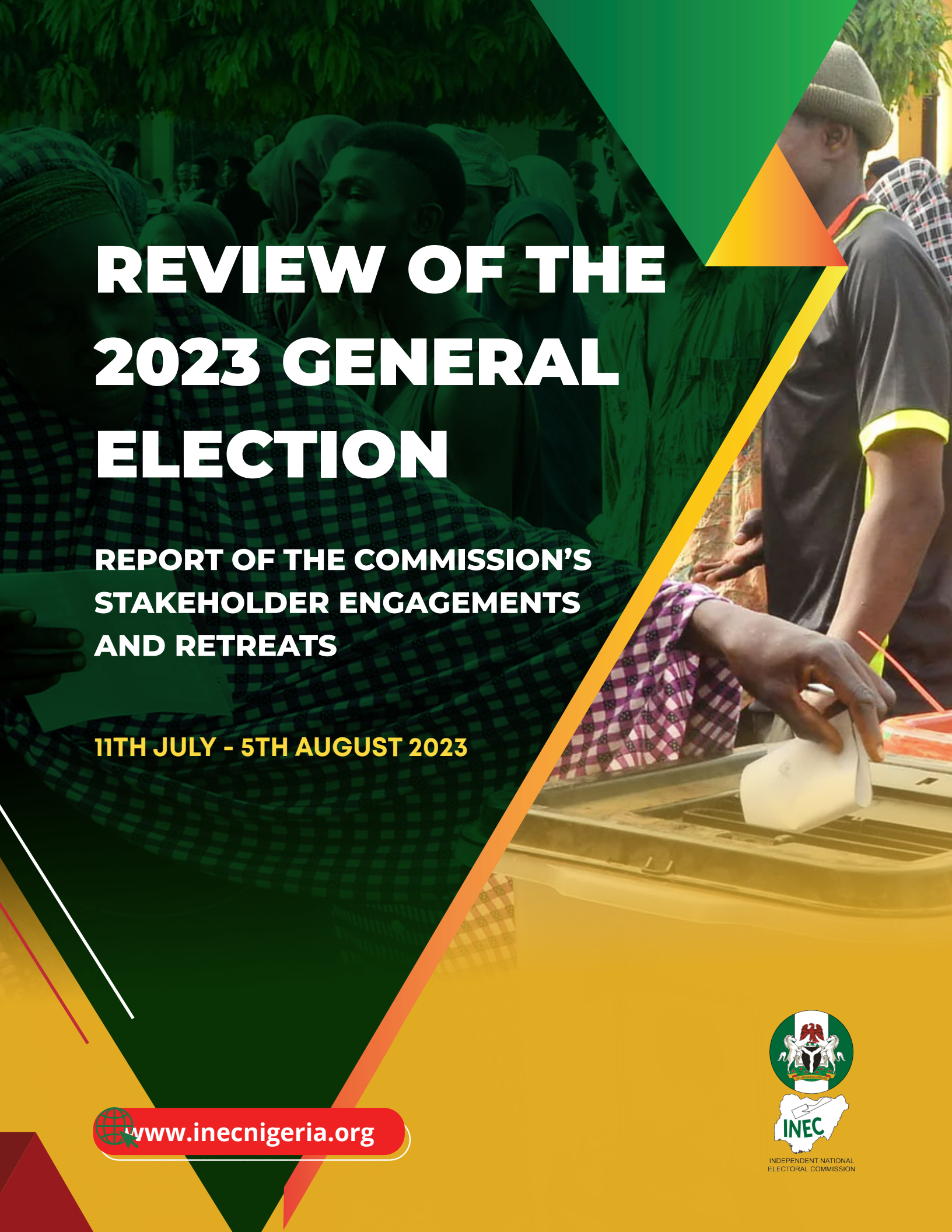

REVIEW OF THE 2023 GENERAL ELECTION

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION'S STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENTS AND RETREATS

11TH JULY - 5TH AUGUST 2023

www.inecnigeria.org

INEC
INDEPENDENT NATIONAL ELECTORAL COMMISSION

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REVIEW OF THE 2023 GENERAL ELECTION

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ABIS	-	Automated Biometrics Identification System
AEO	-	Assistant Electoral Officer
AFIS	-	Automated Fingerprint Identification System
APO	-	Assistant Presiding Officer
AS	-	Administrative Secretary
BON	_	Broadcasting Organisation of Nigeria
BVAS	-	Bimodal Voter Accreditation System
CCTV	-	Closed Circuit Television
CO	-	Collation Officer
CSO	-	Civil Society Organisation
CSRVS	-	Collation Support and Result Verification System
CVR	-	Continuous Voter Registration
EMB	-	Election Management Body
EMS	-	Election Management System
EMSC	-	Election Monitoring and Support Centre
EO	-	Electoral Officer
EOLC	-	Electoral Operations and Logistics Committee
EOps	-	Electoral Operations
EOSC	-	Electoral Operations Support Centre

EPP	-	Election Project Plan
ERM	-	Election Risk Management
EV-MAT	-	Election Violence Mitigation and Advocacy Tool
FCT	-	Federal Capital Territory
FGN	-	Federal Government of Nigeria
FRSC	-	Federal Road Safety Corps
GE	-	General Election
ICCC	-	INEC Citizens' Contact Centre
ICCES	-	Inter-Agency Consultative Committee on Election Security
ICT	-	Information and Communication Technology
IDP	-	Internally Displaced Persons
INEC	-	Independent National Electoral Commission
INECPRES	-	INEC Portal for Recruitment of Election Staff
INEC-SANS	-	INEC Security Alert and Notification System
IReV	-	INEC Result Viewing Portal
IVED	-	INEC Voter Enrolment Device
KPIs	-	Key Performance Indicators
LGA	-	Local Government Area
LGATechSS	-	Local Government Area Technical Support Staff
MoU	-	Memorandum of Understanding
MWUN	-	Maritime Workers Union of Nigeria
NAF	-	Nigerian Air Force

NARTO	-	National Association of Road Transport Owners
NASS	-	National Assembly
NBTE	-	National Board for Technical Education
NCC	-	Nigerian Communications Commission
NIBSS	-	Nigerian Inter-Bank Settlement System
NIMC	-	Nigerian Identity Management Commission
NIN	-	National Identification Number
NOA	-	National Orientation Agency
NPAN	-	Newspaper Proprietors' Association of Nigeria
NPC	-	National Population Commission
NPS	-	Nigerian Postal Service
NUC	-	National Universities Commission
NUJ	-	Nigerian Union of Journalists
NURTW	-	National Union of Road Transport Workers
NYSC	-	National Youth Service Corps
PEP	-	Pre-Election Preparation
P&M	-	Planning and Monitoring
PO	-	Presiding Officer
PUs	-	Polling Units
PVC	-	Permanent Voters' Card
PwD	-	Persons with Disability
R&D	-	Research and Documentation

RAC	-	Registration Area Camp
RATechSS	-	Registration Area Technical Support Staff
REC	-	Resident Electoral Commissioner
RO	-	Returning Officer
SCR	-	Smart Card Reader
SP	-	Strategic Plan
SPIP	-	Strategic Plan Implementation Programme
SPO	-	Supervisory Presiding Officer
TEI	-	The Electoral Institute
TU	-	Transport Unions
TVC	-	Temporary Voter's Card
VEP	-	Voter Education and Publicity
VIO	-	Vehicle Inspection Officer

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FOREWORD

The Commission has a tradition of undertaking a comprehensive review of its performance after each General Election. The purpose is to identify its successes and failures and to learn critical lessons for improving the quality of elections and the electoral process. The review usually consists of internal debriefing sessions and engagements with electoral stakeholders to assess the Commission's activities, processes, and procedures before, during and after the election. The internal review process entails meetings with the Resident Electoral Commissioners (RECs), Administrative Secretaries, Directing Staff and Electoral Officers to carefully evaluate INEC's own performance in the conduct of the election. The external stakeholders' engagement includes meetings with leaders of political parties, members of the Inter-Agency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES), leadership of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and Media Executives (NUJ & Abuja Bureau Chiefs).

The Commission undertook an extensive review of the 2023 General Election to assess and evaluate all activities, processes and procedures relating to the Election from 11th July to 5th August 2023. In keeping with the Commission's policy of openness and transparency, the review was conducted in both plenary and breakout sessions, covering a total of 11 engagements in six separate internal and five external meetings. This strategic engagement method enabled the Commission to listen to its officials and key electoral stakeholders and to learn vital and important lessons in the continuing effort to improve the conduct of future elections.

The review adopted a bottom-up internal debriefing procedure which commenced with the Commission's meeting with RECs to identify and develop a common understanding of the issues. This was followed by the conduct of focused review meetings in the 36 states and FCT, and subsequently the Commission's review meetings with Electoral Officers, Administrative Secretaries and Directors, Resident Electoral Commissioners as well as with certain categories of Ad-Hoc Election Staff. The Commission expanded the debriefing to include engagements with the leaders of the National Union of Road Transport Workers

(NURTW), National Association of Road Transport Owners (NARTO), and Maritime Workers Union of Nigeria (MWUN).

The report is presented in four chapters which identified the main issues discussed in the review and provided details of the observations; opportunities and challenges related to each issue; as well as key recommendations for resolving them. Lastly, the report highlighted aspects of the recommendations that can be implemented through administrative action either solely by the Commission or in collaboration with other electoral stakeholders, as well as those that will require a review of existing legal framework.

The Commission has successfully carried out this review exercise solely on its resources without any external support.

Professor Mahmood Yakubu
Chairman
Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In 2017, the Commission enacted the Post-election Audit and Review Policy (PARP) instrument as a compass to standardising the review of the conduct of elections, as well as providing the framework for conducting such reviews. This policy informed the establishment of the 2023 Post Election Review Committee (PERC) to drive the comprehensive review of the 2023 General Election.

The report of the post-election review of the 2023 General Election is a product of the Committee as well as the collective effort of many stakeholders – internal and external – who participated actively in the 11 review meetings and engagements that were critical in the production of the report.

We acknowledge the leadership of the Commission for remaining focused on its mandate and vision, especially on the objective of implementing post-election audit and reviews. The exercise has become not only an essential planning tool for future elections, but also a key channel for receiving informed feedback from key stakeholders on the conduct of elections and the management of the electoral process.

We specially acknowledge, with appreciation, the support of National Commissioners Mr. Ken Ukeagu and Dr. Baba Bila who were members of the Committee. We are also grateful to other members of the Committee: Prof M. J. Kuna, SA to INEC Chairman, Prof. Bolade Eyinla, CTA to INEC Chairman, Mr. Rotimi Oyekanmi, CPS to INEC Chairman, Mrs. Maryam I. Musa, former Director Commission's Secretariat and other members of the Committee and representatives of key departments. These includes Hakeem Adigun, Chinwe Ogbuka, Modu Gaidam, Ndidi Okafor, Prof. Ibrahim Sani, and Engr. Muhammad Lawal representing EOPs, VEP, EPM, Security, R&D, and ICT departments respectively as well as Emeka Nwachukwu and Helen Ogundana of the P&M directorate. The contributions of Chima Duruaku, former Director Planning and Monitoring deserves acknowledgement who as member/Secretary of the Committee coordinated and supervised the production of the draft report.

We also must acknowledge with gratitude, the contributions of Resident Electoral Commissioners and Administrative Secretaries in the 36 states and the FCT who provided leadership for the review exercise in their respective states. The contributions and role of Heads of Departments, Electoral Officers and other staff of the Commission in the states during the review exercise are also acknowledged.

The 2023 Post Election Review and Audit of the planning, conduct and outcome of the 2023 General Election would not have been complete without the participation and contributions of key stakeholders in the electoral process including political parties, ad-hoc election staff (Presiding, Collation and Returning Officers), members of ICCES and leadership of political parties, transport unions, CSOs and the Media. We want to express the Committee's gratitude for their invaluable contributions to the success of the review process.

Finally, on behalf of the Committee members, I would like to specially thank the Chairman of the Commission, Prof Mahmood Yakubu for his support to the Committee and for providing leadership throughout the review process.

Professor Rhoda H. Gumus
Chairman
2023 Post-Election Review Committee

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On Wednesday 17th May 2023, the Commission inaugurated the Post-Election Review Committee to drive the review of the 2023 General Election, in line with its post-election review policy. The mandate of the Committee included conducting the review, formulating a framework for its implementation, documenting actionable recommendations, and producing a report.

To organise the review process effectively, the Committee framed its strategy around six elements which are: (i) distinguishing internal and external stakeholders; (ii) identifying levels of engagement; (iii) organising 11 targeted review meetings and engagements with critical stakeholders; (iv) formulating the areas and themes for discussion; (v) articulating a timetable and an action plan; and (vi) developing programme to guide the discussions.

To accomplish the task within the time assigned, whilst ensuring that key observations and actionable recommendations are aggregated accurately, the Committee decided to harvest observations and recommendations as the engagements proceeded across the 15 thematic areas and 11 review meetings.

At the end of the exercise, 75 consolidated observations were made, including the following key observations: i) issues of interference in the electoral process by the political class; ii) the conduct, behaviour and attitude of polling agents and election observers at polling units (PUs) and collation centres; iii) sustaining the deployment of technology such as the BVAS, IReV and IVED in the electoral process; iv) issues of the low turnouts during claims and objections prior to the certification of the Register of voters; v) breaches of MoUs/contracts by transport service providers; vi) issues of the intimidation and harassment of regular/ad-hoc staff by disruptive elements on election duty; vii) issues of the increasing involvement of the political class in the perpetration of electoral offences; viii) commendations on the Commission's expansion of voter access to PUs policy and the need to continually expand such access and provide voters with more pleasant voting experiences; ix) issues of breaches of the political party constitutions, laws and guidelines with impunity during primaries and congresses; x) inefficient PVC collection methods leading to delays in successful collection by the public; and xi) public perception that the outcome of some elections were tampered with.

At the end of the review, 142 actionable recommendations were harvested. Of these, 86 require action solely by INEC, 44 by INEC in collaboration with other

entities, three by ICCES (security agencies), eight by the National Assembly through legislative action and one by the Federal and State governments. Some of these actionable recommendations are:

i. Review of Section 47 (1) of the Electoral Act, 2022 to modify the mandatory requirement for the use of PVCs to vote and the introduction of electronically downloadable voters' card.

ii. Redesign the election result sheets to increase the size of fields for entering votes scored and enable multiple digit entries.

iii. Establish Planning and Monitoring Unit at the State level to manage the EMSC and implement other P&M programmes at state level.

iv. Incorporate the party acronym headers at the bottom of election result sheets to ensure consistency between the "total votes scored" field with the names/logos of respective political parties.

v. Devolute the Display for Claims and Objections to the polling unit level.

vi. Review of the electoral legal framework to introduce early/special voting to cater for eligible voters on essential services, including election and security personnel, election observers, journalists and other designated categories of voters.

vii. Review the electoral legal framework to permit diaspora and/or Out of Country Voting.

viii. Enforce penalties in the event of breaches by any of the parties, of the contractual agreement between the Commission and transportation service providers.

ix. Explore opportunities from development partners to fund weekly media conversations on electoral activities in major and local languages.

x. Deploy social media platforms more actively (TikTok, Instagram etc.) to mobilize the youth for publicity and voter enlightenment.

In the pages that follow, the report details the entire 142 recommendations on each of the 15 thematic areas from the 11 review meetings conducted by the Commission. In presenting this report, the Commission hopes that electoral stakeholders will speedily undertake and conclude conversations on how to improve the electoral process and implement all the actionable recommendations well before the next General Election.

INTRODUCTION

01

It is now customary for the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to conduct post election audits and reviews. Since 2011, these reviews have become fixed in the calendar of the Commission. In July 2017, the Commission institutionalised the post-election reviews through its *Policy on Post-Election Audit and Review*. The policy was designed "to create a framework for reporting, reviewing and auditing elections conducted by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)." Its scope includes the audit of electoral processes and personnel, noting that "all elections conducted by INEC and key officials involved in elections" were to be reviewed. The approach enunciated in this policy was twofold. First, internal debriefs of officials and staff of the Commission, who played key roles in elections should be undertaken after every major, and especially a General Election; and second, engagements with external stakeholders, who constitute core participants in the election and recipients of the Commission's services in the process should be consulted and listened to. The logic is that by harnessing information from both sides, the Commission would have a deeper appreciation of the conduct and management of an election. By so doing, the Commission signalled a strong commitment to review its actions, not only internally in the form of self-audit, but also externally in the form of reviews by stakeholders.

For the Commission, post-election audit and reviews serve several overarching purposes. First, as important accountability tools, such reviews offer the Commission an opportunity to account for its conduct and management of an election, not only by its staff and officials, but also as an institution. Typically, in a General Election, the Commission deploys over one million officials acting in different roles. While it carefully tracks the roles and actions of these personnel during elections, it is not possible to fully account for all roles and actions that are taken under the most difficult, sometimes life-threatening conditions. A post-election review, therefore, provides a veritable mechanism for auditing these actions, assessing their strengths and learning lessons for future exercises. Second, and related to the first, such reviews serve as an expression of the Commission's commitment to transparency and electoral integrity, both essential elements in gaining and retaining public trust. Third, post-election audits and reviews provide an important opportunity for lesson-learning, to produce new knowledge, innovation, and the formulation of correctional measures towards the improvement In this lesson-learning process, the Commission not only builds new knowledge,

but it also reinforces existing stock of knowledge on elections thus deepening institutional memory. Fourth, post-election reviews also enable the Commission to further educate the public about its work, particularly the inherent challenges that it faces in the electoral process. It is also a means of learning about how citizens experience the electoral process directly from stakeholders.

Furthermore, the reviews offer the Commission a platform to share its own experiences about the actions of specific stakeholders that negatively or positively impact on elections and explore ways of either curtailing or sustaining them. Finally, post-election audits and reviews constitute important building blocks for electoral reform. This is particularly so in Nigeria, where it has become common practice for electoral reforms, especially of the electoral legal framework, to follow each General Election. Overall, the rationale behind INEC's post-election audits and reviews may be summarised as lesson-learning, electoral reform and confidence or trust building.

It was in line with the long-standing practice and policy of post-election reviews that the Commission inaugurated the post-election review of the 2023 General Election on 17th May 2023. The key objectives of the reviews were:-

i. To interrogate the stages involved in the 2023 General Election and learn lessons for the conduct of elections.

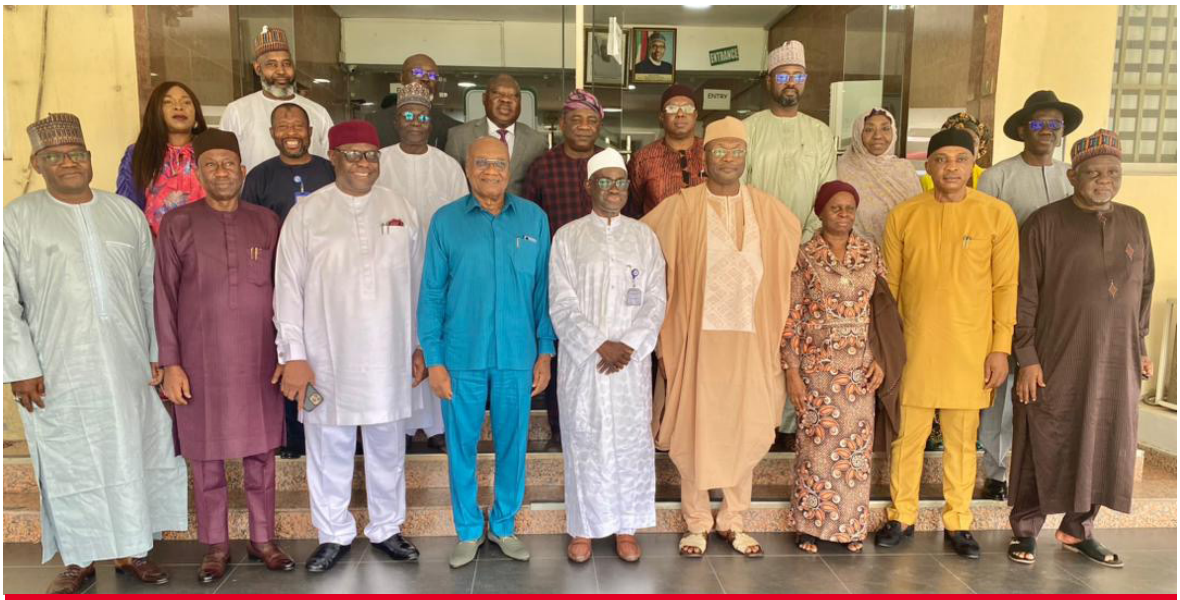
ii. To provide an understanding of the success factors as well as shortcomings and gaps in the conduct and management of the 2023 General Election.

iii. To debrief relevant election officials and stakeholders on their experiences during the election.

iv. To formulate actionable recommendations to the Commission and other electoral stakeholders for the improvement of the electoral process.

v. To help deepen institutional memory on election management for the Commission.

Chairman, Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Prof Mahmood Yakubu (Centre), National Commissioner, Prof Rhoda Gumus (left) and National Commissioner, Mallam Mohammed Haruna (right) at the inauguration of the 2023 General Election Review Commitee on 17th May 2023.



Members of the 2023 Election Review Committee with the INEC Chairman, Prof. Mahmood Yakubu (4th left) and other Commission members after the Committee's inauguration on 17th May 2023

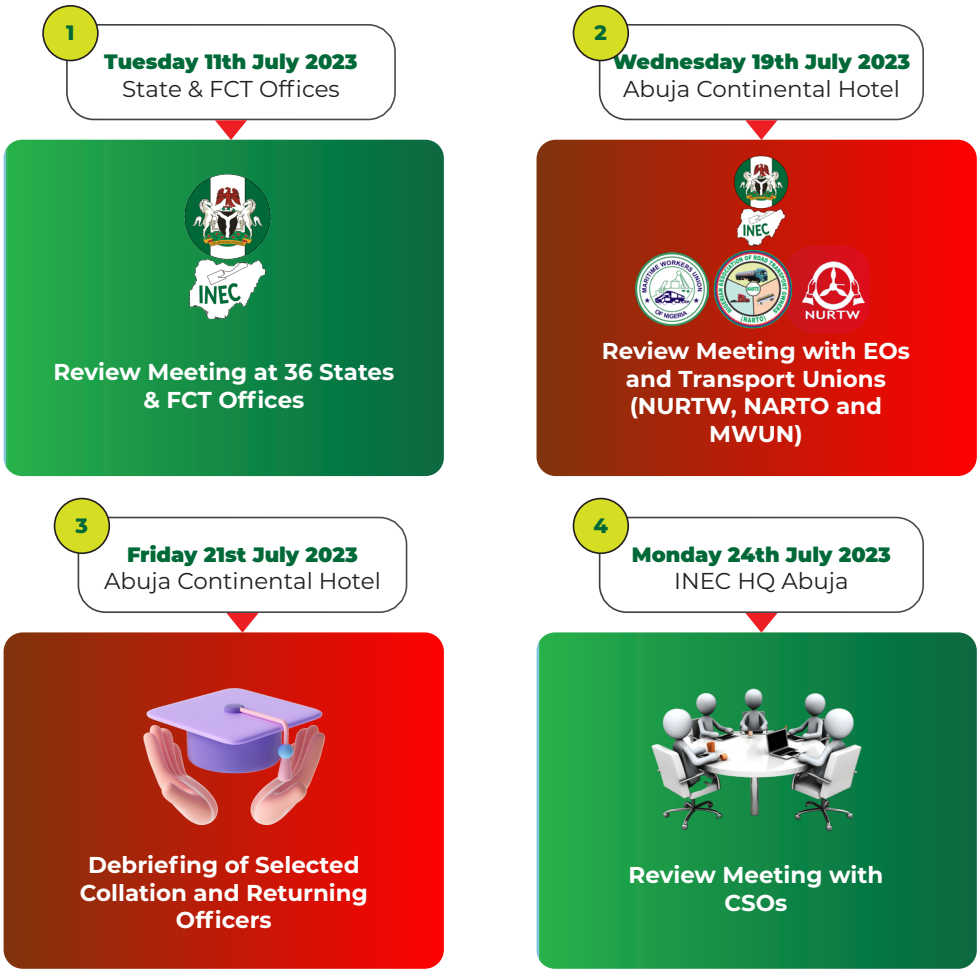
REVIEW FRAMEWORK & METHODOLOGY

02

The 2023 General Election review involved both internal debriefs and engagements with stakeholders. These internal debriefs (audit) and reviews with stakeholders were organised in a manner that allowed free expression of opinions, guided by the Commission's own *Guidelines for Conducting and Managing Stakeholder Meetings/Engagements* (2019), to ensure representativeness and openness.

In addition to the observations and recommendations from the internal debriefings and engagement with stakeholders, additional information came from reports of election observers accredited by the Commission, media reports, as well as the Commission's documents. These included lectures delivered by the Chairman of the Commission, discussion/position/policy papers produced by the Commission, reports of various election monitoring mechanisms of the Commission and reports of previous elections. Figure 1 indicates the schedule of the post-election review meetings.

Figure 1: Schedule of 2023 Post Election Review Meetings



5 **Tuesday 25th July 2023**
INEC HQ Abuja

Regulations and Guidelines for Political Parties, 2022

Review Meeting with Political Parties

6 **Wednesday 26th July 2023**
INEC HQ Abuja

Review Meeting with Media (NUJ and Abuja Bureau Chiefs)

7 **Friday 28th July 2023**
INEC HQ Abuja

Review Meeting with Expanded ICCES

8 **Wednesday 2nd August 2023**
Radisson Blu Ikeja, Lagos

Review Meeting with Media Executives

9 **Thursday 3rd August 2023**
Radisson Blu Ikeja, Lagos

Review Meeting with Admin. SECs

10 **Friday 4th August**
Radisson Blu Ikeja, Lagos

Review Meeting with RECs

11 **Saturday 5th August 2023**
Radisson Blu Ikeja, Lagos

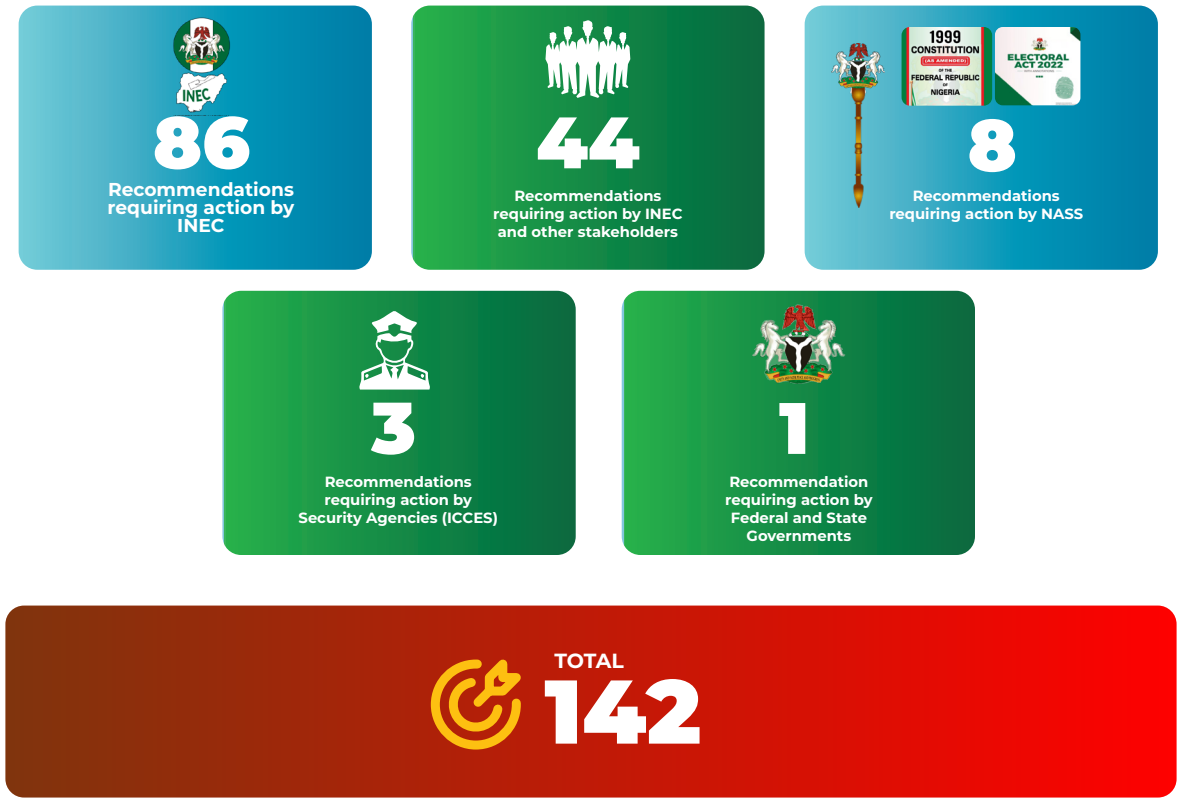
Commission's Review Meeting

KEY FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

03

The comprehensiveness of the post-2023 General Election review is demonstrated by the total of 208 recommendations that arose directly from the internal debriefs and stakeholder engagements. Out of the 142 recommendations, 86 (representing 60.56%) require action solely by INEC. Another 44 (or 32.28%) require action by INEC in cooperation and collaboration with other stakeholders, eight recommendations require legislative action by the National Assembly. Three recommendations were addressed to the security agencies and one was addressed to the Federal and State Governments as presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Summary of Actionable Recommendations by Implementer



The recommendations are discussed under 11 sub-headings as follows: i) General Preparedness, ii) Voter Management, iii) Voter Education and Public Communication, iv) Political Party and Candidate Management, v) Electoral Operations and Logistics Management, vi) Election Officials and Personnel, vii) Election Technology, viii) Voting and Result Management, ix) Election Security, x) Election Monitoring and Supervision, and xi) Partnership and Collaboration.

3.1 General Preparedness

Perhaps the most important aspect of conducting a General Election is preparing for it, especially in a very big demographic and geographically complex country like Nigeria. Election preparations, including the deployment of personnel and materials and the implementation of electoral activities constitute the most extensive mobilisation that takes place in the country in peacetime. For the 2023 General Election, for instance, preparations were made to receive and attend to 93,469,008 registered voters across 176,846 PUs scattered over different terrains – towns, villages, swamps, lowlands, plateaus, and mountains – in a space of six hours. This involved recruiting, training, and deploying over one million staff.

General preparation for elections normally involves review of previous elections through internal meetings and external engagements with major electoral stakeholders. It also entails review of the key policies and project implementation frameworks of the Commission such as the Strategic Plan (SP) and Strategic Plan Implementation Programme (SPIP) as well as the Election Project Plan (EPP). For several electoral cycles now, the Commission has established an approach of carefully planning the general as well as other off-cycle and bye-elections within the ambit of its five-year strategic plan. For the General Election, the Commission usually completes the EPP at least one year ahead of the election. Thus, the 2023 EPP which identified some 1495 broad as well as thousands of specific activities to be implemented was completed before the end of 2021 and implementation began immediately. Each of the activities had a specific implementation timeline and was tracked by the EMSC. The EPP contained, among other activities, the technological innovations deployed in the 2023 General Election; the increase in the number of PUs following the expansion of voter access by the Commission; voter registration process and increase in the number of registered voters; monitoring of political party activities; procurement and deployment of non-sensitive and sensitive materials; organisation and coordination of election logistics; recruitment and training of election personnel and the management of election security.

The prime mover for the implementation of the EPP was the election budget. Elections cost money and more so in a country like Nigeria. Among the many reasons for the rising cost of elections in Nigeria, three are worth mentioning in some detail. First, is the sheer size of the country. For the 2023 General Election, there were 93,469,008 registered voters, 176,846 PUs, 8,809 Wards and 1,484 Federal and State constituencies for which voters were expected to vote. To organise and manage the election, 1,574,301 polling unit staff, and 68,057 Collation/Returning Officers were deployed. Similarly, the Commission engaged and deployed 182,491 vehicles (91,392 cars, 88,090 motor bikes and 3,019 boats) for the election, in addition to the hundreds of thousands of ballot boxes and voting cubicles. This is besides the hundreds of security personnel as well as domestic and foreign media organizations and election observers. By all counts, a General Election in Nigeria is one of the most complex, strictly time-bound peacetime operation that can be conducted anywhere in the world.

Second, is the sheer number of electoral staff deployed in a General Election as earlier mentioned. The over 1.5 million personnel, including polling officials, supervisors, monitors, and security officials must be recruited, screened, trained, deployed and remunerated in order to perform their assigned roles and tasks. The personnel component account for about 40% of the entire election budget.

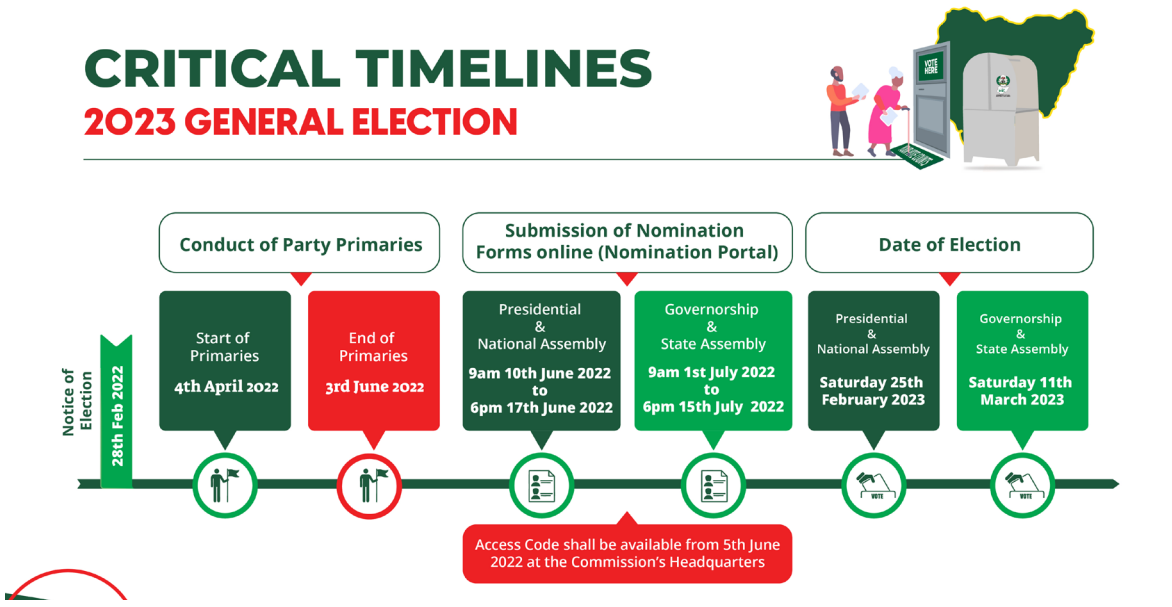
Third and lastly, perhaps the most important factor determining the rising cost of elections in Nigeria is lack of citizens' trust in public institutions. The cost of trust in elections is simply enormous and rising. Voters' cards are produced with advanced security features to prevent them from being cloned or used by impersonators. Ballot papers are printed to near currency quality to protect them from being forged. Result forms are produced via security printing for the same reason. In addition to these, advanced technology must be deployed in accrediting voters and in results management to build the confidence of the public in the integrity of the process. Finally, the entire process – from the deployment of electoral materials and personnel to their retrieval from the RACs, PUs and collation centres must be protected by the Police and other security agencies and in some cases by the Armed Forces. All these are extremely costly undertakings, and the deeper the level of distrust of the process, the higher the cost of the exercise is likely to be.

For the 2023 General Election, the Commission secured full funding support from the Federal Government. With the coming into force of the Electoral Act 2022, the Commission promptly released the Timetable and Schedule of Activities for the election

as shown in Figure 3 and worked with relevant authorities to ensure that the provision of Section 3 (3) of the Act on the release of funds one year to the general election was as far as practicable achieved.

The progress made with funding notwithstanding, during the review, election budget and funding were major issues raised by numerous stakeholders. Thus, the Naira redesign policy close to the General Election was one major issue raised. Although the Commission worked with relevant government agencies to mitigate the effect of the policy on preparations for the election, its wider impact on the election was strongly noted. Apart from the Naira redesign, issues of the impact of rising inflation on election materials and services where budgeted amounts could no longer procure some materials and services was repeatedly raised. More specifically, the sudden increase in the cost of fuel was raised as having a huge impact on the conduct of the election. Furthermore, the rising cost of off-season, supplementary and bye-elections, which are sometimes unanticipated at the time of preparing the EPP, was another major cost issue. Consequently, the review considered the creation of a stable funding regime for elections. The INEC Fund established by Section 3 of the Electoral Act 2022 should, for instance, be adequately funded and activated, and all funds due to the Commission released quickly to enable it to fund upcoming off-cycle and bye-elections, as well as to procure some core non-sensitive materials in good time given the instability of market prices.

Figure 3: 2023 General Election Timelines



The electoral legal framework is a very critical aspect of preparations for General Elections. This involves ensuring that gaps in existing laws/ regulations are eliminated and that the electoral legal framework meets international best practice. Based on a comprehensive and acceptable electoral legal framework, the Commission can then establish the Election Calendar and the Timetable and Schedule of Activities for the election, as well as issue regulations, guidelines, and manuals.

The review of the electoral legal framework for the 2023 General Election was completed on 25 February 2022 with the signing of the 2022 Electoral Bill into law by the former President Muhammadu Buhari. The Electoral Act 2022 is widely regarded as the most comprehensive electoral legislative reform since 2010. The Act introduced a range of measures to promote integrity and inclusion in the electoral process. Among these were:

i. ***Funding of Elections:*** Early appropriation and release of funds, ensuring that INEC gets its funds at least one year to a General Election.

ii. ***Early Release of Notice of Election:*** It is mandatory for INEC to issue the Notice of Polls 360 days to the General Election. This also entails an early release of the Timetable and Schedule of Activities by the Commission to ensure that all electoral stakeholders have ample time for forward planning, which will greatly benefit the quality of the election.

iii. ***Use of Electronic Devices for the Accreditation of Voters:*** The debates over the legality or otherwise of the SCR appeared to be settled by Section 47 of the Electoral Act 2022 which empowers INEC to use the Smart Card Reader or any other technological device for accreditation.

iv. ***Early Primaries:*** Political Parties must complete their primaries and submit the names of candidates 180 days to the General Election. This gives the Commission enough time to produce the materials for the elections, particularly the sensitive materials.

v. ***Type of Primaries:*** The law provides for three types of primaries: Direct, Indirect and Consensus.

vi. ***Result Management:*** The Act empowers INEC to determine the form of transmission or transfer of election results.

vii. ***Inclusivity:*** INEC is mandated to ensure that persons with disability and other vulnerabilities are properly assisted to participate in the electoral process.

viii. ***Election Finance:*** Various new limits were set for amounts of money that political parties and candidates can spend in elections as well as the amounts that can be donated to them.

ix. ***Redefinition of overvoting:*** Unlike the 2010 Electoral Act which defined overvoting in terms of registered voters, the Electoral Act 2022 defines it in terms of accredited voters only. This greatly reduces the challenge encountered by the Commission whereby elections were easily declared inconclusive in cases of low voter turnout, where the Margin of Lead was based on the number of registered voters. The Act now bases the Margin of Lead on the number of accredited voters.

x. ***Power of the Commission to Review Election Results:*** The Act empowers the Commission to review the result of elections to ensure that declarations are made voluntarily and that results emerge in accordance with the law, regulations, guidelines, and manuals for elections.

Although the Electoral Act 2022 appears comprehensive and widely accepted, the implementation of the revised laws, regulations, and guidelines during the 2023 General Elections has led to the identification of new gaps and challenges that need to be addressed. Some of those specifically identified in the review include:

i. ***Removal of errors and ambiguities in the Electoral Act:*** Despite improvements in the Electoral Act, stakeholders identified a number of ambiguities or even errors in the Act and requested the Commission to work with the National Assembly to eliminate or correct them. For instance, in prescribing the mode of moving results from PUs to Collation Centres, the Electoral Act employs the term "transfer" in Section 60 (5), but in Section 64 (4) and (5) it uses the term "transmitted directly." Although INEC sought to clarify the process in its Regulations and Guidelines for Elections 2022, it is important that such ambiguities are corrected by an amendment to the Act. Also, the Act in Section 64 (4a & 5) refers to Section 47 (2) on the question of the transmission of results. However, Section 47 (2) contains no reference to transmission of results. It may well be that the problem is one of cross-referencing. Still, it needs to be corrected to forestall any confusion or misrepresentation.

ii. ***Unbundling of INEC:*** The Commission has extensive responsibilities as shown in Figure 4:

Figure 4: Responsibilities of INEC

1

Organise, undertake and supervise all elections to the offices of the President and Vice-President, the Governor and Deputy Governor of a State, and to the membership of the Senate, the House of Representatives and the House of Assembly of each State of the Federation;

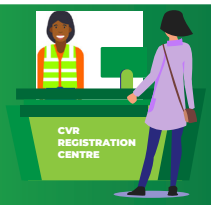
2

Register political parties and provide rules and regulations to govern the activities including the monitoring of party and campaign finance as well as their primaries, congresses, meetings and conventions

3

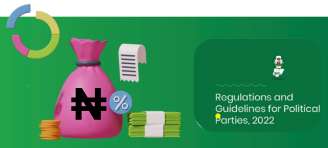
Management of electoral logistics and recruitment, training, deployment of Ad-hoc election officials and maintenance of extensive physical assets (offices, residential accommodation, and other facilities) nationwide.

4



Arrange and conduct the registration of persons qualified to vote and prepare, maintain and revise the register of voters for the purpose of any election.

5



Monitor the organisation and operation of the political parties, including their finances and arrange for the annual examination and auditing of their funds and accounts and publish a report on such examination and audit for public information;

6

Formulation of regulations and guidelines for the conduct of elections and electoral activities to give clarity to the provisions of the Constitution and Electoral Act;

7

Organise a recall of members of the National and State Assembly by their constituents and conduct referendum

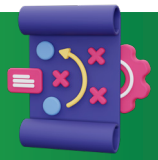
8

Delimitation of electoral constituencies and creation of Polling Units

9

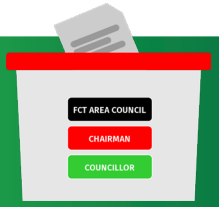
Conduct voter and civic education, promote knowledge of sound democratic election processes

10



Strategic engagement with stakeholders including security agencies for the purpose of election security

11



Conduct elections into the offices of Chairman, Vice Chairman and members of Area Councils of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) and the recall of such member of the Area Council.

12

Prosecution of Electoral Offenders

Given its extensive responsibilities and mandate, there were calls for the unbundling of the Commission. Stakeholders repeatedly called for the Commission to focus more on the conduct of elections. Areas such as registration and regulation of political parties and prosecution of electoral offenders should be left for other agencies. Several stakeholders called on the National Assembly to complete work on the National Electoral Offences Commission (Establishment) Bill to enhance the prosecution of electoral offenders, considering the enormous responsibilities of election management on INEC.

iii. Review of the process of appointments into INEC: In the light of controversies generated over the neutrality of some officials of the Commission, stakeholders called for a review of the process of appointments into INEC to ensure that National and Resident Electoral Commissioners are non-partisan and bring specific skills needed by the Commission for the job. In this regard, the National Assembly could consider revisiting the recommendations of the Uwais Electoral Reform Committee on this.

A summary of the key recommendations on general preparedness, particularly on the electoral law, that were harvested from the review are presented in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Recommendations on General Preparedness

S/N	Recommendations	Responsibility	Priority Rating
1	Review the Electoral Legal Framework to introduce early/special voting to cater for eligible voters on essential services, election personnel as well as voters under incarceration.	NASS	Very Urgent
2	Review the legal framework to permit diaspora and out-of-country voting.	NASS	Very Urgent
3	Review the Electoral Act to remove errors and ambiguities.	INEC/NASS	Very Urgent
4	Review the Legal Framework to unbundle INEC, such as the establishment of the Electoral Offences Commission and Political Party Regulatory Agency.	NASS	Very Urgent

5	Amend Section 65(1) of the Electoral Act to provide a caveat that the review of results should be based on incidents of declarations under duress.	NASS	Very Urgent
6	Review the law to confer on the Commission the power to appoint heads of State and FCT offices	NASS	Very Urgent
7	Create a stable funding for elections and fully activate and fund the INEC Fund established under Section 3 (1) of the Electoral Act.	Federal Government	Medium
8	INEC LGA office buildings should be erected in LGAs located in rented accommodations to provide an enabling work environment and proper storage facility.	INEC	Medium
9	Timely and adequate provision of soft and hard copies of SP, SPIP & EPP documents to the State and Local Government Offices.	INEC	Medium

Commission members at the Review meeting with Electoral Officers and Transport Unions, held in Abuja on 19th July 2023.

3.2 Voter Management

Between the 2019 and 2023 General Elections, the voter population in Nigeria rose from 84,004,084 to 93,469,008, an increase of nearly 10 million voters. This means the voter management for the 2023 General Election required even more rigorous planning and implementation. Voter management consists of the activities relating to registration of voters, issuance of PVCs, expanding voter access to PUs, and assigning them to most appropriate PUs.

In 2021, well ahead of the 2023 General Election, the Commission embarked on a programme of expanding voter access to PUs. This entailed the decongestion of existing PUs by establishing new ones, relocation of poorly located PUs, correction of wrongly named PUs and improving access to Persons with Disability (PwDs). The programme was capped by broad engagements with stakeholders. It would be recalled that prior to 2021, the existing 119,974 PUs in Nigeria were created in 1996. This meant that after 25 years, many of them had become congested due to demographic changes, with some of them catering for up to 10,000 voters. To ensure the smooth implementation of the programme, the Commission released Discussion Paper No. 1/2021 titled State of Voter Access to Polling Units in Nigeria, which became the principal tool for implementing this programme. After securing the buy-in of stakeholders through extensive engagements, the Commission issued Guidelines for Expanding Voter Access to Polling Units in Nigeria in March 2021 which outlined the specific procedures for converting Voting Points (VP) and Voting Point Settlements (VPS) to PUs and provided timelines. The expansion of access to PUs exercise (April - June 2021) led to the creation of additional 56,872 PUs, bringing the total number of PUs in Nigeria to 176,846.

However, the Commission was unable to complete the redistribution of voters to PUs across the country before the 2023 General Election. As a result, there were still congested PUs, some with few voters, and even others with zero voters. To ensure transparency, the Commission published all the PUs without voters prior to the election to assure stakeholders that elections would not hold in them and there would be no results from such Units. Overall, there were 240 of such PUs across the country.

It is therefore not surprising that during the review, both internal and external stakeholders dwelled on the question of PUs. They recommended the continued decongestion of PUs. One very important recommendation from the review exercise was the establishment of Polling Areas as provided for in Section 13 (3) and (4) of the Electoral Act 2022. It is recommended that a Polling Area

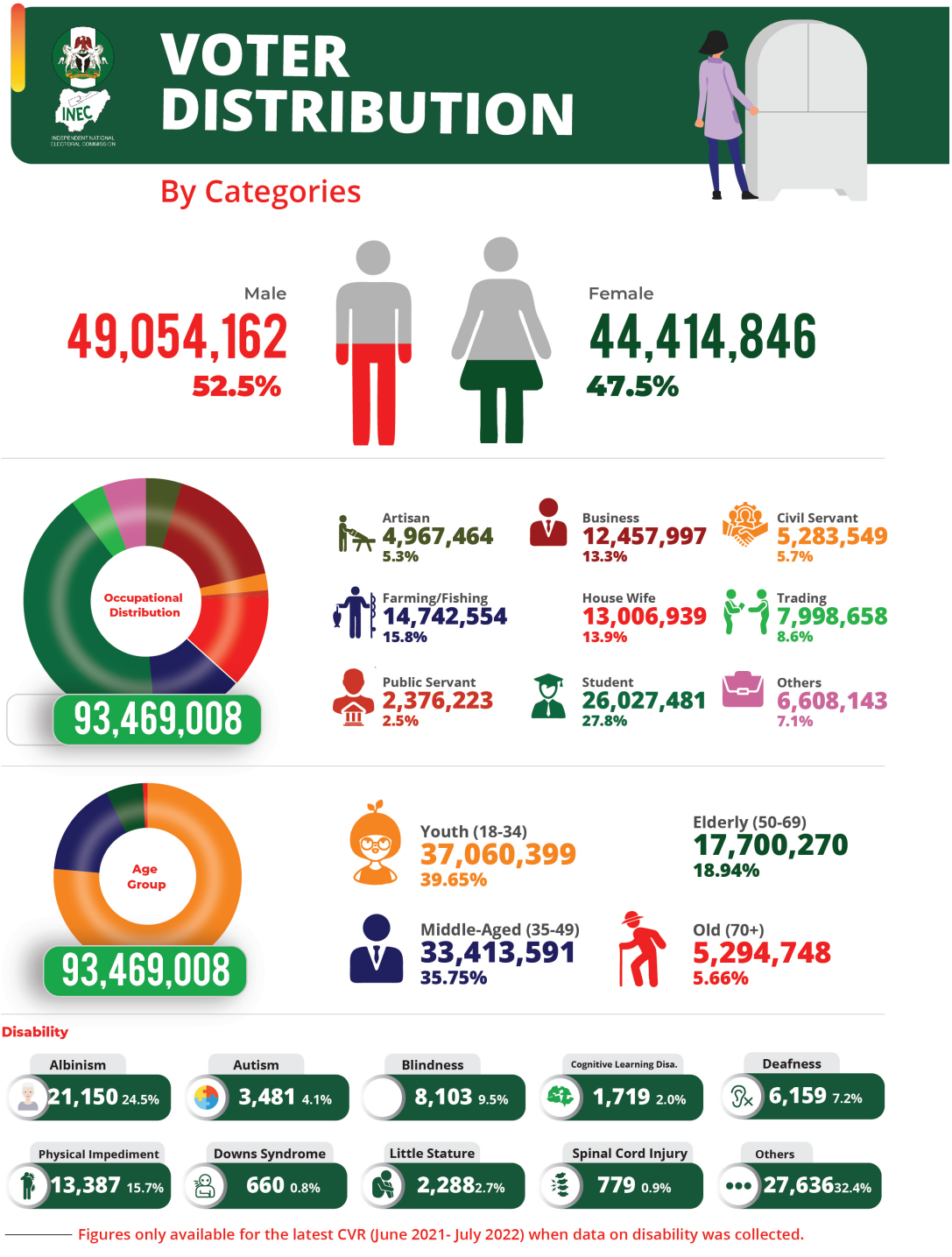
should be defined as a clearly bounded geographical area served by one Polling Unit. Establishing Polling Areas would make it easier to assign voters to PUs based on their residential addresses.

In preparation for the 2023 General Election, the Commission implemented a new method of CVR, with a graduated start due to security threats and attacks on INEC Offices in different parts of the country. The process commenced on the 28th of June 2021, and was suspended on the 31st of July 2022. A new option of registering online was developed. It entailed intending voters or those seeking other registration services such as change of voting locations, correction of particulars and request for issuance of new PVCs to commence the process online and later go in-person to INEC Offices or designated registration centres for their biometrics to be captured. The online system enabled them to make appointments to ease queues at registration centres. Over one million Nigerians took advantage of the online facility to get registered. In-person CVR started approximately a month after the commencement of the online option in 811 locations across the 37 State and FCT and 774 Local Government Area Offices of the Commission nationwide. The online and in-person options lasted for a period of 13 months (25th June to 31st July 2022).

Despite the innovations and improvements in the process of voter registration, which resulted in 12,298,944 new registrants, some longstanding challenges remain, especially regarding removal of deceased persons, the elimination of double/multiple registration, and the collection of PVCs. Problems with official death records continue to make it very difficult for INEC to remove deceased registrants. In response to the challenge of eliminating double/multiple and other ineligible registrants from the voter's register, the Commission removed 2,780,756 double registrations (22.6% of all new registrants nationwide) following a rigorous implementation of the Automated Biometric Identification System (ABIS). In fact, about 45% of all registrations nationwide, rising to as high as 50% in some States, were detected by ABIS as either multiple or incomplete registrations. These invalid cases were not included in the Register of Voters certified for the 2023 General Election.

The distribution of registered voters for the 2023 General Election is as presented in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Distribution of Registered Voters for the 2023 General Election



However, some stakeholders still urged the Commission to continue to clean up the voters' register. This demand has become even louder with the seeming declining voter turnout at elections. For the Presidential and National Assembly elections, turnout stood at 27.5% which is some 8.1% lower than the 35.6% turnout recorded in 2019. There was a suggestion that this decline is partly due to a bloated Register of Voters. While the Reviews affirmed that there were many factors involved in the declining voter turnout outside the Commission's control, stakeholders nonetheless opined that the Commission should make more rigorous efforts to review the Register, including conducting studies about its composition. One suggestion from this review was to strengthen collaboration with other agencies such as NIMC and NPC to identify deceased persons in the register and remove them. In addition, the Commission could suspend individuals who have not voted in the past three elections from the register and request them to revalidate their registration.

Following the publication of the Register of Voters, the Commission made available the PVCs for collection by voters on 12th December 2022. The exercise was initially planned to end on the 22nd of January 2023. However, the fact that a huge number of registered voters were yet to collect their PVCs forced the Commission to extend the deadline to the 5th of February 2023 after devolving the collection to the Ward level between the 6th and the 15th of January 2023 to ease the process. The low rate of PVC collection and other related challenges are illustrative of the problem of processing and managing voters in Nigeria. To increase the rate of collection of PVCs, the Commission implemented a policy that made it possible for voters to locate their PVCs online and subsequently pick them up. Several CSOs supported the Commission's drive to increase PVC collection by working with INEC's State/FCT Offices to record all uncollected PVCs and to inform their owners where and how to collect them. With support from the development partners, some of the CSOs also created information centres in selected States and the FCT to assist voters locate and collect their PVCs. Despite these efforts, over six million PVCs remained uncollected, many of them dating back to 2015. Consequently, one recommendation from the review was that the Commission should consider withdrawing PVCs issued in 2015 since it is not clear if the owners will ever collect them.

Another important aspect of voter management identified by stakeholders relates to inclusivity. Over the years, INEC has shown itself responsive to conducting inclusive elections, particularly regarding some under-represented or excluded populations. For three consecutive

Electoral Cycles, the Commission diligently implemented IDP voting, giving opportunity to millions of Nigerians displaced by conflict and natural disasters to vote. At the same time, the Commission has worked with CSOs to continue to protect the voting rights of persons with disabilities, women and young people. Prior to the 2023 General Election, INEC collaborated with groups representing the disability community, particularly The Albino Foundation (TAF Africa) and Inclusive Friends, to improve the database of PWDs at various PUs to enable the Commission to better target these voters and provide them with assistive voting devices.

As part of this strong commitment to inclusivity, the Commission created a distinct Department of Gender and Inclusivity in 2021 to focus on making the electoral process more inclusive. As at today, out of 23 Heads of Departments and Directorates at the Commission's national headquarters in Abuja, 11 (or 46%) are women. Similarly, many women are serving as Administrative Secretaries, HoDs and EOs in State and LGA offices nationwide. In the 2023 General Election, several stakeholders reported that priority voting was accorded to the elderly, pregnant women and PwDs. The Commission also continued to provide magnifying glasses and braille ballot guides for vision impaired voters and designed a special instructional poster for those with hearing impairment. Still, the Commission and stakeholders could do more to increase the turnout of PwDs for both CVR and elections by, among other things, improving access at election centres. It is also important to address the declining participation of women in the electoral process, especially as candidates.

Overall, while activities implemented to manage voters for the 2023 General Election could be considered largely successful, several challenges were observed during the review. To address these challenges, the following key recommendations were made as presented in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 Recommendations on Voter Management			
S/N	**Recommendations**	**Responsibility**	**Priority Rating**
1	Review the implementation of the Expansion of Voter Access to PU Policy with a view to correcting the errors identified and imposing sanctions on non-compliant by EOs.	INEC	Urgent
2	The mapping and relocation of inappropriately located PUs should be conducted in consultation with INEC State Offices and relevant stakeholders.	INEC	Urgent
3	The Commission should continue the decongestion of PUs with high population of voters by migrating them from densely populated PUs.	INEC	Urgent
4	Expansion of voter access to PUs should be carried out every five (5) years.	INEC	Urgent
5	Display of preliminary register of voters should be devolved to the PU level so that registrants can have easier access to check their details and file claims and objections.	INEC	Medium
6	The period for the display of the preliminary Register of Voters and processing time should be extended so as to have enough time to effect the changes recorded in the field.	INEC/NASS	Medium
7	There should be exception to the voting population threshold as criteria for creation of new PUs to serve difficult terrains that may not meet the stipulated threshold.	INEC	Medium
8	CVR should be carried out in the newly created PUs to provide opportunity for transfer of voters.	INEC	Urgent
9	Decentralise CVR and PVC collection to the ward level to boost registration and collection rate.	INEC	Medium
10	Ensure deployment of security personnel at CVR centres.	ICCES	Medium

11	Enforcement of sanctions on persons who assault staff and circumvent registration and PVC collection guidelines.	ICCES	Medium
12	Collaborate with NIMC, NPC and other agencies to identify deceased persons in the register and remove them.	INEC/NIMC/ NPC	Urgent
13	Undertake studies on the register and its relation to voter turnout.	INEC/TEI	Medium
14	The PVC collection register should carry PVC details, and it should be provided at the beginning of the exercise for proper record-keeping.	INEC	Medium
15	The Commission should take decisive actions on disposing uncollected and obsolete PVCs that have been printed in the past ten years.	INEC	Urgent
16	Deploy relevant technology and review administrative procedures and protocols for removal of deceased persons from the Register of Voters.	INEC	Urgent
17	Address the incidence of unprinted PVCs of new registrants as well as transfer applicants	INEC	Very Urgent
18	Establish Polling Areas as contained in Section 13 (3 & 4) of the Electoral Act 2022. A Polling Area should be defined by the Commission as a clear geographical area served by a single Polling Unit.	INEC	Medium
19	Mobilisation for CVR and elections should target PWDs. Election Officials should be trained and sensitised to the needs of PWD voters.	INEC	Urgent
20	While the Commission should continue to work with all Political Parties for greater participation of under-represented groups in elective positions, the surest way to achieve that objective is through affirmative action. This should be backed by a clear provision of the law that may, for instance, create designated constituencies for such groups, especially women and persons with Disability.	NASS	Urgent

3.3 Voter Education and Public Communication

Ahead of the 2023 General Election, the Commission implemented several voter education and publicity activities to provide regular and effective communication to stakeholders, encourage and broaden voter participation, and discourage tendencies such as vote buying and thuggery. Some of these activities included:

i. Capacity Building Workshops

ii. Production of printed and audio-visual enlightenment materials

iii. Dissemination of voter education messages on electronic and social media platforms

iv. "Youth Votes Count" outreach programmes

v. INEC online newspaper

vi. Road shows

vii. Leaflets, pamphlets, stickers and INEC-branded wears

viii. Press briefings

During the review, stakeholders noted that INEC's communication prior to the election was far better than during previous elections. However, this appeared to have waned during the election, culminating in the tardy communication of the challenges that arose especially with the IReV. Some stakeholders believe that the handling of public communication regarding the problems with the IReV is emblematic of the absence or inadequacies of a strategic and crises communication framework in INEC. They therefore call for the establishment of a robust strategic and crises communication framework by the Commission, which should be headed by a National Commissioner, drawing expertise from within and outside the Commission.

Several other recommendations that will improve the quality of the Commission's voter education and public communication in the future were made during the review. The key recommendations are as presented in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3 Recommendations on Voter Education and Public Communication

S/N	Recommendations	Responsibility	Priority Rating
1	Intensify multi-pronged approach to publicity on the Commission's voter education and public communication.	INEC	Urgent

2	Continue with the extensive sensitisation and publicity to mobilise citizens for claims and objections during the display of the Register of Voters.	INEC	Urgent
3	Undertake broad and targeted voter education/sensitisation campaigns on a continuous basis, including into remote areas and difficult terrains, to acquaint re-assigned voters of their new PUs.	INEC/CSOs/ Political Parties	Urgent
4	Continue engagements with secondary schools and tertiary institutions for advocacy with students on elections and electoral activities.	INEC/State/FG	Medium
5	Sustain the INEC Half hour and replicate it at State levels. Commission can liaise with media houses to request for free airtime for voter education as part of their corporate social responsibility.	INEC/Media	Urgent
6	Make voter education an all-year-round activity.	INEC	Medium
7	Production of voter education related skits should be encouraged to better inform the public on the electoral process.	INEC	Medium
8	Refocus the existing ICCC tools to reach voters and other citizens in remote locations.	INEC	Urgent
9	Create platforms for development partners to fund weekly media discussions on electoral activities which could involve programmes in local languages.	INEC/Dev. Partners	Urgent
10	Resuscitate voter education clubs for students in Secondary Schools and inclusion of voter education in their curricula.	INEC/FGN/ State Govts	Medium
11	Establish monitoring mechanisms to track social media activities, identify potential violations, and promptly report any electoral offenses or threats/violations.	INEC/NCC/ ICCES	Medium
12	Create a strategic and crises management process and protocols to enhance the Commission's responses to fake news, misinformation, and disinformation.	INEC/ICCES	Urgent
13	Give due consideration to riverine areas, distant locations, and difficult/hostile terrains in the planning and allocation of resources for voter education and logistics.	INEC	Urgent

14	Send media tags for accreditation of journalists covering elections to State Offices/ Media Organisations on time.	INEC	Medium
15	Undertake robust stakeholder interaction for future exercises on expansion of voter access and voter migration policy.	INEC/Media/ CSOs	Medium
16	Liaise with Apex media associations/ organizations in the accreditation of media agencies/journalists.	INEC/Apex Media Organizations	Medium
17	Engage NOA to develop and deploy public enlightenment programmes on voter education and election security.	INEC/NOA	Urgent
18	Develop a database of media organisations.	INEC/Media	Urgent
19	Undertake advocacy on the establishment of the Electoral Offences Commission.	INEC/Media/ NASS	Very Urgent
20	Intensify publicity on the availability of online resources for locating PUs for those affected by voter migration.	INEC	Urgent
21	Regularly update the Commission's website and use social media platforms such as Facebook, Tiktok, Instagram for public enlightenment.	INEC	Urgent
22	Strengthen the implementation of INEC's communication policy by ensuring that it is properly understood and used both for internal and external communication, as well as establish effective monitoring of its implementation.	INEC	Urgent

Staff attending to calls and social media posts from the public at INEC Citizens Contact Centre desk, embedded inside the Situation Room, Abuja during the 2023 General Election

3.4 Political Party and Candidate Management

The Timetable and Schedule of Activities for the 2023 General Election released by the Commission allowed a two-month period (4 April - 3 June 2022) for political parties to conduct primaries to democratically nominate candidates for the election. However, some political parties were not able to complete the process within the stipulated time. Following appeals by the political parties, the Commission extended the deadline for the conduct of primaries by six days, from 4th to 9th June 2022, to enable the parties conclude outstanding primaries and prepare to upload the list and personal particulars of their candidates to the INEC Candidates Nomination Portal.

The process of managing political activities, including the monitoring of party primaries, submission of list of candidates, submission of list of party agents, and monitoring of campaigns and party finances can be described as generally successful. The success of political party management during the 2023 General Election can be attributed to the improved legal framework introduced by the Electoral Act 2022, the technical and administrative innovations introduced by the Commission, as well as the experience gained by the Commission over time in managing political party activities.

The Electoral Act 2022 contains improvements by giving INEC some powers to reject candidate nominations and in stipulating early conclusion of party primaries (giving more opportunity for completion of pre-election cases). Under the Electoral Act 2022, unqualified nominations can, in principle, be rejected by INEC, thereby reducing the need for challenges through courts. Also positively, the Electoral Act 2022 requires primaries to be completed 180 days before elections, allowing more time for legal challenges to be determined by trial Courts before Election Day and thereby reducing potential delays and disruptions to Election Day preparations as has been the case in previous elections. As the process of party primaries and candidate nomination demonstrates, changes in the Electoral Act, have addressed the problems with the nomination process, particularly, monetisation of politics, intrigues and manoeuvrings by party leaders, and disregard for party constitutions and guidelines.

Despite these improvements, several challenges were observed for which a number recommendations were made as presented in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4 Recommendations on Political Parties and Candidate Management			
S/N	**Recommendations**	**Responsibility**	**Priority Rating**
1	Upload the list of accredited political party agents to the dedicated web portal within the timeframe provided by the Timetable and Schedule of Activities for Elections.	INEC/Political Parties	Medium
2	Compliance by Political parties with the legal requirements for the notification of primaries.	INEC/Political Parties	Urgent
3	Political parties should not be allowed to replace any of their Accredited Polling Agents without permission from the Commission.	INEC/Political Parties	Urgent
4	Penalise any Political party that uses uncredited agents on Election Day.	INEC/NASS/ Political Parties	Medium
5	Provide stiffer penalties for political parties that fail to submit dates and venues of party congresses and primaries on schedule, as well as those that fail to comply with rules and guidelines of their party primaries.	INEC/NASS	Urgent
6	Clearly define the period for withdrawal and substitution of candidates by law such that no party can substitute its candidate two weeks after the publication of the final list of candidates except in the event of death as provided in Sections 33 and 34 of the Electoral Act 2022.	NASS	Medium

Cross section of leaders of political parties at the post 2023 General Election Review meeting held at the Commission's headquarters, Abuja on 25th July 2023.

3.5 Electoral Operations and Logistics Management

Electoral operations and logistics have often been the Achilles heel of elections in Nigeria. But over the years, the Commission has demonstrated a strong determination to solve the challenges. In this regard, the Commission undertook several reforms and innovations to improve its electoral operations and logistics management. Perhaps because of these reforms, the 2023 General Election was held as scheduled, unlike the three preceding elections. In fact, both the 2011 and 2019 General Elections were rescheduled because of logistic challenges.

One of the most challenging aspects of Election Day logistics is transportation. Improved collaboration with transport unions such as the NURTW, NARTO and MWUN has helped to deal with the noticed bottlenecks to ensure a more efficient and timely delivery of materials to PUs. During the review, however, reports indicated that the performance of transport providers was not uniform all over the country. In the FCT, transport providers failed to meet their commitments to the Commission, leading to tardy deployment and late opening of polls in some locations. As a result, stakeholders call for stricter action to ensure that the transport unions and transport providers adhere to the terms of their MoU and contracts with the Commission. It is suggested that the Commission should consider legal action against defaulters. However, reports also point to sharp practices and dereliction among some INEC staff in the State and Local Government Offices, where the guidelines for Election Day transportation management were flouted or ignored. It is therefore recommended that the Commission should in future thoroughly investigate reports of infractions by its officials in the management of transportation and mete out the requisite sanctions.

One major point from the review is the role of constant and robust monitoring, supervision and support systems to electoral operations and logistics. The Commission needs to strengthen the Election Monitoring and Support Centre (EMSC) to make it more effective in providing the necessary planning, monitoring, implementation, early warning and support services to electoral operations and logistics before, during and after elections.

Many stakeholders commended INEC's early planning of election operations and logistics through the instrumentality of the EPP. However, they recommended that more efforts be put into ensuring that the EPP is vigorously implemented. It is also important to build the capacity of the Commission's staff to deploy such

tools during elections in order to reduce sabotage and partisan interference. Finally, the question of reverse logistics featured prominently in the consultations and debriefings. The consensus was that the Commission's reverse logistics remain inadequate in retrieving reusable material and the replacement of such materials maybe a contributory factor to the high cost of elections. The Commission should therefore place more emphasis on planning the retrieval of personnel and materials after elections.

In general, there were improvements in logistics and deployment for the election, but serious operational delivery shortcomings persist in certain areas, showing that much stronger election planning, logistics management and operational oversight are required. Some of the specific key recommendations offered to address the challenges associated with electoral operations and logistics are as presented in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5 Recommendations on Electoral Operations and Logistics Management

S/N	Recommendations	Responsibility	Priority Rating
1	Review the design of voting cubicles to introduce a lower side for voters on wheelchair where required.	INEC	Urgent
2	Liaise with PwD focused CSOs to develop a framework on the deployment of assistive devices.	INEC/PWDs/ CSOs	Medium
3	Develop a mechanism to involve certified Automobile Maintenance workshops to ascertain the road worthiness of vehicles together with the FRSC.	INEC/FRSC	Low
4	Ensure enforcement of penalties in the event of breach of the contractual agreement between the Commission and transportation service providers.	INEC/ICCES	Medium
5	Revise MoU with transport unions to include the condition of vehicles, control of drivers, and implementation of reverse logistics.	INEC/NURTW/ NARTO/MWUN	Medium
6	RECs should communicate to EOs and transport unions at State and LGAs the content of the MoU and their respective obligations.	INEC	Medium
7	Develop supervisory mechanisms for the effective implementation of the Commission's MoU/contracts with transport unions and service providers at the LGA level.	INEC	Medium

8	Impose disciplinary measures on any EO that permits the use of transportation from unauthorised sources.	INEC	Medium
9	Undertake quarterly audit of stores to guide the supply of electoral materials to State Offices.	INEC	Medium
10	Properly sensitise RAC Managers on their roles and responsibilities before the election.	INEC	Medium
11	Relocate RACs and Collation Centres prone to attacks to more secure venues.	INEC	Medium
12	Conduct assessment of storage facilities by the concerned Department/Directorate and provide standard storage facilities according to the needs of LGAs at least 12 months before a major election.	INEC	Urgent
13	Enhance and expand the storage facilities for IVED/BVAS. The use of reinforced concrete stores is recommended.	INEC	Urgent
14	Organise RAs with highly populated voters for easy administration.	INEC	Urgent
15	As much as practicable, target holiday periods of schools for training of Ad-hoc election officials.	INEC	Medium
16	Provide training materials and election manuals in the right quantities and in multimedia formats at least two weeks before training commences.	INEC	Urgent
17	Make available adequate BVAS for training purposes (at least 1 BVAS to 5 trainees).	INEC	Urgent
18	Increase the duration of the training of ad-hoc officials to five (5) days.	INEC	Medium
19	Organise fit-for-purpose transportation arrangements for COs/ROs in areas with large land mass, difficult terrains and water ways.	INEC	Urgent
20	Make the final payment to transport service providers contingent on the completion of reverse logistics for election personnel and materials.	INEC	Urgent
21	Base the payment of administrative fees only on the number of vehicles used and not on number of vehicles allocated.	INEC	Medium
22	Undertake thorough quality assurance checks and physical verification of non-sensitive and sensitive materials before deployment to the State/LGA offices.	INEC	Very Urgent

23	Develop reverse logistics protocols and procedures for the Commission with the AEO (Administration as coordinator).	INEC	Medium
24	Complete all trainings/workshops for regular and ad-hoc staff in accordance with the EPP timelines as approved by the Commission.	INEC	Medium
25	Compile and maintain a profile of drivers engaged for elections.	INEC/TUs	Medium
26	Strengthen logistics management tools as well as election monitoring and support tools.	INEC	Urgent
27	Develop a policy to replace unusable materials after every Electoral Cycle.	INEC/FG/NASS	Urgent

A cross section of participants at the Post 2023 General Election Review Meeting with Electoral Officers and officials of Transport Unions, held in Abuja on 19th July 2023.

3.6 Election Officials and Personnel

Electoral activities are implemented by three categories of election officials and personnel, namely:

i. Commission (Chairman of the Commission and Chief Electoral Commissioner, National Commissioners, and Resident Electoral Commissioners)

ii. Permanent Staff of the Commission

iii. Ad-hoc Staff engaged by the Commission

Ad-hoc staff are election officials that are temporary employees of INEC. Over a million of such officials were recruited for the 2023 General Election. There are three types of ad hoc staff:

i. The Polling Staff: Presiding and Assistant Presiding Officers.

ii. The Supervisory Staff: Supervisory Presiding Officers.

iii. The Collation and Returning Officers: Ward Collation Officers, LGA Collation Officers, State Constituency Collation & Returning Officers, Federal Constituency Collation & Returning Officers, and State & FCT Collation & Returning Officers.

These ad-hoc officials are appointed/ recruited based on established procedures. There are also laid down rules, regulations and guidelines that govern the conduct and actions of these officials and personnel.

Generally, the Commission has been successful in managing the huge and complex mix of officials and personnel under its control. However, there have been occasions where a few officials and personnel have conducted themselves or their duties in ways that fell below expectations. Although the Commission has demonstrated commitment to address misconduct by its officials and personnel, there is room for more action. The following recommendations presented in Table 3.6 were made regarding managing election officials and personnel.

Table 3.6 Recommendations on Election Officials and Personnel

S/N	Recommendations	Responsibility	Priority Rating
1	Create a pool/database of ad-hoc electoral officials for regular training, engagement, and retraining.	INEC	Low
2	Take appropriate disciplinary measures against Electoral Officers who are deploying fewer vehicles than provided for in the budget.	INEC	Low
3	Impose appropriate sanctions on NYSC members that commit infractions during elections.	INEC/NYSC	Medium

4	Undertake root training on a continuous basis and expand the training to tertiary institutions.	INEC/NUC/NBTE	Medium
5	Deploy training resources and modes/media on continuous basis for capacity building for EOs/ Election personnel.	INEC	Medium
6	Introduce the use of NIN and strengthen the physical verification process to ensure that only qualified persons are recruited for electoral duty via the INECPRES.	INEC	Urgent
7	Continue the deployment of the Google Form during the training of ad hoc staff for those Corps members who could not enroll with the INECPRES due to network challenges.	INEC	Medium
8	Promote greater involvement of States in data sharing with INECPRES.	INEC	Medium
9	Send notification by e-mails and SMS to trained and recruited ad-hoc staff at least three days before Election Day.	INEC	Urgent

INEC Chairman, Prof. Mahmood Yakubu addresses some ad-hoc staff undergoing training in preparation for the 2023 General Election.

10	Commence training of RATechSS a month to election and devote adequate time for cascade training.	INEC	Medium
11	Ensure adequate training for LGATechSS/RATechSS and deploy them at least two days to Polling day.	INEC	Medium
12	Sensitise ad-hoc staff on the importance of presenting correct account details.	INEC	Medium
13	The number of trainees should not be more than forty-five (45) personnel per class for purpose of effective training.	INEC	Medium
14	Train all INEC staff on the BVAS and IVED technology, on a continuous basis.	INEC	Medium
15	Emphasise practical simulation for COs/ROs during training.	INEC	Medium
16	Engage RATechSS at the point of configuration of the BVAS devices to complement the work of INEC ICT staff.	INEC	Medium
17	Incentivise RATechSS/Poll officials' postings to LGAs in remote/difficult/high risk locations.	INEC	Medium
18	Release the list of ad-hoc staff on time to ensure that the personnel locate their places of posting on time at least a day to the election.	INEC	Medium
19	Review the Commission's posting policy to include the posting of EOs not later than 90 days to an election.	INEC	Medium

Cross section of selected Collation Officers at post 2023 general election debriefing, held in Abuja on 21st July 2023

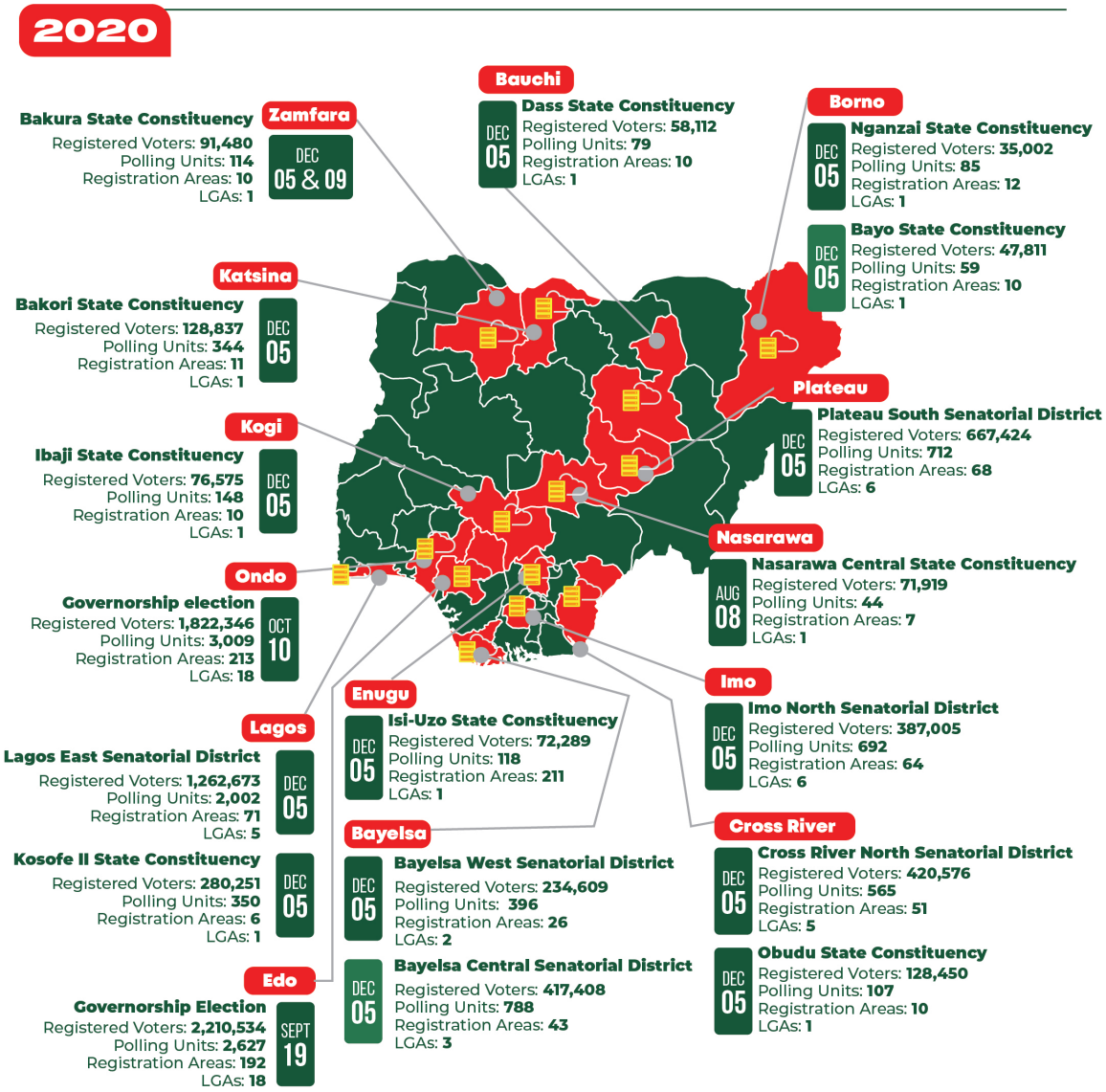
3.7 Election Technology

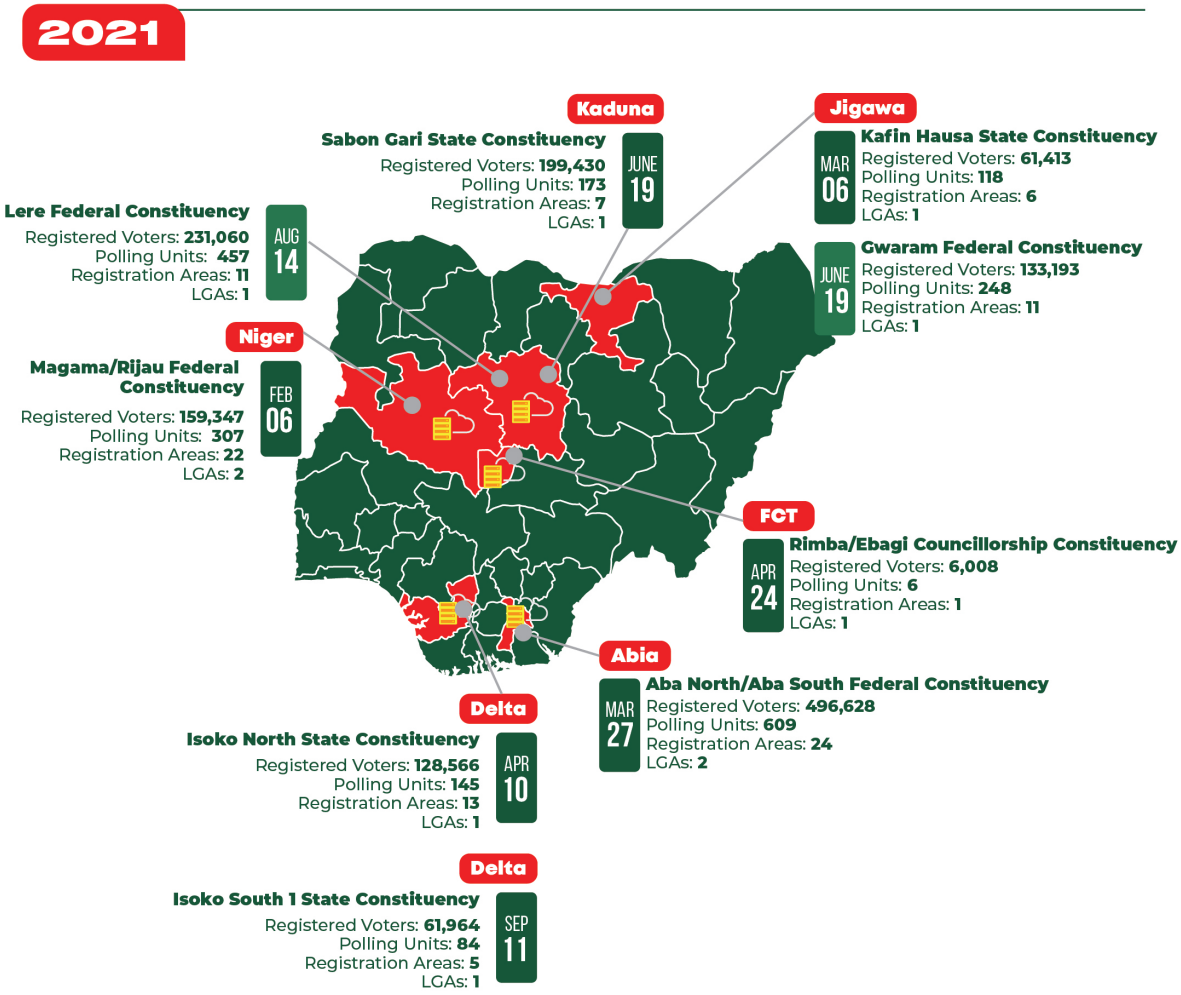
Increasingly, technology is becoming part and parcel of our elections. The Commission has slowly but steadily been introducing innovations in the electoral process using technology in the area of: registration and accreditation of voters; results management systems; nomination of candidates, accreditation of election observers, media and party agents; security and safety of election personnel; public information and education; election logistics; planning, monitoring and implementation of elections, as well as the recruitment and training of election staff. This has increased efficiency and integrity in several areas of the electoral process.

Perhaps the most important aspect of deploying technology in the 2023 General Election was in the area voter accreditation and result management. This became very important in the light of the technical glitch experienced in the uploading of Presidential election results to the IReV. Prior to the 2023 General Election, INEC vigorously campaigned to be granted the power to transmit election results. This culminated in the Commission releasing its Discussion Paper No. 1/2021 titled Electronic Transmission of Election Results in which it made a strong case for electronic transmission of results. In the space of four months between August and December 2020, the Commission successfully uploaded results from PUs for State Assembly, Senatorial District and Governorship elections across the country to the IReV portal for public viewing as presented in FIgure 6. This practice continued in 2021 and 2022 with the uploading of the Governorship election results in Anambra, Ekiti and Osun States to the Portal. The 2023 General Election was the first opportunity to scale the IReV up to a Presidential election, which has the entire country as a single constituency.

A voter undergoes the pre-voting process using the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS), during the Mock Accreditation exercise, held in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) on 4th February, in preparation for the General Election which began on 25th February 2023 with the Presidential and National Assembly elections

Figure 6: Map showing constituencies where election results were uploaded to the IReV Portal in 2020 and 2021





Source: INEC, Electronic Transmission of Election Results, Discussion Paper 1/2021, p. 12.

During this review, many stakeholders repeatedly sought explanation for the technical glitch that affected the upload of the 2023 Presidential election results. During the review, details of the problem were provided by INEC's technical experts. In a nutshell, the challenge of uploading the PU presidential election results on the IReV after the presidential and NASS elections on 25th of February 2023 was unique. As voting ended across the country and POs began the process of uploading the images of the PU result sheets of the elections for the various constituencies around 4:00pm, the Commission began to receive reports that the upload of presidential election result sheets was failing.

Following these reports, the Commission immediately engaged with its field officials for details to understand and trace the origin, source, scale and magnitude of the problem across the result management ecosystem to devise appropriate solutions. In the troubleshooting process, it was established that there was no issue in uploading the PU result sheets of the Senate and House of Representatives elections through the Election Result Modules. However, there was a problem with uploading the presidential election results to the system. Attempts to upload the results were generating internal server errors, which refer to a significant impairment that usually originate from within an application due to problems relating to configuration, permissions, or failure to create or access application resources correctly. Further interrogation of the Election Result Modules indicated that the system is encountering an unexpected configuration problem in mapping the presidential election results uploaded into the system to the participating Polling Units.

Due to the complex, sensitive and critical nature of the systems and the real potential for malicious cyberattacks, the Commission immediately put in place several strict security and audit control measures to prevent any unfettered or elevated access to the Result Upload System. In the process of resolving the challenge, it was discovered that the backend system of the IReV was able to query and detect the base States for uploading the PU result sheets based on the mapping of all Senatorial District and Federal Constituency elections to the respective 36 States of the Federation and the FCT as established in the database structure deployed within the system. In configuring and mapping the election results for the presidential and NASS elections, the Commission created Four Hundred and Seventy (470) election types consisting of one presidential constituency covering the entire country, 109 Senatorial Districts and 360 Federal Constituencies. Each Senatorial District and Federal Constituency election on the database was mapped to their respective States. However,

the presidential election result is a single, countrywide constituency and therefore, does not belong to any one State.

Consequently, while the uploads for the NASS elections succeeded as the application was able to identify the respective State and build the folder hierarchy for the results organisation process for the election, attempts to upload the presidential election results sheets, which does not belong to or mapped to any State on the database, failed. Instead, it returned a HTTP server error response. This failure is attributable to the inability of the application to create and build a folder structure to organise the uploaded images of the result sheets of the presidential election. Having identified and established the source of the problem, the Commission quickly created and deployed "Hotfixes" which are software updates for fixing a bug or any vulnerabilities in a system. The deployed hotfixes eventually resolved the HTTP error on the system and the first presidential election result sheet was successfully uploaded at 8.55pm on the 25th February 2023.

After the problem with the upload was resolved, the Commission noticed a high volume of uploads on the queue. All results that were scanned but could not be uploaded due to the error were queued waiting to be automatically processed. Due to the large volume and high traffic from the queue, the system was running slower, even though it tried to scale up automatically to handle the unanticipated heavy traffic. While the density of the traffic that slowed the uploads was one issue, the requirement that the BVAS devices to be switched-on and connected to the internet for the upload of results in the offline queue was another. . However, some of the POs had at the time left their PUs, and the devices had either been switched-off, or were out of internet coverage. Switched-off devices could not connect and upload the results sheets.

It would be recalled that on 4th February 2023, about three weeks to the General Election, the Commission conducted a mock exercise to test the transmission of election results from PUs to the IReV. This was a general test that was not specific to any given election. Perhaps had this mock exercise been tailored to specific elections, the hitch that was experienced in uploading Presidential election results would have been detected on time. Consequently, a major lesson for the Commission is that in addition to other technical and administrative preconditions, time is critical to the deployment of election technology. Adequate time to develop, test, embed and publicise the technology is essential to its success.

To address the challenges identified in the deployment of election technology, the following recommendations were made as presented in Table 3.7.

Table 3.7 Recommendations on Election Technology			
S/N	**Recommendations**	**Responsibility**	**Priority Rating**
1	Upgrade the BVAS to function more effectively in both online and offline modes.	INEC	Urgent
2	Upgrade offline registration software to capture registrants' data easily in the field.	INEC	Urgent
3	Build multiple sim card slots into the BVAS/ IVED to enable network switching.	INEC	Low
4	Conduct proper network mapping to ascertain the signal strength in each Registration Area/Polling Unit to aid in the upload of results.	INEC/Mobile Network Operators/NCC	Urgent
5	Deepen the use of satellite service providers to ensure quality service during elections in remote and unserved areas.	INEC/NCC	Medium
6	Upgrade the EMSC dashboard to function on Android phones and ensure the full integration of its components units viz: the EMS, EOSC, ERM and I-SANS	INEC	Very Urgent
7	Conduct mock tests on the results management system before any election.	INEC	Medium

3.8 Voting and Result Management

The 2023 General Election saw the deployment of the most advanced systems in voter accreditation and result management in the history of elections in Nigeria. The use of biometric features of voters to identify them for voting commenced in 2015 with the Smart Card Reader (SCR), which read the biometrics from the chip in the voters' card and prompted the voter to match his/ her fingerprint on the reader. While this worked adequately for the 2015 and 2019 General Elections, several problems soon emerged, such as the inability of the reader to read the cards or fingerprints, bypassing of the accreditation process, as well as voting with other people's cards. Consequently, the Commission introduced a new accreditation device, the BVAS to speed up accreditation of voters while curbing the malpractices associated with the SCR. As a result, accreditation on the first day of the 2023 General Election stood at 98%. The improved performance of the BVAS was widely acknowledged by stakeholders during the post-election review.

Unlike the SCR, the voters' register is now resident in the BVAS. The new device does not read and extract voters' details from the PVC. Moreover, the Electoral Act 2022 has made biometric accreditation

(fingerprint or facial) mandatory for voting. The utility of the PVC is now limited to voter identification. It is therefore possible to identify voters using their registration slips which obviates the need for PVCs, the cost of producing them, the logistics for their distribution and the fact that voters without them are unable to vote, thus raising serious issues of disenfranchisement. With the BVAS, voters can be identified using their registration slips otherwise known as the Temporary Voter's Card (TVC) and accredited biometrically without the need for a plastic PVC. However, such a step requires the amendment of Section 47(1) of the Electoral Act 2022 which makes the presentation of the card (PVC) to the PO at the PU mandatory before accreditation and voting.

Regarding result management, the scanning of the Polling Unit results for display on the IReV drastically curtailed opportunities to manipulate results between the PUs and the Collation Centres. This is because the public already had records of the results before collation. Furthermore, the use of the Collation Support and Result Verification System (CSRVS), which supports and expedites collation, making for the improved management of election results. Although there was a technical challenge with uploading Presidential election results to the IReV during the General Election, as already noted, the post-election review generally acknowledged improvements in voter accreditation and result management during the 2023 General Election.

Still, the review proffered some recommendations on strengthening Voting and Result Management, as presented in Table 3.8.

Table 3.8 Recommendations on Voting and Result Management

S/N	Recommendations	Responsibility	Priority Rating
1	Repeat party acronym header at the bottom of the result sheets to ease comparing the total "votes scored" fields to the appropriate political parties.	INEC	Medium
2	Review and update the Guidelines for Elections to clearly define the time that uploaded result will be available for public view.	INEC	Urgent
3	Extend the deployment of the Collation Support Result Verification System (CSRVS) to the RA level.	INEC	Medium
4	Redesign the result sheet to increase the size of fields for entering votes scored on the result sheet to accommodate multiple digit entries easily and legibly.	INEC	Urgent

5	Review of Section 47 (1) of the Electoral Act to modify the requirement for the use of Permanent Voters' Card (PVC) and introduce electronically downloadable voters' card or any other form of ID acceptable to the Commission.	NASS	Urgent

3.9 Election Security

The rising insecurity in Nigeria was probably the greatest challenge to the conduct of the 2023 General Election. There were multiple forms of violence that impacted on the preparation and conduct of elections. The election security risk assessment conducted by the Commission using the Election Risk Management Tool (ERM), the Election Violence Mitigation and Advocacy Tool (EVMAT) as well as security assessments by other organisations and agencies provided a very bleak outlook, suggesting that most parts of the country will experience varying degrees of violence during the election.

In addition to risks to life and property of election officials and service providers, a major impact of insecurity on elections is the displacement of huge number of voters due to insurgency, communal crisis, farmer-herder conflict and natural disaster. In 2015, an estimated two million voters were displaced in the North-East and North Central geopolitical zones. Consequently, the Commission worked with the NASS to amend the Electoral Act to support voting by IDPs. This entailed making additional provisions for the enumeration of IDP voters and for voting in their camps. With increased scale of violence in 2023, the Commission planned for greater number of IDP voters.

In response to the challenges of election insecurity, the following recommendations were made as presented in table 3.9.

Table 3.9 Recommendations on Election Security

S/N	Recommendations	Responsibility	Priority Rating
1	Enhance the election security training for security personnel on electoral duties.	INEC/Police	Medium
2	Train and retrain security operatives on crowd control management during elections.	ICCES	Medium
3	Inform EOs adequately about deployment plans on election security.	INEC/Police	Medium

4	Release the deployment list and telephone numbers of security personnel at least 24 hours before an election.	INEC	Medium
5	Ensure that the ESP training is cascaded through ICCES to the security officers at the LGA level because these are the officers that will work on Election Day.	INEC/ICCES	Medium
6	Deploy security personnel to the State and LGA offices two or three weeks before and after the Election Day for effective security cover depending on the level of threat.	ICCES	Medium
7	Engage with the security agencies to secure communities and encourage voter participation in areas with security concerns.	INEC/ICCES	Medium
8	Deploy Armed security personnel to RACs and Collation Centres in areas prone to violence.	INEC/ICCES	Medium
9	Utilise the ICCES platform to sensitise security agencies on the role of the media in election.	INEC/ICCES/ Media	Medium
10	Deploy technology to protect and secure critical infrastructure and facilities of the Commission nationwide.	INEC	Medium
11	Site INEC offices at secure locations.	INEC	Medium

Cross section of members of the Inter Agency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES) at the post general election review meeting, held at INEC headquarters on 28th July 2023.

3.10 Election Monitoring and Supervision

The principal mechanism used by the Commission for monitoring and supervision in the 2023 General Election was the EMSC. This mechanism coordinates all implementation of election plans and activities before, during and after elections. The EMSC is a suite of several tools including the EMS, EOSC, ERM and INEC-SANS. During this review, focus was on the adequacy of its operational framework, operation of State secretariats and linkages with HQ EMSC secretariat, integration of the various tools, as well as functionality and utility of the EMSC dashboard.

On the strength of field reports from the EMSC, National Commissioners deployed to the field to monitor and have an on-site assessment of the implementation status of preparations for the election. The performance of this supervisory role was especially critical in cases where elections were inconclusive on first ballot. Staff of the Commission such as State, LGA and RA Supervisors, as well as SPOs and RATechSS also perform sundry roles in the monitoring and supervision of the pre-election, election-day and post-election processes. These include monitoring the state of preparedness, electoral operations, as well as activities or Key Performance Indicators outlined in the green, amber and red zones of the EMSC.

The review of the 2023 General Election found that this system of monitoring and supervision has worked relatively well. A few suggestions were however made to enhance it. One of these was the need for the establishment of protocols and procedures for the strict monitoring and supervision of SPOs to ensure greater objectivity and neutrality. It was also recommended that there should be greater clarity in the supervisory powers of National Commissioners when they deploy to States on election duty. The case of the Governorship election in Adamawa State, where the REC defied National Commissioners and usurped the powers of the RO was of grave concern to stakeholders.

A summary of the recommendations on the monitoring and supervision of electoral activities are as presented in Table 3.10.

Table 3.10 Recommendations on Election Monitoring and Supervision			
S/N	**Recommendations**	**Responsibility**	**Priority Rating**
1	Designate AEO (Admin) as EMSC Desk Officer in LGA Offices for effectiveness and clarity of responsibility.	INEC	Very Urgent
2	Submit the names of key monitoring and supervisory staff at National, State and Local Government Levels to the Director of Planning and Monitoring for the EMSC at least 14 Days before an election.	INEC	Urgent
3	Activate the EMSC Secretariat at least 16 weeks to an election to ensure adequate tracking, monitoring, implementation and reporting of activities in the Amber and Red Zones.	INEC	Urgent
4	Revise the EMSC's Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) every Electoral Cycle and ensure their alignment with both the SP and EPP.	INEC	Urgent
5	Review EMSC information protocol and management procedure for greater efficiency.	INEC	Medium
6	Create a Planning and Monitoring Unit under the REC to implement P&M programmes and manage the EMSC at the State level.	INEC	Urgent

Commission members and Resident Electoral Commissioners in a group picture at the post 2023 General Election Review meeting, held in Lagos on 4th August 2023

3.11 Partnerships and Collaboration

Considering that elections are a multistakeholder project, the Commission pursued an active engagement and collaboration with various agencies, institutions, and organisations. The Commission collaborated with several Ministries, Departments and Agencies of government in view of their potentially important supportive roles in the electoral process. Specifically, the MDAs provided a wide range of support in terms of advice, expertise and in some cases personnel in the planning, conduct and management of elections and in facilitating the deployment of national assets and logistics.

Similarly, the Commission has continued to Co-Chair the ICCES, an organ established in 2011 as a deliberative platform for consultation, coordination and harmonisation of election security in the country. The Committee has been serving the Commission as an advisory body for the efficient management and effective deployment of personnel and resources for ensuring peaceful and violent free elections.

Over the years, the Commission has established the practice of quarterly engagement with political parties, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), and the media. In the run-up to the 2023 General Election, the Commission, led by the Chairman briefed several critical stakeholders on the preparations for the election and solicited their support towards the conduct of a free, fair and peaceful election. Equally, the Commission continued its tradition of engagement with the international community. The engagements included regular meetings with officials of the African Union (AU), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Commonwealth and specialised agencies of the United Nations. Additionally, it is important to mention the value the Commission places on its engagement with foreign and domestic election observation groups.

These engagements provided an important platform for promoting understanding between the Commission on the one hand and the key election stakeholders on the other. The Commission was able to explain its operations, processes, and procedures while at the same time receiving useful feedback, particularly with reference to global best practices in the conduct of elections.

To improve on the quality of its partnership and collaboration with various agencies, institutions and organisations, the following recommendations were offered as presented in Table 3.11.

Table 3.11 Recommendations on Partnership and Collaboration			
S/N	**Recommendations**	**Responsibility**	**Priority Rating**
1	Inform EOs of the domestic and foreign observers posted to their LGAs.	INEC	Medium
2	Hold regular workshops and training sessions for political parties, election observers, and other stakeholders on election procedures and their observation statuses and roles.	INEC/CSOs/ Political Parties	Medium
3	Observers should produce reports of their observations based on the areas or locations observed.	INEC/CSOs	Medium
4	Enhance mechanisms for identifying accredited Polling Agents and observers at Collation Centres, such as publication of the list of accredited Polling Agents, Observers and the Media.	INEC/CSOs/ Media/ Political Parties	Medium
5	Institutionalise debriefing of election observers at State level.	INEC/CSOs	Medium
6	Foreign Election Observer Missions must be conducted in line with the regulations and guidelines set by the Commission.	INEC	Medium
7	INEC should collaborate with States and Local Governments to address the issue of poor infrastructure for training, locations/venues, RACs, Collation Centres etc.	INEC/State Govts.	Medium
8	Intensify the collaboration with the Police on the speedy prosecution of electoral offences.	INEC/Police	Very Urgent
9	Utilise security reports from the Police and DSS in establishing PUs in IDP Camps.	INEC	Medium
10	Engage NYSC management for the review of MoU.	INEC/NYSC	Medium

INEC Chairman, Prof Mahmood Yakubu greets media executives at the post 2023 general election review meeting, held at the Commission's headquarters, Abuja on 26th July 2023.

Cross Section of participants at the Commission's Post 2023 General Election Review Meeting with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), held on 24th July 2023 in Abuja.

CRITICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

04

1. Electoral Legal Framework

a. Address ambiguities and errors in EA 2022: 60(5) vs. 64 (4)&(5); "transfer" vs "transmitted directly" and wrong reference to 47(2) by 64(4a & 5).

b. Clarify S.65 on Commission's powers to review results.

c. Create a more Stable funding regime in line with Section 3(1), EA 2022.

d. Consider Early/Special, OCV, Diaspora and Inmate Voting.

e. Unbundle INEC: Electoral Offences Commission/Tribunal & Political Parties Registration and Regulatory Commission.

2. Voter Management

a. Continue the expansion of voter access to PUs.

b. Migrate voters accross PUs for a more even distribution.

c. Discontinue the Use of PVCs and replace with the use of TVCs & E-Cards.

d. Develop protocols for the cleaning of the Register of Voters and the removal of multiple registrants and deceased persons.

e. Further Integrate the EMSC's Four Key Monitoring Tools: EMS, EOSC, ERM and I-SANS.

f. Develop a more inclusive regulations/advocacy for affirmative action for greater participation of under-represented groups.

3. Voter Education and Public Communication

a. Develop broad, innovative, targeted and continuous voter education and public communication programmes.

b. Develop a strategic & crises communication management process and protocols to respond to fake news & mis/disinformation.

c. Regularly update the Commission's website & intensify the use of social media handles.

d. Develop and deploy monitoring mechanisms to track social media activities on/about the Commission.

4. Electoral Operations and Logistics Management

a. Redesign voting cubicles to allow better access for PwDs.

b. Review and develop Logistics

Management and Election Monitoring and Support tools at least one year before a General Election.

c. Develop mechanisms for effective implementation of MoUs and contracts with Transport Unions & Owners.

d. Identify RACs and Collation Centres in insecure locations for relocation to more secure areas.

e. Provide adequate training materials and equipment two weeks before an election.

f. Develop procedure for deploying non-sensitive materials six and three months before an election to Zonal and State stores respectively.

g. Develop clearer Reverse Logistics Protocols & Guidelines.

5. Election Officials and Personnel

a. Establish a database of ad-hoc electoral staff towards the professionalization of election duty.

b. Encourage NYSC to impose sanctions on erring Corps member.

c. Root training should be a serious consideration in election training.

d. Identify RACs & Collation Centres in Insecure Locations for Relocation to more Secure Areas.

e. Commence training of RATechSS one month to an election.

f. Review the practice of transferring EOs out of station a few days/hours to an election.

6. Voting and Results Management

a. Review Section 47(1) of EA 2022 to modify the requirement of the use of PVC and introduce electronically downloadable voters' card.

b. Redesign the results sheet to increase the size of fields for entering votes scored to accommodate multiple digit entries easily and legibly.

c. Extend Collation Support and Result Verification System (CSRVS) to the RA Level.

7. Election Security

a. Deploy the ERM & INEC-SANS of the EMSC for all elections.

b. Deploy special squads to strengthen security at Collation Centres.

c. Provide training and retraining to security officials for election duty.

d. Enforce the Code of Conduct for Security Personnel on Election Duty.

8. Election Monitoring and Supervision

a. Give the names of key monitoring and supervisory staff at National, State and LGA Levels to Planning & Monitoring Directorate for the Operationalisation of the EMSC.

b. Activate the EMSC Secretariat at least one year to a General Election and six months to an off-cycle election to ensure effective monitoring and implementation of electoral activities.

c. Review the EMSC's Key Performance Indicators every electoral cycle in alignment with both the SP & EPP.

d. Create a Planning and Monitoring Department in State Offices to implement planning & programmes and to manage the EMSC in the States.

9. Partnerships and Collaborations

a. Conduct regular workshops for political parties, election observers and others on election procedures.

b. Develop regulations guiding minimum areas to be covered for election observation.

c. Develop mechanisms of collaboration between the Commission and State governments on training venues and facilities.

d. Engage relevant Federal and State Governments on enhancing school infrastructures such as RACs and Super-RACs.

e. Undertake more engagements with transport unions and transport owners before elections.

f. Develop protocols in conjunction with NAF for airlifting election materials in difficult terrains or with security challenges.

g. Engage NYSC to review MOU to formally establish INCE/ NYSC Ambassadors across the federation for the conduct of elections and voter education.

CONCLUSION

05

The 2023 post-election review exercise is the second exercise since the Commission's approval of the Post-Election Review and Audit policy instrument in 2017. The 2023 exercise, organised around 14 major activities and 11 engagements with internal and external stakeholders, commenced on Tuesday 11th of July 2023 and ended on Saturday 5th of August 2023.

The 11 engagements and review meetings with critical internal and external stakeholders commenced with the State level review meetings nationwide. It was concluded with the Commission's review meeting with RECs on Friday 4th August 2023.

The 2023 post-election review exercise had the benefit of some important initiatives, among them the inclusion of the leadership of transport unions - NURTW, NARTO and MWUN. The review meetings also included media executives from all the States of the Federation and FCT. The careful identification of actionable issues from the vast pool of general recommendations and their analysis in terms of the entities responsible for taking required action.

An important point to grasp and act upon is that analysing the actionable recommendations and identifying entities to act on them exposes the urgency ordinarily embedded in some of the recommendations. For instance, actionable recommendations requiring legislative action are the most urgent having regards to the rigour and the time to amend or enact new laws. It is advisable therefore that swift action is undertaken towards operationalising the actionable recommendations beginning with the items that demand a long time to process. This will facilitate the early attainment of the refinements emanating from this review exercise.

Finally, these recommendations point to several realities of election management in a developing country like Nigeria. First, so many things that are taken for granted in other jurisdictions for the success or failure of elections, such as transportation, electricity, security, and funding are not the case in Nigeria. The second is that there is no perfectly organised election. There will always be challenges. What is important is continuous lesson-learning, reforms, and innovations. And the third is perhaps the most enduring of them i.e. that election management must be driven by partnerships involving the Election Management Body, other public agencies, citizens, and organisations. It is in the light of such partnerships that the audit and review of the 2023 General Election and the many recommendations arising from them should be seen.

APPENDIX

05

INDEPENDENT NATIONAL ELECTORAL COMMISSION

GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING AND MANAGING STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS/ENGAGEMENTS

These Guidelines are designed to harmonise the conduct of stakeholder meetings/engagements convened by the Commission to ensure that they are peaceful and meet the core values of the Commission, thereby maximising their usefulness.

1. Invitees and Attendees

    a) These shall be selected in a manner that ensures that they can contribute to the central objectives of the meeting/engagement.

    b) As much as practicable, all stakeholders and partners of the Commission on the core issues to be discussed at the meeting/ engagement should be invited.

    c) Where there are "traditional" partners of the Commission on the core purpose of the meeting/engagement, efforts must be made to include them. Where all such partners cannot be invited, clear criteria of representativeness – political, regional, religious, gender, disability youth – must be defined and used.

    d) As much as possible, organisations, rather than individuals, should be invited to INEC-convened stakeholder meetings/engagements.

    e) Organisations should be represented by their Heads or persons duly mandated by them.

    f) Whenever there are known competing interests on the issues to be discussed, particularly political issues, all sides must be represented in the invitations.

    g) For pre-election stakeholder meetings, incumbents who are not candidates shall not be invited and should not attend.

    h) Records of invitation and acknowledgment by invitees should be kept by the Commission as much as possible.

    i) Attendance at all stakeholder meetings shall be taken by the Commission.

2. Ground Rules

Ground rules for the meeting/engagement must be established beforehand or at the meeting before commencement, and where possible communicated to participants by the person chairing the meeting or by the Master of Ceremonies. Ground rules should cover, but not necessarily limited to, the following:

a) Decorum and civility in words and conduct towards one another by all attendees.

b) Offensive language and disruptive behaviour shall be avoided at all times. Participants or the presiding official may request the withdrawal of specific offending language.

c) As much as possible, interventions should avoid mentioning individuals and organisations by name, especially where such mentions are likely to be deemed offensive.

d) All phones should be switched off or put on silent mode.

3. Interactive Sessions

a) As much as practicable, substantial time shall be allocated for interactive sessions at all INEC convened stakeholder meetings/ engagements.

b) For meetings involving organisations, including political parties, recognitions for intervention shall be in alphabetical order; in ascending order for the first round of interventions and descending order for the next round, and so on.

c) Where an organisation in the alphabetical order is either not present or not ready to intervene, the next organisation shall be recognised.

d) For meetings involving individual participants, the Presiding Officer shall make a list of individuals who want to intervene and recognise them in the order of the list. As much as possible, individuals who have already spoken should yield to those who have not.

e) For meetings involving multiple stakeholders, such as stakeholder meetings preceding elections, the sequence of contributions during interactive sessions shall be political parties/candidates first, followed

by CSOs/Observers, media, traditional rulers, etc.

f) The Presiding Officer shall establish the maximum time for individual or organisational interventions before they commence. The objective should be to give as many participants as possible the opportunity to contribute to discussions.

4. Recognitions

The presence of dignitaries attending INEC convened stakeholder meetings/engagements shall be recognised as directed by the Presiding Officer. Care should be taken to recognise all "interested parties" and to do so in a manner that does not disrupt the meeting.

5. These Guidelines should be included in meeting programmes/brochures and, whenever possible, displayed on a screen at the commencement of the meetings.

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