

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Osogbo, Osun State.

**A PRESS STATEMENT BY KIMPACT DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE (KDI), THE SOUTH WEST HUB FOR THE NIGERIA ELECTION VIOLENCE REPORT (NEVR) ON THE VIOLENCE AND POTENTIAL FOR VIOLENCE REPORTS ON THE 9<sup>TH</sup> MARCH, 2019: GOVERNORSHIP AND HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY (HOA) ELECTIONS**

Distinguished Men of the Press  
Ladies and gentlemen.

We welcome you to this press conference organized by Kimpact Development Initiative (the South West Hub of the Nigeria Election Violence Report **NEVR** Project) on the Governorship and House of Assembly (HOA) elections. The objective of this press conference is to inform the general public and major stakeholders on the key findings and observations of Kimpact on election violence and potential for violence reports received in the last governorship and house of assembly elections and to give recommendations based on the last election findings to improve the election process and procedure.

**ABOUT ON NEVR PROJECT**

The Nigeria Election Violence Report (NEVR) project is supported by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES). The project focuses on developing the capacity of civil society to monitor, analyze and respond to incidents of election-related conflict before, during and after elections in Nigeria. It encourages collaboration and dialogue between election stakeholders in society to mitigate and/or prevent election violence. To achieve these objectives, Kimpact have trained and deployed 106 monitors throughout South West geopolitical zone for the Pre-election, Election Day and Post-election periods. Several peace initiatives such as advocacy visits and town hall meetings have been held in each state of the southwest to discuss with key stakeholders so as to mitigate political tensions that may lead to electoral violence. Over 6000 pledge cards were circulated and the commitment of the citizens to peacefully participate in the elections were gotten. 18 billboards bearing nonviolence messaging have been mounted across the 18 senatorial districts of the south west. A toll-free line (**08000010000**) has been made available as a medium where the public can also report any incident of violence in their communities.

**KIMPACT / NEVR SOUTH WEST ELECTION SITUATION ROOM**

Kimpact / NEVR South West Election Situation Room was on with full operation on (9<sup>th</sup> of March, 2019) the governorship and house of assembly election day to get field reports from 106 NEVR monitors deployed across the six states of the South West Nigeria for

swift, credible, and real-time analyses that will become one of the most sought-after election information during and after the polls, to give objective insights into incidence of election violence, document same and to provide rapid response to emergencies – especially in the crisis situation during and after the elections. In addition, report was equally gotten from the public via the toll-free line provided by Kimpact, many of these reports were tracked and verified by the NEVR monitor in that neighbourhood.

### **KIMPACT KEY FINDINGS AND OBSERVATION ON INCIDENCE OF ELECTORAL VIOLENCE, POTENTIAL VIOLENCE OTHER RELATED ISSUES AROUND THE ELECTIONS.**

Before anything else, Kimpact commends the resilience and purposeful act displayed by patriotic Nigerians who still went to their respective polling units to exercise their franchise on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> of March, 2019 going against all odds despite the fear and worry in the build up to the elections. On Saturday, 9<sup>th</sup> March, 2019, Kimpact NEVR South West Election Situation Room received reports from the 6 states of the South West Nigeria ranging from Violence, Intimidation of Voters, Logistics issues, Vote Buying, to Security Conduct at all levels. Out all the reports received 210 reports were verified and analysed.

### **COMMENCEMENT OF ELECTIONS**

As against the Presidential and National Assembly Elections on Saturday, 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2019. Saturday, 9<sup>th</sup> March, 2019 Governorship and House of Assembly elections experienced a huge improvement, voting started somewhat around 8.15am in most polling units (PUs) of the South West Nigeria. The early commencement of polls experienced on Saturday, 9<sup>th</sup> March, 2019 is never far from the early arrival of ad-hoc officers to set up the PUs. There were reports that ad-hoc officers got to PU before 7am most especially in Ward 9, Unit 008, Irepodun Local Government Area (LGA), Osun. Although, there were reports from Agege ward 3 RAC, and Oshodi/Isolo LGAs of Lagos that polls commenced late due to refusal of ad-hoc officer to deploy.

### **INEC ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE ELECTIONS**

It was largely reported of the reaction of INEC ad-hoc officials at earlier hours of Saturday and the late arrival of INEC ad-hoc officers in Lagos at the PUs. There was even a report from Eti-Osa ward 1 that INEC ad-hoc officers arrived a PU at 11am and voting commenced 11.30am. All these are not far from the multiple reports we received. In Agege ward 3 and Oshodi/Isolo RACs, we got report of ad-hoc officers protesting issues around their welfare most especially non-payment of their dues from previous election. Kimpact is really disturbed about the treatment INEC gave its personnel most especially the ad-hoc officer. We believe that the quality of any exercise cannot be better off the personnel in-charge of its implementation, if the ad-hoc officers are not in a balanced psychological and physical state, the expectation of quality delivery is in jeopardy.

## **VOTER APATHY**

It was evident that on Saturday, 9<sup>th</sup> March, 2019 that the voter turnout is low. In comparison with the Presidential and National Assembly Elections on Saturday, 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2019, the level of voter apathy recorded on the election day was worrisome. Supposedly, an election ought to roll around voter, but report gotten from some PUs of ward 9 in Ado Ekiti, Ekiti state and Yewa North ward 1 in Ogun state shown an inauspicious situation of election officials being idle at these respective PUs waiting for voters to come out. This show of apathy displayed by voters is not far from factors around the disappointment of citizens over poor conduct of the February 23 Presidential and National Assembly elections. Most of the voters are frightened and feel unsafe due to couple of violence recorded on the 23 February elections. Concerns over the impartiality of security personnel and indeed the integrity of the electoral process are also a factor to consider.

## **INDUCEMENT AND VOTE BUYING**

The preponderance nature and widespread of vote buying and inducement across the South West Nigeria is really disturbing as reports gotten were mostly that vote buying was with impunity in states like Ogun, Ekiti, Ondo, Oyo and Osun. Agents of political parties were distributing money ranging from ₦200 to ₦2000. It got so pathetic that votes were bought in Akinyele, Ward 8, Unit 39-42 at ₦200. What is practically astounding is the little or no arrest that was made despite high number of reported cases. We can also say that's the reason for the latitude in vote buying.

All the above-mentioned issues are potential for violence and issues related to election logistics in the Saturday, 9 March, 2019, getting reports disruption of the voting process by political thugs and party agent, as well as that of violence at the collation period is very disheartening. We cannot but talk about the **Election Security**.

With sadness of heart, Kimpact confirmed that fourteen (14) Nigerians died during the course of electoral violence in this 2019 election cycle in South West but 12 was recorded on Saturday, 9 March, 2019: Ogun – 1, Oyo -7, and Ondo – 4.

KDI has constantly stated that election is a civil exercise and never a do or die affairs. No ambition of any politician worth the life of any Nigerian. Despite the improvement in the deployment of security agents to PUs, Report revealed the prevalence of polls' disruption by party agents and political thugs.

In Ifaki Ekiti, ward 2, PU 3&4 Ido-Osi LGA in Ekiti, it was largely reported that ballot boxes were snatched and ballot papers were burnt in ward 2 units 7&10. In Efon Alaye, Ward 5 PU 1 in Ekiti, report gotten revealed the sporadic shooting in the areas, thereby scaring the ones that wants to exercise their franchise.

Around 10.44am on the day of election in Akure South LGA, ward 5 PU 30 and 31, it was reported of sporadic shooting. Which cause INEC officials and unarmed security men to flee before normalcy was restored.

In Oba Akoko, there was a massive disruption of electoral process leading to indiscriminate shooting, malicious destruction of ballot boxes, and other properties.

### **COLLATION OF RESULTS**

Collation of voting results remains a major weak-point in Nigeria's election management and administration as so many persons believe manipulation and interference commonly occur in the collation centers. In Oyo, Kimpact received report of the malicious burning of the INEC secretariat in Ibadan South West LGA by some Unidentified persons, we strongly condemn this act as it is nothing but inhumane. In Ondo, we received numerous reports of disruption of collation process.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

In view of the aforementioned issues, KDI recommends that:

- The cases of violence in our electoral process is disturbing and the impunity displayed by vote traders are destroying our democracy. There must be accountability for every life lost in this election cycle. Therefore, we recommend that the FG should consider setting up an Electoral Offence Commission to prosecute and punish electoral offenders swiftly as INEC presently have no such power.
- Most persons believe manipulation occurs mainly at the collation centers, the collation process of election results should be fast-tracked. Besides, since smart card reader could transmit voting result directly from the PUs to the INEC situation room, then we implore INEC to embrace this transmitting process as the major way of collation instead of the manual collation process that is vulnerable to manipulation and human error. This we know will ease officers that were fatigue, cut the long period used for collation and it will enhance transparency and openness in the collation process. And we encourage that if this needs to be given a legislative backing it has to be done on time before the 2023 general election.
- Independent assessment should be done on the Nigeria Electoral Management Body to determine what is the best option available to improve our voting system so as to improve it to the point of meeting the minimum requirement of democratic process.
- Security agencies should ensure that credible security assessment is done, so as to strategically deploy security agents and not military in subsequent elections.

**Call to Action.**

KDI hereby request that:

- We know that the desperate quest for power of the political class has led us into nursing violence in our elections and the impunity from the suspected staunch followers of the political class and even themselves as become a major threat to our democracy. We request that all political actors and candidates should ensure they abide by the rules and respect the choice of the people, that's when a peaceful atmosphere can be ensured.
- They should ensure that all their followers are not going to be instrument to cause violence in any area of the state, and bear in mind that there is no blood of any Nigerians that worth their political ambitions.
- As citizens of this beloved country Nigeria, voters as a major stakeholder should bear in mind that there no good war or neither is there a bad peace and no development is possible in the atmosphere void of peace. We implore voters to please avoid being an instrument to foment violence in any area as peace for one is peace for all.
- We request that the security agencies should probe more into the causes of partiality displayed by some of their members, also for the subsequent election they should be impartial, fair and ensure justice in the discharge of their roles during the supplementary and 2023 general election as any act of partisanship can jeopardize the peace in our country.

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