

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Kim pact Development Initiative (KDI) Conference Hall,
Yenagoa, Bayelsa State.

**PRESS STATEMENT BY THE BAYELSA HUB OF THE NIGERIA
ELECTION VIOLENCE REPORT (NEVR) PROJECT TOWARDS THE
2019 BAYELSA GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION**

Distinguished Members of the Press

Ladies and Gentlemen,

You are welcome to this pre-election press conference organized by Kim pact Development Initiative (KDI) in respect to the Nigeria Election Violence Report (NEVR) Project for the 2019 Bayelsa Gubernatorial Elections. We wish to: inform the public on the key findings of the Kim pact pre-election survey/hotspot mapping done before the 2019 governorship elections; how citizen observation/monitoring could help on mitigating electoral violence; share various mediums where electoral violence can be reported; and to remind all stakeholders to play by the rules at critical junctures of the electoral process - before, during and after the election.

About NEVR Project

The Nigeria Election Violence Report (NEVR) project, supported by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), 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 promotes

collaboration and dialogue between election stakeholders in order to mitigate and/or prevent election violence.

To accomplish these objectives, KDI will engage monitors throughout the local governments areas in Bayelsa State during the pre-election, Election Day and post-election periods. KDI will also distribute public awareness materials and engage in public education during this process. This combination of activities will strengthen the monitors' ability to reinforce peace in their communities and to help prevent tensions from escalating into violence.

Methodology and Key Findings of Kimpact's Pre-Election Survey/Hotspot Mapping

Kimpact Development Initiative's commitment to deepening democratic processes motivates the organisation to embark on projects which will achieve this objective. KDI assessed the electoral risk factors in the eight (8) local government areas ahead of the 2019 Gubernatorial Election with a view to explore opinions, knowledge and non-violence expectations of the election on the one hand and on the other hand examine real and potential security threats in the zone so as to identify early warning signals that could assist relevant stakeholders, especially INEC, security agencies and civil society organisations (CSOs) to deploy appropriate responses. The pre-election survey comprised a web-based experiment which sampled the opinion of 678 respondents spread across Bayelsa State, desk reviews, interviews and focus group discussions.

From the survey, 74.3% of the respondents agreed that elections in Bayelsa State have been attended by violence. Going forward, 38.50% of the respondents expect a peaceful governorship election while 33.78% expect a violent election. 13.27% foresee a very peaceful election while 14.45% anticipate a very violent election. From the survey, the possibility of violence is unlikely in Kolokuma/Opokuma local government while Sagbama, Yenagoa and Ogbia are projected to somewhat likely to experience violence. However, the remaining four (4) local governments: Ekeremore, Southern Ijaw, Nembe, and Brass have a high tendency of experiencing violence.

Also, from the analysis, the top risk factors which could spark electoral violence are: party thuggery, vote buying, cultists' clash and spate of decamping which is presently going on in the state.

Monitoring Electoral Violence through Citizen Observation

With all these aforementioned concerns, providing impartial voice on electoral violence through citizen observation with the ultimate goal of ending the culture of violence by documenting and publishing comprehensive electoral violence data is crucial so as to inform relevant stakeholders on why election violence needs to be mitigated.

IFES through KDI have trained and deployed over 16 monitors to all the local government areas in Bayelsa for the pre-election, election day and post-election phases. Some peace initiatives such as advocacy meetings and town hall meetings have been held and will still be held across the state to discuss with key stakeholders so as to mitigate political tensions that may result into electoral violence. Thousands of pledge cards will be circulated to get commitment of citizens to peacefully participate in the 2019 governorship election. Nine (9) billboards bearing anti-violence messages are already being mounted in strategic places across Bayelsa State.

A toll-free line (0800001000) will be made available as an avenue to involve the public in reporting any incident of violence in their immediate communities.

Call to Action

As the November 16 governorship election draws nearer, KDI hereby implores all stakeholders: INEC, political parties, candidates, youth leaders, security agencies, political gladiators and civil societies to facilitate a peaceful atmosphere during this electoral process. As committed citizens of Nigeria and Bayelsa, we like you all to bear in mind that no development is possible in an atmosphere void of peace. We strongly appeal to youths to avoid being an instrument to foment violence in any area of the state as peace for one is peace for all.

We request that all candidates involved in the forthcoming election should promote a peaceful atmosphere for all by ensuring that all their followers are not going to be instrumental in causing violence in any area of the state. It is important to bear in mind that no blood of any Nigerian(s) is worth anyone's political ambitions.

We request that the security agencies should be impartial, fair and ensure justice in the discharge of their roles during the forthcoming election as any act of partisanship can jeopardize the peace of the state and the country at large. This press conference would be incomplete without requesting the media to be professional in their reporting bearing in mind that the people count on them for genuine and unbiased reporting.

In conclusion, we say thank you to all stakeholders as we hope for a peaceful atmosphere before, during and after the gubernatorial election.

Bukola Idowu,

Executive Director,

Kim pact Development Initiative