

RESEARCH ISSUE Brief

Issue 9, No. 2, September 2018

INECs House to House PVC Distribution Policy in Nigeria: Issues and Way Forward

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Overview

Although Nigeria has favourable ranking in the support of democracy amongst other African nations, support for democracy in Nigeria based on survey conducted within 1999 to 2015 shows that the support declined from 80.9% to 65%. Within 2015 to 2018 however, support for democracy in Nigeria increased from 65% to 69.1%, according to Afrobarometer. While the support for support democracy in Nigeria is on the rise, available data on the total number of PVCs collected and yet to be collected shows that Nigerians are yet to match intent with action. Studies^{1,2} published by the OECD and the UN have shown that there is a link between inclusive/participatory governance and sustainable economic development. This implies that increased citizen's participation in the nation's democratic process remains vital in order to better lives of the country's citizens and to achieve the SDGs. To reposition the country towards the path of inclusive governance therefore, there is need for increased citizen's engagement in the need to collect their PVCs. More so, the high number of PVCs that are yet to be collected also suggest that the nation's electoral umpire could consider reviewing its method of disseminating PVCs to Nigerians. This brief examines INECs house to house policy of distribution of unclaimed Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs). It raises some concerns and suggests ways through which the test policy that is to begin in Kogi state can be extended to other parts of the country as well.

1.0 Introduction

1. On July 25th 2018, the Independent National Electoral Commission announced that it will soon embark on house to

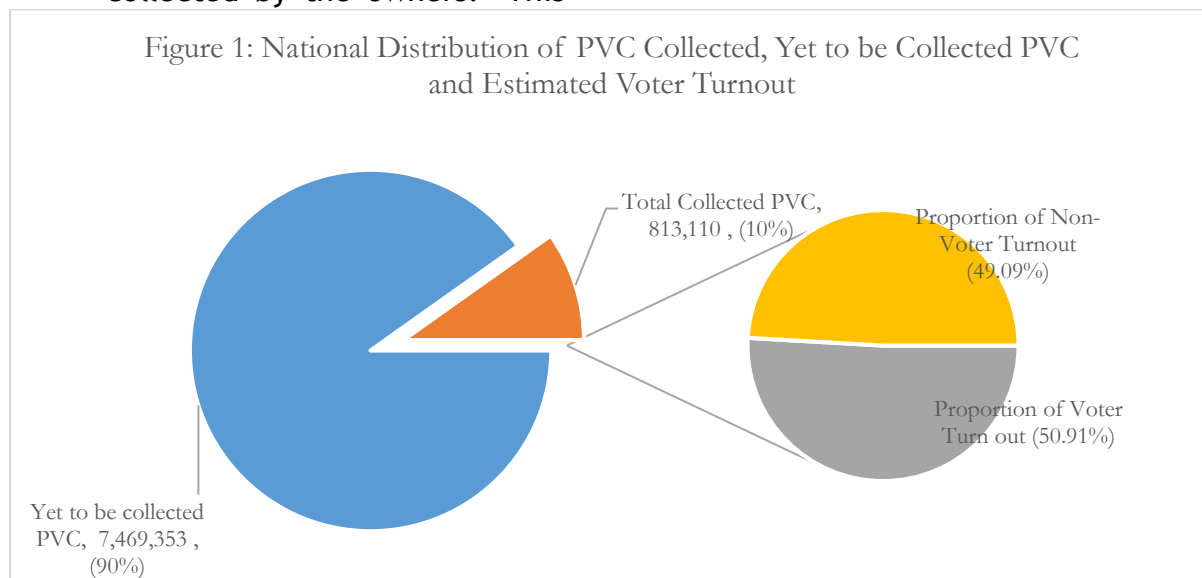
house distribution of PVCs to owners in Kogi State. This is because, according to the Resident Electoral Commissioner (REC) in the State, the number of

¹ UN Economic and Social Council, Committee of Experts on Public Administration Sixth session on Participatory governance and citizens' engagement in policy development, service delivery and budgeting, held at New York, 10-13 April 2007. Available at <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/un/unpan025375.pdf>

² OECD (2015), 'Policy Shaping and Policy Making: The Governance of Inclusive Growth' A publication of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Available at <https://www.oecd.org/governance/ministerial/the-governance-of-inclusive-growth.pdf>

uncollected PVCs is not far from the ones that are collected, for example, the REC revealed that 112,323 cards for newly registered voters are ready for the past six months, but only 18,887 of the cards have been collected by the owners.³ This

shows that only about less than 10% of the new PVCs have been collected (see Figure 1). Considering that the 2019 general elections is around the corner, there is need to address this lacunar.



Source: Analysts Presentation using data from INEC and USAID, 2018

2. No adult can vote in an INEC organized election without a Permanent Voter Card (PVC). This means, a potential voter without a PVC has unilaterally disenfranchised his or herself in the forthcoming 2019 general elections. According to Ajayi⁴, as at 2017 December, there are 66.5m registered voters; of this 54.43m have collected their PVCs while the uncollected PVCs are 7.8m and the unprinted PVCs are 4.23m. Unfortunately, as the electoral body continue to register voters, the number of the unclaimed PVCs continue to

raise in an astronomical manner.

3. Consequently, this policy brief is therefore interested in recommending strategies that will help INEC to resolve the challenges that the new house-to-house distribution of unclaimed PVCs will face. This is important because democracy will be in great danger by 2019 if the number of unclaimed PVCs keep increasing as the campaign for voters' registration intensifies to its climax at the end of this year. However, for the new policy to succeed, there are certain

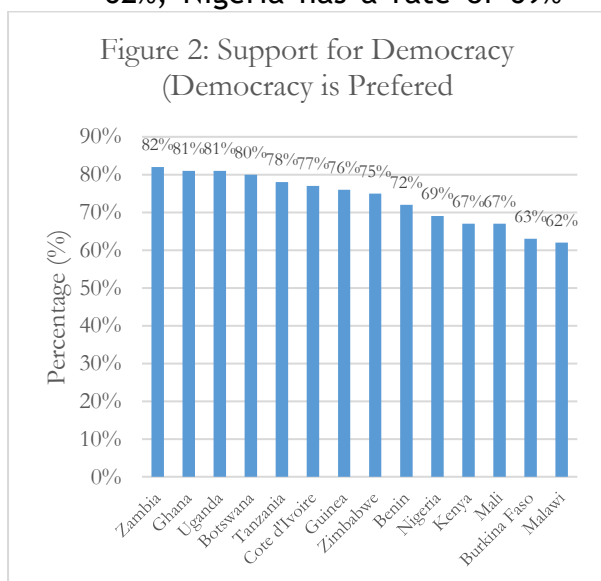
³ Punch (July 25th 2018). Inec plans door to door distribution of PVCs in Kogi). www.punchonline.com.
⁴ Ajayi, O. (2018). 2019: INEC and the Burden of uncollected, unprinted PVCs. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/04/2019-inec-and-the-burden-of-uncollected-unprinted-pvcs/>

Vanguard (April 16, 2017). 2019: INEC and the Burden of uncollected, unprinted PVCs. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/04/2019-inec-and-the-burden-of-uncollected-unprinted-pvcs/>.

issues that must be taken into consideration.

2.0 Political Participation and Nigeria's Democratic Governance

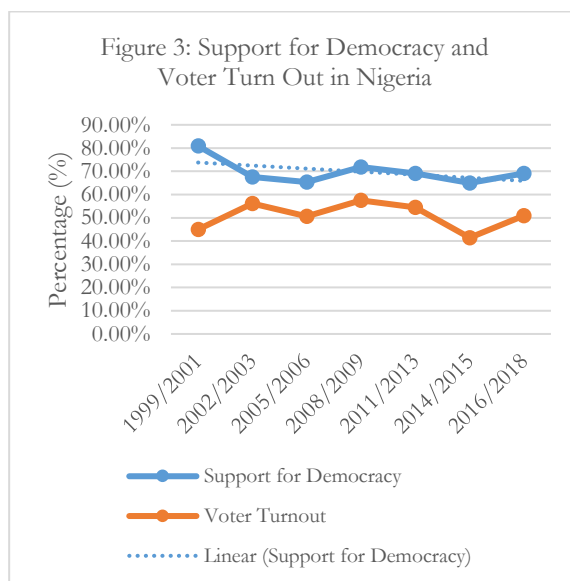
- Nigeria ranks high amongst other African countries in support for democracy. Data from Afrobarometer shows that while countries like Kenya have a 67% score in support for democracy and Malawi with 62%, Nigeria has a rate of 69%



Source: Afrobarometer
USAID

- Available data⁵ as at August 2018 shows that a total of 7,469,353 Permanent Voters Cards (PVCs) are yet to be collected from the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) (see Figure 1), while a total of 813,110 PVCs have been collected. The situation is not different across geopolitical zones as the distribution in Figure 4 shows that there are more yet-to-be Collected PVCs in all the geopolitical zones and

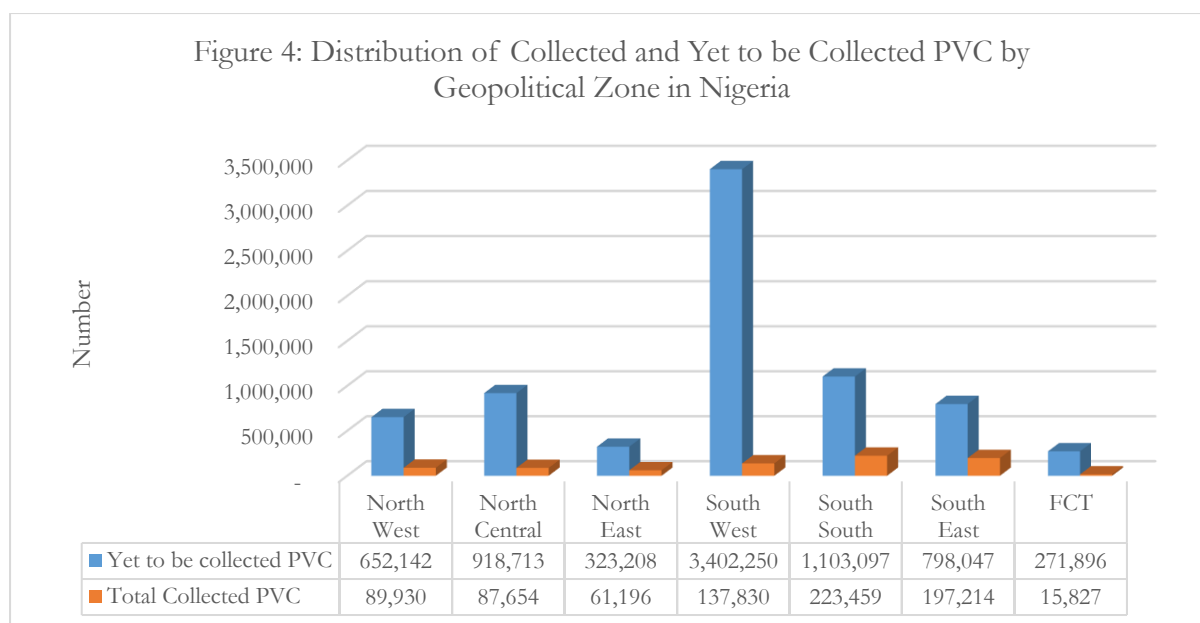
(see Figure 2). On the country specific level, however, Nigeria's growth in support for democracy for Nigeria calls for concern. Whereas as at 1999/2001 Nigeria's support stood at 80.9%, it had dropped to 65% in 2014/2015 (see Figure 3). When rationalized against the actual percentage that will turn out to vote, the problem at hand becomes more worrisome.



Source: Afrobarometer and

the FCT compared to number of collected PVCs. This implies that while Nigerians have a relative high support for democratic governance, there is need to complement this effort by collecting their PVCs as it remains the only tool to elect the leaders they want in order to stair the affairs of the country towards achieve inclusive development.

⁵ INEC report and Daily Trust news report of August 20th, 2018, pages 1 and 5



Source: Analysts Presentation using data from INEC and Daily Trust

3.0 Cross-Country Analysis: Voters' Registration and Voters' Cards Collection Methodologies around the World

- How eligible voters are registered and given PVCs in emerging and advance democracies and the success stories or otherwise of such process, are contain in Table 1⁶.

Table 1: Voters Exercise and PVC Dissemination in Other Climes

Countries	Methods of voters' registration	Remarks
USA	Citizens who are qualified to vote seek for means to register. The entire burden of registering to vote is on individual citizens.	The country has a success of rate of 75% to 90% of voters registration
Argentina, Australia, Sweden, Canada, France, and the Canadian provinces of British Columbia, Ontario, and Québec	Voters' registration is decentralized and eligible voters are enrolled automatically and the necessary documents are sent to the qualified voters. sometimes they are called to come to different offices to collect the documents to vote	Ninety-three percent (93%) of eligible citizens are registered to vote. This is a success story.
Indonesia	The government conducts a nationwide enumeration by hiring temporary workers to go door-to-door, registering every eligible voter.	There are very few incidences of unclaimed voters' documents/materials
Britain	Eligible voters are automatically registered and also some potential voters do go to registration points to register.	98% success.

⁶Jennifer S. R. and Margaret C. (2009). *Expanding Democracy: Voter Registration around the World*. N.Y: Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law.

Source: Compiled by author (2018) from Jennifer and Margaret (2009)

7. A major lesson to draw from the method of voter's registration in advance democracies is that there is adequate public awareness and citizens consciousness on the need to not register, but also ensure that they collect their PVCs in order for their votes to count.
8. Whereas there are various reasons why PVC collection is low in Nigeria⁷, some the factors responsible are identified in Table 2. However, with increased commitment and use of information technology and national orientation, factors like relocation from place of registration, poor administrative arrangement on the part of INEC and change of venue of collection points, should be weeded out.

Table 2: Reasons for Low PVC Collection in Nigeria

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Deaths, 2) Relocation from place of registration, 3) Laziness 4) Disenchantment with INEC's inability to conduct free and fair elections in the past 5) Fear of arrest because they are underage voters 6) Poor administrative arrangements put in place by INEC 7) Change of venue of collection points

Source: compiled by Author, (2018) from Akuki, (2017) and Gabriel, (2017)

4.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

9. Without a PVC, the right to vote, that will translate to the election of political leaders, in the local, states, and federal levels in Nigeria cannot be exercised in any form. Currently, the campaign for qualified Nigerians to get their PVCs is in top gear. This is why the millions of unclaimed PVCs in INEC's custody should be a problem to all stakeholders.
10. As a result of the fact that the 2019 general election is already at the corner and also because most Nigerians that have not collected their PVCs usually blame INEC, the onus now rest

on INEC to help the situation. Hence it is imperative that the new policy to distribute the PVCs from house to house that will soon start in Kogi State should be largely problem free. The following recommendation are therefore very important:

- i. Due to the fact that most Nigerians are always moving from place to place for mostly economic reasons, getting them to collect their PVCs will be very difficult in the addresses that are in their PVCs, hence, we recommend that the local radio stations should be contacted to locate the current residents of the

⁷ Akuki, A. (March 30, 2017). INEC and Concerns over Unclaimed 7.8m PVCs. <https://independent.ng/inec-and-concerns-over-unclaimed-7-8m-pvcs/>.

- PVCs owners before the door-to-door distribution commences in a particular locality;
 - ii. Also the services of the telecommunication companies and the commercial banks should be used to locate and invite the PVCs owners to come to the local INEC officers for their PVCs. This will also enable the house-to-house distribution policy very easy to a large extent;
 - iii. The chiefs and other traditional leaders including women leaders in each of the localities should be contacted to help INEC to do the door-to-door distribution of the PVCs. This is important because these local leaders will help to make the identifications of the addresses in the PVCs owners very easy for the INEC staffers;
- iv. Civil societies and development partners should also partner with democratic institutions in the country that are mandated to support and monitor the nations electoral process, in order to increase citizens awareness on their electoral rights, its link with development outcomes and as such, the need to collect their PVCs; and
- v. Lastly, considering the grass root advantage of the National Assembly, the House Committees on electoral matters, House committee on civil society and development partners and House committee on information, National Orientation, Ethics and values, can also collaborate to facilitate such campaigns and public enlightenment.

The views expressed in this Research Issue Brief are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the views of the Institute and its Management.

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