

NEW INITIATIVE FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, PRESS RELEASE ON EKITI STATE GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION HELD ON SATURDAY 18TH JUNE, 2022.

New Initiative for Social Development (NISD) participated in the electoral process of the Ekiti State governorship election which held on Saturday 18th June, 2022. In preparation for the election, NISD collaborated with other Civil Society Organizations and partners within and outside the state to provide voter education, mobilize community members and engage stakeholders to effectively participate in Ekiti State Governorship election towards a more credible electoral process.

NISD attended and participated in the following programs organized by CSO partners to prepare community members towards the election;

1. Ekiti Women Agenda Review meeting
2. Stop Violence Against Women in Politics mobilization campaign
3. Women Situation Room consultative meeting
4. Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room observers training
5. Research on Election Security management across all LGAs
6. Nigeria Women Trust Fund advocacy with female political party candidate etc.

Through these various platforms, NISD was able to train and sensitize community mobilizers to provide voter education to citizens in the various LGAs and Communities. This covered information on how to vote, when to vote, proper conduct during election activities, reasons why citizens should vote etc.

During the election activities, NISD, as a CSO, independently observed the conduct of Ekiti State Governorship Election.

Findings from the field during the election revealed the following;

1. **Timeliness:** INEC adhoc staffs were averagely timely and arrived their polling units with the election materials on the due time. This automatically led to an early commencement of the polls at 9:00am on the average.
2. **Accreditation System:** It is commonly believed that the process of accreditation in elections in Nigeria is often fraudulent, hence the increase in election malpractice. However, the initiation of the Bi-modal Verification Accreditation System (BIVAS) was able to debunk the high level of fraud in the accreditation of voters. We commend the INEC and its staff for the successful implementation of this new initiative. Although, the otherwise was the case in some locations of the state during the election. There was intense system malfunctioning and inadequacy in the number of BIVAS machine provided at some polling units. This brought about delay and led to voter apathy in some locations.
3. **Inclusion (Gender/PWDs):** According to reports findings, it was discovered that elderly persons, pregnant women and People Living with Disabilities were treated with priority while voting. However, PWDs in some locations were not provided with the necessary

voting aides for them to cast their votes fairly. This led to manipulations by some party agent and their affiliates on their choice of candidate.

As a result of several advocacy and sensitization on women participation in politics, it was observed that more women came out to vote on Election Day than usual.

4. **Security/Safety:** We applaud the level of decorum observed during the just concluded election. It is a very good development, as in the past, election days have always been violent days. We commend the effort of the various security outfits; Nigeria Police Force, Nigeria Security & Civil Defense Corp for their activeness in ensuring peace and stability during the election process.
5. **Vote Trading:** General report from the field reflected massive vote buying by major political parties in the state. It was emphasized that voters flagged their thumb printed ballot papers for party agents to see as confirmation of their vote to validate them for payment. This again is a blow to the face of all, as political parties continue to use the poverty and hunger situation of citizens to their advantage during election activities. We condemn this act and strongly recommend below;

RECOMMENDATION

1. **Government should address the economic situation of Ekiti people as the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) report of May 2020 reveals that Ekiti poverty head count ratio is the highest in south-west despite being the 12th lowest in Nigeria. This is clearly responsible for the massive vote trading recorded during the election.**
2. **We also recommend CSOs critical engagement with political parties across the state to address vote buying attitude and further translate to behavioral change in subsequent election activities.**
3. **INEC should be empowered by law to arrest, investigate and prosecute election offenders as well as vote buyers and sellers in subsequent elections.**
4. **Police and other security personnel should be up to their responsibilities of observing and arresting all involved in any form of violation of the electoral law especially vote trading.**
5. **Civil Society Organizations should serve as bridge between the government and the people to demand accountability and responsiveness to their manifestos and agendas during the course of governance. This will promote good governance and build the trust of the people in the system.**

NISD will continue to engage government and the people to ensure a better society for all.