

**REPORT
ON
SENSITIZATION
WORKSHOP
FOR
WOMEN
ON
CONTINUOUS
VOTER
REGISTRATION
(CVR)
SOUTH-EAST ZONE
30TH JULY, 2021**

INTRODUCTION

In consonance with the Continuous Voters Registration (CVR) that has commenced across the country, Pan African Women Projects board of trustees, managing executives and members decided to support and promote the Continuous Voter Registration(CVR) exercise as one of our contribution to good governance and sustainable democracy in Africa through zonal sensitization workshops to be held across the six (6) geopolitical zones in Nigeria in partnership with the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) . This workshop is to inform the registrants on the new registration portal and create confidence for people to turn up and get registered in preparation for the forthcoming elections in Nigeria.

The South East sensitization workshop was held in Awka, Anambra State on 30th day of July, 2021 at Dora Akunyili Women Development Centre, where the target audience mainly women groups, INEC officials, representatives from women ministries/parastatals, youth groups, people with disabilities (PWD), traditional fathers, CSOs, security agencies, national orientation agency etc came from Enugu State, Imo State, Abia State, Ebonyi State and the host State Anambra State.

The CVR exercise is for those who clocked eighteen (18) years after the last time this exercise was done in 2018 and for Nigerians who have never registered but are 18 and above in years.

INEC launched a dedicated portal for online registration for the exercise. This is unlike the previous years where prospective voters queued in various centers to register and obtain their

voter's cards.

The newly launched portal will enable Nigerians to commence the registration process online by filling the forms, other documents, then make an appointment on the web portal for a date and time to visit an INEC State or Local Government Area (LGA) office to give their fingerprints and complete the registration.

In addition, those who are already registered as voters can carry out all the other activities such as transfers of voting location from one place to another, correction of personal details and replacement of damaged or defaced Permanent Voters' Cards (PVCs) online.

Registered voters, who have had any issue during accreditation for any past election with their Permanent Voters' Cards (PVC) and their fingerprints can use this window (2021 CVR) to make those corrections.

If INEC attains its projected 20 million new voters in addition to the 2019 existing 84 million voters, Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation, will have not less than 124 million voting population for the 2023 General Elections.

ORGANISATION

The Pan African Women Projects, is a non-governmental, Non-religious and non-political organization of African women from the fifty-four (54) nations of Africa and the Diaspora with headquarters in Johannesburg, South Africa and regional offices in five (5) countries in Africa including Nigeria as the hub for the West African Region. Our organization international

connectivity is in tandem with the enabling laws and policy principles that guarantee, project, establish and sustain a free, fair, peaceful, credible and manifestly transparent election devoid of subtle or overt intimidation, commissioned or commissioned, manipulation, tangible or palpable coercion, systematic thuggery or gratuitous inducement and even organized violence.

More so, the Pan African Women Projects is also an International Election Observer Group with multi-faceted capacities and multi-dimensional experiences in election observations with the aid of the state of art technological approach in compliance with International best standard practice on election monitoring and observations.

OUR MISSION

Our primary mission is to promote good governance and sustainable democracy in Africa through our projects.

We engage all the critical stakeholders, eligible voters, women and the youth to actively participate in diversities of activities that promote voters education and electorate enlightenment programmes on the fundamental ingredients that will guarantee consciousness, to entrenching free, fair, peaceful and credible elections based on global acceptable norms, in free, fair, peaceful and credible elections based on global acceptable norms, in planning, conduct, observation and post-election management and reportage.

OUR VISION

Our vision is to use our knowledge and multi-diversities of experiences on elections planning, preparations, conduct, observation and post- election management, to generate civic

responsibilities consciousness and activate the innate zeal in every eligible voter, particularly in Africa, to sustain a vibrant consciousness to vote or engage in any voting or electoral process or procedure that will establish credible election, devoid of unconscious manipulation and bereft of conscious intimidation in every society or nation across Africa.

THE SOUTH EAST SENSITIZATION WORKSHOP

This workshop blueprint was discussed and professionally processed by Mrs. Blessing Obidegwu, the active Director Gender and Inclusivity of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) headquarters after several meetings with our team.

The SOUTH EAST workshop was a one-day event.

The choice of holding the workshop of the SOUTH EAST ZONE in Awka, Anambra State was as a result of the forthcoming Governorship elections in Anambra State and the socio political relevance of Anambra State in Eastern Nigeria.

The workshop began with an opening prayer that was followed with the National Anthem. A welcome remark was presented by Dr. Mrs. Eno Udensi, Head of Mission, Pan African Women Projects, welcoming all participants to the workshop and addressing women to create time for the continuous voter registration exercise and pass the message to their family members and extended relations in villages, market places, churches and communities to turn up and get registered.

In his opening remark, the Anambra State Resident Electoral Commissioner, INEC, Dr. Nkwachukwu Orji, expressed

dissatisfaction with the number of Ndi Anambra that have registered so far at the ongoing registration exercise, urging them to come out and register to enable them exercise their franchise during the November sixth governorship election.

He revealed that there are twenty-two INEC registration locations situated in the headquarters of each of the twenty-one Local Government Areas of Anambra State, as well as the State headquarters of INEC in Awka.

In a paper presentation titled, "Voter Registration, A Call for Women Participation", the keynote speaker, Professor Joy Ezeilo, a Professor of Law/Head of Department Public Law from University of Nigeria, Enugu campus pointed out that women have what it takes to change the narrative in the electoral process of the nation, she urged them to begin to reflect on the Nigeria they have and the Nigeria they want, and to use their votes, which are powerful and of great value to get things right in Nigeria.

The workshop featured goodwill messages from the State Director, National Orientation Agency, Barrister Charles Nworji, noted that the workshop is strategic and expressed hope that it will reflect in the total number of voters during the November sixth governorship election. Also, Anambra Commissioner for Women and Children Affairs, Lady Ndidi Mezue, represented by the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Economic planning, Dr. Daniel Ezeanwu congratulated the South East women for leaving their warehouses and markets to participate at the workshop and encourage them to carry the message to their "AUGUST MEETINGS" and share it in their various groups that the time is now, registration for the Continuous voter

registration is ongoing.

Other goodwill message was delivered by a former Minister of Women Affairs, Iyom Josephine Anineh, pointed that Government is involved in the life of people from birth till death, hence the need for the electorate to use their voting power to elect credible people to lead them, urging the participants to take the message of the workshop to the grassroots.

Representatives from Imo States, Enugu state, gave their brief remarkably and women from Abia entertained the participant with a beautiful women cultural dance.

Also, a youth group from Onitsha painted the message in a dance drama speaking in Igbo language to the participants.

At the plenary session papers were presented by HOD, VEB. - INEC Anambra State, Mr. Samuel Nimem on – “INEC preparedness for the Continuous Voter Registration-CVR”. Also Prince Stafford Bisong, Director General, Intercontinental Leadership Initiative presented a paper on Attitudinal change towards women civic responsibilities in the electoral process” while the Director Gender & Inclusivity INEC headquarters Mrs. Blessing Obidegwu presented a paper on "Importance of women participation in the Continuous Voter Registration – CVR exercise.” The paper was presented by the Gender Desk Officer INEC Anambra State, Mrs. Ijeoma Okefor.

Interactive session at the workshop was chaired by the Head of Department INEC, Anambra State Mr. Samuel Nimem who took all questions from the participants.

The session revealed that political apathy is eating deep into the electoral processes in the zone.

Women groups from National Council of Women Societies, Federation of Women Lawyers, Women Leaders across Political Parties, National Association of Nigerian midwives, National Association of Teachers, Market Women Association, Ijaw Women Network, People with disabilities (PWDs), CSOS, Students, Niger/ Delta Women Forum, Association of Women Against Trafficking, Delta Women Voices, Catholic Women Organization (CWO), women fellowships from Anglican Communion, Living Faith Church aka Winners Chapel, Methodist Church, Presbyterian Church, Qua Iboe Women, Cultural group, Vulnerable Women Association, and the media attended.

OBJECTIVE OF THE WORKSHOP

The objective of this workshop is to create awareness for persons who never registered to get registered. It is also a platform of passing of information to registrants that they can transfer their registration from one voting point to another; apply for replacement of lost or broken permanent voters card (PVC), replacement of defaced PVC and collection of PVC.

This workshop is to build confidence among women and let them understand that Voter registration is both the most central and most expensive aspect of the electoral process. It is an opportunity to make the participants understand that registering voters and producing voters' lists often accounts for more than 50 percent of the overall cost of administering elections as such, it is an exercise that must be protected by all stakeholders.

Pan African Women Projects through this workshop is providing adequate knowledge through different presentations by showing that voter registration support democratic principles as the Independent National Electoral Commission through the Continuous Voter Registration (CVR) is fostering political equality for all citizens and actively promoting the inclusion of eligible voters in the election process and must be supported by making their communities peaceful for a successful exercise in Nigeria.

This workshop addressed the factor of inclusivity. Registration must be inclusive – which means accessible to all groups and categories of eligible citizens. INEC in this workshop has shown that there is no systemic bias against any identifiable group. Any person male or female citizen of Nigeria who has attained the age of eighteen years (18) is eligible to register. This is an important message our organization is assisting INEC to pass on to women and people residing in urban / rural communities, people with low literacy level, people who are economically deprived or homeless, people with physical disabilities, people in incarceration etc.

The objective of this workshop also included that voter registration is a civic right of any citizen and foster the necessary awareness by emphasizing on the importance of registration, explaining citizens' responsibilities in becoming registered, and presenting information on how to complete the registration process.

Technological awareness was one of our objectives at the workshop. Our organizations use this workshop to elaborate on the use of technology as it is increasingly playing a central part

in the voter registration process. Aside from the introduction of the registration by INEC in making the voter registration easier, it is important to educate the participants that other technologies are useful in voter registration, particularly technologies for data collection, compilation, entry, matching, recognition, sharing, storage and transmission. Various types of technologies are for instance used to capture physical features of voters in the biometric registration process.

KEY OBSERVATIONS

1. Attendance was very impressive. About three hundred and two participants attended the sensitization workshop that was held on the 30th day of July, 2021 in Awka, Anambra State at Dora Akunyili Women Development Centre.
2. It was observed through various complaints from the women of SOUTH EAST that they have challenges in registration of voters as a result of absence of INEC registration officials at advertised venues, alleged extortion of those wishing to register by officials and non-collection of Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs).
3. The workshop also identified that women from the SOUTH EAST are really not interested in governance as even on Election Day those who had registered with PVC never went to cast their votes and their children who also registered and eligible to vote were captured on television by NTA news on Election Day playing football.
4. It was observed that only 22 per cent of the **2,064,134** million voters in Anambra State participated in the Nov. 18, 2017 governorship election, and that over 142,000 PVCs

were still awaiting collection at the INEC office in the state.

5. The Keynote speaker disclosed that those who did not participate in politics contributed more to the political and economic crisis in the country hence the workshop was a medium to speak to mothers from the SOUTH EAST STATE to give democracy a chance by encouraging their family members to begin by getting registered at the ongoing CVR exercise.
6. From the interactions of women, youths and participants at the workshop there is a serious political apathy in the SOUTH EAST STATES. This blame of political apathy among the people is because of the lack of confidence in the Nigerian electoral process.

Apathy include; refusal to register, refusal to belong to a political party, refusal to vote and refusal to protest against rigging and other electoral malpractice.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO INEC

1. We recommend that INEC do more sensitization workshops in the SOUTH EAST STATES to boost confidence in women who have fears that their vote don't count.
2. INEC to put enough measures to ensure that officials deployed to various registration centers should perform their duties efficiently and effectively.
3. More Registration Centers to be created especially at market places, malls, and business premises in the SOUTH EAST as they spend more time at their business

places than home.

4. INEC to partner with television stations in the SOUTH EAST STATE to promote their programmes for more awareness.
5. INEC to engage CSO'S in the SOUTH EAST ZONE to create awareness campaigns to promote electoral processes.

CONCLUSION

The workshop in the SOUTH EAST by our organization was a great eye opener, as it revealed the depth of political apathy among the people in this zone.

Political apathy is the canker worm that is destroying the efforts of INEC in the SOUTH EAST but the good news we gathered is that the women of this zone have a permanent solution.

This solution the SOUTH EAST women are offering from this sensitization workshop is teamwork, a synergy, a partnership, a dialogue with women and stakeholders and the time is now.

The Anambra Governorship election is holding on the 6th of November, 2021 and the outcome of the election in Anambra may change the political and economical atmosphere in the South East zone which is the reason PAN AFRICAN WOMEN PROJECTS is ready to further engage with the electoral body in having town hall meetings involving these women leaders and representatives that are willing to campaign for a change to attend with other stakeholders in promoting a peaceful and successful election.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

On behalf of our board of trustees, managing executives and members of our organization PAN AFRICAN WOMEN PROJECTS we express our profound gratitude to the National Chairman, Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) Prof. Mahmud Yakubu, National Commissioner and Chairman Outreach & Partnership Committee (OPC) INEC Hqts, Dr. Adekunle Ogunmola, Dr. Nkwachukwu Orji, Resident Electoral Commissioner Anambra State, Mrs .Blessing Obidegwu Director Gender & Inclusivity, INEC Hqts and the management and staff of INEC for their partnership and support to the success of the SOUTH EAST SENSITIZATION WORKSHOP for women on Continuous Voter Registration exercise held in Awka, Anambra State on the 30th July, 2021.

We look forward to the success of the remaining zonal workshops across the country and more engagements with the commission in promoting a sustainable democracy and peaceful and credible elections in Nigeria.

SIGNATURE PAGE

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