

February 23, 2019

## **Women's Situation Room Nigeria (WSRN) Releases Initial Findings from Observation Mission**

*WSRN notes improvements in gender-sensitivity of electoral process, while raising concerns about serious incidents of violence and barriers to voting*

ABUJA, NIGERIA – Women's Situation Room Nigeria (WSRN) has released the initial findings from the accreditation and voting phases of the election, having received reports from its observers in all 36 states.

WSRN observers have reported an improvement in the gender-sensitivity of the electoral process, with separate lines provided for women where appropriate, and persons living with disabilities, pregnant women and nursing mothers given priority in voting. Observers also highlighted the large turnout seen at polling units across the country.

However, WSRN observers also reported significant barriers to voting in some locations, including: late arrival of voting materials; late arrival or absence of Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) officials; card reader malfunctions; and mismatches between the names and photos on Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs) and those on card readers.

WSRN also denounces the serious incidents of violence that have been reported by observers in several locations. The incidents reported include: multiple bomb blasts in Maiduguri, Borno State; a voter killed in Ajetachi, Kogi State; a gun battle in Abonnema, Rivers State, which has claimed at least two lives; and multiple outbreaks of fighting at polling units across the country. In a particularly troubling incident reported in Bonny, Rivers State, a stray bullet from a shooting that struck a breast-feeding mother.

In addition to condemning these incidents of violence, WSRN also expresses serious concern about reports that women observers were prevented from entering polling units in Four Corner, Enugu State.

WSRN National Coordinator Dr. Joy A. Onyesoh said: "We are deeply troubled by the reports of electoral violence from our observers in the field. We call on all political parties and candidates to appeal to their supporters to remain calm and peaceful. Tensions are high, and it must not be allowed to escalate into widespread violence."

WSRN also raises concerns about video footage showing President Muhammadu Buhari checking the completed ballot paper of his wife, Aisha. Dr. Onyesoh noted: "This sets a



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*...promoting women's participation in the peace process*

worrying precedent, which undermines women's rights and their ability to freely exercise their franchise without intimidation or interference."

Finally, WSRN expresses appreciation to INEC for their coordination and quick response to incident reports from observers in the field. An INEC representative has been present in the Women's Situation Room in Abuja and has been an invaluable partner in investigating and seeking to resolve incidents as quickly as possible.

In the coming week, WSRN will release a detailed report of the findings from its observation mission, including data collected from its 450 observers deployed across the country.

For more information, contact [info@wsrng.com](mailto:info@wsrng.com).

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