



THE FEASIBILITY OF HARMONIZATION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY DATA AND VOTER REGISTER:

The Technical Challenges, Legal Obstacles and the Opportunities

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INTRODUCTION

- The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) was established by the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to among other things **organize elections into various political offices in the country;**
- The functions of INEC as contained in Section 15, Part 1 of the Third Schedule of the 1999 Constitution (As Amended) and Sections 2 & 9 of the Electoral Act 2010 (As Amended) are nine (9) in number, but could be summarized as follows:
 - *Organise, undertake and supervise all elections in the Country (except Elections into elective offices in the Local Government Areas);*
 - *Register Political Parties and monitor their activities;*
 - ***Registration of persons qualified to vote and maintenance of the register of voters;***
 - *Conduct voter and civic education; and*
 - *Promote knowledge of sound election processes.*



VOTER REGISTRATION PROCESS IN NIGERIA

- Voter Register is a major challenge for any EMB in the conduct of credible Elections;
- While election rigging can be attributed to:
 - *confusing ballot instruments*
 - *ballot stuffing, counting fraud and others*
- Lack of an authentic VR provides the necessary environment for all these vices to thrive;
- A credible voter register must ensure that a person only appears once in the register, hence can only exercise his/her franchise once;
- The application of biometrics to any electoral process therefore must start with a biometric registration which has every capability to ensure one-man-one-record.

BIOMETRIC VOTER REGISTER



- In 2010, INEC deployed 132,000 Direct Data Capture Machines (DDCMs) to its 120,000 Polling Units to enroll prospective voters;
- Machines captured the biodata, photograph and the ten (10) fingerprints of most registrants – over 74million voters enrolled;
- Register adjudged to be the best register produced in Nigeria, used for two General Elections - 2011 & 2015;

The current voter register is continuously been updated – in fact currently being updated Nationwide in preparation for the 2019 General Elections

CHALLENGES OF MULTIPLE BIOMETRICS ID SYSTEMS

Lack of an identified source of "Truth"

Compromises the system

Security challenges – similar records across multiple platforms

Affects international perception of the Country

Aids criminal activities

Poor trackable identity system

Affects Ease of Doing Business (EDB) rating of the Country

Waste of resources



PROGRESS MADE – Voter Register & National ID

- The two agencies have since commenced modalities for the harmonization process
- Joint technical committee has been formed
- Data dictionaries exchanged
- Release of 10,000 masked voter registration records as sample for analysis and test-run;
- Report showed 73.3% of the records were successfully processed to the point of issuance of the National Identity Number (NIN)
- INEC is preparing 5 Million records for release soon
- Voter enrollment software modified to handle data requirements of NIMC

TECHNICAL CHALLENGES – National ID & Voter Register

- With the progress made so far with the test-run, most of the teething issues like data compatibility have been resolved. Existing data challenges are:

Large volume of data requiring cleansing, conversion and processing

Lack of foundational data

Data integrity – which record is “golden”?

Interoperability

Time-consuming nature of handling hits during the AFIS run

Privacy issues & Data security

Retention periods for unused data

LEGAL OBSTACLES – National ID & Voter Register

INEC

mandated by law to **compile, maintain, and update** on a continuous basis, a National Register of Voters;

NIMC

is mandated by law to **create, manage, maintain and operate** the National Identity Database including the harmonization and integration of existing identification databases in government agencies and integrating them into the National identity database

- Legal impediments are not evident, but as soon as the harmonization project is completed, and modalities for the maintenance of the National DB, legislations may have to be amended.



OPPORTUNITIES– National ID & Voter Register

- Reduced cost of ownership
 - *Biometrics data capture & AFIS costs are eliminated*
 - *Shared cost*
- Reduced expenditure by Government
- Improved National Security
- Single source of truth – foundational data used to compile voter roll
- Underaged voters are eliminated
- Streamlined activities
- Improved operations for INEC, focus fully on conduct of elections
- Interdependence of agencies and healthy collaboration
- INEC offices can double as NIMC registration centres

WAY FORWARD

- While harmonization process is going on, INEC has to keep updating its register of voters
- Big question then is– When will agencies collecting legacy data stop collecting?
 - *Determinant – NIMC’s having a reliably large volume of data of Nigerians*
 - *Harmonization has to have a cut-off date so all legacy data are harmonized*
 - *No more biometrics data capture by INEC after this date*
- INEC registration centres – turn to NIMC data capture centres



WAY FORWARD – Post Harmonization

- INEC has specific data that NIMC does not capture, so voter enrolment continues

At enrolment:

- Voter brings NIN
- Verification from National Identity Database (KYC)
- INEC Collects other information not captured by NIMC, from voter
- INEC pulls data from NIMC DB
- Allocates voter to specific Polling Station
- Issues a form of ID that shows PU code and location to voter



“An illiterate person
is one who cannot write his name,
and
an illiterate state
is one that cannot write the names of its citizens”
– Maria Batch

Thank you
for your kind
attention!

