

A VOTER'S GUIDE TO PARTICIPATION IN THE 2015 GENERAL ELECTION



PLAC

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INTRODUCTION

- » The General Election in Nigeria is regulated by the provisions of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended), as well as the Electoral Act 2010 (as amended). Both provide the legal and institutional framework for regulating the conduct of Federal, State and Area council elections in Nigeria.
- » The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is the body established by Section 153 of the 1999 Constitution with the power and authority to organize and conduct elections.
- » Thus, the registration of voters and the conduct of elections are subject to the direction and supervision of INEC.

STEPS TO VOTE IN THE ELECTION

VOTER REGISTRATION:

Step 1: A Nigerian citizen who is eligible to vote, identifies the nearest Polling/Registration Unit to his location.

Step 2: The citizen goes to the chosen Polling/Registration Unit to register

Step 3: The citizen would have his/her picture taken and his/her details captured.

Step 4: The citizen would be given a Permanent Voters' Card (PVC) , which makes him/her eligible to vote on election day.

ELECTION DAY:

STAGE 1: ACCREDITATION (8:00am - 1:00pm)

Step 1: Go to the Polling Unit you were registered with your PVC and join the queue.

Step 2: Present your PVC to the INEC official and ensure that your name is in the register.

Step 3: Your finger would be marked with ink to show that you have been accredited. Accreditation is usually set out by INEC.

STAGE 2: VOTING (1:00pm)

Step 1: Join the queue with the intention of casting your vote.

Step 2: When it gets to your turn, ensure your name is ticked in the voter register.

Step 3: You would be given a ballot paper listing out the political parties.

Step 4: Enter the booth and select your preferred candidate.

Step 5: Place your ballot paper in the ballot box.

Voting time is usually designated and set to take place after accreditation.

- » Every citizen of Nigeria, who has attained the age of eighteen years residing in Nigeria at the time of the registration of voters is entitled to be registered as a voter for an election.

A person can only qualify to register as a voter if he/she is:

- » A Nigerian citizen
 - * Has attained the age of 18 years.
 - * Lives, works or originates from the Local Government Area Council or Ward covered by the Registration Centre.
 - * Presents him/herself to be registered.
 - * Not subject to legal incapacity to vote under any law, rule or regulation in force in Nigeria.
- » A person is not allowed to register in more than one Registration Centre or register more than once in the Registration Centre.
- » If a person moves from the State where he registered to vote to another State, he may apply to the State Resident Electoral Commissioner (REC) for his/her name to be transferred from the voters' list of the constituency/area where he/she originally registered to his/her present constituency/area. He is not allowed to register again as this would count as double registration.
- » Deadline for Registration to Vote: A person must ensure that he/she is registered to vote or that his/her name is included in the Register of Voters in his/her constituency/area where he/she intends to vote thirty (30) days before the date of any election. Failure to do so would result to his/her inability to vote in the election.

***The Right to
Vote...***

***Registering
to Vote....***

***Voters'
Card...***

- » It is the duty of INEC to design, print and issue the PVC to all registered voters.
- » A person is expected to collect his PVC from the constituency/area where he registered.
- » A Voter is not allowed to own more than one PVC.
- » In the case where a PVC is lost, damaged, torn or defaced, the owner of the PVC has 30 days to apply for a new one from the State REC. The State REC, if satisfied as to circumstances of the loss or damage, shall issue another voters' card to the person and the new card shall be marked "Duplicate".
- » The State REC shall not issue a duplicate voters' card on the polling day or less than 30 days before the polling date.
- » A registered voter is prohibited from giving his/her PVC to another person for the purpose of voting at the polling day or buys, sells, or deals with the PVC in any manner contrary to the Electoral Act.
- » INEC is expected to compile, maintain and update, on a continuous basis, a National Register of Voters which includes the names of all persons entitled to vote in any Federal, State, Local Government or Area Council elections.

***The Official
Register of
Voters...***

- » The Register of Voters for every Local Government Area shall be in the custody of the Electoral Officer who shall be under the supervision of the State REC.
- » Display of the Register of Voters: INEC shall earmark a period of not less than 5 days but not more than 14 days for the display of a copy of the Register of Voters for each Local Government, Area Council or Ward for purposes of claims or objections to names omitted or wrongly included.
- » The registration of voters, updating and revision of the Register of Voters shall stop not less than 30 days before any election.
- » Voters can request for a certified copy of the voters register in his area from the Commission, upon payment of specified fees/charges.
- » The order of elections into the offices of the President and Vice-President, the Governor and Deputy Governor of a State, and to the Membership of the Senate, the House of Representatives and the House of Assembly of each State is in the following order:
 - * Senate and House of Representatives;
 - * Presidential election; and
 - * State Houses of Assembly and Governorship elections.
- » The Time-Table for the 2015 general elections are as follows:-
 - * President and National Assembly – 28th March, 2015.
 - * Governorship and State House of Assembly – 11th April, 2015.

Order of Elections...

- » INEC shall publish a Notice of Election in each of State of Federation and the FCT which shall state:-
 - a. The date of the election; and
 - b. The place at which the nominations papers are to be delivered.
- » The Notice of Election must be made not less than 90 days before the date of the election. Nevertheless, if it is a by-election, the Notice of Election must be made not less than 14 days before the date of the election.
- » **Date and Time of Elections:** INEC must notify the public of the date and time for elections, persons entitled to vote and location of polling units not later than 14 days before the date of the elections.
- » Voting in any particular election must take place simultaneously at the same day and time throughout the federation.
- » **Postponement of Elections:** INEC can postpone elections in an area(s) in the event of the following circumstances:
 - * Where it has reason to believe that a serious breach of peace is likely to occur if elections proceeded on the date fixed;
 - * Natural disasters or emergencies make the conduct of elections impossible; or
 - * Where a candidate dies after delivery of nomination paper and before start of polls.

Where the above happens, there shall be no return for election made in the areas, until the holding of polling in the affected areas except the Commission decides otherwise. In other words, the Commission has discretion

to either announce or not announce election results in the area.

- » INEC will establish polling units in each registration area and to assign registered voters to each polling unit.
- » INEC will also be expected to provide ballot boxes, election forms and other election materials.
- » Before start of voting, the empty ballot box must be opened by the Presiding Officer and displayed to persons lawfully present at the polling unit and then closed back and sealed. Afterwards, it should be kept in full view of all present until after voting.
- » Voting Process: A voter must present himself and his voter's card to the Presiding Officer. The Presiding Officer shall then confirm that the voter's name is on the voters register, issue a ballot paper to the voter and mark him/her as having voted.
- » The Presiding Officer should separate voting queues for men and women in areas where the culture does not permit men and women to be on the same queue.
- » Electronic voting is prohibited for the time being. The use of the PVC card reader machines for the 2015 general election is not regarded as an electronic voting system by INEC.
- » With respect to persons with disabilities, INEC is encouraged to make adequate devices or equipment to enable such persons cast their votes.

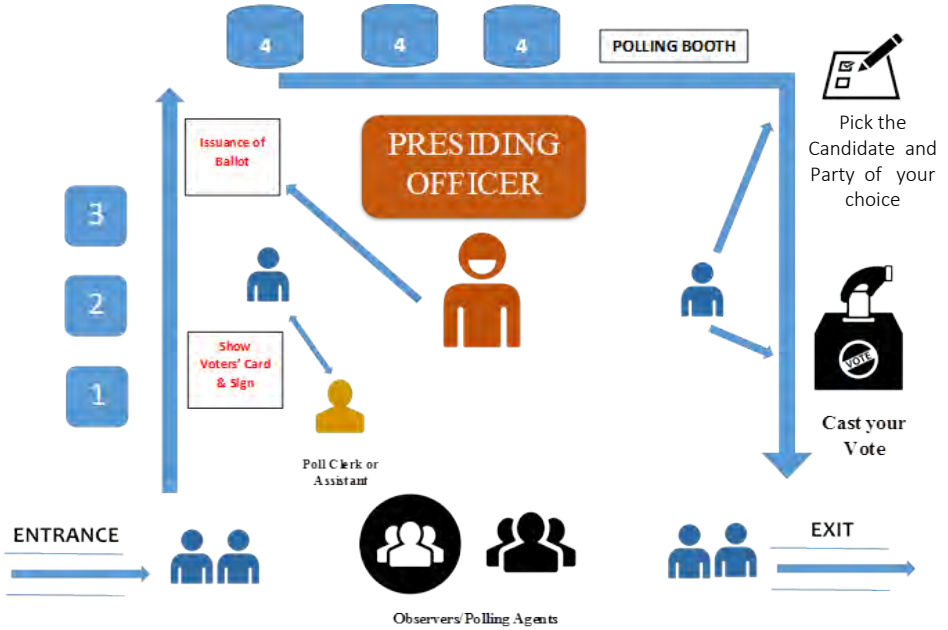
***Polling
& Actual
Voting....***

***Things to
Note when
Voting....***

- » Voting is by open secret ballot and all ballots must be deposited in the ballot box in the open view of the public.
- » A voter must appear in person to vote and he must vote in the polling unit where he has been assigned.
- » Voting for more than one candidate in one election is not allowed.
- » A voter is not allowed to make any mark on a ballot paper that identifies him/her. A voter is only allowed to cast his/her vote by applying their thumbprint marked with indelible ink on the ballot paper. Doing otherwise will cause the ballot paper to be rejected.
- » Voters are not allowed to vote on destroyed or spoiled ballot paper.
- » Tendered Ballot: This is issued in a situation where someone applies for a ballot paper to vote, whereas records indicate that another person has voted in the name given by the claimant.
- » The Electoral Act requires the Presiding Officer to enter the name of the voter and his number in the voters register on a list to be called “tendered vote list” and the tendered vote list shall be produced in any legal proceedings arising out of the election. The aim is to regulate conduct of voters at polling units and prevent disruptive situations.

Role of Presiding Officers on Election Day

- » The Presiding Officer regulates the admission of voters to the polling unit and can exclude persons other than those lawfully entitled to be admitted such as accredited observers, polling agents and Poll Clerk.
- » A Presiding Officer can order a police officer to arrest a person impersonating a voter or a person who he believes is under the age of voting i.e. 18 years.
- » The Presiding Officer may also remove any person who behaves in an unruly manner in a voting precinct. Such persons may only re-enter the polling unit on the day of the election with the approval of the Presiding Officer.
- » Nevertheless, the powers given to the Presiding officer to exclude disruptive persons or persons charged with the commission of an offence must not be abused to prevent a lawfully entitled voter from voting.
- » In the absence of a Presiding Officer, the Poll Clerk assumes all his powers.
- » The Presiding officer must declare the polls closed at the time set for closing. At this time, only persons inside the polling unit who have not voted are allowed to remain in the polling booth until their votes are cast.



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|--|-------------------------------------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|--|------------------------------|
| | (YOU VOTER) | | Polling/ Voting Booths | | Vote Flow |
| | Check Register of Voters for Your Name | | Vote for Preferred Candidate | | Polling Clerk / Assistant |
| | Verify ID & Eligibility (Accreditation) | | Cast Your Vote | | Election Observers |
| | Issuance of Ballot Paper After Close of Accreditation | | Presiding Officer | | Polling Agents |

About PLAC

Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC) is a non-governmental organization committed to strengthening democratic governance and citizens' participation in Nigeria. PLAC works to enhance citizens' engagement with state institutions, and to promote transparency and accountability in policy and decision-making processes. The main focus of PLAC's intervention in the democratic governance process is on building the capacity of the legislature and reforming the electoral process. Since its establishment, PLAC has grown into a leading institution with capacity to deliver cutting-edge research, policy analysis and advocacy. PLAC receives funding support from donors and other philanthropic sources.

