



# REPORT ON INCLUSIVITY IN NIGERIA'S ELECTIONS



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# Acronyms and Abbreviations

**API** – Africa Polling Institute

**CEDAW** – Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women

**CSOs** – Civil Society Organizations

**EMBs** – Election Management Bodies

**IDPs** – Internally Displaced Persons

**INEC** – Independent National Electoral Commission

**LNOB** – Leave no one behind

**OPD** – Organization of Persons with Disabilities

**PLAC** – Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre

**PWDs** – Persons with Disabilities

**SDG** – Sustainable Development Goals

**UN** – United Nations



# Executive Summary



Participation of all citizens in formal political processes is fundamental for democracy and Election Management Bodies (EMB) and other stakeholders who have crucial roles to play in empowering marginalized persons to participate in formal political processes. Nigeria's elections still excludes significant proportions of the population including women, youths and people with disabilities. For instance, the level of women's participation in government is very low. In the recent 2019 general elections, the numbers of elected women lawmakers in the National Assembly were very low and indeed decreased from 22 to the new low of 13 in the House of Representatives. Young persons, as well as persons with disabilities complained about exclusion from participation in politics. The marginalization of critical segments of the Nigerian society from participation in politics means that a significant portion of the population is excluded from participation and decision making.

This work is a veritable attempt targeted at examining the efforts of electoral stakeholders towards an improved election administration and consolidation of the democratic process in Nigeria. It has been initiated, nursed, and undertaken by Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC) with support from the MacArthur Foundation as a way of underscoring inclusive citizens' engagement in the electioneering process. A core objective of the study is to promote social inclusion and citizens' awareness of the electoral process. To achieve this, the scope of the report covered the participation of disadvantaged groups: women, young persons, internally displaced persons and persons with disabilities in the

democratic process. Policy recommendations that will help improve and promote voter awareness, knowledge of electoral laws, and processes, as well as educate first time voters and encourage voter registration have been offered accordingly. This is intended at enhancing voter participation in the electoral process and to gain a better understanding of the reasons why marginalized groups may or may not participate in the electoral process. The report also reveals the barriers experienced by Nigerians in exercising their right to vote.

## KEY OBJECTIVES

Africa Polling Institute (API) was commissioned by PLAC to carry out a survey amongst citizens and key informants. Research findings from the survey will help election stakeholders implement public education and information programs to make the electoral process better known to the public, particularly to those persons and groups most likely to experience difficulties in exercising their democratic rights. Specific objectives include the following:

1. Determine to what extent electoral participation varies across marginalized groups.
2. Examine the specific barriers that marginalized groups encounter that limit their electoral participation.
3. Identify possible causes behind low turnout among marginalized groups and isolate those causes that can be addressed by the Election Management Body, INEC.
4. Recommend values, attitudes and behaviours associated with voting that can be leveraged through outreach strategies to increase the electoral participation of marginalized groups.

### 1.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Inclusive electoral practice is the most important policy instrument that condenses inequality and disparity among the citizens in the electoral process. As identified by extant literature, some of the elements of this instrument includes but are not limited to voter's turnout and registration gap. There are also other aspects of electoral practices that are capable of undertaking this function. A well designed electoral system is a key example. This element is very significant to the extent that the overall electoral processes and its design are capable of affecting inclusivity, voters' participation & turnout, and by extension, overall democratic outcomes in a society. By and large, while the concept of inclusion maintains an important position in this conceptualization, it is absent in many discussions and definitions that connect electoral integrity and democracy because it has been underdeveloped and understudied (James and Garnett, 2020), owing to the exclusive nature of most democratic practices in developing nations such as Nigeria.

There are different traditional theories of democracy that are silent on this issue. One good example is minimalist approach to the definition of democracy set out by scholars like Adam Przeworski (1999) and Robert Dahl (1971). They identified different characteristics of elections that are considered prerequisites and necessary for any state to be termed democratic. While they prioritized the fact that voting should be done in secret with little attention to how election itself takes places, there is a greater attention placed on the inclusion of everyone in the process. This unarguably is at the core of the theory of democracy itself. Adding to this, some theorists have considered democracy as the process of realizing some specific principles and ideal. Beetham (1994) for example sees it as the political equality and popular management of government, but he failed to give exact mapping of the electoral institutions that may help to achieve this. This institution is one that begs the question of inclusion since the concept cannot happen in isolation. Detailed guidelines for figuring out this goal of inclusive turnout in election are widely spread among the global community. The third wave of globalization and democratization caused the development of worldwide networks of global actors who sought to outline requirements for how elections ought to be run, which have been sketched into international treaties, interpretative files, political agreements and other assets (James 2020). Such agreements had been consolidated into assessment manuals so they can be used by observers to evaluate the extent of inclusions during elections.

The Carter Center (2014) guide details consist of a commitment to an expansion of practices that are seeking to ensure inclusion and political equality. To take one example, the United Nations Conference on the Rights of People with Disabilities, followed in December 2006, calls on states to: 'make sure that individuals with disabilities can effectively and absolutely take part in political and public existence on same level with others, at once or through freely selected representatives, together with the proper and opportunity for individuals with disabilities to vote and be elected (United countries 2007, 21). These agreements are landmark moments toward the realization of inclusive voting practices. In reality, these statements are regularly taken as the definition of electoral integrity itself (Norris 2013). They stay unconnected to political theories, thus, allowing political actors to define what inclusive practices mean.

Electoral processes as an area of research have largely been overlooked by modern political scientists, rather, they focus more on the effects of electoral system and voting behavior. A seminar by Wolfinger and Rosenstone in 1980 changed the story while trying to respond to a question posed: Who votes? At this seminar, some of the earliest empirical works were produced, this focused on why electoral practices can make a huge difference. Many other studies followed over the time but mostly based on researches gotten from United States of America. Most of these studies were gingered by the politics that followed

National Voter Registration Act. Other studies later came up to gradually cover other established democracies across the world (Garnett 2019a, 2019b; Germann and Serdült 2017; James 2011). Despite the fact that there have been less frequently published work outside western democracies, the studies of Virendrakumar et al. (2018) that projected the non-availability of inclusive electoral practices for disabled persons in Africa became one of the exemptions. Additionally, the rational choice framework is tagged to most of the exhausting researches but not without criticism. The idea was explicitly started by Wolfinger and Rosenstone (1980) when they posited that "...we find it useful to think in terms of the benefits and costs of voting to the individual... The easier it is for a person to cast a ballot, the more likely he is to vote". Considering the importance of a single vote due to marginal difference it could have, it is therefore important to the ongoing to understand the normative and cultural context in which election takes place.

Galicki (2018) in one of his studies argued that: "voting can be viewed as an act of belonging or acceptance of the "system". With this, she sets out an alternative approach known as sociological institutionalism. This is concerned with the wider range of informal norms and cultural context in which voting takes places, instead of the normal formal-legal institutional arrangement and how they structure incentives.

Furthermore, there have been several works aimed at conceptualizing different practices that can help to promote equal turnout during election. One of the works was given by James (2010) where he adopted the concepts of restrictive and expansive forms of electoral administration, he said this according to whether they decreased or increase electoral turnout in a meta-analysis of studies that were done earlier on and later placed procedures on what he called 11 points ordinal continuum. In a similar manner, Pallister (2017) adopted the concept of inclusiveness in election administration to mean "the degree to which the administration of the electoral process facilitates or hinders the ability of eligible citizens to vote". He then arranged the procedures on the scale of three points. Other works by researchers have considered the policy and political consequences of inclusive electoral practices. Different questions are asked, such as; Are some procedures, for example, capable of redressing the severe economic inequalities that are prevalent in most societies? Do they favour the candidates or parties from an ideological point of view? What are the consequences of such policy? Many researchers have used the above questions to advance arguments that electoral practices are consequential to the theorization of State.

The theories of State deal with nature of the State, the relationship with the citizens and the interests that the state serves (Dunleavy and O'Leary 1987). The liberal democratic theory of State considered a State as a neutral arbiter between different interests that

compete. On the other hand, Elitist Theorists posited that the Incumbent in the State can shape the State to suit particular interests that are mostly self-centered. James (2010) therefore advanced an argument in this lane that the governing elite of any State would be conditioned to choose electoral procedures that would enable them to win more seats in government.

Piven and Cloward (1983) in their earlier writing argued that the attempts to redress class and racial struggles begot the battle for inclusive voting procedures. There have been many other arguments but not without notable gaps because the normative theories seem to only justify election as a method of rule and remain silent on the details of how elections should be conducted. To encourage inclusive election, right to vote is one of the rights protected under international human rights law. The international human rights law made provisions that the right to vote shall not be subject to unjustifiable and unreasonable restrictions and distinction of any kind, such as colour, sex, race, religion language, political or other opinion, social or national origin, property, birth or other status (PLAC, 2018). There are several international, regional and sub-regional conventions and declarations on human rights and other relevant legal documents provide support for the right to vote. The more prominent of these treaties include the following:

- I. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
- II. The 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;
- III. The 1981 African Charter on Human and People's Rights.

Women's full participation in political and electoral processes stems from the principles of non-discrimination and equal enjoyment of political rights enshrined in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the 1952 Convention on the Political Rights of Women (CPRW), and other regional conventions that explicitly state that such rights shall be enjoyed without distinction of any kind, including sex or gender (UN, 2013). Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR, 1966) outlines the rights of all citizens not only to take part in the conduct of public affairs, but also "to vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors" and "to have access, on general terms of equality, to public service in his [sic] country". Women's rights to "hold public office and execute all public responsibilities at all levels of government" are reaffirmed in the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). More specifically, Article 7 states that: State Parties shall take appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country, and, in particular, shall ensure to women, on an equal footing with men, the right:

- I. To vote in all elections and public referenda, and to be eligible for election to all

- publicly elected bodies;
- II. To participate in the formulation and implementation of government policy, and to hold office in government; and c) to hold office in government (CEDAW, 1979).

While the ICCPR states unequivocally that no discrimination based on gender is permitted in the exercise of the right to vote and the right to participate in public life, CEDAW imposes a further, affirmative obligation on states parties to take appropriate measures to eliminate any such discrimination. Furthermore, Article 4 of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women promotes the employment of temporary special measures (TSMs) to speed up compliance with Article 7. While temporary special measures are frequently thought of in terms of increasing the number of women in elected office, they can also be used to give full effect to Article 7 in relation to electoral procedures and processes, as well as the appointment and composition of electoral management bodies (Palmieri, & Bardall, 2013).

The right of women to freely participate in all aspects of public life has remained a cornerstone of UN resolutions and declarations. From the UN Economic and Social Council Resolution (E/RES/1990/15) to the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action (1995), the Commission on the Status of Women Agreed Conclusions 2006 (E/2006/27-E/CN.6/2006/15), and the General Assembly Resolution 66/130 (2011) on Women and Political Participation, governments have been urged to take steps to increase the number of women in elective and appointive public offices and functions at all levels (UN, 2013). States that are signatories to international agreements are jointly responsible for respecting and enforcing their obligations through a variety of organizations. EMBs have explicit responsibility to ensure that their actions and decisions are in accordance with their country's international obligations, which may necessitate more resources to promote a more inclusive election process.

National laws, especially in nations like Nigeria that have ratified international legal instruments, are supposed to reflect the international framework by domesticating its provisions and adopting international standards. The right to vote, on the other hand, is not explicitly expressed and stipulated in Nigeria's Constitution and other legal documents. This may be one of the reasons why the right to vote is so difficult to implement. Although it is commonly assumed that the right to vote in Nigeria is granted by the Constitution and thus constitutional, a closer examination of the provisions frequently cited in support of this claim (namely, sections 77, 117, 132, and 178 of the 1999 Constitution) reveals that these provisions do not clearly provide a constitutional basis for exercising the right to vote in Nigeria (PLAC, 2018).

The most commonly referenced clause is section 77, which deals with the procedure of electing members of the National Assembly as well as individuals who may be eligible to vote in legislative elections. The following provision is worth repeating: 77. (1) Subject to the provisions of this Constitution, every Senatorial district or Federal constituency established in accordance with the provisions of this Part of this Chapter shall return a member who shall be directly elected to the Senate or the House of Representatives in such manner as may be prescribed by an act of the National Assembly. (2) Every citizen of Nigeria, who has attained the age of eighteen years residing in Nigeria at the time of the registration of voters for purposes of election to a legislative house, shall be entitled to be registered as a voter for that election. Section 117 is worded exactly as section 77. The only difference, however, is that, while Section 77 relates to elections to the National Assembly, section 117 only deals with elections to the State Houses of Assembly: 117. (1) Subject to the provisions of this Constitution, every State constituency established in accordance with the provisions of this part of this Chapter shall return one member who shall be directly elected to a House of Assembly in such manner as may be prescribed by an Act of the National Assembly. (2) Every citizen of Nigeria, who has attained the age of eighteen years residing in Nigeria at the time of the registration of voters for purposes of election to any legislative house, shall be entitled to be registered as a voter for that election.

In a similar spirit, Section 132 of the Constitution, which is ostensibly intended to provide a fundamental foundation for the right to vote in Nigeria, falls far short. The subsection (5) of the provision is only significant because of how it is written. 'Every person who is registered to vote in a legislative house election shall be allowed to vote in an election for the office of President,' it states. Similar provisions apply to who is eligible to vote in a state governorship election under Section 178(5). Although the words "must be entitled to vote" appear in these laws, they must be interpreted in the context in which they appear. When these provisions are considered in conjunction with the other provisions already examined, it is clear that they were not intended to express a constitutional or enforceable right to vote. To back up the foregoing claim, two significant reasons have been advanced (see Ugochukwu 2013). The first is the way the Nigerian Constitution frames the right to vote in comparison to the constitutions of other African countries. For example, Part 2 of Kenya's 2010 Constitution contains 'rights and fundamental freedoms,' which include political rights, such as the right of every adult citizen to (a) register as a voter; and (b) vote by secret ballot in any election or referendum without arbitrary restrictions. The constitutional provision that none of the protected rights and fundamental freedoms may be reduced "unless by legislation, and then only to the degree that the limitation is reasonable and justifiable in an open and democratic society founded on human dignity, equality, and freedom" is also crucial. Because the Kenyan Constitution does not link one's right to vote

to their voter registration, the right to vote is simply enforced when it is violated.

The second point raised is that voters have no legal recourse if their right to vote is violated or hampered. If a Nigerian voter is dissatisfied with the election results, he or she cannot file a complaint. 'an election petition may be presented by one or more of the following persons: (a) a candidate in an election; (b) a political party that participated in the election,' says section 137(1) of the Electoral Act 2010 (as amended). As a result, one must consider the impact of Nigeria's so-called right to vote if voters are unable to utilize their legal right to challenge a violation of that right. Again, it's a disgrace when no specific remedy arises from exercising one's right to vote when that vote is diluted or devalued. When a Nigerian voter is denied the right to participate in the election process, he or she is also unable to make a case for redress. Things have begun to change in recent years, as some segments of Nigeria's voting population, such as those living outside the nation and those incarcerated, have begun to argue for the exercise of their voting rights and participation in the election process. For example, on May 25, 2007, a group of Nigerians living overseas led by Mr. Hakeem Bello, Professor Bolaji Aluko, and Mr. Uzoma Onyemaechi filed a lawsuit in Abuja's Federal High Court challenging their exclusion from voter registration and voting. The plaintiffs argued that under the combined effect of Article 13 of the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, Section 77 of the 1999 Constitution, and Section 13 of the Electoral Act 2006, Nigerians living abroad who are 18 years or older are legally qualified to vote for candidates of their choice in any Nigerian election. The Court declared in December 2008 that Nigerians residing overseas could vote in Nigerian elections and directed INEC to put in place apparatus to facilitate their participation in future elections (Adewole 2009). The Commission has failed to comply with the court order.

A Federal High Court in Benin, Edo State, ruled in December 2014 that inmates in Nigerian prisons had the right to vote in all elections held in the country (Enogholase 2014). Victor Emenuwe, Onome Inaye, Kabiru Abu, Osagie Iyekepolor, and Modugu Odion (for and on behalf of inmates of Nigerian prisons) filed a lawsuit against the Independent National Electoral Commission and the Controller-General of the Nigerian Prisons Service. The plaintiffs had requested the court to rule "whether the plaintiffs were not eligible to be registered as voters by INEC, having respect to the provisions of Section 25 of the 1999 Constitution (as amended) and Section 12 (1) of the Electoral Act 2010." They also asked the court to rule on whether the plaintiffs were entitled to vote in any election in the country, based on the requirements of Section 77 (2) of the 1999 Constitution and Section 12 (1) of the Electoral Act 2010. They also asked the court to rule on whether INEC's failure to make registration and voting provisions for inmates in Nigerian prisons does not constitute an infringement of their rights as citizens of Nigeria as enshrined in sections 14 (1) (2) (a) (b), section 17 (2) (a), section 24 (b), (c), and section 39 of the 1999 constitution, as well as



Article 13 (1) and Article 20 (1) of the African Charter on Human and People's Rights. The struggle to enhance inclusive electoral practices will continue to be a significant part of democratic consolidation in the world.

## 2.0 SURVEY METHODOLOGY

API adopted a multi-stage research methodology of both Telephone Interviews and In-person survey each approach was quantitative technique. Data collection was divided into two phases.

### **Phase I: Quantitative Telephone Poll**

A 2,000 Sample Size Citizens Perception Telephone Poll was conducted between November and December 2021, to gauge the perception of Nigerians on the state of electoral inclusion in Nigeria. The poll adopts a proportionate, stratified, random sampling technique to across the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. All interviews were conducted via telephone, using a stratified random sampling technique. Interviews were conducted in five major Nigerian languages; **English, Pidgin-English, Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo.**

The average time per interview was 20 minutes. A total of 6,600 contacts were attempted, with 2,077 interviews completed, representing an average response rate of 31.4 percent. All respondents were aged 18 years and older. The sample was randomly selected from API's Database of over 50 Million GSM Numbers; distributed proportionately across the 36 state and Abuja using the 2006 population census.

### **Phase II: Face-to-Face Survey with Women, Youth, Persons with Disability (PWD) and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)**

Following the completion of the Telephone Poll, the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of data collection began with a 1,500 Sample Size Face-to-face across the 36 States and FCT. The survey offered an even slice across the federation. The sample was distributed evenly to ensure equal participation of Women, Youth, PWDs and IDPs in the survey.

All survey protocol was designed and scripted using Kobo Toolbox software, and data was collected using android handheld devices. A total of 1,899 respondent intercepted, with 1,645 interviews completed, representing an average response rate of 86.6 percent. All respondents were aged 18 years and older. The in-person exercise adopts a convenient sampling also known as non-probability technique across the 36 state and Abuja. Furthermore, the overall respondent rate was calculated at 59.2 percent.

Post-stratification weights were constructed and applied to the data to make it representative of the population of Nigeria and reduce non-response bias. The margin of error for the survey is 2 percent and the mid-range with a confidence level of 95 percent.

### 3.0 SURVEY RESULTS & FINDINGS

This section of the report presents and analyses data gathered through the Questionnaire and Key Informant Interview (KII) instruments. Logical triangulation of data will be done to accentuate data derived from the field with the position of extant literature on the subject of inclusive election and how it is practiced in Nigeria.

#### 3.1 SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DATA

The result disaggregates response by Category(ies) of Respondents (spread across key variables of inclusion including women, youth, PWDs/IDPs, and also the general public), Gender, Age Group, Disability Status, Education, & Geo- political Zone. The result shows that out of 8499 respondents whose opinions were sampled, 3722 were returned. This represents 43.8% of the total population sampled. The character of the data showed that responses were gotten from all the geo-political zones of the country with the highest response coming from the North-West (25.6%), and the lowest from South-East (11.7%) & North-East (13.5) respectively. The poor responses from these regions were due, in parts, to the Boko Haram insurgency in the North-East region, and the sit-at-home order in South-East which is a solidarity movement for Nnamdi Kanu's quest for a Biafran State.

Additionally, the disability status of the respondents fairly indicates fairly that the ratio of PWDs is not much compared to the general population. This conforms to recent research in the area under investigation as one findings holds that: "while there is not a clear estimation of the number of people with disabilities in Nigeria, data from the 2018 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey revealed that an estimated 7% of household members above the age of five (as well as 9%t of those 60 or older) experience some level of difficulty in at least one functional domain—seeing, hearing, communication, cognition, walking, or self-care. Similarly, 1% either has a lot of difficulty or cannot function at all in at least one domain."<sup>1</sup>

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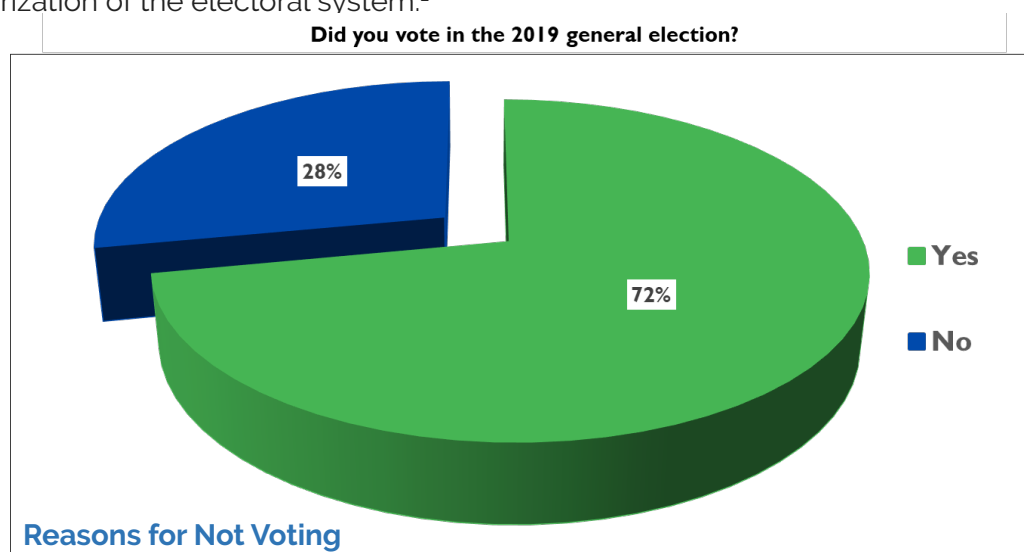
<sup>1</sup> <https://blogs.worldbank.org/nasikiliza/social-inclusion-persons-disabilities-nigeria-challenges-and-opportunities>

| Variable Name              | Variable Label                                 | N=3,722 | %=100 |
|----------------------------|--|---------|-------|
| Category of Respondent     | Youth  | 456     | 12.3% |
|                            | Women  | 600     | 16.1% |
|                            | Persons with Disability / IDPs                 | 658     | 17.7% |
| Gender                     | Male   | 1891    | 50.8% |
|                            | Female   | 1831    | 49.2% |
| Age Group                  | 18 – 35 Years                                  | 1705    | 45.8% |
|                            | 36 – 60 Years                                  | 1841    | 49.5% |
|                            | 60+  | 174     | 4.7%  |
| Disability Status          | Yes  | 726     | 19.5% |
|                            | No   | 2996    | 80.5% |
| Highest Level of Education | No formal Education / Completed Primary School | 1130    | 30.4% |
|                            | Completed Secondary School                     | 1233    | 33.1% |
|                            | Completed Tertiary and above                   | 1356    | 36.5% |
| Geo-Political Zone         | North Central                                  | 540     | 14.5% |
|                            | North East                                     | 503     | 13.5% |
|                            | North West                                     | 952     | 25.6% |
|                            | South East                                     | 435     | 11.7% |
|                            | South South                                    | 558     | 15.0% |
|                            | South West                                     | 735     | 19.7% |

## 3.2 ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION

### 3.2.1 Respondents who Voted in the Last General Elections

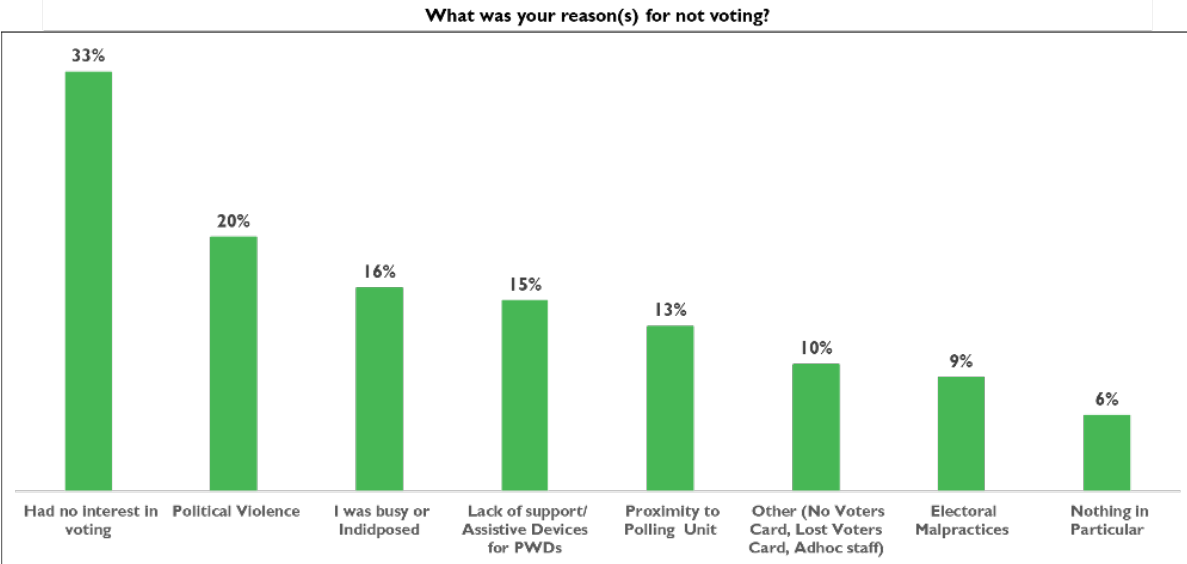
From the survey, 72% Nigerians affirmed that they voted in the last general elections, while 28% did not vote. This finding reflects the fact that a good number of Nigerians (whose opinions were sampled) voted in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, it is important to recount that the trend of voters' apathy keeps widening despite huge resources devoted to political education and voters' awareness campaigns in the country. In a 2020 study by Nweke and Etido-Inyang, it was argued that the causes of political apathy, particularly poor voters' turnout are attributable to political marginalization (especially against communities of PWDs), corruption, and lack of trust in the electoral process, political violence and militarization of the electoral system.<sup>2</sup>



### 3.2.2 Reasons for Not Voting

In addition, the data adequately captures the reasons why some of the participants did not vote in the last general elections. Sheer lack of interest in voting (33%), political violence

(20%), busy with personal engagements (16%), lack of assistive devices/ support (15%), and proximity to polling unit (13%) topped the list of reasons why they did not vote. Other reasons such as non-possession of voters' card/ commitment to election activities as staff (10%), electoral malpractices (9%), and no reason in particular (6%) all accounted for the reason why some Nigerians did not vote in the last general elections.



Salihu and Yakubu in 2021 affirmed that the incidence of electoral violence and its resultant effects on voter turnout in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria took its turn on the democracy project in the country. Accordingly, a review of election data shows; voter turnout has been on the decline from 69% in 2003 to 35% in 2019. While a handful of factors could be responsible, the study ascribes its prevalence to the antic's political parties (incumbent and opposition) and politicians who deliberately deploy violence as an electoral strategy.<sup>3</sup> This decline considerably affects, on a negative note, the quality of elections that are conducted in Nigeria. It raises serious concerns about the poor inclusion of all irrespective of disability status. For instance, while 33% of the respondents had posited that they were not interested in voting, 17% specifically opined that their poor interest in voting was because of the unfavorable voting system as assistive devices (such as brails, shades etc.) that will help PWDs vote were not provided.

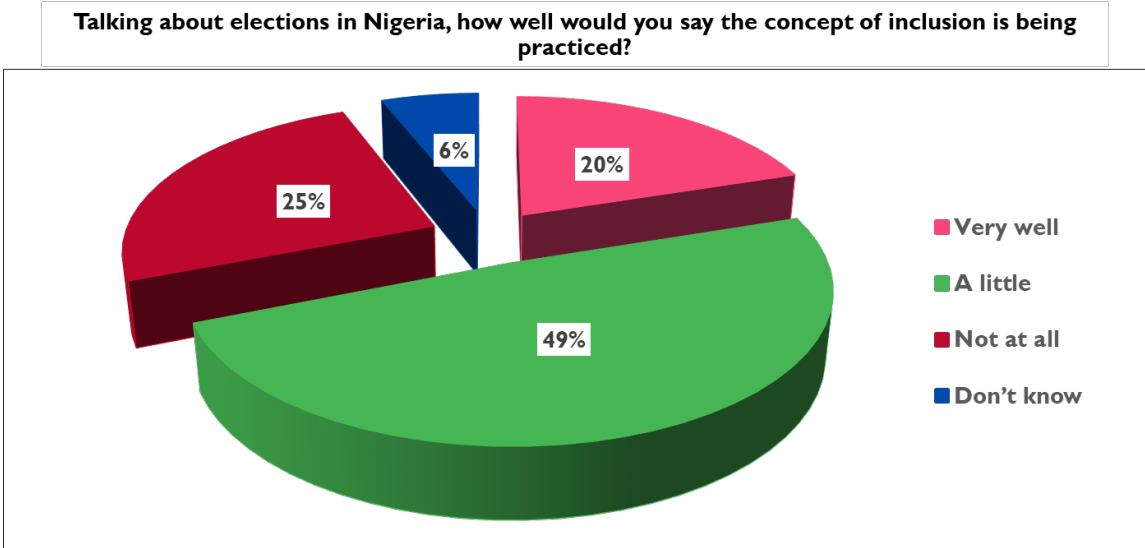
### 3.3 ELECTORAL INCLUSION IN NIGERIA

#### 3.3.1 Perception about the Concept of Inclusion

Findings show respondents' views on inclusive elections in Nigeria. 20% of them hold the view that Nigeria practices inclusive elections very well; 49% opined that the country pays a little attention to political inclusivity, while 25% suggested that Nigerian elections

<sup>3</sup> Salihu M. & Yakubu Y. (2021). Election Violence and Voter Turnout in 2019 General Elections: What Role for Political Parties?. *European Scientific Journal, ESJ*, 17(2), 137. <https://doi.org/10.19044/esj.2021.v17n2p137>

are not inclusive and 6% said they do not know about this. In a report published by the Punch Newspapers in 2021, it was noted that considerable efforts have been made at ensuring an all-round inclusive election in the country. However, it was observed that physical accessibility of the PUs for voters with disabilities was a major issue. Violence and vote-buying also muscled out the PWDs that contested elections while many of the PWDs were injured when fracas took place at the units or collation centers. Arising from this, there is a burgeoning need for INEC to have ramps and handrails for voters on wheelchairs or crutches. INEC also needs to consolidate and institutionalize the braille ballot guide, Election Day Written Instructions (EC30 D PWD), Magnifying Glasses and priority voting for all future elections – both off cycle and general elections; and it should also provide adequate training for Poll Workers on how to administer assistive devices for PWDs, as well as, early and sustained voter education targeted at the PWDs.<sup>4</sup>



Perceptions of Nigerians also differ accordingly on how inclusive the electoral process has been over time. A position by a Key Informant holds that:

After 22 years of democracy in Nigeria, I cannot describe our Elections as inclusive. For me, to say an election is inclusive means women are given equal playing field to contest for elective political offices up to the highest available, and where they qualify, they should be voted into such offices. The other angle to inclusiveness is allowing women and girls with disabilities who have passion for change through democratic governance to run on the platform of major political parties without any form of discriminations or intimidations. Nigeria is yet to get to the point of seeing the women especially, those with disabilities to be capable enough to handle issues of governance thus, only a handful of the women are found in the legislature and a few

<sup>4</sup> <https://punchng.com/how-inclusive-was-2019-general-election/>

others made the appointment lists in the Executive arms. The biggest indicator that the Nigeria elections are not inclusive is the rate of violence against women and girls during election period. The cycle questions not only the credibility of the system and elections outcome but, it births apathy which clutches the entrenchment of real democratic dividends.<sup>5</sup>

### 3.3.2 What Electoral Inclusion Means to Nigerians

The perception of the respondents about the meaning of inclusion in the electoral process appears very unambiguous as a good number of them (46%) submitted that it means improving the capacity of everyone to participate irrespective of ability. Another 28% holds that it is akin to creating opportunities for marginalized groups to participate in the process. While 19% affirmed that it specifically means the act of making consideration for marginalized groups in the process, 7% either do not know about this, or refused to provide any answer to the question. And extract from Key Informant buttresses some of the above findings thus:

An Inclusive Election is an election process that leaves no one behind, where all Nigerians irrespective of gender, disability, religion, ethnicity etc participate actively. Unfortunately, not all Nigerians have access to inclusive electoral process; most especially, persons with disabilities.<sup>6</sup>

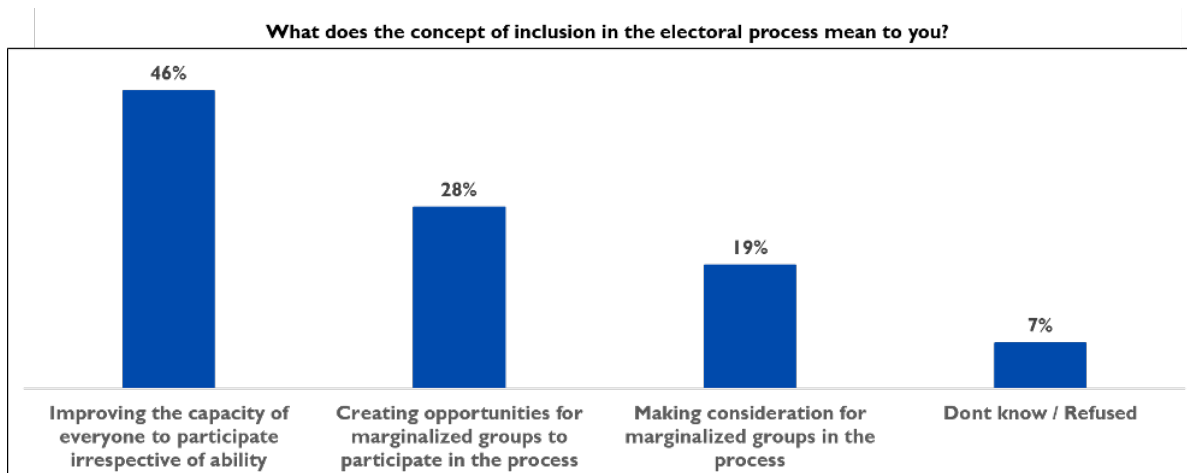
All of the understanding given to the concept of inclusion adequately resonates with the principle of inclusion as a strand of democratic ideal and good governance. They all conform to the position of United Nations Women (UN-Women) that posited that inclusive elections, where all those eligible have the opportunity to vote to choose their elected representatives, are central to democracy. Ensuring that women and men can and do participate without unfair barriers is a core component of delivering an inclusive election.<sup>7</sup>

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5 *KII Extract*

6 *ibid*

7 <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2015/Inclusive-electoral-processes-poster-en.pdfm>



### 3.3.3 Extent of Inclusiveness in Election Process in Nigeria

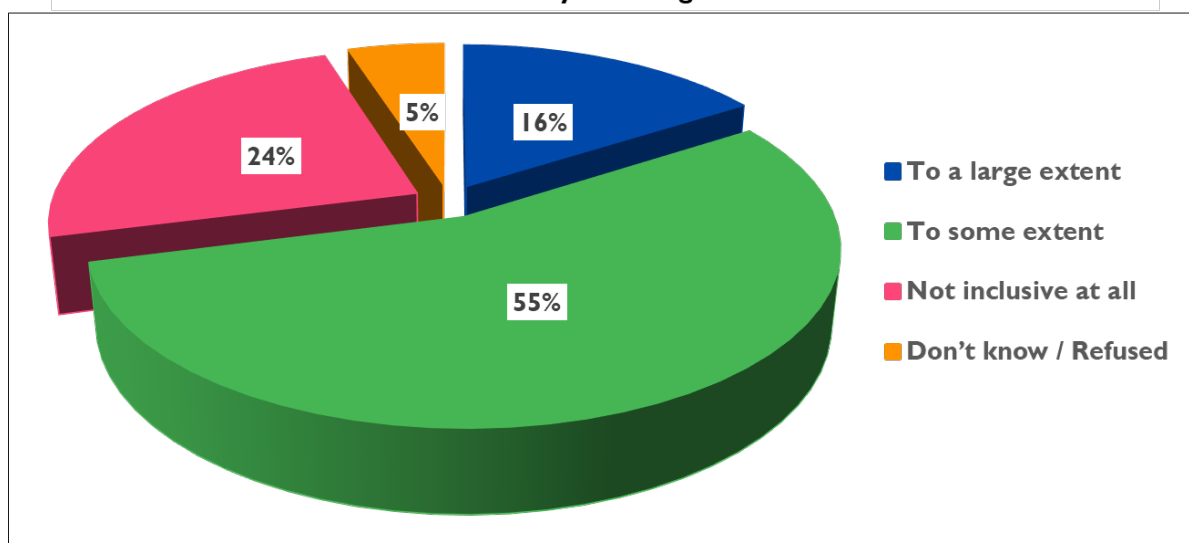
Leave no one behind (LNOB) is the central, transformative promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It represents the unequivocal commitment of all UN Member States to eradicate poverty in all its forms, end discrimination and exclusion, and reduce the inequalities and vulnerabilities that leave people behind and undermine the potential of individuals and of humanity as a whole.<sup>8</sup> Survey findings further accentuates this view as it shows respondents' opinion about the inclusive nature of the Nigeria's electoral process. Opinions amongst the respondents are common about their ignorance (55%) of how inclusive the Nigerian electoral process is. Others were vehement (24%) as they asserted that the process is not inclusive at all. Only 5% and 16% of them agreed that the process is inclusive to some extent, and to a large extent respectively.

Meanwhile, an extract from a Key Informant on this was quite expressive about the situation of inclusive elections in Nigeria and the progress that Nigeria has achieved overtime. According to the Informant:

Election in Nigeria is yet to become inclusive as required in democracy! The level of marginalization due to several factors including economic status in hindering youths, women , persons with disability and other vulnerable groups. Adding to this is the fact that even though the electoral amendment Act is not holistic in terms of ensuring adequate inclusive electoral process for all Nigerians especially persons with disabilities, however, it is a starting point. It could be improved going forward.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> <https://unsdg.un.org/2030-agenda/universal-values/leave-no-one-behind>  
<sup>9</sup> KII Extract

**To what extent would you say Nigeria's electoral process is inclusive or carries everyone along?**



### 3.4 MARGINALIZATION IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

#### 3.4.1 Marginalized Groups in the Electoral System

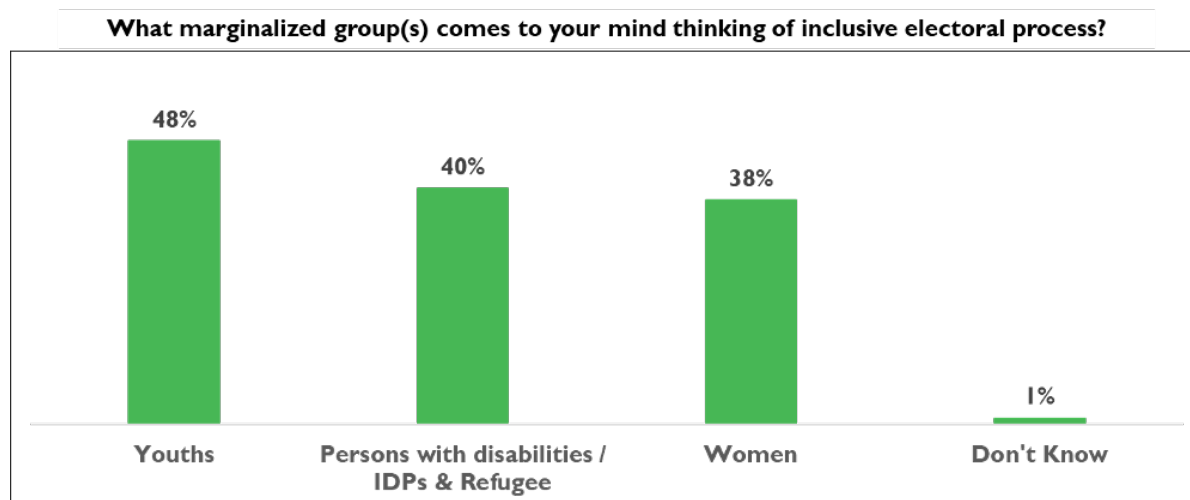
When respondents were asked about their perception on marginalized groups in the electoral system, 48% of the respondents opined that the youths are the most marginalized group. 40% said that persons with disabilities, internally displaced persons and refugees are marginalized in the electoral process. A further 38% argued that women are marginalized while a meager 1% of the respondents have no position on marginalized groups in the electoral process. While this understanding is not significantly different from the position of most extant literature, a more robust conceptualization of marginalized groups beyond electoral inclusion holds that: "...marginalized communities are those excluded from mainstream social, economic, educational, and/or cultural life. Examples of marginalized populations include, but are not limited to, groups excluded due to race, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, physical ability, language, and/or immigration status. Marginalization occurs due to unequal power relationships between social groups".<sup>10</sup> Additionally, it was common amongst key Informants interviewed that there are selected marginalized groups that are repeatedly excluded from the process. The opinion holds as follows:

For me, the major groups that are often marginalized are the women, youths and PWDs, and this is due to our weak electoral laws. For instance, why should election be conducted in just one day instead of a longer period and allowing PWDs to vote at any center of the choice rather than travel to far distances in the name of electoral ward?

<sup>10</sup> Baah FO, Teitelman AM, Riegel B. Marginalization: conceptualizing patient vulnerabilities in the framework of social determinants of health—An integrative review. *Nursing Inquiry*. 2019;26(1):e12268. doi: 10.1111/nin.12268.



Why can't the system allow people to vote electronically to minimize stress for PWDs and other electorates? The lack of accessibility before, and during election periods is a major concern, and a serious challenge.<sup>11</sup>

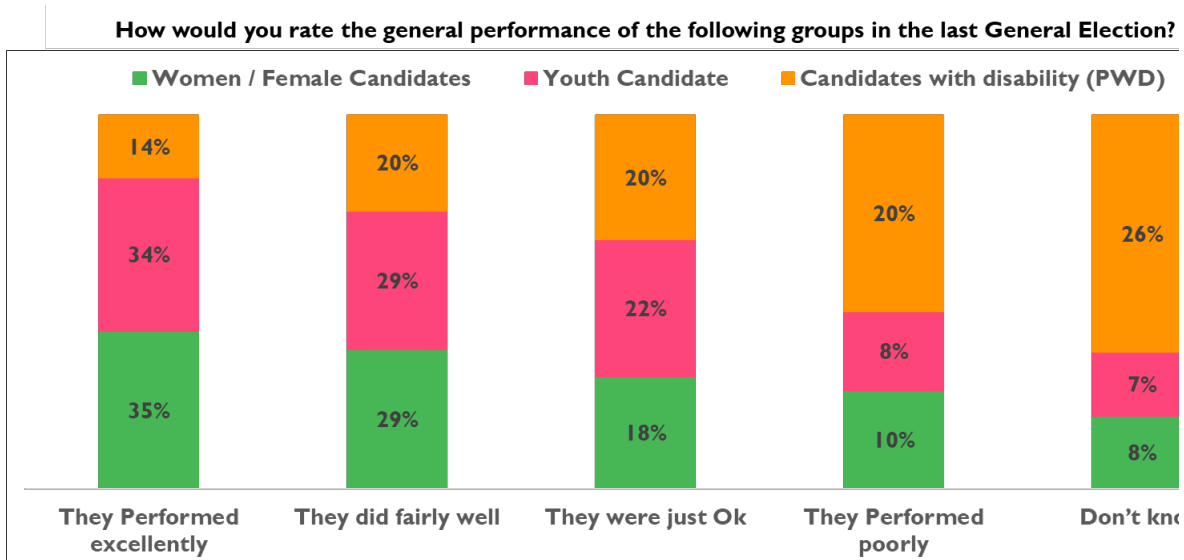


### 3.4.2 Performance of Women, Youths and PWDs in the Last General Elections

Further x-ray on the performance of marginalized group was undertaken by the study. Result shows the performance of women/female candidates, youth candidates and candidates with disabilities. 14% of the respondent adjudged that candidate with disabilities performed excellently, 20% posit that their performance was fair, another 20% feels that their performance was okay, also 20% of the respondents argued they performed poorly while 26% were indecisive. In terms of youth candidates performance, the position of the respondents are presented below: 34% posit that youth candidates performed excellently, 29% claimed it was fair, 22% opined it was just ok, 10% advanced that it was a poor outing while 8% are indecisive. In respect to women performance, 35% of the respondents are of the opinion that women performed excellently, 29% posits that their performance were merely fair, 18% of the respondent were not impressed as they claimed it was just ok, a further 10% percent opined that there performance were poor while 8% were indecisive. To further emphasize this, a study found that the Nigerian youths did not participate fully in previous general elections compared to 2019 after the passage of the Age Reduction Bill popularly known as the Not too Young to Run bill as part of the Constitution Amendment process in the country. The study showed that this amendment made the outcome of the 2019 general elections to be better than previous elections because youths are now more encouraged to take part in the electoral contest unlike what it used to be.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> KII Extract

<sup>12</sup> [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/351373396\\_2019\\_General\\_Elections\\_in\\_Nigeria\\_and\\_the\\_New\\_Dimension\\_of\\_Youth\\_Involvement\\_in\\_Osun\\_State](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/351373396_2019_General_Elections_in_Nigeria_and_the_New_Dimension_of_Youth_Involvement_in_Osun_State)

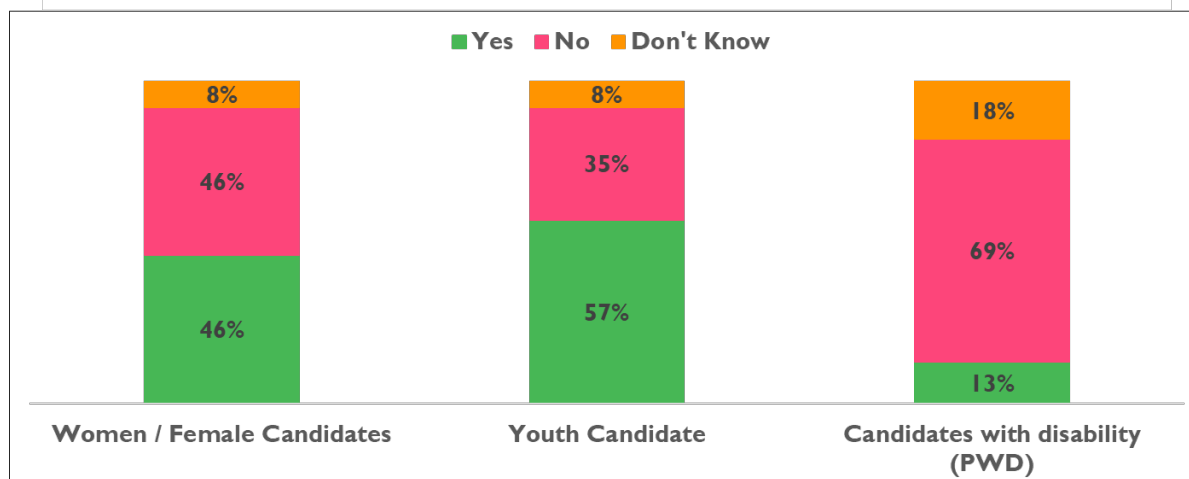


### 3.4.3 Citizens Knowledge about Women, Youths and PWDs in the Last General Elections

The figure below catalogues the responses of the respondents on personal awareness of candidates within the following groups (women, Youth and PWD) candidates. 8% of the respondents are indecisive of women candidates, 46% are oblivious of women candidates, while another 46% are aware of women candidates during the 2019 General elections. In respects of Youth candidates, 8% of the respondents are indecisive of knowledge of youth candidate in the last general election, 35% are not aware of youth candidate while 57% of the respondents have knowledge of youth candidates. 18% of the respondents are indecisive of PWD candidates, 69% are not aware of candidates with PWD while a meagre 13% are aware of candidate with disability in the last general election. The low level of popularity of PWD candidates is associated with the electioneering process in Nigeria. Barriers to political participation for individuals with disabilities tend to exist at every step of the election cycle, including pre-election, election, and post-election, according to a framework published by the International Foundation for Electoral System in 2014.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> International Foundation for Electoral Systems (2014). *Equal Access: How to Include Persons with Disabilities in Elections and Political Processes*. Washington: International Foundation for Electoral Systems. Retrieved from [https://www.ndi.org/files/EqualAccess\\_How-to-include-PWD-in-elections-political-processes.pdf](https://www.ndi.org/files/EqualAccess_How-to-include-PWD-in-elections-political-processes.pdf)

**Do you know of candidate within the following groups who contested for elective position in the 2019 General Election?**



### 3.4.4 Voting Pattern of Women, Youths and PWDs in the Last General Elections

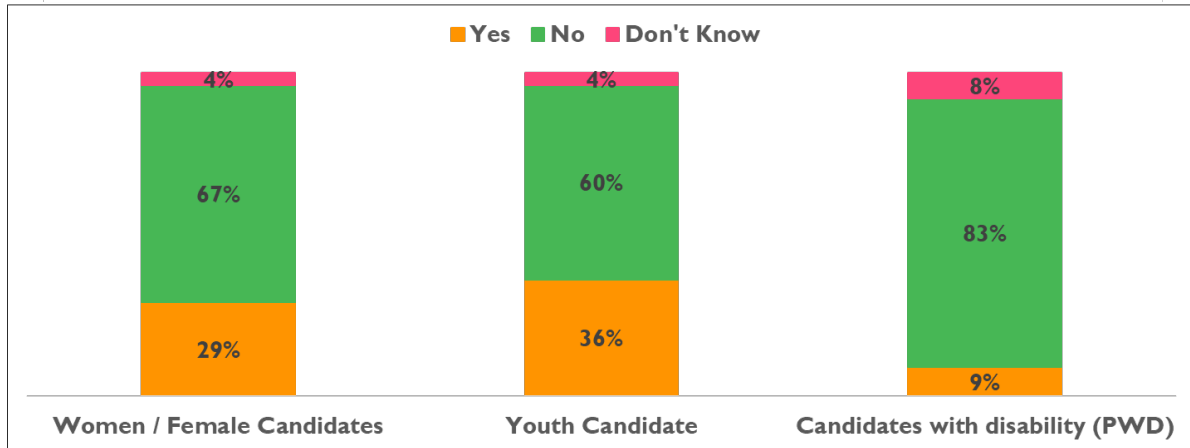
The figure below presents respondents voting pattern on women, youth and candidates with disability (PWD). 29% of the respondents posit that they voted for women candidates, 67% claimed they did not vote for women candidates while 4% are indecisive. In respect to respondent voting pattern on youth candidate, 36% of the respondents voted for youth candidates, 60% of the respondent did not vote for any youth candidates while 4% of the respondents are indecisive. Finally, 9% of respondents voted for candidates with disability, 83% did not vote for PWD candidates while 8% are indecisive. Although, women/female candidates registered the highest in comparison to other vulnerable groups, however, their performance fell short of expectations in comparison to their male counterpart. According to a report by CDD (2019), Only 2,970 women were nominated for election, accounting for 11.36 percent of all candidates. So far, only 62 women have been elected, accounting for only 4.17 percent of all elected officials. If this percentage holds, it will be a decrease from the 2015-19 period, when women made up 5.65% of elected officials<sup>14</sup>. Youth candidate performed favorably in 2019 general elections in comparison with previous elections. The Not Too Young to Run Movement and advocacy for increased youth representation has had a direct impact on the number of youths running for President, National Assembly, gubernatorial, and State Houses of Assembly elections in 2019<sup>15</sup>. The abysmal experience of PWD has been well documented. Grueling registration process, lack of accessible information and infrastructure and inefficiency in election management agencies has been fingered as factors mitigating against PWD electoral participation<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> Centre for Democracy and Development. (2019, April). How women fared in the 2019 elections. <https://www.cddwestafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/How-Women-Fared-in-the-2019-Elections-CDD.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/342898118\\_How\\_Youth\\_Fared\\_in\\_the\\_2019\\_General\\_Elections](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/342898118_How_Youth_Fared_in_the_2019_General_Elections)

<sup>16</sup> [Disabilities and Elections in Nigeria III - The Election Network](#)

Did you vote for any candidate within the following groups during the last General Election or any recent elections?

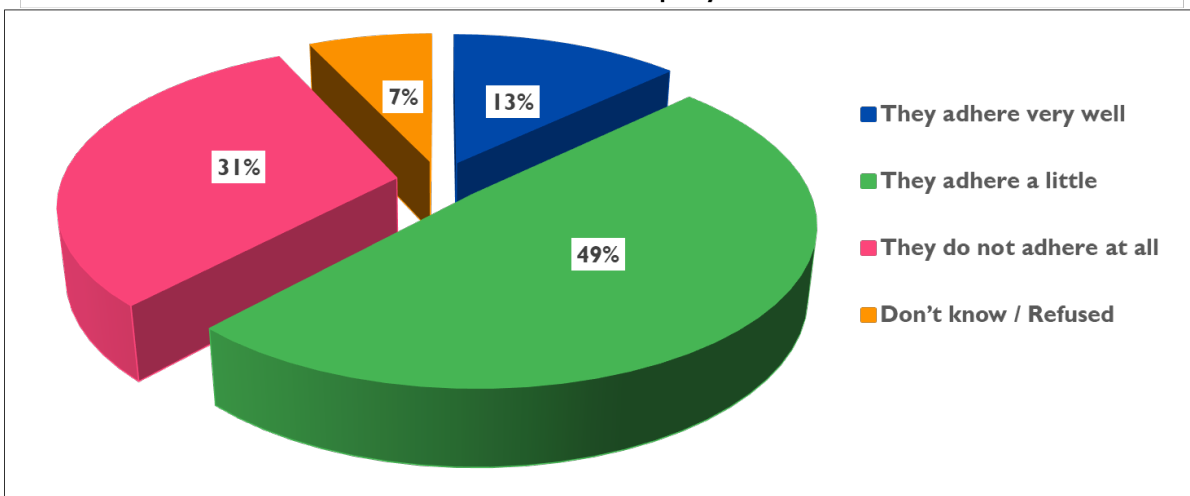


### 3.5 INCLUSION AND THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS

#### 3.5.1 Political Parties and the Principle of Inclusion in the Administration of Party Affairs

The survey gauged the perception of the respondents on political party principle of inclusion in party administration. 13% of the respondents are of the opinion that political parties adhere to principle of inclusion, 49% claimed that political party are performing fair in inclusion, 31% of the respondents opined that political parties do not adhere to policy of inclusion, while 7% are indecisive. The spread of the responses from the above table indicates the lack of transparency and probity in party administration in Nigeria. This is corroborated by the assertion made by INEC director of Election and Party Monitoring (EPM) Aminu Idris, he argued that "One of the biggest challenges affecting political parties is internal democracy whereby political parties don't allow members to fully participate in the activities"<sup>17</sup>.

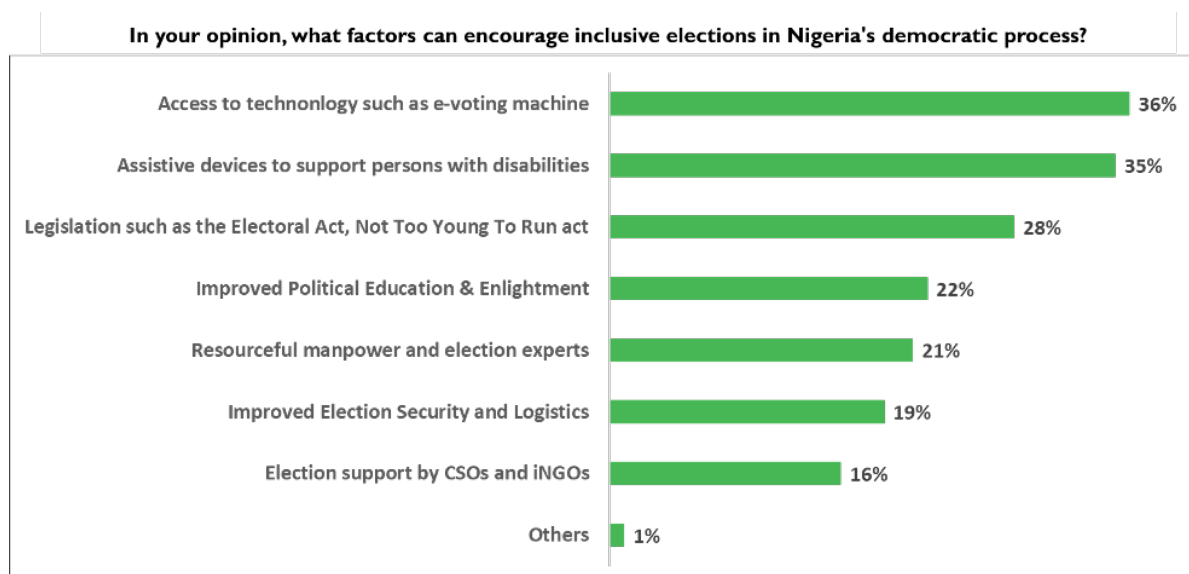
In your opinion, how well do political parties in Nigeria adhere to the Principle of inclusion in the administration of their party affairs?



<sup>17</sup> <https://allafrica.com/stories/202102180649.html>

### 3.5.2 Mechanism that Could Promote Inclusive Elections in Nigerian Democratic System

The figure below shows the solicited responses from the respondents on mechanism that could promote inclusive elections in Nigerian democratic system. 36% opined that adopting technological instruments such as e-voting would promote inclusiveness. 35% of the respondents argued that assistive devices for PWD would improve democratic elections in Nigeria. Furthermore, 28% of the respondents argued that institutional legislation such as the electoral act would lead to more inclusiveness in the electoral process. On the other hand, 22% are of the opinion that political education would stimulate political participation thereby improving electoral inclusiveness. A further 21% argued that resourceful manpower could well provide democratic system with required human resources that promote inclusion. 19% of the respondents support the notion that improved election security and logistics will increase political participation and inclusion. 16% of the respondents are of the opinion that strategic supports from CSOs and NGOs are pivotal to political inclusion in Nigeria. 1% of the respondents are of the opinion that others factors could aid political inclusion. In line with the continuous efforts geared towards improving electioneering process in Nigeria, all factors identified above are instrumental to the process. Fundamentally, e-voting and legislation such as electoral act are among the ongoing process at ensuing Nigerians experience an improved election in the forthcoming 2023 polls.<sup>18</sup>

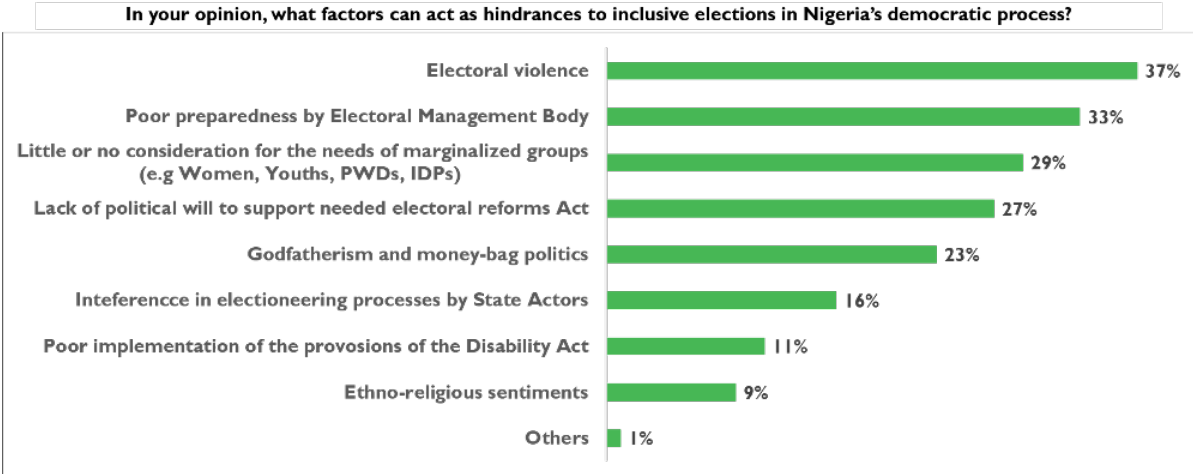


### 3.5.3 Factors that Can Hinder Inclusive Elections in Nigeria's Democratic Process

According to the survey, 37% of the respondents are of the opinion that electoral violence constitutes the most significant hindrance to inclusive elections in Nigeria. 33% of the respondents opined that Poor preparedness by electoral management body is

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2021/12/the-e-voting-system-vis-a-vis-nigerias-electoral-challenges/>

responsible for lack of inclusion in democratic process. 29% further supports the notion lack of consideration for marginalized groups constitute hindrance to democratic process. 27% claimed that the dearth of supports for electoral reforms is a significant challenged to inclusive elections in Nigeria. Godfatherism and money bag politics accounts for 23% of factors that hinders electoral inclusion in Nigeria. Interference in electioneering process by state actors constitutes 16% of factor that affect inclusive elections. In terms of PWD inclusion, 11% argued that poor implementation of the provisions of Disability Act hinders electoral and political inclusion. Nigeria is a country with significant social pluralism, thus, 9% of the respondents opined that ethno religious sentiments hinders electoral and democratic inclusion in Nigeria. Finally, 1% of the respondents opined that other factors constitute hindrance to the inclusion elections and democratic system in Nigeria. A study conducted by Ezonbi and Jonah (2021), argued that Electoral violence, poor electoral management, godfatherism and vote buying are significant hindrance to inclusive political and electoral participation in Nigeria. This position corroborates the perception of the respondent<sup>19</sup>.



**3.5.4 Challenges that Pose threats to Inclusion of Marginalized Groups by Political Parties and INEC**

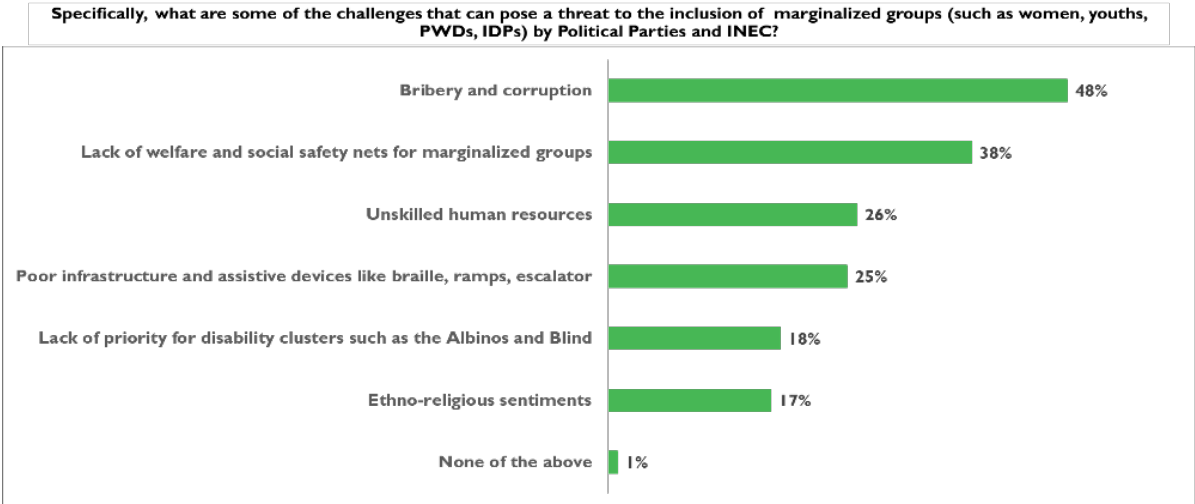
Bribery and corruptions is a challenge in socio-political experience of Nigeria, thus 48% of the respondents are of the opinion that it is a significant challenge to the inclusion of marginalized groups. Lack of welfare and social safety nets for marginalized groups represents 38% of respondents' views, 26% of the respondent claimed that unskilled human resources is a threat, 25% claimed that poor infrastructure and assistive devices for PWD is a threat, 18% argued that lack of priority for disability hampers the inclusion of marginalized groups, ethno religious sentiments accounts for 17% while 1% considered other factors. In a relative argument Omobolaji (2009) argued that electoral corruption is primarily perceived as a direct subversion of the democratic process by those who are

19 Ezonbi, B. & Jonah, Changwak Emmanuel. (2021). Security, Elections and Electoral Violence in Nigeria.

thirsty for the personal wealth that electoral success brings. It concentrates on the realities of godfathers, political parties, and the complicit of electoral commission. It argues that electoral corruption stems not only from the greed of godfathers and politicians, but also from the logic of electoral competition (zero-sum), which demands that political parties in Nigeria, unable to mobilize voters due to their elite/caucus nature, turn to individuals (godfathers) with certain characteristics, such as an "intuitive grasp of and control of local voting structure," to achieve electoral success<sup>20</sup>.

On this, a Key Informant holds the believe that:

Negative believe system in Nigeria towards women, youths and PWDs is one of the challenges militating against inclusive elections in Nigeria. Where women are relegated to the background and that their position is in the kitchen not in politics is not fair. The youths are tagged not too serious to take the mantle of leadership and the PWDs are discriminated upon by blocking their chances of contesting irrespective of how brilliant they are in their different areas of specialization.<sup>21</sup>



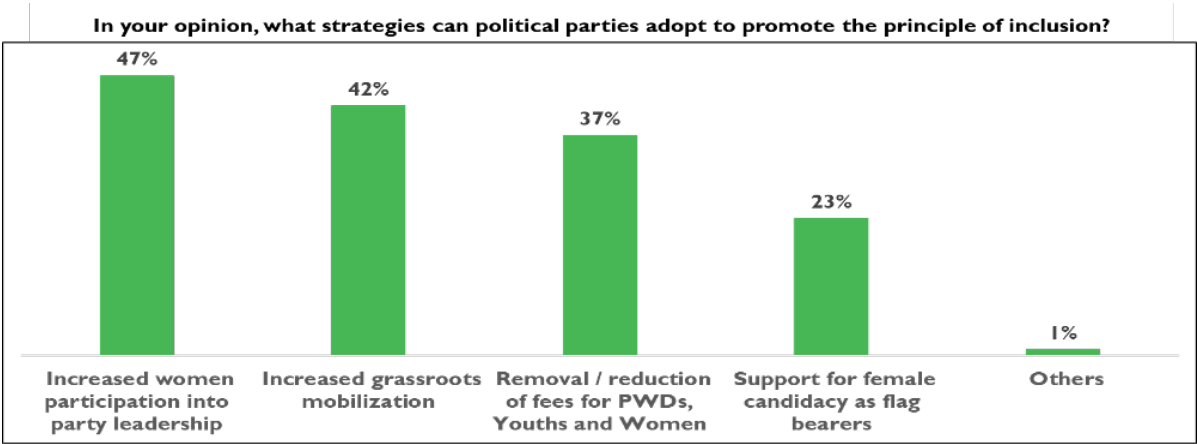
### 3.5.5 Strategies for Political Parties to Promote the Principle of Inclusion

The figure below documents the varying opinions of respondents on strategies that could be adopted by political parties to enhance principle of inclusion. 47% of the respondents opined that woman should be recruited into the party leadership, 42% argued in favour of grassroots mobilization, 37% appealed that removal/reduction of fees for PWD, women and Youths is viable strategies to achieve the principle inclusion. Supports for female candidacy as flag bearers and other strategies represents 23% and 1%of the respondent view. Encouraging inclusive political participation for disadvantaged groups remain an agenda for political parties, INEC and civil society organizations. Adebowale Olorunmola,

20 [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228346289\\_Godfathers\\_political\\_parties\\_and\\_electoral\\_corruption\\_in\\_Nigeria](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228346289_Godfathers_political_parties_and_electoral_corruption_in_Nigeria)

21 *KII Extract*

Country Representative of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, called on political parties to give more access to women, youths, and marginalized groups, as they are the main vehicles for participation.<sup>22</sup>



**3.5.6 Strategies and policies for INEC to improve inclusion of persons with disabilities**

Proposing strategies and policy that could be adopted by INEC to improve the inclusion of PWDs, 38% of the respondents asserts that the provision of modern assistive devices for PWD will improve the political inclusion of PWD. 36% supports the establishment of a monitoring and evaluation framework for compliance to the new Electoral Act as viable strategy for PWD inclusion. Accountability and honest moral code by officials will leads to inclusion of PWDs. A further 31% of the respondents opined that improved voters education and enlightenment will lead to inclusion of PWDs. Finally, 24% of the respondents support the criminalization of irresponsible political behaviors such as vote buying and selling and violence would improve electoral process for PWD. The above represent responsibilities of INEC to implements The Independent National Electoral Commission Framework on Access and Participation of Persons with Disabilities (PWDS) in the Electoral Process. (JONPWD) enjoin the electoral body to implement the framework, it is encompassing and will ensure the inclusion of PWD in electoral process<sup>23</sup>.

There are other recommendations that EMBs can do to ensure that there is improvement in the inclusion of PWDs. A major recommendation stems from the outcome of the KII thus:

Persons with Disabilities suffer a great deal of exclusion during electioneering process in the sense that no recognition is given to their peculiar needs which will enable them to vote and be voted for. In addition, there is no concrete data that will help in giving credence to the numerical strength of persons with disabilities who are eligible for electioneering process in the

<sup>22</sup> <https://businessday.ng/politics/article/calls-for-inclusive-politics-rebound-as-stakeholders-brainstorm-on-party-reforms/>

<sup>23</sup> [Disabilities and Elections in Nigeria III\] - The Election Network](#)



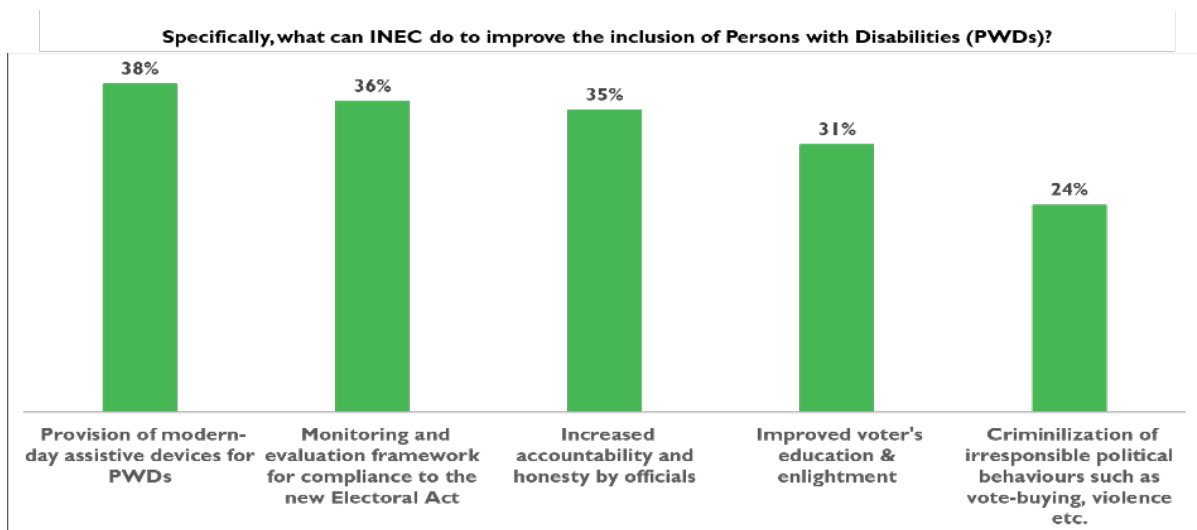
country. Also, the cost of nominations forms of various political parties is highly competitive thus discouraging persons with disabilities participation in the electioneering process.<sup>24</sup>

Another KII extract holds that:

...the recently amended electoral act will give room for inclusive electoral process in Nigeria in the sense that a provision will be made for the recognition, accommodations and participation of persons with disabilities in equal grounds with the non-disabled counterparts. These will inevitably create employment opportunities for persons with disabilities thereby improving the socioeconomic status of the community, society and the nation at large.<sup>25</sup>

A more extract specific to the short term in view of the forthcoming General Election goes thus:

INEC as an independent electoral body should involve the umbrella body of persons with disabilities while formulating policies that govern electoral process in the country. They should also create a disability desk office where issues pertaining PWD is addressed. They should equally work closely with the disabilities commission in ensuring full implementation of guidelines for disability participation in all electoral process.<sup>26</sup>



<sup>24</sup> KII Extract

<sup>25</sup> *ibid*

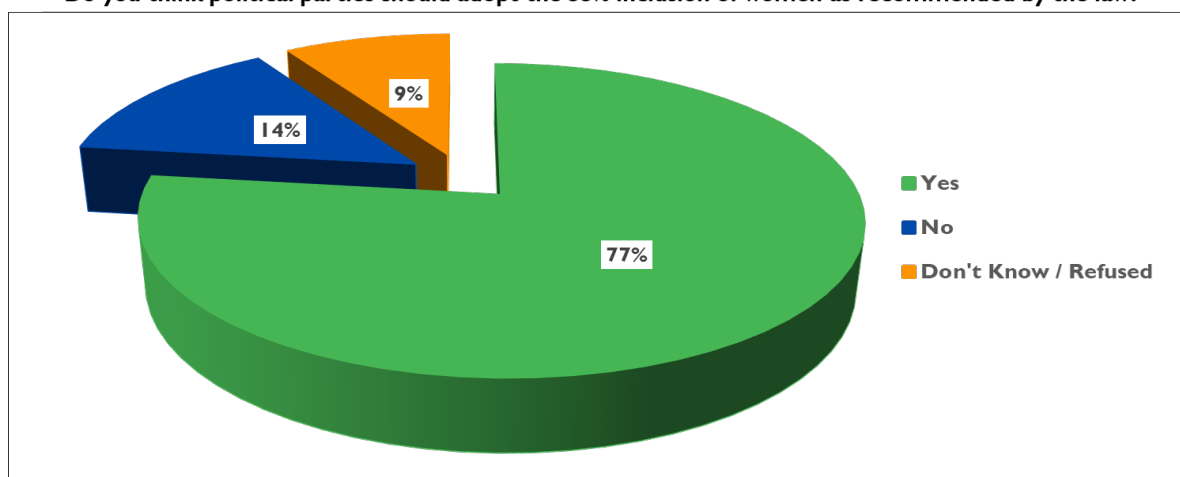
<sup>26</sup> *ibidem*

### 3.5.7 Support for 35 Percent Inclusion of Women in Political Process as Recommended by Law

Several policies have been initiated to support the inclusion of women in political process. Respondents were queried on their positions on 35% inclusion of women in political process their process were captured below. 77% of the respondents are indecisive, 14% are against the implementation while 9% are in support the strategy. The above position of respondent is further corroborated by Nwachukwu who argued that, there has been a growing call for progressive inclusion of women in society's political life, particularly in its legislative body. It is argued that this will help to institutionalize the democratic ethos in society. Over the last two decades, women's political representation has increased dramatically around the world, with the global average of women in national parliaments doubling and all regions making significant progress toward the objective of 30 percent female representation in decision-making Nigeria, on the other hand, has made little progress in this area, with women still underrepresented in the political arena<sup>27</sup>. In addition to this, a recommendation that beckons on women participation fully indicates that:

INEC should be independent enough to not become a tool in the hands of the Executive as it exercises its mandate in conducting fair and credible elections. It should penalize political parties that bully women to quit the race before it even begins. Political parties can encourage women to run for the highest political offices and where possible give a waiver on payments of certain fees just to motivate them to participate in the process.<sup>28</sup>

**Do you think political parties should adopt the 35% inclusion of women as recommended by the law?**



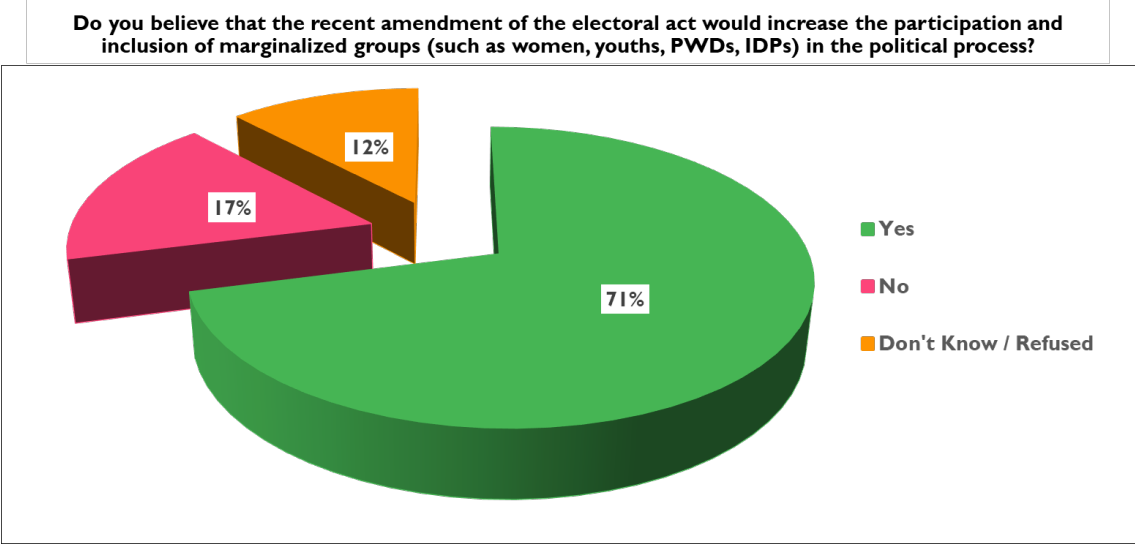
### 3.5.8 Opinion on the Recent Amendment of the Electoral Act to Increase Participation and Inclusion of Marginalized Groups in the Political Process

Respondent's perceptions were sought on the viability of recently amended Electoral Act

<sup>27</sup> [\(PDF\) GENDER AND THE POLITICS OF INCLUSIVENESS IN NIGERIA: THE RESIDUAL OPTION \(researchgate.net\)](#)

<sup>28</sup> *KII Extract*

in providing succor to the challenges of the marginalized group. 71% of the respondents are quite are certain that the recent amendment of electoral Act will yield positive results on political inclusion of marginalized groups. 17% opined that the recent amendment will not have significant impact on political participation and inclusion of marginalized groups, while 12% of the respondents are indecisive. This resounding perception of the respondents has been shared by stakeholders on the need to reform the electoral process. In anticipation of 2023 election civil society group in Nigeria encouraged the National Assembly to speedily amend the electoral act. An established framework to strengthen the election management body, INEC's financial independence, the integration of technology into our electoral process, the inclusion of all marginalized groups, transparency in campaign financing, and the provision of a framework to ensure the enforcement of our electoral laws<sup>29</sup>.

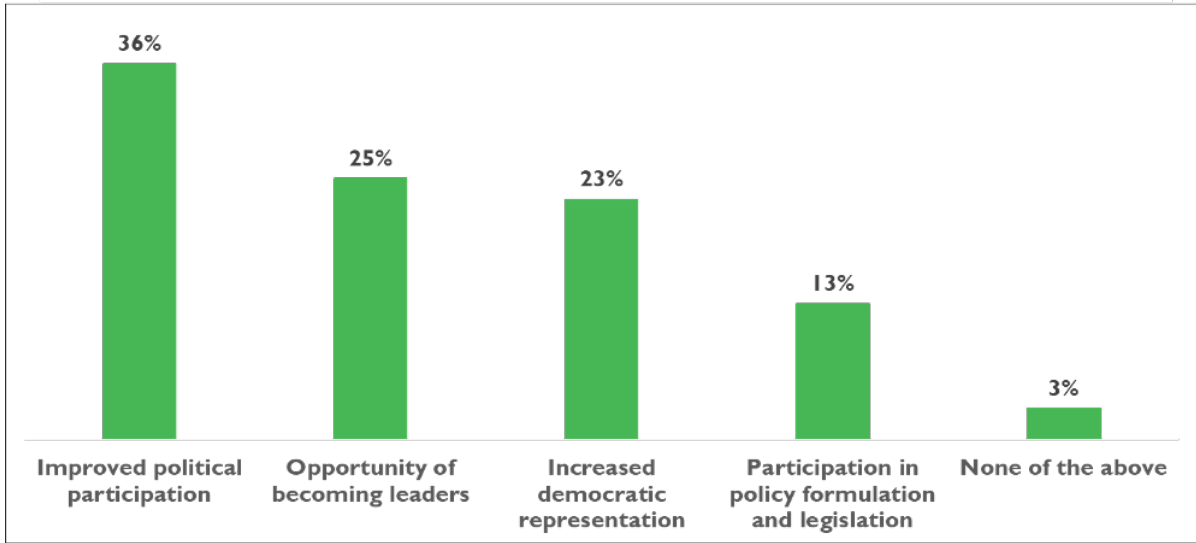


**3.5.9 How Inclusive Election Can Improve the Life of Marginalized Groups in Nigeria**

The survey also present responses of participants on the relationship between inclusive election and life of marginalized groups in the Nigerian political scene. Findings revealed that 36% of the respondents are of the opinion that inclusive elections will improve political participation, 25% asserts that it provides opportunity for marginalized groups to become leaders. 13% argued that it improves standard of living, because it leads to participation in policy formulation and legislation, while 3% of the respondents are indecisive. Equitable development is achieved through inclusive participation of various marginalized groups in the society. Inclusive political system provides opportunities for marginalized groups to express their choice in the way they are governed. Daron and James in their celebrated book *Why Nations Fail* established the relationship between political inclusion and economic prosperity.<sup>30</sup>

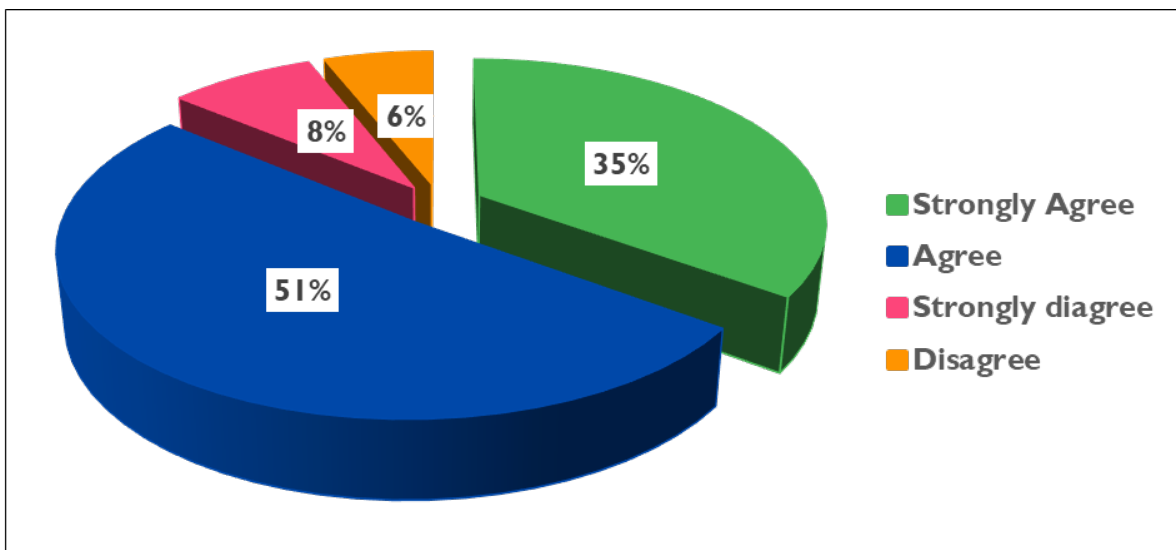
<sup>29</sup> [Why we're demanding for electoral reforms in Nigeria – CSOs \(vanguardngr.com\)](#)  
<sup>30</sup> Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson, *Why Nations Fail*

**How can inclusive election better the life of marginalized groups in Nigeria ?**



**3.5.10 Perception on Inclusive Elections to Enhance Good Governance and Democratic Consolidation**

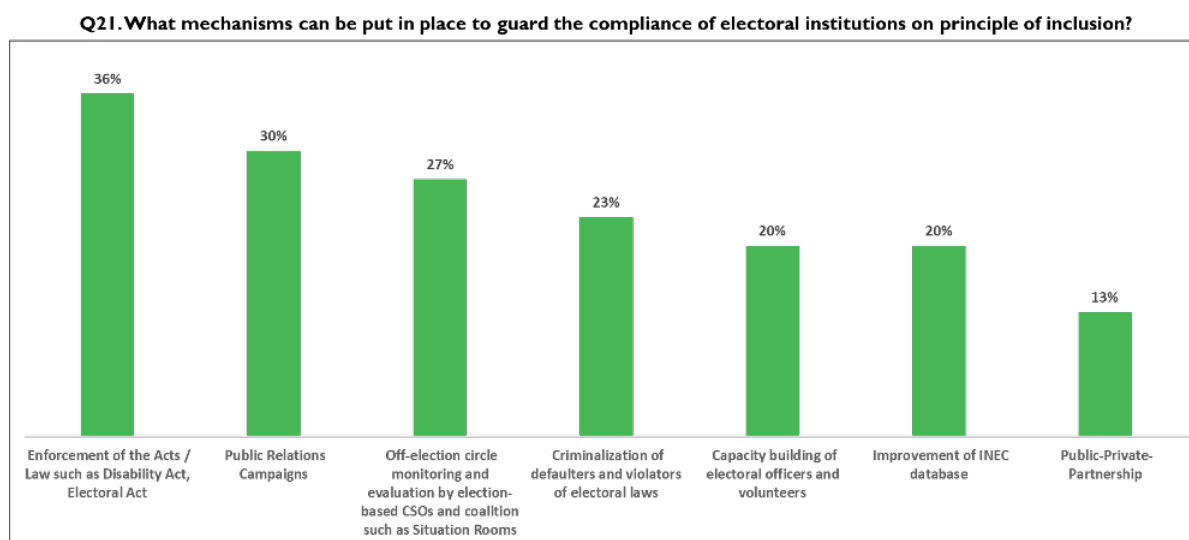
The survey further examined the relationship between inclusive elections, good governance and democratic consolidation. 51% of the respondents asserts that there is a strong relation, 35% of the respondents strongly agreed that there is significant relation between the variables. 8% and 6% of the respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed accordingly that inclusive elections can enhance good governance. The above opinion is buttressed by International Foundation for Electoral System which argued in its mandate that a strong and resilient democracy requires a well-informed and empowered public. IFES sponsors a number of civic education and training activities, such as informing voters about their rights and obligations and providing leadership and advocacy trainings to empower individuals to have a say in how their government is run<sup>31</sup>.



31 <https://www.ifes.org/issues/participation-and-inclusion>

### 3.5.11 Mechanisms to Guard the Compliance of Electoral Institutions on Principle of Inclusion

The figure below presents the perception of respondents on mechanism required to aid the compliance electoral institution on principle of inclusion. 36% of the respondents opined that enforcement of institutional framework such as the implementation of Disability and electoral act will encourage compliance. 30% of the respondents submitted that public relations campaign will enforce compliance level. 27% of the respondents posit that off election circle awareness and critical support by CSOs and NGOs would improve compliance. A further 20% argued that criminalization and prosecution of electoral violators will improve compliance level. Similarly, 20% of the respondents are of the opinion that continuous capacity building for electoral officers will advance electoral institutions. Again 20% of the respondents adjudicate that INEC should improve on its database while 13% calls for partnership between private and public sector in ensuring compliance to electoral institutions. Ensuring compliance in the adoption and implementation of inclusive by electoral institutions requires a multifaceted strategy, this support the spread of the respondent perception. In corroborating the above the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance posits that the political environment is the most decisive factor in ensuring political inclusion. The political context should allow them to be representational, accountable, transparent, inclusive, participative, and sensitive to the aspirations and expectations of the citizens they represent in carrying out their functions in order to contribute to democracy<sup>32</sup>.



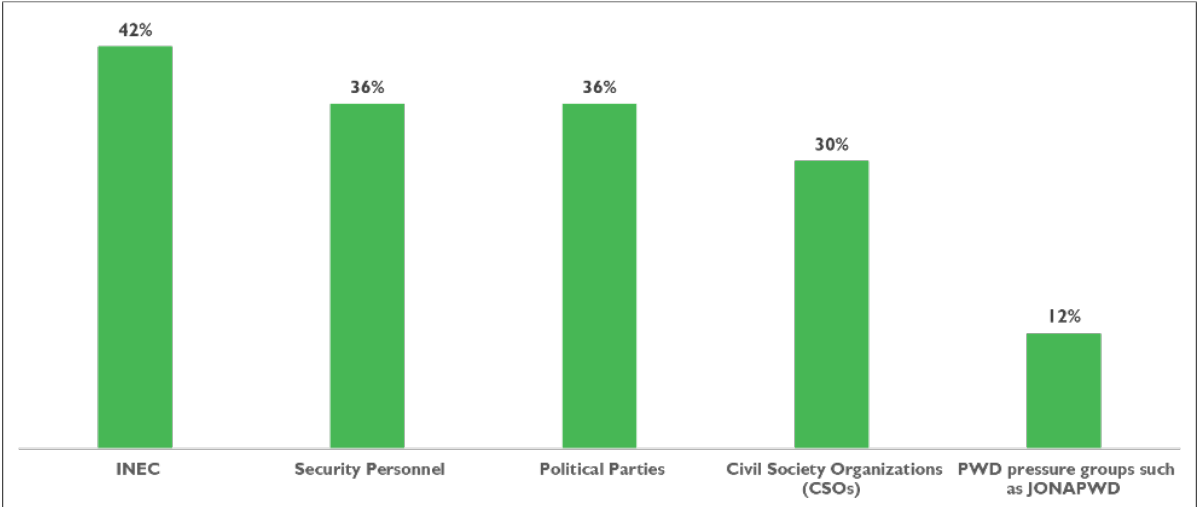
### 3.5.12 Organizations / stakeholders that play greater roles in ensuring inclusive elections in Nigeria

The table above categorized organizational responsibilities on inclusive elections in Nigeria. 42% of the respondents are of the opinion that INEC are crucial to electoral inclusion. 36%

32 International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance 2013

are of the opinion that security personnel are vital. Similarly, another 36% support the fact that political parties are as well important. 30% of the respondents opined that CSOs have a crucial responsibility in inclusive election and finally 12% of the respondents believe that PWD pressure groups such as JONAPWD have a holistic responsibility in the inclusion of marginalized groups. In contrast to the above perception, civil society organizations and PWD pressure groups such as JONAPWD have been instrumental to the inclusion of marginalized groups in Nigeria. Specifically, Civil Society like Yiaga was instrumental to the inclusion of youth and women inclusion in Nigeria political and electoral system<sup>33</sup>.

**Q22. In your opinion, what are the organizations or stakeholders that play greater roles in ensuring inclusive elections in Nigeria?**



**4.0 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION**

**4.1 SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS**

Following the key outcomes from the data presentation and analysis, the study presents these findings that speak to the core project objectives thus:

- i. That government is not doing enough in the area of collaborations with relevant CSOs to engender political inclusivity. This is borne out of the fact that a great deal of the respondents (especially marginalized groups) do not know (from the findings) what to do and how to go about key processes such as voters' registrations exercises. Some of them also do not engage in the voting process because assistive devices are not provided for them at the voting points during elections.
- ii. Again, most of the efforts of government in consolidating an inclusive electioneering process are often thwarted by poor implementation framework and non-criminalization of violators of the electoral act. The results show that persons who administer elections significantly disenfranchise the communities of PWDs and IDPs and they are not subjected to any punitive sanction in that regard.
- iii. Findings also show that increasing participation of the marginalized groups in the

<sup>33</sup> <http://democracy-support.eu/nigeria/posts/yiaga>

electoral process will positively reflect their voices in policy decisions that affect them. This is evident in the fact that when they experience a seamless voting process for instance, their numbers would significantly affect election turn-outs at the polls.

- iv. One of the greatest concerns of the community of marginalized groups, the study shows, is their inclusion in legislative institutions and framework. There is widespread disaffection by respondents about the poor participation of the community of PWDs or IDPs in the legislative processes such as lawmaking. Thus, allowing key institutions to implement affirmative action plans for women or reducing the costs of nomination forms for PWDs by political parties will allow them greater opportunity to be included in national elections as there is the likelihood of their emergence as flag-bearers of Parties if they could afford nomination forms.
- v. There is dearth of advocacy by core CSOs for electoral inclusion at the grassroots level. This is due, in part, to their inability to secure systemic support by governments across boards in their attempts to engage international donor agencies that can be useful in their drive for all-round inclusion.
- vi. The over-militarization of elections in Nigeria, the study shows, is functionally limiting the communities of marginalized groups to participate in elections. For instance, the PWDs have special needs that require exclusive attention in situations of emergencies. Security personnel often do not put this into consideration when they shoot canons of teargas to disperse people or shoot sporadically into the air. This, the respondents consider as a harbinger of electoral apathy.

## KEY FINDINGS

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- II. Again, most of the efforts of government in consolidating an inclusive electioneering process are often thwarted by poor implementation framework and non-criminalization of violators of the electoral act. The results show that persons who administer elections significantly disenfranchise the communities of PWDs and IDPs and they are not subjected to any punitive sanction in that regard.
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- them. This is evident in the fact that when they experience a seamless voting process for instance, their numbers would significantly affect election turn-out at the polls.
- IV. One of the greatest concerns of the community of marginalized groups, the study shows, is their non-inclusion in legislative institutions and framework. There is widespread disaffection by respondents about the poor participation of the community of PWDs or IDPs in the legislative processes such as lawmaking. Thus, allowing key institutions to implement affirmative action plans for women or reducing the costs of nomination forms for PWDs by political parties will allow them greater opportunity to be included in national elections as there is the likelihood of their emergence as flag-bearers of Parties if they could afford nomination forms.
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Some of the outcomes from the Key Informant Interviews<sup>34</sup> resonates with the above. In fact, one of them strongly holds thus:

- i. INEC: Ensure that all electoral processes are accessible and inclusive of every community and group in the society. They should also reduce the cost of elections so that it doesn't exclude those that are not financially strong but have the capacity.
- ii. Political Parties: Ensure that their parties are all inclusive and provide a level playing ground for all that wish to contest. They should also have policies that are all inclusive.
- iii. Religious/Traditional leaders: They should serve as a catalyst for uniting the society and ensuring that there is no discrimination in their society. This is because their followers see them as a strong voice and they have a vital role to play in advocating for an inclusive society.
- iv. CSOs and OPDs: Build the capacity of these vulnerable groups (Women, Youths, PWDs) to enable them participate from a place of knowledge and power.
- v. The Government: Government at all levels should ensure there is adequate budget that will cover the cost of conducting an inclusive election. They should also provide a safe environment for all.

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34 *KII Extract*



## CONCLUSION

The increased demands of CSOs and active citizens, has compelled governments to focus on promoting more inclusive political involvement and representation. There is no gainsaying the fact that the advantages of involving all individuals and civil society in policy formulation process, development policies, and efforts geared towards inclusion will reflect the aspirations of citizens. One of the major ways of doing this is to allow inclusive electoral processes that will fundamentally impact on the quality of participation by marginalized groups such as women, youth, PWDs and IDPs. Furthermore, involving citizens in the implementation of such policies ensures that the core values of proper accountability and responsiveness are institutionalized. Participation in politics that is inclusive is crucial.

Citizens' representation ensures the legitimacy and credibility of government. However, all the efforts by governmental to institutionalize inclusion of marginalized groups are yet to yield positive impacts. This is the reason why studies like this are carried out to unearth the core gaps that exist in the electoral system despite series of reforms that have taken place over time. Additionally, there needs to be a robust database of PWDs in the electoral system, this will help INEC deploy assistive materials to the appropriate polling units during elections.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the foregoing findings, the report makes the following recommendations:

1. There is a strong need for government to partner with Civil Society Organizations because they are in a unique position to connect with citizens and stakeholders due to their mandate to promote inclusive political participation and representation. This mandate reflects the political will and commitment to be more inclusive and engage with citizens. Institutionalizing engagement with civil society and stakeholders will also help to ensure implementation.
2. More support for special measures to include women and PWDs in political parties and in the Nigerian legislature would increase inclusive political participation.
3. In a more specific manner, legal and policy framework could be developed that will see to the inclusion of marginalized groups in the electoral process. Civil society and development partners should continue to provide technical assistance to government agencies on implementing global best practices and international standards.
4. While INEC has a policy framework for including IDPs in the electoral process, there is indeed a need to create a flexible data management system for the teeming IDPs in crises States. This is particularly important given the level of exclusion that the IDP

communities presently face during elections. It will also help substantiate claims of voting fraud amongst them during elections.

5. There is also a need to insist on availability of assistive devices in Polling Units and where INEC staff fail in their responsibility to provide or use these materials, there should be penalties. INEC also needs to design polling booths that are disability friendly and still ensure secrecy of the ballot particularly for PWDs without legs.
6. Advocacy campaigns by CSOs can be strengthened around the area of inclusive grassroots mobilization and leadership trainings for PWDs across the States. This is particularly important given the growing assumption that PWDs do not have the capacity to lead or superintend over policy implementation in some quarters of government. If successfully initiated, it will help marginalized groups to have a stronger belief in their capacity to express their franchise as eligible citizens of Nigeria with equal rights and responsibilities.
7. The National Assembly should increase its oversight responsibility to ensure that monies budgeted for inclusive elections are used appropriately.
8. Stakeholder conversations and campaigns for reducing money in Nigeria's elections should be highly encouraged to give a chance to marginalized groups to participate actively.
9. Overall, there is a need to intensify political education amongst citizens and advocacy for equal rights as well as social inclusion in Nigeria. A shift from negative social attitudes towards marginalized groups will go a long way to remove some of the barriers they experience in political participation and elections.

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