

STATEMENT ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN POLITICS (VAWiP) IN NIGERIA ISSUED BY A COALITION OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS WITH SUPPORT FROM UN WOMEN AND UNDP/DGD

About the Initiative

The Violence Against Women in Politics (VAWiP) initiative is part of a larger Africa regional project by UN Women which aims at stimulating evidence-based, systematic and institutionalized response mechanisms to the issue of electoral violence against women. It was first piloted in the February 2011 elections in Uganda. Nigeria is the second pilot site and Zimbabwe will be the third.

In Nigeria, the pilot study is being implemented by a coalition of Nigerian civil society organizations, activists and volunteers with the support of UN Women in collaboration with UNDP's Democratic Governance for Development (DGD) Project. The Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA) is the key implementing technical partner.

The Methodology

Following several consultations in February and March 2011 with state and non-state actors in the area of election security in Nigeria, the Coalition reviewed and modified the toolkit developed by IDASA for use in Nigeria. A total of thirteen (13) sites were selected for the pilot. They include two (2) randomly selected States from each of the six geo-political zones in addition to the FCT. To coordinate the collection, coordination and analysis of data from the 13 sites a Hub was set up. Volunteers nominated by members of the Coalition were trained on the use of the 2 questionnaires, which capture various aspects of the incidents of violence against women in politics during the campaign period and on election days. At the Hub, the Volunteers place calls to pre-identified and authenticated field-based sources of information in the selected locations. This information is then collated and

analyzed by the Hub data analyst. Coordinators provide crucial substantive overall analysis of the data pooled from the Volunteers' calls.

Preliminary Findings

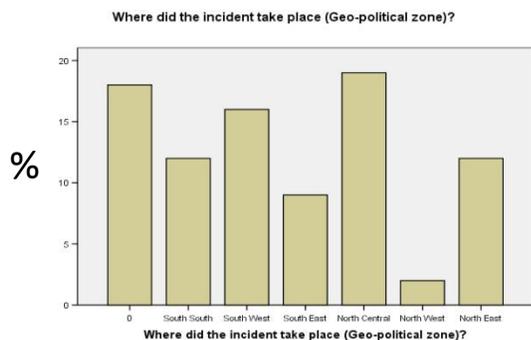
Between March 21 and 30, 2011 the Hub volunteers made 88 calls to field based sources in order to collect information on the incidents of violence against women in politics during the campaign period.

Early findings reveal 75% of the field monitors reporting an incident or incidents of violence that were targeted specifically at women. The largest number of these incidents reportedly took place during political campaigns or rallies, while others occurred at political party events. The perpetrators were identified as primarily party supporters and agents. This further underscores the real need to engage political parties in promoting peaceful elections in Nigeria.

The most common forms of violence reported were intimidation, physical harm, murder and death threats either to particular women candidates, their family members or ordinary women who are party supporters. The largest number of victims was ordinary women party supporters or potential voters (14.8%) and women candidates (13%).

The toolkit used allowed for information collected to be disaggregated by geographical locations. The North Central zone had the highest number of cases reported (21.6%), followed by 18.2% from the South West and 13.6% from the North East and South South each.

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It would appear that as the elections draw nearer the spate of violence has been on the rise; and women are not spared. The months of January and February had fewer reported incidents of violence compared to March which accounted for 56% of all the incidents reported. Only 29% of these incidents were reported to relevant authorities, of which at least 17% are currently under investigation.

Recommendations

Research and anecdotal evidence in Nigeria and elsewhere on the continent have shown that violence or the perception and/or real fear of violence are a major deterrent for women to engage effectively in politics. The goal of this pilot is not only to document the issue but to provide evidence for use by various election security actors to take more decisive measures to address the problem of violence targeted at women candidates, party supporters and ordinary voters.

We therefore urge key actors particularly the Police and INEC to investigate and prosecute cases of electoral violence as provided for in the 2010 Electoral Act. We urge Political Party leaders to restrain their supporters, honor the recently signed Political Parties’ Code of Conduct and promote the practice of peaceful elections. We commend the media for

recent efforts to highlight the impact of violence against women in politics and urge them to continue spotlighting this issue in order to promote public discourse about how to end the problem.

In the coming days, the project and Coalition members are open to continued dialogue on this issue with INEC, Political Parties, candidates, Security agencies, domestic and international observers and the media to ensure that violence does not impinge on women’s rights to campaign as candidates, support parties of their choice and vote in the elections commencing April 2, 2011.

The members of the Coalition will continue to track the situation right up to the end of the elections and release regular updates.

<p>For further information on this initiative please contact the Coalition Coordinators:</p>
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