



Transition Monitoring Group

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TEXT OF THE PRESS RELEASE BY THE TRANSITION MONITORING GROUP ON THE FLAGS OFF OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION MACRO PROJECT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTION

The Transition monitoring Group (TMG) has formally commenced the Local Government election project tagged “*Making the votes count: Promoting Citizens’ Participation and protection of their mandate during the local government elections in Nigeria*”.

The European Commission under the Europe Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights Project had in the Campaign 3 of their 2005 Macro project contracts provided funding for this important activity-filled project.

The project which covers the 774 Local Government areas in the 36 states of Nigeria is aimed at promoting the conduct of credible Local Government election in Nigeria. The project also involves some post-election activities and processes that reflect inclusive governance and reactivating the will of the people to demand accountability from their representatives at all levels of government as expected in a democracy. The project has therefore been designed to strengthen the capacity of civil society organizations, including NGOs, CBOs, faith based organizations and all community members to observe Local Government elections and other post-election activities. Holding political office holders accountable to their constituencies and enhancing electoral justice is an important component of this project and that is why there is a lot of emphasis not only on the need to observe the election actively, but also to monitor the LG election tribunals and also engage the process of governance even after the elections. It was essentially for the benefit of a post-election dialogue and engagement that the project showcases community town hall meeting and dialogue components. This component will be preceded by trainings on the use of the town hall meeting manuals and will be characterized by community people coming together to deliberate and dialogue on issues of governance dear to them and their communities. It will also provide a platform for interface with potential office seekers or holders to interact on priority and need assessment in the local communities. Above all, the platform enables the local electorate to make informed decisions in choosing from among contending candidates or parties contesting for elective positions on their behalf.

TMG’s experiences and findings as a key election monitor in the April general election in Nigeria, fell short on success and credibility criteria of a free and fair general election. The findings of international observer groups merely corroborated TMG’s position. In fact, the very poor conduct and prosecution of that general election and the legitimacy crisis that have since bedeviled its outcome, is a good-enough lesson in approaching the LG election. Thus, the strategies outlined especially for the post-LG election have become necessary given experiences of Nigerians in the recent past where voting at elections have at best

become a mere window-dressing with no real term commitment on the part of the politicians or any direct bearing on good governance or quality service delivery to the people.

The EU-funded LG election project had acknowledged the monumental gaps in the Nigerian-type of governance especially at local government level, and is therefore intervening through TMG to restore power to the people who are the sovereign in a democracy. It is our collective hope that at the end of this project which is also geared towards accountability in government, the 'peoples' will' shall become superior to engender good governance and quality service delivery for the ultimate good of the Nigerian populace.

The project's core activities are distinctively segmented to cover pre-election, election and post-election activities as follows;

Pre-LGA Elections Activities

- Advocacy visits to SIECs and communities by State Advocacy Committees (SACs).
- Training of Trainers (TOT) for LGA elections
- Production of visibility materials
- Establishment of People's Mandate Protection Committees (PMPCs).
- Step-Down Training for LGA elections
- Training of State Advocacy Committees (SACs) and Peoples Mandate Protection Committees (PMPCs)
- Publication of *Democracy Watch* on the objectives of the project.

LGA Elections Activities

- Airing of radio jingles
- Town hall meetings
- Deployment of observers/monitors
- Training of LGA elections petitions tribunal observers/monitors
- Data collection and processing of election reports
- Engage Technical Report Writing Committee for the election final reports
- Publication of second edition of *Democracy Watch*
- Present preliminary reports

Post-LGA Elections Activities

- Town hall dialogue continues with elected representatives
- Deployment of LGA elections petition tribunal observers and monitors.
- Data collection, collation, processing and reporting on outcomes of LGA elections petitions tribunals.
- Analysis of findings from LGA elections petitions tribunals.
- Publication of third edition of *Democracy Watch* newsletter on LGA elections petitions tribunals.
- Press briefing as part of reporting proceedings of LGA elections petitions tribunals.
- Community radio discussion programmes.
- Public presentation of overall report on LGA elections and elections petitions tribunals.
- Publication of fourth edition of *Democracy Watch* newsletter and subsequent editions on a bi-monthly basis.

Thank you