How Citizens Demands For Good Governance, Alliances By Transport Unions, And Activities of Militants Shape Ondo Governorship Poll

- NURTW Partisanship May Affect INEC Logistics
- Spotlights Flash Points, Violence Prone Areas
- Calls For Strategic Deployment of Security To Areas With High Risk of Violence

An Issues-Driven Campaign

As voters in Ondo State make last minute preparations in readiness for the October 10 Governorship election, the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) has identified a number of positive and negative trends, which it projects could shape the election and the credibility of its outcome. In its pre-election assessment, the CDD through its dedicated Election Analysis Centre (EAC) listed what it described as a groundswell of citizens demands for good governance through specific debates on specific policy issues as one of the encouraging signs in the campaign period. The Centre observed that although the threat of misinformation and disinformation remains potent, especially in the final stretch of the campaign, its observation of the pre-election environment indicated that citizens in Ondo State have largely shown a strong resolve to take political actors, to task on key programmes and policies.

CDD Director, Idayat Hassan lauded the resolve of citizens in Ondo State to make the election a referendum on some of the core governance issues directly affecting their everyday living conditions. She said:

"An example of the resolve of citizens to demand answers to the key governance issues they face would be seen in the debates on school fees and the maternal health policy of the government."
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"From the way they are discussing how the policies have rubbed off on them, it is apparent that they were mobilised to engage the matter as an election issue, which should determine which direction voting should go. The impact of these debates has been in turn affecting policies, with reversals of initial positions by the government. Another instance of the prevalence of governance issues in the election is the debate on the status of the free maternal healthcare programme (Abiye), which was introduced by the administration of Governor Olusegun Mimiko. Citizens have been using the conversation around the election as an entry point to interrogate the incumbent on his administration's handling of the free maternal care programme (Abiye) introduced by his predecessor.

"It is refreshing to see citizens using the electoral process as a basis to institutionalise democratic accountability. As a matter of fact, CDD projects that role of fake news and misinformation in the Ondo election will be relatively low compared to other states, partly because citizens are busy interrogating core governance issues. CDD hopes citizens will put these governance issues in perspective as they go to cast their ballot on Saturday. CDD believes that if citizens remain focused on these issues as they go out to vote on Election Day, incidents of vote buying will be reduced."

Transport Unions, Armed Non State Actors Wield Influence on Poll

On the flipside however, CDD warned that the partisan disposition of transport unions, including the National Union of Road Transport Workers and the Motorcyclists Association could pose challenges, which may create credibility and logistics problems. CDD observation of the political environment in Ondo State indicates that the NURTW, and the Okada riders’ union will play a major role in the complex web of partisan alliances, which will influence the outcome of the election.

"One of the worrisome realities is that NURTW, one of the major unions is depicted to be a highly partisan association, which tries to use its influence to enforce electoral outcomes. The NURTW played a prominent albeit partisan role in previous elections, and remains on course to do leverage its presence towards the realisation of partisan objectives. The closeness of the union to partisan interests could impact on the
CDD observation of the electoral process has also been picking up early warning signs of violence. The CDD pre-election report notes that the prevailing political situation ahead of the 2020 Ondo governorship election has the potential to escalate in ways that could cause widespread violence.

“Since political campaigns began, CDD has been monitoring news reports to document and analyse the pre-election environment. The Centre observes an upsurge of political tensions in at least 11 of the 18 local government areas of the State with several reported cases of election-related violence. A trend analysis of data gathered so far indicates that group clashes, attacks on party secretariat and political rallies and campaigns by thugs and party supporters escalated in most LGAs across the State with the highest number of cases reported in Akure South and Idanre LGAs. Of the 34 incidents of electoral violence reported between August and early October 2020, at least 12 cases of clashes during campaigns were reported. While these early warning signs are not definite indicators to give 100 percent certainty that there will be violence in the areas highlighted, they nonetheless call for a strategic deployment of security. CDD is of the view the presence of security in areas with history of election violence will deter elements which would be inclined to resort to violence,” the Centre advised.
The Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) was established in the United Kingdom in 1997 as an independent, not-for-profit, research training, advocacy and capacity building organisation.

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