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## **Credibility of Local Government Elections in Nigeria: Election Observation Paradigm-The Case of Akwa Ibom State Local Government 2017 Election**

by

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### **Abstract**

*Local Government is an important level of governance everywhere because it is the seed bed of democratic practices. In Nigeria, elections at this level suffer from credibility problem hence many people stay away from it knowing that the political party which controls the state very often win all the seats contested for in the election. It was the attempt to introduce credibility into elections at this level of governance that led to bringing on board Election Observation Mission into the December 2017 Akwa Ibom Local Government Election. The process consisted of a corporate body applying to AKISIEC to observe the election, funding itself, selecting and training election observers who were non-partisan, providing election observation checklist, setting up 'Situation Room' and receiving field reports for analysis. The report and analysis identified the strength, weaknesses and opportunity for improvement by AKISIEC. The outcome indicated that the election was better than the previous ones because of the presence of Election Observers both at the AKISIEC office and at the polling units. Credible local government elections would create credible national politics as in Britain and continental Europe. This partly explains why their representations and politics generally, is more humane and development oriented. It is because most of them learned the political values by participating at the local government elections before joining the state or national politics. It is, therefore, imperative to commence the processes of instituting credibility in local government elections in Nigeria, as it has been done in the Akwa Ibom case. It is expected that Akwa Ibom State Local Government Election management body, improve tremendously in the next election planning using the report of the Observers Mission.*

### **1. Introduction**

Nigeria has had a tempestuous ride in her democratic path, partly because of long years of military rule, hence did not have room for learning the arts and practices of democracy. Local government election provides an arena for learning the rudiments of democratic practices which would have been scaled-up and consolidated at both the state and the national levels respectively. This presents the logic why we should ensure that

local government elections gain credibility in Nigeria, for it would serve as a learning ground for improvement of other elections. One of the major elements for upgrading elections at the local level, is 'election Observation' which would make it assume the importance as local government elections in advanced societies of the USA, UK etc., especially in a three-tier (federal) governmental system as in Nigeria.

Nigeria operates a federal system of government, where a central government spread development by making itself present in all nook and crannies of the country through both state and nation- building processes, while another level of political organ known as the 'State' or 'federating unit' also provide development and ensure peace and order within the area assigned to it. The states are further divided into local administrative units known as Local Governments. This is meant to ensure that the local people determine the direction of their development through a 'governmental' system whose personnel are chosen by them in an election, to fulfill their aspirations and complement the efforts of both the federal and state governments respectively. This is the format of the Nigeria federalism, though an aberration, where the states/local governments do not retain natural resources within their localities and pay prescribed percentage to the national government, as in other federal climes.

The credibility of local government elections which produce the administrators, is the subject matter of this study. Local government elections have not been taken as a serious form of the exercise of electoral franchise in Nigeria, since 1999. This is because very often, the political party in control in each state often wins a hundred percent (100%) of all the chairmanship and councillorship seats in the council elections. This situation is assumed to hold because the state owned Electoral Management Board (EMB) organizes the election with funding from the state government, hence it grants itself successes. It immediately raises the question: If it is to be conducted by the Federal Electoral Management Body, Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), would the political party in control of the federal government not do the same? Consequent upon this practice, many Nigerians have predictive capacity of what the outcome of any local government election would turn out to be - and thus, do take it seriously, thereby raising the credibility problem of local government election very high.

The logic of 'local government election' include the fact that, people in a local area would know better their need requirements, and the personages capable of articulating policies and programs which would translate into goods and services better than anyone else. This is because development relates to the improvement of the living conditions of human beings within a local area on a sustainable basis. The process of obtaining the personages to drive the development of the area by harnessing both the human and the material resources has always been through the processes of elections.

It is instructive to note that in Nigeria, like in other polities, there are three (3) levels of elections, the national election would produce the President and the members of the national assembly (legislature), the second level is that which produces the Governors who govern the administrative units known as states. The elections at these two levels are managed by the National Election Management body (EMB), in this case, Independent National Election Commission (INEC). At the local government level, elections are conducted by the State's Independent Election Commission (SIEC), in this

case, Akwa Ibom State Independent Election Commission (AKISIEC). However, local government elections like all others in Nigeria, had been fraught with lack of credibility of outcomes. This study seeks to ensure that elections at this level is trustworthy and the leaders which emerged are accountable.

The recently concluded 2017 local government election in Akwa Ibom State, was used for a trial introduction of Election Observation Mission (EOM) with the aim of making it credible.

## **2. Aim and Objectives**

The objectives of the study were three-fold and include; (a) to establish the importance of Election Observation Mission in the processes of selecting the rulers and the drivers of development at the local level of governance which is closest to the people. (b) To strengthen the credibility and legitimacy of the government that emerged at the local government level thereof. (c) To evaluate in what way the Election Observation Mission (EOM) would facilitate the integrity and the accountability of the government at the local level. It was also aimed at generating future policy options to strengthen local government elections. At the end of the study, these objectives would have been mainstreamed with analysis on how they are achievable through the framework of observation of local government elections in Nigeria and specifically in Akwa Ibom State.

The structure of the paper consists of the introduction, brief description of local government, the problem, nature of election observation, the outcome of the election, analysis of the outcome, policy prescriptions for improved future elections and the conclusion.

### ***Local Government***

The 1999 Constitution as amended, in section 6 provided for the total number of local governments to be 744. The state governments are enjoined to ensure the establishment, composition, finance and functions of such councils. This imply that local government is the business of the state governments. Whereas, Part II 1(iii) provides for its revenue from the Consolidated Revenue Fund, the fourth schedule, outlined about twenty-three (23) functions for every local government, which are meant to complement the role of the states at the local areas. The nature of the functions requires the election of locales who are conversant with the locality and their need requirements and define the strategies for their realization. These local governments have been holding elections since 1976, but these functions are hardly addressed and the problems persisted.

Beyond the constitutional provisions, the United Nations Organization's Department of Public Administration, described local government as a political subdivision of a nation (or in a federal state), which is constituted by law and has substantial control of local affairs, including the powers to impose taxes or to exact labor for prescribed purposes. The governing body of such an entity is elected or otherwise locally selected (Whalen, 1970). The justification for local government includes but not restricted to; the presumed superior capacity of the local people to understand and conduct their local affairs better than anyone else. Each locality, of course, has its own

peculiarities-economic, social, physical, its own history, tradition, custom, beliefs and taboos. People are overly against imposition from above and are committed to whatever they have decided upon directly or what they have some input in deciding upon (Ola, 1988). The 1976 local government reform document described it:

*as a government at the local level exercised through representative councils established by law to exercise powers within defined areas...has substantial control over local affairs as well as the staff and institutions and financial powers to initiate and direct the provision of services ...and to ensure ...that local initiative and response to local needs and conditions are maximized.*

A further concern of this study rests on the plank that this level of governance provides the following expediencies;

- (i) it would serve as a forum for political education and socialization of potential statesmen in Nigeria as in Britain and Continental Europe and America. In Britain for instance David Butler study found out that in the 1964 British general election, 53 percent of Labor Party members of Parliament, 45 percent of the defeated Labor Parliamentary candidates had served their political apprenticeship as Local Government Councilors. The Conservative Party on the other hand, had 29 percent of the successful Member of Parliament and 40 percent of the defeated Parliamentary candidates had been local government councilors. In continental Europe, Mackenzie (1964), stated that in Italy, more than half of the Deputies (House of Representative members) and about the same proportion of Senators had had political education in the local government (Cited in Ola, 1988).
- (ii) It exists also for the purpose of bringing about democracy and to afford opportunities for political participation to the citizen. It provides a good training ground for prospective parliamentarians. To provide services, and it must be judged by its success in providing the services (Ola, 1988). The above statistics provide reasons why local government elections should be made credible in Nigeria. It would in due course serve as training school for future statesmen who would not heat up the polity but pursue development to advance the Nigeria state.

### ***The Problematic***

It is a truism that the processes of organizing and conducting elections in Nigeria have been fraught with controversies which questions the legitimacy of the government which emerged thereof in Nigeria. The constitution enjoined the states to ensure that local governments are democratically elected.

However, the focus of the current problem is on making local government elections to be credible, transparent, inclusive and making people's vote count, because election at this level has been desirous of legitimacy over the years. Quite often the governors of the state, under whose jurisdiction the local government fall, have been accused of abusing the processes of the local government elections.

The abuse ranges from, the use of ‘transitional chairpersons’ to operate the local government areas, refusal to remit ten per cent of the state’s Internally Generated Revenue’ (IGR), to the local government, and the misuse of the federal allocations to the local government areas, through local government ‘joint-account’, to occasional dissolution of local councils. It was presumed that these acts, deny the local people the benefit of genuine development decided by their representatives.

The principal issue is that local administration is the basic unit of government to drive appropriate development, hence it is critical to get election right at this level. It is the contention of this study that, in order to strengthen the credibility of local government elections, Election Observation Missions should be the mechanism for introducing incremental credibility into the processes of election at the local government level.

The major problem is that Election Observation by independent groups have not been introduced into the local government elections, hence it had not always inspired the confidence of the voters as many frauds are perpetrated, and often experienced low voters turn out, meaning election apathy.

It is instructive also to note that often local government elections are rarely inclusive, they often exclude People Living with Disabilities’ (PLWDs), youths, and women in the locality. Consequently, people do not own up the elections and do not as a result demand accountability from the duty-bearers at the local government.

The state governments in whose jurisdiction the local governments belong, do not frequently demonstrate sufficient ‘political will’ to allow the entire democratic gamut in local government elections, and make the arena to be one for preparing future political leaders. These are some of the dimensions of local government problems, which this study attempts to address through the Election Observation Mission (EOM) paradigm. Given the trajectory of the above challenges, local government elections usually suffer from credibility (trustworthiness, reliability, integrity, authority) problem, because more often than not, the political party which rules the state would always win the entire chairmanship and counsellorship seats in every election conducted by the State EMB. What strategies exist to make local government election credible?

### **3. Material and Methods**

The procedures through which the exercise was conducted was participatory and observational. The participatory aspect consisted of assisting to train Local Government Election Observation Mission Observers, selected from the various participating Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) with thematic focus on election. The knowledge of the process was obtained from the training received from European Union-Election Observation Mission (EU-EOM). The observers were selected to cover the entire local governments of the state. The training consisted of the Election Observation ethics and the creation of election Observation ‘Check-list’.

The observational component of the procedure consisted of registration with Akwa Ibom State Election Commission (AKISEC), applying and obtaining accreditation to be an observer.

The approval was accompanied with 'Election Observer' tag and Reflective jackets which provided free movement on the election day for the observers. By this token, the observers were able to go to election polling stations, while some were stationed at the AKISEC office to observe the distribution of sensitive election materials before and on the day of the election (D-Day). It was further used to obtain data for this study on the day of the election. It is a correlational enquiry where trained observers were on the spot to observe the election and take note of the behaviors of the election officials and voters through the use of a structured check list. It contained some pre-determined variables consisting of five (5) principal items namely; arrival of materials, set-up of the polling units, accreditation and voting, counting, and declaration of results, with numerous sub-variables under each heading.

The procedure comprised of direct observation of the phenomenon in their setting, in this case at the polling units. The observers were in the polling units to observe both the voters, officials and the processes of conducting the local government election which otherwise would have been reported

The trained field observers were on the various locations reporting every action at the polling station to the 'Election Situation Room' (ESR) where the reports were being analyzed and interim conclusion reached while the final conclusion were arrived at by polling the entire reports together.

The analyzed report took into cognizance the basic elements of elections; its inclusiveness (members of other political parties were allowed to freely participate, people living with disabilities of physically challenged (PLWD) were accommodated) behaviors of the election officials, voters and the processes of conducting the local government election.

The observers were trained to ensure that the voters remained relatively natural in their behaviors in the election context, thereby guaranteeing a measurement of a high degree of external validity.

It accorded the observers direct access to the event and a high level of flexibility in the generation of the data. However, it took a longer time to accomplish because election observation commenced before the actual election started and ended after collation and declaration of results.

Biases were contained by various trainings and the code of conduct signed by each observer, which ethical code were evolved and complied with, while the present of election observation mission must have affected the behavior of both voters and officials-this is a standard practice.

As Connelly and Clendenin (1990) pointed out, the observer's role in qualitative observational research is to record group interactions and behaviors as objectively as possible using various qualitative inquiry tools. In this case the checklist used to obtain the data included categories of behavior that were noted.

#### **4. Conceptual Framework**

The model of the study was Election Observation Mission (EOM), a major component which legitimizes all elections and establish its credibility or not. One of its significance is often to verify and establish that article 21(3) of the United Nations 1948

Universal Declaration of Human Rights which provided for the right of everyone to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives had been complied in all situations. This was applied in the case of the Akwa Ibom local Government election 2017;

*that the will of the people shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections, which shall be made by universal, and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedure.*

It is only through election observation that this critical component of election credibility could be ascertained in the just concluded Akwa Ibom local government election.

It was against this backdrop and many others that an independent corporate civil society citizen, desirous to improve the electoral system by ensuring it was inclusive, transparent, accountable and above all credible, obtain accreditation from the Election Management Body (EMB) in order to observe the election, either as a short term domestic (Election-Day) observer or long term international Observer. Long-term observer commences from the day when the election time-table is announced until when the election is concluded (Dundas, 1994). The context of the present study was the Akwa Ibom local government election conducted in December 2, 2017.

The accredited organization worked with women, youth and people with disabilities, hence it was involved in observing the election to ensure that the right of participation was extended to these class of people. It is instructive to note that the presence of election observers can ensure a free and fair election. It gives credibility to election in the international community. It consists of accreditation of observers by which they agree to adhere to specific code of conduct, the observer sign an indemnity document exempting the EMB from any claims arising in the course of election observation, the organization applying for accreditation to observe, submitted its profile to the EMB, then the observers were trained (Ujo,2000). On the Election Day, the domestic election observers went out with prepared checklist of activities for observation (this included; the time of arrival of materials number of poll officials, number of political party agents present. Set-up of the polling units-were campaign materials removed, were the ballot boxes located in full view of the public, were there provisions for people living with disabilities (PLWD). On accreditation and voting, were voters with finger disability accredited and how did they vote, were they aided by people of their choice? What other problems were encountered? Were persons ineligible to vote permitted to do so? Counting; were the ballot counted before the electorates and was the result openly declared at the unit and was the copy of the result sheet pasted at the polling units). Lastly, was the process inclusive of women, youths and PLWDs?

Generally, the aim of election observation has been to;

- i) Encouraging openness and transparency of elections
- ii) To deter fraud, intimidation and improper conduct
- iii) To inspire confidence of voters/public, candidates and political parties in the election process,
- iv) Record the accuracy and irregularities to determine compliance with the rules of election.



- v) To document evidence to support their findings
- vi) To recommend measures to strengthen future electoral processes and effect future policy base on the current situation.

#### **5. Elements of Election Credibility**

One of the elements which would make an election to be considered credible is when it is free, fair (participants are not restricted and the process transparent) and where each of preparatory processes, namely, delimitation of electoral boundary are fairly constructed; the voters register is complete, accurate and current; the contestants, political parties and candidates (including independent), have a level playing campaign field; the logistic management is efficient, the counting of vote is done competently and timely; and the electoral management and officers are non-partisan and competent, is executed professionally. Furthermore, in order to make the grade of free, fair and credible election, there must be complete transparency in the preparatory and voting processes to the satisfaction of all stakeholders, and electoral complaints and disputes should be resolved in good time and in accordance with established procedures (Dundas, 2014).

The European Union-Election Observation Mission (EOM) observed that credible election entails;(i) transparency of the processes, that is, when there are no widespread procedural irregularities. (ii) extensive voter disenfranchisement, (iii) equal conditions for all political parties and candidates (iv)low incident of violence (EU-EOM,2007).

Furthermore, election is 'free and fair' when it is conducted according to the rules and regulations, and when the rules are made known to all parties and satisfaction of stakeholders. These are some of the minimum criteria of international best practices.

Credibility is the most important criteria of all elections, how was it manifested in the December 2017 Akwa Ibom State local government elections? Dundas had isolated; 'voters' register' which had no complaints associated with it. It should be stated that in the Akwa Ibom local government election, the 'voters' registers' had no controversy as political parties had their copies. It must be assumed that the political parties and candidates had level playing ground, since there was no known case or protest from any of the twelve (12) participating political organizations. The logistic management was inefficient which led to the late commencement of the election in distanced locations. The counting of votes was competently done with the agents of all the participating political parties present, they all endorsed the results. Electoral management officers were presumed to be non-partisan, since there was no yardstick for ascertaining this. Transparency in the voting process; this was open as much as possible with few cases where the ballot boxes were placed in the open field. Electoral disputes in Nigeria are often not resolved in good time by the judiciary. This has become customary even in the Akwa Ibom local government election.

It is important to emphasize that transparency in this context refers to the openness of the processes while integrity is the ability of the election management body and presiding officials to operate without unnecessary interference from external bodies and persons related to the contest, but strictly on the rules set for the election.

**6. Election Observation Mission: Findings**

- i) The election was scheduled to commence at eight (8.00am), but the field report from the observers and obtained in the Situation Room (where field observers reported on the spot findings to), indicated that materials were not distributed as at 10.00am and this affected the timely commencement of the election in about 70 per cent of the polling units. This was certainly a logistic problem, probably due to inadequacy of vehicles and personnel.
- ii) The late arrival of materials led to accreditation and voting being done simultaneously without following the necessary steps (declaring the number of ballot brought in, educating the electorates on processes of voting and declaring the contents of the ballot box before voting) to the electorates before voting commenced.
- iii) The polling officials were not deployed in sufficient numbers as in some polling centers the electoral or presiding officers also acted as poll clerk, no orderly or security agent. Ironically, there were large numbers of security agents on the streets of Uyo, halting movements of people yet few of them at the polling stations.
- iv) Voting commenced in the majority of polling stations at about 12.00 noon and lasted beyond the scheduled time for closing the polls. In majority of the areas, few units complained of no material and no voting. The number of polling units where voting was reported not to have taken place in each ward were negligible often three (3) out of ten, or about 30 per cent of the total units in the wards. In order not to disenfranchise the electorates, election was rescheduled in some local government areas units.
- v) The exercise recorded impressive turn out as reported by field observers and communicated to the 'Election Situation Room'. The electorates included men, women, youths and the physically challenged (people living with disabilities - PLWD), hence, it was inclusive in all ramification.
- vi) After the late closing of the poll, votes were counted at the units and result announced but not pasted as it went into the night and they proceeded to the local government collation centers to aggregate units results in order to obtain the total local government votes. The results were then forwarded to the Election Management Body – (AKISIEC) state office for by the Returning officer for declaration of winners.

**7. Analysis of Election Outcome**

The outcome of the election as announced by the Election Management Body (EMB - AKISIEC), indicated that one of the contesting political party won the 329 councillorships and 31 local government chairmanship seats in the state. However, the EMB was yet to provide the breakdown of the votes scored by each of the twelve (12) political parties and their candidates who participated in the election. What factors accounted for the election results as declared?

Electoral Behavior: An Analysis: Several long-term and multiple short-term factors accounted for the outcome of the election as declared, with policy implications to strengthen further local government elections both in Akwa Ibom and other states in Nigeria. The variables were;

- i) Independent (undecided voters) first-time voters- It is instructive to note that democracy returned to Nigeria in 1999. By 2017, a period of eighteen (18) years, there are many first-time or independent voters who in the period in reference, have only seen and heard of one party in Akwa Ibom State. This party had established itself through its various activities in the mind and psychic of the youths who were voting for the first time. This is because within the environment where they grew, only one party have created momentum in the environment. This imprinted in their minds the name of the party, thus, without campaign, about seven out of ten independent voters voting for the first time would vote the outcome as declared by the EMB-AKISIEC. It is enlightening to note that these chaps have seen the party offices, vehicles, symbols and heard of the party in the news in the media all their lives. This explained their electoral behavior in their first electoral outing. This is the party they have heard of, seen and eventually voted for it. It is a fact to note that what one hears, see, determine what his action in the circumstance would be. This corps of electorates ought to have been pursued by the other political parties, with the aimed of convincing them to their party if they were strategical in their planning and communications.
- ii) The voter's identification with the candidates: the bulk of the candidates presented for the election by one of the parties, were also local government transition chairmen, who might have proven their mettle or otherwise in the local government areas and have cultivated a lot of followership. The followers therefore want their benefactor to continue in their parochial interests. -This transform into electoral capital no matter how marginal over and above their opponents. This relates to the fact that a particular party had ruled the state since 1999 and become entrenched in the state. The other twelve (12) parties in the election did not have such electoral advantage. Consequent upon this, a number of people identified with the party in the state, that is, party affiliation. It is also important to note that electoral crowd does not translate to effective electoral capital except those that are affiliated to it by one way or the other.
- iii) The voter's view of the incumbent's previous performance, integrity and capacity. Most of the voters already knew how they would vote, it is rare for campaign to change the minds of voters, though sometimes campaign do sway voters especially undecided voters. A voter's view of the incumbent previous performance greatly influences that voter's decision. This is the masterstroke applied by one of the parties in representing former transition chairmen for election against candidates who had not occupied the office before.
- iv) Incumbency factor: For incumbents to lose election, some voters who voted for him must switch allegiance. In the Nigerian case it means a lot of things. When the economy is doing well the incumbent has a chance for re-election, gaining

support from many independent. And when there are many candidates that are new, and the voters do not know much of their background, they would vote according to party identification or at least, vote the party they already knew.

#### **8. Conclusion and Recommendations**

This study set out to examine how Election Observation Mission (EOM) would enhance the credibility of local government elections using the recently concluded Akwa Ibom State Local government election. The observers' field account was subjected to analysis against the indices of election credibility drawn from Dundas (2014) and other sources. This indicated that; the processes were relatively transparent-to the extent that there were no complaints by other political parties to this effect. The event was inclusive as both youths, women and people living with disabilities (PLWD) all participated with no exclusion. No political party complained of being denied opportunity to contest the election. The incidence of violence was very minimal; the election became the most peaceful in the history of elections in the state. It was conducted within the legal framework for elections-amended electoral law. though the election started late it however held with very few polling units complaining of lack of materials. Every political party had a level playing field. Political party should strategize in the future elections to win the votes of independent or undecided voters. Thus, the local government election could pass for a credible one with ample chances of doing better than presented in the future. This is because, the report of the election observers, would normally be submitted to the state and organizers of the election for policy initiatives to improve on future elections.

Finally, it is the submission of this study that whenever Long and Short-term election observer missions become part of local government elections in Nigeria, then the country would be on the path of establishing credibility in local government elections. Furthermore, as illustrated herein, local government elections could be made the means to instituting responsible governance in Nigeria when potential statesmen are required to commence their political career from this level of governance. By the time they become senators, the art of accountable governance would have become part of the political culture as in Britain, and Continental Europe. Getting election right at this level the primary habitat of human existence would create electoral culture of immense benefit to Nigerians.

The very first condition for setting public policy agenda is when the problems identified affects a large number of the public. Thus, in order to make future local government election credible, it is imperative that the following public policy steps need to be taken;

- i) To ensure that future election is more inclusive, there should be brail ballot paper to guarantee that the blinds are able to perform their civic duty. The polling centers should be made accessible and friendly to all people living with disabilities or physically challenged. This should be followed with a law which gives prominence and first place accreditation and voting to all persons living with disabilities (PLWD). This should be captured in the next amendment of the electoral law.

- ii) On logistics, the Election Management Body should place a request to the state Government for adequate fund to purchase adequate vehicles and to recruit staff to enable it address the challenges of the delivery of electoral materials to the polling units as at when due before and on the election day and should have enough polling clerks assigned to polling units in the future.
- iii) The Election Management Body should conduct 'Motorization' (test driving to the farthest outpost office to know the time taken) to its farthest local government office across the state (Frank, 2014). In this case, Akwa Ibom State Independent Election Commission (AKISIEC), would test run its vehicle from Uyo – to Ini, Mbo local government offices for instance, to establish the time taken to get to these locations in order to know the time it would take to deliver election materials to these places. It is important to know the time it takes to reach its most remote location for delivery of election materials.
- iv) It should be mandatory that all candidates standing for principal offices such as that of the Chairman, to appear on television or other mass media, so that those who are less known than incumbents would present themselves to the electorates to enable them make wise decision in their electoral choices.
- v) Revamp voters Registration system: -a situation whereby voters' names are spelled wrongly thereby creating doubt as to their identity, because pen-and-paper forms were used, delays the voters and in extreme cases deny them opportunity to vote because of doubt in their names and persons. There were several cases of this in the recently concluded Akwa Ibom local election. Electronic registration should be introduced into the system to avoid the problem arising thereof. A scientific and electronic system is herein canvassed where permanent voters card (PVC) would be useful.
- vi) Early voting -before election day, opportunity should be created to allow for the options of early voting. The long lines at polling units discourage many people from voting. It is time to modernize the system and its processes to allow people to vote at their convenience. Electronic voting is therefore a categorical imperative.
- vi) The EMB should provide brail ballot papers in subsequent elections, to enable the blind to vote with ease and other means to accommodate people living with disabilities.

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