



# THE ADVOCACY BULLETIN

*The Nigerian Physicians Advocacy Group*



## THE NIGERIAN HEALTHCARE CRISIS

*Dr Biodun Ogungbo, MBBS, FRCS, FRCSEd, MSc*  
Abuja, Nigeria

**There are 3 events juxtaposed in time at this present moment.**

Round about the same time, President Muhammadu Buhari traveled to London for a “routine” medical check-up. However, this was just two days before the National Association of Resident Doctors (NARD) called its members out on strike over unpaid salaries and unfulfilled government promises. The Minister of Labour and Employment, Dr Chris Ngige then went on National TV and essentially stirred the hornets’ nest. Ngige claimed that resident doctors in Nigeria were paid by government in contradistinction to what obtains in other countries such as the USA and UK.

The three events happened recently in the fast-moving wreck called Nigeria.

### IN THIS ISSUE

**THE NIGERIAN HEALTHCARE CRISIS**

**PERILS TO VOTING IN NIGERIA: VOTER REGISTRATION**

**MY EXPERIENCE GETTING MY PVC**

**LOBBY(IST): RTLA YOUTH MARCH FORTH FOR ELECTORAL REFORM**

**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

Starting from the rear, Dr Chris Ngige spoke confidently that nobody (no government) pays anything to resident doctors; rather resident doctors pay to train themselves. He also said that the Nigerian government pays salaries and some aspect of the training of resident doctors such as books, exam fees among others. He said this is not what obtains in other countries. In effect, the striking doctors are a lucky breed and should thank their stars.

Of course, the uproar was immediate, and the cacophony of voices has not died down. First on his case was the Nigeria Medical Association (NMA). Dr. Enema Amodu, the Chairman, NMA, Federal Capital Territory (FCT) decried the insensitivity and callousness of the dear Minister. He said the Minister was clueless and spreading false statements a.k.a. the big lie.

He said that doctors were not insensitive and hoped that those in charge of the discussion with NARD will take it seriously.



“But if a doctor is not in a sound state of mind and is not happy with what he or she is getting from the job, the doctor may not be in the right frame of mind to discharge his or her duty right”. This was in relation to the fact that many doctors including house officers had not been paid their salaries for about 3 months. Many had not been paid their entitlements including remunerations promised for managing covid-19 patients over a year ago.

Meanwhile, on planet Nigeria, meteors were landing in our hospitals daily. A 14-year-old boy presented with severe headaches and unconsciousness. He had a scan showing a brain tumour and hydrocephalus. He needs an operation, but the doctors are on strike.

A woman presents with the head of the baby already between her legs. She was at the traditional birth attendants for delivery, and the rest of the baby refused to come out. She needs an operation, but the doctors are on strike.

Mr President? **He went to see his doctor in the UK.**

# PERILS TO VOTING IN NIGERIA: VOTER REGISTRATION

*Susan Edionwe MD  
United States of America*

Depending on who you ask, voter registration is a complicated issue in Nigeria and often viewed in a contentious light. Primarily manned by the Independent National Election Commission (INEC), voter registration is the primary enrollment process of eligible voters into the national vote casting system, as it is in most countries. But just how does it work in Nigeria?

It starts with the Continuous Voting Registration (CVR) exercise. While it has not been continuous as the name implies, it is the only process that enables qualified Nigerian citizens (at least 18 years of age and not subject to any legal incapacity to vote under any law) to register.

Eligible registrants are to present to any of the 774 Local Government Area (LGA) offices of INEC or INEC designated locations to register. There, a registration officer assists registrants with checking their voter status and entering their data and fingerprints into the system. While documentation (government ID, birth certificate, passport etc) is not required to register, it may at times be requested. This process culminates in a temporary voter card (TVC) issued day of.

Registrants will be called back at an appointed time to confirm their details before a permanent voter card (PVC) is issued. Voter registration is supposed to be a ONE TIME process. Barring untoward reasons, once registered to vote, it is a life long privilege. Even if a voter's name changes, address changes or, even if one loses their PVC, there is no need to re-register.

Sounds simple enough? But, it is Nigeria.

The voter registration process is fraught with problems that obstruct the democratic process. For example, "in many places, people [have to] wait several hours to collect their voting card. Another

issue raised is that the voting register itself does not contain clean and up-to-date data. For example, there are allegations of more than one million dead voters on the Independent National Election Commission (INEC) register". Furthermore, historically, it has occurred more than once that "electoral preparations by INEC, and in particular the registration of voters, started too late and led to recurrent delays during the whole electoral process [including election delays]. Many deadlines were missed and certain legally prescribed tasks, such as the display of the voters register, were not fully adhered to". The late distribution of PVCs not only causes widespread confusion but has led to "conflicting information on whether registered voters who had not been issued voter cards could still vote on Election Day". What is the ultimate result? The disenfranchisement of the Nigerian citizen voter leaving many unwilling to engage with the voting process further.

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As it stands, the CVR process has been halted since August 2018 which means, no new voter registrations have happened since the last major elections.

Is this with good reason? INEC seems to believe so. It reports that the delays were not just because of COVID but to create a new online registration system that will make it easier to register online, schedule registration appointments and find a CVR location in the area. Further, the commission says it needed more time to prepare new polling units for the CVR as well as to procure and introduce a new voter registration equipment and technology, the INEC Voter Enrollment Device (IVED), which is based on an Android tablet and integrates with the new online registration portal.

Critics such as PDP Publicity Secretary in Lagos State, Taofik Gani, has slammed INEC saying “that it was “embarrassing” that the process “is always announced as if it has intervals. That should not be; it should be a continuous and uninterrupted registration exercise.”

INEC, however, has officially declared that **effective from Monday 28th June, 2021, the CVR exercise will commence nationwide** and will be carried out continuously for over one year until the third quarter of 2022. It has added 1,000 new registration centers to widen access. Time and the next election, will tell if INEC's efforts are enough or continue to fall short.

## MY EXPERIENCE GETTING MY PVC

*Goodness Esu, Lagos Nigeria*

Getting my voters card the first time was not so stressful, this is because it was done in my school and the population of students was not so much, so I know that there are places where registration for one's PVC is not as stressful. Unfortunately, I lost my PVC and I had the displeasure to experience firsthand the ordeal of retrieval and registration of PVC in an average setting in Nigeria.

Firstly, I had to wait till it was a few months to the election to be able to retrieve it and when the time came getting a registration center close to where I stayed was a hassle so I had to pay a considerable sum to get to the nearest registration center.

When I got there the crowd was so much (because I obviously was not the only one who wanted to vote and considering the scarcity of registration sites it was not much of a wonder). I joined the queue and got a number and though there was about 10 tables with people to help registration and retrieval of cards, I was not able to speak to any one and so had to go home and come back the next day. The next day I still was not able to get a good number on the queue because those who came earlier rejected the

idea to start calling numbers from where we left off yesterday. It finally got to my turn that evening and I was told to get a police report or affidavit from the court and some other documents. It was obviously too late to get any so I had to return again.

I returned two days later with the required documents and this time I was smart enough to leave my house as early as 6am to get a good number and register on time. I finally finished the process and was told to return few months later to finally get my PVC.

Few months later I returned to get my PVC and the crowd was nothing compared to what I experienced during registration. I guess I should have expected it because all those who registered few months ago will obviously have to come take theirs. There was a deadline for collection of PVC (I can't recall how long but I know it was not equivalent to the days for registration). I came back early the next day and still was not able to get it. I was told mine has not been sent so I had to come back on the last week of collection. I recall hearing people talk about how they registered for their PVC's two elections ago, while some the previous the election and was not able to get theirs till now.

I came back on the last week of collection and still didn't get mine, apparently mine still was not sent. I logged into their portal and I saw that my voter's card had been verified and that my voters identification number had been transferred to my new place of registration but still I was told it had not been sent. This process was done in 2014 and I am currently waiting for the next election to get my PVC and possibly be among the countless numbers of those complaining of how I registered 8 years ago and still haven't gotten my PVC.



## The LOBBY(IST)



by Dr. Susan Edionwe, USA

### RTL A Youth March Forth For Electoral Reform.

NPAG is pleased to update our members on the electoral reform we are supporting in Nigeria. As recently reported, NPAG donated funds to the RTLA electoral reform movement and Youth March Forth event. We believe it is important to support the voices of the future lobbying for change. Please see photos from this year's march.



# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Patriotism-

A special concern for the well-being of one's country.

The Nigerian Physicians Advocacy Group (NPAG) is committed to enhancing good governance in Nigeria to improve health.

Our commitment to the most vulnerable members in Nigeria is a testament of our patriotism towards our country of heritage. Together, we can! Join us!

[www.npagroup.org](http://www.npagroup.org).

Iyore James MD/MALD, FACS