



THE ADVOCACY BULLETIN

The Nigerian Physicians Advocacy Group

VOTE.

CONSOLIDATION OF DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA: THE VOTING PROCESS - FALLACY OR TRUTH?

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In what was considered free and fair elections, the 4th Nigerian Republic began in 1999 when the military handed power to the democratic elected president- Olusegun Obasanjo, ex-military head of State 1976 to 1979. Nigeria has continued in its quest to consolidate democratic principles in a country characterized by a remarkably diverse population consisting of multiple ethnic groups with different languages. Indeed, some will argue that the primary problem with Nigeria lies within this diversity, but I beg to offer a different explanation which is, the primary problem may lie in the mismanagement of resources. In the presence of resource scarcity, it becomes extremely easy to bond and blame conflicts along ethnic/religious lines but, let me not digress.

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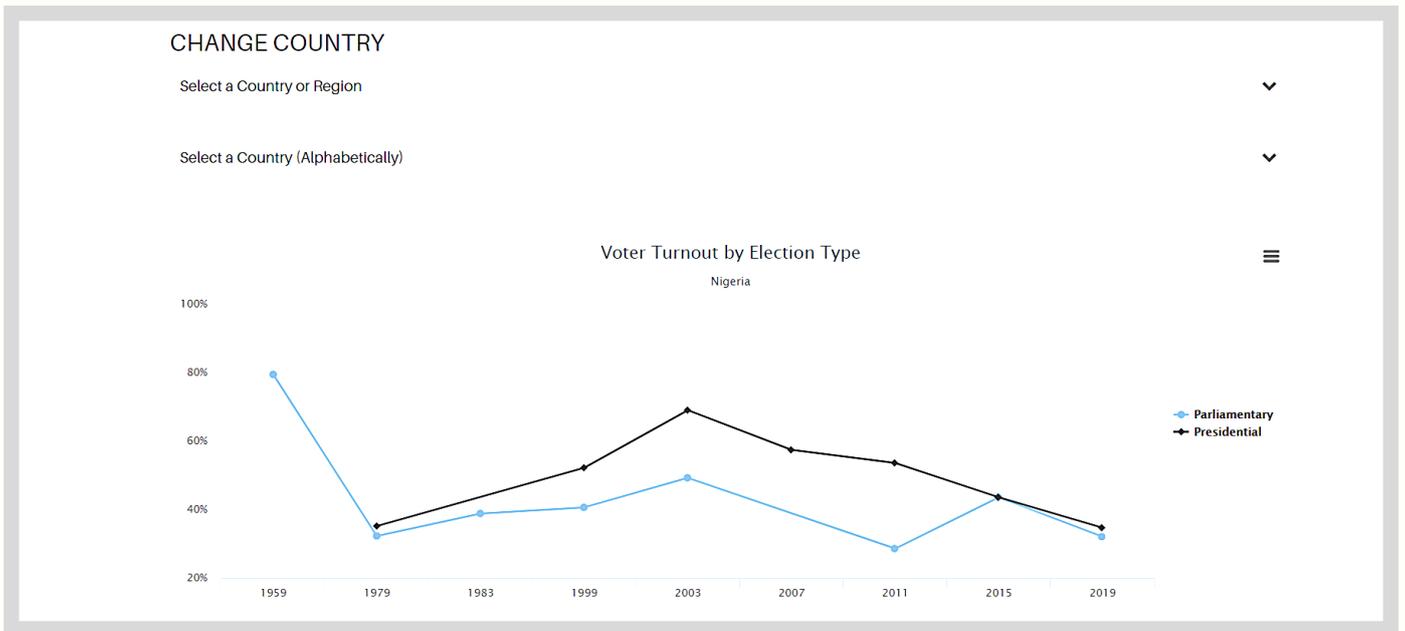


Figure 1: Voter turnout by election type 1959-2019 (presidential election in black; parliamentary elections).

Twenty-two years after return to democratic rule, most Nigerians find themselves fervently dissatisfied with Nigerian political leaders. Dissatisfaction is further amplified with worsening economy in the setting of a system that seems to celebrate corruption and greed while disregarding basic human right to life and security of person.

Democratic principles not only allow citizens to elect their public officials but also, provide mechanisms to ensure that those entrusted with public resources are held accountable. The steep decline in voter turnout (Figure 1 and Table 1) raises alarm on the future of Nigeria’s democracy. Furthermore, it begs the question- what factors are responsible for the re-election of leaders with strong dissatisfaction scores? In 2019, voting age population turnout was only 26.87%; lowest since return to democratic rule.

A recent analysis by Yusuf Akinpelu re-demonstrated worsening voting turnout with Lagos State having the lowest turnout at 17.25% during the 2019 general election. In contrast, rural states like Katsina and Jigawa states recorded greater than 50% turnout rate.

Only 9% of eligible Lagosians voted in the December 5, 2020 Lagos East Senatorial elections. This is particularly worrisome for the 2nd most populous state that not only boasts of having the most educated residents but also, the most cosmopolitan city in the country. In the most populous state of Kano, voter turnout was 36% in the 2019 general election.

Generally, reasons for low voter turnout have not being quantified however, there are clearly sentiments of voter fatigue, distrust in the electoral process, barriers to voting and security fears. It is not uncommon for voters to experience intimidation at voting polls on Election Day. To consolidate democracy in Nigeria, the Buhari administration must prioritize reforms to remove barriers to voting, increase transparency in the electoral process and security at polling units. Immediate easy steps include:

1. Increasing the number of polling units with installation of functional security cameras at all polling stations with particular emphasis in high-risk areas.
2. Nationwide electronic voting and transmission of results to INEC database. Paper ballots should only be used for recounting purposes.

Year	Voter Turnout	Total vote	Registration	Voting Age Population Turnout	Voting Age Population	Population	Invalid Votes
2019	34.75 %	28,614,190	82,344,107	26.87 %	106,490,312	208,679,114	4.51 %
2015	43.65 %	29,432,083	67,422,005	32.11 %	91,669,312	181,562,056	2.87 %
2011	53.68 %	39,469,484	73,528,040	48.32 %	81,691,751	155,215,573	3.19 %
2007	57.49 %	35,397,517	61,567,036	49.85 %	71,004,507	131,859,731	
2003	69.08 %	42,018,735	60,823,022	65.33 %	64,319,246	129,934,911	6.00 %
1999	52.26 %	30,280,052	57,938,945	57.36 %	52,792,781	108,258,359	1.40 %

Table 1: Statistics on voter turnout and registration for presidential elections 1999-2019. Source: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/country-view/231/40>

- Voters should be allowed to vote in any polling unit in the state of residence and registration. Registered voters must be able to present PVC card and identification.
- Allow early voting period at all polling units; for example, early voting could start 2-4 weeks prior to Election Day.
- Extend hours of voting on Election Day to include most hours of daylight for example, 7am until 6pm instead of 8am to 2pm as currently practiced.
- Ensuring polling units are safe and secured from violent actors.

Source: Yusuf Akinpelu: ANALYSIS: Nigeria has a voting problem, but it's much worse in Lagos. Premium Times January 3, 2021 <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/434582-analysis-nigeria-has-a-voting-problem-but-its-much-worse-in-lagos.html>

ARE YOU EATING TUBERCULOSIS?

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

- If you want cheap
- If you are careless
- If you are not observant

The incidence of tuberculosis is on the increase. Many people including those in whom you would least expect it are developing the disease. Recently, I got involved with the case of a medical doctor who became paralyzed due to Tuberculosis in his spine.

Pray, where did he get it from?

TB is a potentially serious infectious bacterial disease that mainly affects the lungs. It is caused by a bacteria. This is different from a virus like the one which causes Covid-19.

- You understand?
- Anyway, let's call it TB for short
- It's less of a mouthful that way

The bacteria that causes TB is spread when an infected person coughs, sneezes or spits. If you are constantly in the vicinity of someone infected with TB or are living with them, you can catch the disease and then suffer from it too.

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TB is spread through the air and a person needs to inhale only a few germs to become infected.

Most people infected with the bacteria that cause tuberculosis don't have symptoms. Only 5-15% of these people will fall ill with active TB disease. The rest have TB infection but are not ill and cannot transmit the disease. When symptoms do occur, they usually include a cough (sometimes tinged with blood), weight loss, night sweats and fever. Treatment isn't always required for those without symptoms. This is because most often we don't know who they are.

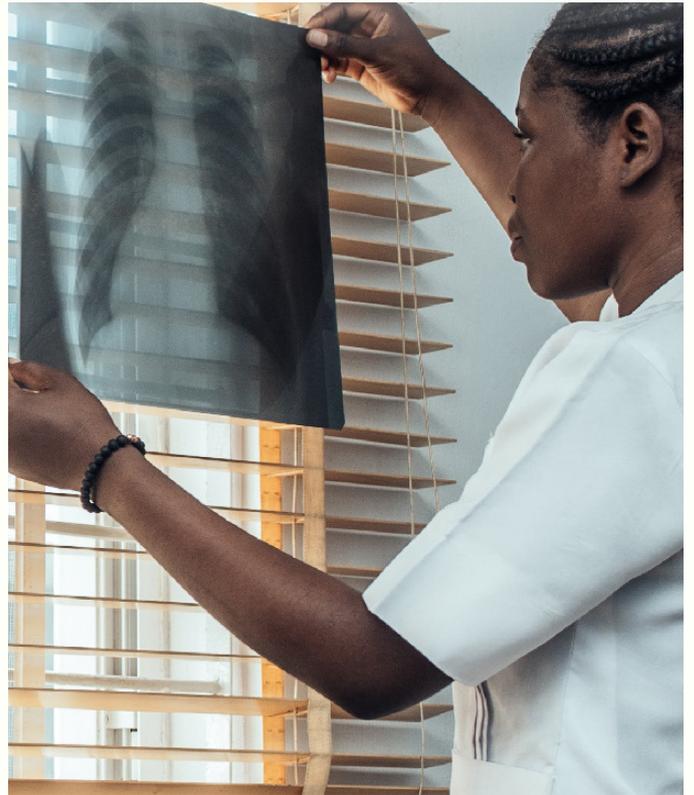
Both TB infection and disease are curable using antibiotics. Patients with active symptoms will require a long course of treatment involving multiple antibiotics. Some treatment with about 3 different drugs can go on for as long as 18 months.

TB is not a joke

Those who get it won't be laughing



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Some people without symptoms, no cough, no weight loss and no night sweats can suddenly develop TB in other areas outside of the lungs. *It appeared suddenly in the bones of the medical doctor leading to paralysis.* It caused a lot of swelling and injury to his spinal cord. A young man who had not, apparently, been in contact with anyone with TB.

The point is how did he get it?

Stay with me and we will get there

There is a type of TB that can be spread from animals to man. This is called Bovine TB. Bovine TB usually affects animals such as cattle, but it can affect practically all mammals causing a general state of illness, coughing and eventual death. It can be transmitted from animals to humans as well as to other animals.

In Nigeria, *we have poor water supply, poor sanitation, poor animal husbandry and poor oversight by environmental and health inspection officers.* Our abattoirs are poorly supervised and in a state such that infected animals can be mixed with other animal parts by unscrupulous individuals.

You can buy cattle off the streets in Nigeria!

Infected cows sold quickly and carelessly prepared can lead to infection with TB. Buying meat infected by the disease can cause it to be transmitted to humans. Therefore, you need to be extremely careful with your source of meat. Check and then prepare your food properly as this can destroy the germs in the meat. Otherwise, you can eat your TB. Or drink it through unpasteurized milk or contaminated water.

If you do not care what you eat

If you do not prepare your food properly

It won't matter whether you are a doctor or a nurse!



The LOBBY(IST)

by Dr. Susan Edionwe, USA

When A Lobbyist Gets Shut Down, the Diaspora RISES.

This month, the Deputy speaker of the House of Representatives, Idris Wase, earned the ire of Nigerians in the diaspora when he shut down Deputy Chairman, Mark Gbillah's attempts to lobby a petition for the Tiv people in the diaspora. By now, his reason, despite his denials, has been made clear to the diaspora - "Nigerians who 'sit in their comfort zones' abroad are not eligible to file petitions against the federal government [of Nigeria]". The result? **The diaspora was not having it.** The deputy speaker's statements helped galvanize the voices of diasporans as his words went viral leading to an overrule of action by Speaker, HOR, Femi Gbajabiamila. The lesson?

We in the diaspora CAN make a difference. Even when opposition seems high and the deck stacked. Let us not forget the POWER of our voices in our long mission to save Nigeria.



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Gbajabiamila overrules deputy, receives petition from diasporan Tivs | The Guardian Nigeria News - Nigeria and World News



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Sociocultural practices coupled with philosophical ideas influence the behavioral patterns of any given society. There always seems to be an uproar amongst Nigerians about the utter lack of leadership that has led to an exodus of highly qualified personnel out of Nigeria in search of greener pastures. Current hot topic is the call to restructure Nigeria into autonomous regions or even break Nigeria into separate countries.

Others call for Nigeria to operate as a true federation that allows for increased state autonomy in resource management. With current behavioral patterns, the question remains: will state actors enact changes to benefit their statesmen or will it be an increased allocation of funds into personal accounts?

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