



THE ADVOCACY BULLETIN

The Nigerian Physicians Advocacy Group

IMPACT

THE NPAG 2021 IMPACT CONFERENCE: ENHANCING VOTER PARTICIPATION & ELECTORAL REFORM

Dr. Iyore James, MD/MALD, FACS, Charlotte, NC

Dr. Iyore James talked about enhancing voter participation in Nigeria while Mister Godbless Otubure gave current updates on Electoral Bill, 2021. Below are highlights of both presentations:

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is charged with voter education, registration and conduction of elections as set forth in the Electoral Act 2010 (as amended).

Despite population rise and increasing number of registered voters, Nigeria has the same number of polling units. Inadequate infrastructure, increasing violence at polling units and election fraud all contribute to voter fatigue and apathy.

In a January 2021 Discussion paper, INEC Chairman Professor Mahmood Yakubu, highlighted challenges by the Commission to expand voter access to polling units. Specifically, “the politicization of the process by sundry interests in the country, especially by propagating unfounded claims and conspiracy theories about the Commission’s intentions.”

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The Commission believes such politicization is a result of inadequate stakeholder education. Therefore, a major component of INEC’s mission in 2021 is to engage relevant stakeholders to explain prevailing electoral climate, discuss solutions, get buy-in and listen to concerns of stakeholders so as to establish a framework that will improve voter access.

INEC supports electronic voting and electronic transmission of results.

INEC has increased polling units from 4,608 to 5,720 in preparation for the Anambra State Elections on November 6th, 2021.

The Nigeria Diaspora must recognize that they are a relevant stakeholder in Nigeria’s electoral processes. They must support INEC in civic education and voter sensitization campaigns. The diaspora must continue advocacy efforts to ensure passage of the Electoral Bill 2021 that should include electronic transmission of results as this is one essential means to decrease election fraud. This would also give way to diaspora voting. Given inadequate capacity to handle increasing number of registered voters, INEC must expand voting access to include early voting as well as extending voting hours on election day. These and more form the basis of NPAG’s lobbying efforts.

THE HAVOC OF “CHEMISTS & PATENT” MEDICINE STORES

Dr Biodun Ogungbo, MBBS, FRCS, FRCSEd, MSc

This is not the first time that someone is going to call the attention of government and all Nigerians to the terrible dangers posed to the health of the nation by so called patent medicine stores and local chemists. Sounding this note of warning again and again can never be too much, as the havoc wrecked by them, on unsuspecting customers, cannot be over-emphasised.

Chemist shops and patent medicine stores abound in all parts of the country, they are usually shops of average square area 50 cm² with a counter and glassed or wooden shelves on the walls. They are often manned by uneducated men/women, young boys in certain cases and mostly secondary school dropouts.

These shops stock almost any drug and none is sacred to them.

Even though unqualified, the chemist boys (and girls) diagnose and treat customers. They proclaim to know everything, every drug and are ever ready to “help”.

As of this writing, here is where we stand on the controversial Section 50.2 of the Electoral Bill 2021. For your reference, Section 50.2 states:

Voting at an election under this Bill shall be in accordance with the procedure determined by the Commission, which may include electronic voting, PROVIDED that the Commission shall not transmit results of elections by electronic means.

Through well-executed lobbying efforts involving many civic organizations including NPAG, the following amendment was made:

Senate amendment to Section 50.2 allows electronic transmission of results pending approval by the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC). The NCC is responsible for ensuring the provision of telecommunications services throughout the country. House amendment to Section 50.2: allows electronic transmission of results

The National Assembly was in recess as at the time of NPAG’s Inaugural IMPACT Conference. NPAG will continue to work with other civic organizations in Nigeria to ensure that the final draft of the Electoral Bill, 2021 includes electronic transmission of results. **Support us: <https://npagroup.org/give-now/>**

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This help offered at a price, can however be suicidal, yet their customers range through the social and educational levels of the public.

Many people have stepped inside a local chemist, at least once.

I personally had the misfortune of patronising one such chemist some time ago. I’d gone to visit a relative and one of the children had scabies. I opted to buy the necessary drug from this chemist a few meters away. The drug I wanted was ASCABIOL (pronounced AS-KA-BIOL). The young man in the shop checked the shelves and there was no Ascabiol. He, however, advised that I buy ENCEPHABOL instead since in his own words, **“na the same work dem dey do”**. I was shocked and felt like beating him into coma with head injury so that he can have use for the Encephabol he offered me.

And that is one major danger posed to customers.

Drugs with similar names are traded off for one another. These drugs in most cases have different chemical compositions and are used for different diseases. Or how can one reconcile the sale of CHLORPROMAZINE (a drug used in anxiety state and some psychiatric diseases) to a diabetic patient who wanted to buy CHLOPROPAMIDE, simply because they are both CHLOR-CHLOR. i.e both begin with CHLOR. Apart from being deprived of the

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correct drug, the customer is subjected to the harmful effect of using the wrong and potentially dangerous drug.

Another source of danger is the sale of expired drugs.

A look into the expiring date of drugs in this chemist will reveal that up to 40% of drugs being offered for sale are expired drugs. The potency and efficacy of their drugs is also suspected as manufacturers advise specific conditions for retail drugs which are not met in the hot, dust environment of these chemists.

The issue of fake drugs must not be over looked.

Fake manufacturers collude with owners of patent medicine stores in the sale of fake drugs. More so, these people cannot distinguish between original and fake drugs. In actual fact, it is cheaper and more rewarding for them to buy fake drugs. It must be mentioned that chemist boys also double as 'injectionists' and quack doctors. There have been situations where they have prescribed and administered injectable drugs.

Invariably, majority of their customers end up in hospital with serious complications. In addition, at times, customers are introduced to new diseases acquired from improper technique and unhygienic conditions.

Injection abscesses are so common from chemists and patent medicine stores.

What is needed is proper re-orientation and health education of the general public to the serious danger in patronage of such places. Health is wealth. The eventual cost of managing the complications of diseases BOUGHT from these chemists outweighs the cost of proper treatment in recognised hospitals and accredited health care facilities.

The pharmacy board and local government officials have an important role to play in ensuring that only registered pharmacists own and manage chemists, dispensaries and pharmaceutical stores.

Hospital staff must also ensure that all cases resulting from quackery that come to them should be reported to police for immediate prosecution. **The time is now.**



The LOBBY(IST)

Is the Diaspora ready to roll up their sleeves? Adopting a more PROACTIVE lobbying strategy.

Dr. Susan Edionwe MD, Houston TX

Upon the conclusion of the 2021 NPAG IMPACT Conference, something troubling occurred to me. I got the overwhelming sense that the diaspora's lobbying strategy towards affecting good governance has largely been reactionary. As the many impactful speakers divulged their knowledge and points-of-view, I began to wonder about how well and how efficiently we, the diaspora, assimilate this information and convert it to proactive lobbying. As it stands, it appears that endless streams of controversy out of Nigeria galvanize the diaspora the most. From END SARS, tragic stories of insecurity to egregious political impropriety, the diaspora has made a habit of responding *ex post facto* to the hemorrhaging mayhem from the Giant of Africa.

What is a reactive vs. proactive lobbying strategy? With "reactive" lobbying, the [organization] is less involved and must select single issues when it wishes

to have its voice heard by influential public decision-makers. In most cases the aim is to gain protection against a general decision (law) so as to minimize the consequences of that decision for the [group]. **Such relations are a source of antagonism** between the target and the lobbyist [group], who will therefore use pressure to advance [its] aims. However, ["proactive action"] lobbying ... can be a strategy in its own right characterized by ongoing contacts with the [political] authorities. In such cases the [group] monitors the regulations (active attitude), and this leads to a **desire for cooperation with the target**. Lobbying in this context is considered as a comparative advantage in seeking to maximize gains, in a number of fields. (Madina Rival, Are firms' lobbying strategies universal?)

The END SARS movement is a perfect example of a single issue that led to a strong reactionary response from the diaspora (rightful so) that unfortunately cast the diaspora against political leadership. The result, an adversarial response from government.

The question is: is the diaspora ready to roll-up its sleeves and change the tide on our lobbying tactics in favor of proactivity?

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

We want to create a mind shift within the Nigerian leadership and citizens. We want transformative leaders that understand the benefits of investing in the Nigerian people and state. We want a Nigeria that works for most Nigerians irrespective of tribe or socioeconomic status.