

- a newsletter of the Centre for Environment, Human Rights and Development (CEHRD)



Master Trainers (MTS) Drawn from all the states in the south-south region pose in a group picture with IFES officials in Calabar, Cross Rivers recently

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The Colour of WHAT IS TO COME

The Centre for Environment, Human Rights and Development (CEHRD) through this medium wishes to announce the birth of another publication, *The Election Monitor*. This newsletter is devoted to verifying, investigating and reporting electoral violence throughout the six states of the south-south region of Nigeria and its pattern. The aim is not just to report them as they occur, but also to suggest ways of mitigating them as our contribution to democratic growth and the development of the electoral system in Nigeria. CEHRD is grateful to the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), for empowering us to do this patriotic work.

During the last congresses of the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP), the region witnessed several dimensions of armed violence. There were also cases

BOMB EXPLOSIONS SHATTER ASABA, BENIN

On December 11, 2006, in the wake of the congresses of the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP), the secretariat of the party in Asaba, the capital of Delta state, was attacked by thugs armed with explosives suspected to be bomb devices.

Party properties and other things were destroyed in the explosion which was allegedly planted by the invading thugs. The Police who confirmed the incident later accused 25-year-old Joseph Akpan and others of being responsible for the bomb attack on the party secretariat. The Police later arraigned Akpan before magistrate Court 3 in Asaba, for planting the bomb devices on the PDP secretariat, and possession of a pistol and live cartridges.

Also, in the same Asaba on December 13, 2006, some thugs believed to be loyal to some PDP politicians, armed with dangerous assault rifles and dynamites attacked the campaign office of Mr. Ndudi Elumelu. Elumelu was seeking to represent Aniocha/Oshimili Federal

Constituency, Delta State. The attackers injured some residents of the office, but no one was killed. The residence of Mrs. Theodora Giwa Amu was also affected. In the various attacks, government vehicles and other valuable properties were torched.

In the same vein, Benin-city, the capital of Edo State, a neighbouring state of Delta, had on November 28, 2006, witnessed a pattern of violence similar to that which rocked Asaba. In Benin city, an explosive device suspected to be a bomb was planted in a Mercedes Benz car parked in the compound of Mr. Richard Ehimegbai, a chairmanship aspirant in Owan East Local Government Council of Edo. On November 28, 2006, at about 8.30am, the bomb exploded and killed one Godwin Aigbekhai. Other properties such as a car, buildings and others were destroyed.

The Colour of WHAT IS TO COME

of destructions of properties etc.

Delta State, one of the states of the federation, paraded the largest reported cases of violence. Perhaps, the reason is that the state paraded the largest number of aspirants. There were cases of bomb explosions, arson, destructions and raw display of violence. Amidst all these anomalies, groups like CEHRD, IFES, USAID and others are also training folks to monitor the violence and think of ways of reducing electoral violence.

BAYELSA GOVERNOR'S CAMPAIGN OFFICE DYNAMITED

10 days after an explosion destroyed parts of the PDP secretariat in Bayelsa, another major blast occurred on Thursday December 5, 2006, at about 9.50pm, just four days to the conduct of the Governorship primaries.

A two-storey building housing the Green Movement-Bayelsa State Governor Goodluck Jonathan's campaign organization-located along Yenagoa-Mbiama Road in the Ekeki area of Bayelsa state was attacked with dynamites. Although dynamites were allegedly thrown into the building by suspected thugs, nobody was injured, it however caused panic and stampede among residents of the area.

Prior to the PDP Governorship primaries, which held on December 11, 2006, the political atmosphere was tensed and literally, ticking steadily towards a major explosion, as political thugs and militia groups were recruited and armed by various political camps. However, the peaceful settlement between two major political contenders to the Governorship seat Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, the Bayelsa state Governor and Chief Timi Alaibe, the Director of finance and Administration of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) saved the gloomy day that was hanging over Bayelsa State. A consensus was reached and Jonathan was to contest the 2007 election as Bayelsa PDP candidate. But the recent convention of the PDP produced Jonathan as a Vice Presidential candidate to Alhaji Musa Yar' Adua the PDP Presidential flag-bearer.

This maiden edition of *The Election Monitor*, while giving us reports of the various incidents also warn us of the negative consequences electoral violence will have on our systems. We need to work together to reduce the virus of electoral violence from our system. Our young people need dividends of democracy such as good health system, good schools, good roads, employment, good trade, sustainable development and not guns and other dangerous weapons. Please, do not recruit any body as a thug, and do not enlist in any politician's private army as a thug.

COCKTAIL OF Violence MORE IN ASABA

Asaba, the capital of Delta State is gradually becoming a theatre of raw violence as the city witnesses violence, destructions and explosions on a daily basis. On Thursday, December 14, 2006, thugs believed to be loyal to some gubernatorial candidates who could not secure the PDP ticket, unleashed terror on the city as the civil service Commission building was besieged and over 8 vehicles Parked there were vandalized, while two staff of the commission (including a woman) was seriously injured by their thugs.

It was reliably gathered that the thugs were protesting the outcome of last Sunday's (December 17, 2006) primaries. The political squad stormed the commission building at about 8.00am, and destroyed any property at sight.

PDP SECRETARIAT IN WARRI BURNT

The Secretariat of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) in Warri, the slummy metropolis of Delta state, was on Thursday, December 14, 2006, burnt by unidentified persons.

The PDP Secretariat is located along Esisi Road in Warri, Delta State. The fire rendered the entire party secretariat useless as furniture; files, tables etc were torched by the raging fire. The fire was caused by thugs of aggrieved PDP candidates who could not receive party ticket. However, the Federal Fire Service in the area later acted swiftly when called upon and had the fire put off.

PDP THUGS RAZED DLA OFFICE IN DELTA

The office of Direct Labour Agency (DLA), an organ of the Delta State Government responsible for direct construction and maintenance of roads in the state located at Agbor, headquarters of the Ika Local Government Area, was razed down by hoodlums suspected to be thugs of defeated gubernatorial aspirants on the platform of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) on Thursday, December 14, 2006.

Several vehicles and properties belonging to DLA were burnt by rampaging political thugs who were said to have been armed with AK47 assault rifles and explosives. They reportedly stormed the DLA office as early as 9.00am on that fateful Thursday, and chased away workers from the building before setting fire to it and other properties around.

It was also gathered that thugs of another defeated gubernatorial aspirant had on Monday night, December 11, 2006, destroyed the compound and properties of the late Unueworo of Ekpan Community in the Uvwie Local Government area in Delta State, because his (Unueworo) children supported Dr. Uduaghan Emmanuel, ex-secretary to Delta State Government, who later emerged as PDP gubernatorial flagbearer for Delta State.

Bayelsa Legislator Escapes ASSASINS' BULLETS

Mr. Robert Enogha, the Chief whip of the Bayelsa State House of Assembly on December 11, 2006, at about 9.00pm, narrowly escaped assassins' bullets. A group of thugs armed with Ak47 machetes, axes and dynamites, stormed the House of Assembly quarters in Yenagoa in a Peugeot 406 car with registration No. BYGH 167, and headed for the residence of Enogba where they requested to see him.

Enogha who got the ticket of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) to fly the party flag in the coming 2007 election, was lucky, because as the suspected assassins walked suspiciously around his residence, some of Enogba's thugs at the residence raised alarm and Policemen stationed at the estate swung into action and arrested them.

The invading thugs were taken to the Ekeki Police station where they were detained and the vehicle impounded.

SCORES INJURED AT PDP PRIMARIES

On Monday, December 11, 2007, there was a fracas at the congress of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) which left scores of delegates injured and led to the postponement of the gubernatorial primaries in Akwa Ibom State.

The congress started at about 1.00pm on Saturday with accreditation of delegates numbering over 7,000 drawn from various constituencies of the state. Just as the congress officials of the state electoral panel were getting ready to kick start voting, a group of angry protesters chanting protest songs arrived at the venue.

EMMANUEL UGUEBOR KILLED AT INEC'S REGISTRATION CENTRE

On Thursday, December 21, 2007, Mr. Emmanuel Uguebor, a middle-aged man was beaten to death by some youths at Ivbiore primary school in the Oredo Local Government Area in Edo State Over who should register first.

The deceased had arrived at the above primary school where the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) had converted into a centre to register prospective voters in the coming election. Uguebor and others who arrived earlier were given numbers, while waiting for the arrival of the electoral umpire, INEC. Trouble started when some youths numbering over 5, stormed the INEC centre 30 minutes later and insisted that they should be registered before others who came before them. *Election Monitor* gathered that the action of the youths did not go down well with Uguebor and others who arrived before the youths. The deceased and the youths were engaged in a heated argument. The youths who were angered by the deceased's utterances as they swooped on him and gave him (Uguebor) the beating of his life with their fists. He fainted. He was later taken to the hospital as the unruly youths disappeared into thin air. Emmanuel Uguebor died at the hospital before treatment commenced.

The registration exercise was stopped there for some days due to the incident. Mr. Isaac Eke, the police Area Commander confirmed the incident to *The Election Monitor*, and revealed that a crack team of detectives have been detailed to track down the suspects. He argued further that it is a murder

PDP CHIEFTAIN MURDERED OVER CHOICE of CANDIDATE

Tragedy occurred in Ogoniland on Sunday, December 3, 2006 when a 50-year-old chieftain of the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) was murdered by assailants believed to be his PDP rivals. The PDP chieftain, Mr. Andrew Elizah Nzor was kidnapped from his home at Baan-Loore in the Nyo-Khana District of the Khana Local Government Area of Ogoni, in Rivers State on that December 3, 2006 and taken to an unknown destination.

His daughter, Joy Torsinwa Nzor who was with him (the deceased) when the agents of death struck was severely attacked and narrowly escaped death. She received several machete cuts and was receiving treatment at a hospital in the area. For about 3 days after the ugly incidents, Mr. Andrew Nzor's whereabouts was unknown.

However, on Sunday, December 7, 2006, Mr. Nzor's mangled body was discovered at a swampy waterside in a community in the area called Korogun, few kilometers from his house. The deceased was an ex-officio of PDP in ward 19 in the area, and was said to be opposed to the councilor representing his ward at the Khana Legislative assembly Hon. Goodluck Okere as a result of his non-performance in the council. Community people alleged in an interview that Hon. Goodluck Okere led the operation. Others also accused include Ward 19 PDP secretary, Mr. Lenee Okere, a secondary school teacher, Mr. Rex Beke, son of Chief Sakpugi of Luumene Bangha, Gladay Nzime and others.

The murder of Mr. Nzor sparked off riot at the community as angry youths and other members of the community armed with guns, machetes etc quickly mobilized and went after those suspected to be responsible for the sinister act. Their houses were burnt down as they took to their heels. The angry youths have vowed to deal with the suspects anytime, anywhere, any

INEC SUSPENDS REGISTRATION DUE TO CRISIS IN OKPAI

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Nigeria's electoral body suspended all its registration centres in Okpai community in the Ndokwa East Local Government Area of Delta State due to what it termed, "a deplorable security situation" in the area. In early December, 2006, the hitherto peaceful community erupted into a violent conflict as armed youths loyal to the Igwe of Okpai, Enebeli Ugbome and a Benin-based business woman who hails from the community fought over control of the community.

The community which hosts major installations belonging to the National Electric Power Authority (NEPA), had since the crisis witnessed destructions of the palace of the Igwe, Ugbome, The paramount ruler of the area and other houses in the community. Scores of poor villagers have also deserted the community and INEC has shut down its registration in the area.

Meanwhile, a detachment of anti-riot police unit deployed to the area claimed that it has arrested over 22 suspects.

LAWMAKER'S THUGS KILL 3 EKIUGBO YOUTHS

Armed thugs loyal to Hon. Ovie Ages, a member of the Delta State House of Assembly had killed 3 youths from Ekuigbo, a nearby community to Ughelli town, during a fierce gun battle.

Ekuigbo youths armed with pump action guns and explosives numbering over 8 had stormed the house of the lawmaker in Ughelli, to see him. The youth allege that the lawmaker had used them to rig the 2003 elections which ensured his second tenure in the house of assembly but had refused to pay them the money he promised them.

The armed Ekuigbo youths who revealed that all pleas for Hon. Ovie Ages to settle them as agreed failed, had gained entrance into the lawmaker's house, and on sighting them, Hon. Ages sent for Oteri youths (his thugs from his home town, Oteri).

The lawmaker's thugs were said to have engaged the Ekuigbo youths in a fierce gun battle and at the end, 3 Ekuigbo youths lost their lives in the premises of the lawmaker. The police in the area, clearly not honest had claimed to have killed the hoodlums (Ekuigbo) youths in a cross fire with the police and not Iteri youths (the lawmaker's thugs). A police boss in the state, Prince Udom Epoudon was quoted to have said that they were on the trail of the fleeing robbers (remaining Ekuigbo youths)

YOUTHS ATTACK OVWIE LG BOSS OVER SECOND TERM

On Tuesday, January 9, 2007, Mrs. Everlyn Ojakovo narrowly escaped death as youths believed to have been hired by rival politicians in the Ovwie Local Government Area of Delta State, attacked her convoy and disarmed her orderly.

The Election Monitor gathered that the youths who were chanting anti- Everlyn Ojakovo slogans said, loudly that they were marginalized in her distribution of "dividends of democracy". And that their attack was aimed at preventing Mrs. Everlyn Ojakovo from seeking a second term in office.

However, events turned dramatic that day as another group of youths fully armed with assault rifles loyal to the council boss, mobilized and launched a counter-attack. Innocent by passers later became victims of the attack and counter-attack as they were dispossessed of their cell phones, cash and other valuable items. Also, scores of innocent persons were wounded.

The Quick Response Squad (QRS), a special anti-crime unit of Delta State police command intervened and rescued the council boss Ojakovo who was on a condolence visit to the families of the late Chief B.O. Ogaga at Orhumarto Quarters, Effurun near Warri, in Delta State.

IFES TRAIN NGOs TO MONITOR ELECTORAL

Violence

The Centre for Environment, Human Rights and Development (CEHRD) and other members of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Nigeria were among organizations invited to Abuja, for a program design meeting on Electoral Violence Education and Resolution (EVER). The workshop held from 28th to 30th November 2006 at the Ladi Kwali Conference Centre of the Sheraton Hotels Abuja. In attendance were two representatives each of six organizations drawn from the six geopolitical zones of the country. CEHRD has earlier been chosen to coordinate the EVER project in the South-South geopolitical region of the country. CEHRD was represented by Patrick Naagbantou, and Sebastian Kpalap, coordinator and special project officer respectively of the centre. The other organizations represented at the workshop are the Catholic Institute for Development, Justice and Peace (CIDJAP), for the South-East; Women Advocates Research and Documentation Centre (WARDC) for the south-West; Strategic Empowerment and Mediation Agency (SEMA) for the North-West; Forward in Action for Education Poverty and Malnutrition (FACE - PAM) for the North-East; and International Centre for Gender and Social Research (Inter-Gender) for the North-Central.

Participants were informed that IFES seeks to bring the global EVER programme and methodology to bear on the local conditions. To this end, there is an inevitable reliance on local organizations and local knowledge, standards and guidelines. It was also learnt that IFES was among the first to identify electoral violence as a

special form of conflict. For IFES, there is need to separate political violence from Electoral violence. The EVER project is, therefore, concerned about what organizations are doing, and how the various levels of government are handling issues of electoral violence. The EVER project also believes that since Civil Society Organizations CSOs were outside government, they could be relied on to monitor Electoral violence.

On the whole issue of Electoral violence, one of the facilitators at the workshop, Lisa Kammerud an IFES researcher, defined Electoral violence in EVER parlance as “any harm or threat of harm that is aimed at hindering or disrupting any part of the electoral process in and around the election period”. It could be anything from murder to physical harm or any form of intimidation during the electoral period she added. In her view, the motives for electoral violence could be power consolidation, access to resources, feelings of marginalization, and disdain for the electoral process.

According to the expert, electoral violence in the EVER methodology may begin to occur from the period of registration and up to the period of inauguration, (before, during and after election). Participants were enjoined to ensure that Electoral violence incidents satisfy the criteria of “when, where, who are the victim and who the perpetrator is” The need to separate political violence from Electoral violence was also emphasized.

Also at the workshop, participants were taught how to monitor the various phases of the EVER project in Nigeria. Monitors were expected to look at violence, potential for violence, peace initiatives, and the level of tension in communities. They are also required to find out the position of public officials in relation to electoral violence.

To obtain necessary information, monitors are required to conduct research, follow the media, interview stakeholders like election officials, security/government officials, community and religious leaders, community folk, representatives of political parties, CSOs, voters and private sector people. Monitors could also attend political events and peaceful/mitigation initiatives in order to be abreast with political happenings in their areas. They are required to follow up on information got. Information got is expected to be verified. Two different sources of information are required. These should not be two media sources. Documentation of the various reports from the field should be analyzed by way of review and statistical methods.

In another session, Professor Victor Adetula took the participants through the various particulars of EVER-Nigeria. The participants were later introduced to the various materials and reporting forms to be used on the EVER project. They were also given an insight into how EVER has worked in other countries like Bangladesh, Kyrgyzstan, Guyana, Iraq, and Ghana. This was followed by a discussion on the mode of training and method of reporting. At the end of the day's training, the participants from the various regions were given an assignment to develop their respective work plans in preparation for the next day's business.

On the second day, the various regional hubs were invited to present their work plans. The presentations produced divergent designs reflecting the peculiarities of the different regions. Each of the work plans was discussed in turns and fine-tuned at the end. After the presentations, the flow of information and materials was discussed and agreed upon. The reporting period was also agreed to be two weeks.

ELECTORAL VIOLENCE MONITORS TRAINED IN THE SOUTH-SOUTH

In consonance with the designed work plan of EVER-Nigeria, IFES embarked on a training of the trainers (Master Trainers) in the six zones of the federation beginning from 11th January to 5th February 2007. The South-South zone got the first slot, with the Master Trainers' training for the zone holding from 11th - 13th January 2007 at the Pyramid Hotel Calabar.

In attendance were selected representatives of reputable civil society organizations in the region. They have been selected by the hub organization, in the region, the Centre for Environment, Human Rights and Development (CEHRD) to serve as supervisory monitors in the various senatorial districts of the region. Three master trainers were selected from each state of the region to attend the training. The IFES team had Rosemarie, Charles Aniekwe and Tihana Batulac. The participants at the training were trained to carry out step down training later for the monitors who are the foot soldiers of the EVER - Nigeria. The workshop featured training and practical exercises which were aimed at deepening the participants' understanding of the training objectives. Participants were introduced to, and made to appreciate various materials that would be used in the course of their work. They were also taught practical monitoring which involved, interviewing, verification, and attending events and meetings. At the end of the workshop, the work plan for the south-south step down training was developed.

Those who attended the workshop from the six states of the region are Emem J. Okon of Kebetkache Women Development and Resource Centre, Deborah Effiong of Gender and Development Action (GADA) and Ineba Bob-Manuel of IFESH,

for Rivers State; Savior Akpan of CHREAPNET, Regina Fabian of Rural Health and Women Development (RHWD) and Innih Archibong of Liberty Now, for Akwa Ibom State. Others are Glory Odu of African Women Empowerment Guild (AWEG) for Edo State, Efiom Duke of ABGREMO, and Roibito Ekanem of Women Action Organization (WAO) for Cross River State, and Deborah Laju Edah of Coastal Women Forum, Esike Onajite of Global Peace Development (GPD), and Festus Keneboh of Afro Centre for Development, Peace and Justice for Delta State. Also at the workshop were Adaka Inemo of Niger Delta Resource Centre, Achimota Dickson of Biosphere Resource, and Tari Dadiwei of Conflict Resolution Trainers Network for Bayelsa State, and Patrick Naagbantou and Sebastian Kpalap of the hub organization, Centre for Environment, Human Rights and Development (CEHRD).

About CEHRD

The Centre for Environment, Human Rights and Development (CEHRD) is a non-profit organisation based in the Ogale-Nchia community in the Eleme Local Government Area of Rivers State in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. It was founded on August 15, 1999 as the Niger Delta Project for Environment, Human Rights and Development (NDPEHRD) and re-incorporated under its new name CEHRD in 2005 following its board decision. CEHRD's mission is to forge a common link with the rural Niger Delta communities primarily, through research, participatory trainings, campaigns and advocacy on the problems confronting them. Equipping them with the basic knowledge of their situation and encouraging them to non-violently address the issues themselves.

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SCORES INJURED AT PDP PRIMARIES

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The protest continued for hours and resulted in a stampede. The protesters hurled various harmful materials at the delegates. Bullets were also fired at them leaving several people wounded. The protesters who were mostly PDP members were protesting what they called imposition of a gubernatorial candidate on them.

In the course of the stampede, the state electoral chairman, Alhaji Jubril Tafida and Mr. Ita Toyo, the Chairman of PDP in the state fled. The congress was postponed. It was conducted at a later day.

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