The Nigeria Electoral Early Warning System or NEEWS 2015 is a mechanism set up to monitor early warning signs and incidents of electoral violence in the run-up to the 2015 elections. The system includes information collected from crowd sourced citizen observers, media reports from the News Agency of Nigeria, and trained observers deployed in every local government area as part of the Transition Monitoring Group's (TMG) Quick Count 2015. This document contains Search for Common Ground’s own analysis and does not necessarily represent the views of TMG.

Plateau State

TMG Observers deployed to each LGA in the country send reports every two weeks answering a checklist of questions about the pre-election environment in their LGA. Observers have submitted nine reports covering the period between November 14 and March 16. The data, while not statistically representative, provides some information on key indicators and early warning signs of election-related violence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plateau State—17 LGAs</th>
<th>Period 1 Nov 14-27</th>
<th>Period 2 Nov 28 - Dec 12</th>
<th>Period 3 Dec 13 - Jan 8</th>
<th>Period 4 Dec 23 - Jan 22</th>
<th>Period 5 Jan 9 - Feb 5</th>
<th>Period 6 Feb 6 - Feb 19</th>
<th>Period 7 Feb 20 – Mar 5</th>
<th>Period 8 Mar 6 – Mar 16</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attack on rally</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destruction of property</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inciting violence</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attack on candidate or supporters</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hate speech based on origin</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hate speech based on religion</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The chart above depicts the % of LGA observers in Plateau state reporting that they directly witnessed or heard reports of incidents relating to six key early warning indicators of election-related violence across the nine reporting periods.

High Percentage of Observers Reporting Hearing Hate Speech

Throughout the election period, TMG’s LGA observers have reported a relatively high level of hate speech in Plateau State compared to the rest of the country. This is particularly the case with hate speech directed at candidates or their supporters based on their religion and where they come from. The percentage of observers reporting hate speech reached its peak during the third reporting period (December 13 –22),
which coincides with the time period immediately after the political party primaries, and has remained above the average recorded in all states. The percentage of observers reporting directly hearing or hearing reports of hate speech have declined over the last two reporting periods.

Given Plateau State’s history of ethno-religious violence, the high levels of hate speech is a warning that religious and ethnic tensions are high as the elections approach. It is important that religious and community leaders, as well as civil society, counter these messages with messages calling for nonviolence and encourage their followers and constituents to not allow politics to ferment divisions based on ethnicity or religion.

**Increase in Observers Reporting Attacks on Candidates and Supporters**

During February and March, Plateau State has seen a slight increase in violence indicators including the destruction of property belonging to parties or candidates, candidates inciting their supporters to violence, and attacks on candidates or their supporters. Violence not only results in the loss of lives and property, but it also deters participation in the democratic process. Political parties, candidates and their supporters should abide by the Abuja Accord signed by fourteen political parties, which commits the parties to peaceful campaigning and non-violent elections. Civil society actors and the media should continue to engage the political parties and politicians as well as facilitate dialogues and spread messages about nonviolence.

**Rise in Reports of Buying of Voters’ Cards**

Throughout most of the pre-election period, a higher than average percentage of TMG observers in Plateau state reported witnessing or hearing reports of individuals buying voters’ cards. The percentage has steadily increased since January (Period 5). During the last reporting period (March 6—March 16), 71% (12 of 17 LGAs) reported witnessing or hearing reports of the buying of voters' cards. While most of the observers indicated that they heard reports of rather than directly witnessed these acts, it is still significant that information is circulating of the occurrence of voters’ cards being bought and sold. This has the potential to undermine the credibility of the election process. It is important that the National Orientation Agency, the Independent National Electoral Commission and civil society groups engaged in voter education and continue to inform voters of efforts to deter illegal voting including the use of electronic card readers at polling stations, which will allow only the real owners of cards to vote.
Out of the 227 reports sent by TMG observers as of March 16, six of the critical incident reports came from observers from Plateau State. During the week of February 16th, two separate attacks in different local governments resulted in the death of party officials from both major political parties. On February 16, unknown gunmen killed the APC ward chairman at his home in Barkin Ladi LGA. Two days later, gunmen killed a PDP deputy ward chairman in Riyom LGA. Both LGAs have experienced a spate of attacks by unknown gunmen over the past year. While it is unclear if these individuals were targeted because of their political affiliation, position in the community or for other reasons, this escalation of violence should be taken seriously and communities and security actors should take steps to ensure enhanced security as the elections approach. Political parties should urge their supporters to remain calm and not resort to violence.

Other reports received included the burning of People’s Democratic Party campaign vehicles in January in Jos North LGA, which has been a flashpoint for violence in past crises in Plateau State. In early February, the TMG observer in Qua’an Pan LGA also reported increased tensions during the APC gubernatorial rally after supporters were seen destroying opposition party posters.

Intercommunal violence also remains a concern in Plateau state as politics has the potential to inflame existing tensions, and clashes can prevent voters from accessing or participating in the polls. In November 2014, a TMG observer reported tensions and violence in Qua’an Pan LGA spilling over from intercommunal violence in Nasarawa state, interrupting the voter registration exercise. In December 2014, the News Agency of Nigeria reported the death of seven people in an attack by unknown gunmen in Mangu LGA. In addition, citizen reports indicated incidences of intercommunal violence and an escalation of tensions in Barkin Ladi LGA in February and March. These incidences of intercommunal violence in the pre-election period should be taken seriously and efforts taken to de-escalate tensions, increase security and spread messages of non-violence during this period in areas prone to conflict and violence between ethnic and religious groups.

On February 26, Jos experienced its third set of twin bomb blasts, this time at a bus station near the University of Jos. This incident demonstrates that terrorism remains a threat in Plateau State, and that increased vigilance and information sharing is needed to assist security agents in preventing similar attacks, particular during the election period.
Help us track and prevent election-related violence

The NEEWS 2015 system collects information from a number of sources including trained election observers, media sources and citizen observers like you. As stakeholders in the peace process, it is our collective responsibility to work together to promote peaceful elections. You too can contribute by reporting early warning signs or incidents of election-related violence.

What should you report?

You should report any warning signs – such as threats, rumors, inflammatory language, or tensions – or incidents of violence related to the election such as:

- Attacks or threats of violence against election officials, election observers or voters including voter intimidation;
- Attacks or threats of violence committed by or against political party agents, candidates, their supporters, or their property;
- Increased tensions between or attacks on groups and communities related to communal conflict that may be influenced by or influence the elections; or
- The use of inflammatory language or hate speech, especially directed at candidates or their supporters based on their gender, age, disability, where they are from or their religion.

How do you report?

Send an SMS to one of the following numbers:

**MTN** – 09035419841  **GLO** – 08155529646

**Airtel** – 07083648546  **Etisalat** – 09098385657

or

Tweet about it using the hashtag

#NEEWS2015report