

# ELECTORAL REFORM MATTERS



Your Monthly digest of Crucial electoral reform developments in Nigeria

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# FROM THE Director's DESK



The month of July reaffirmed our conviction that credible elections are not a product of chance, but of deliberate effort, civic enlightenment, and institutional courage. Across our engagements, one truth continues to stand out; democracy thrives when citizens understand the process, demand accountability, and insist that leadership reflects public will, not private interest.

Through our platforms this month, we harvested powerful insights on how reforms can move from policy to practice. Conversations around electoral technology, legislative reform, inclusion, and voter awareness all underscored the urgent need for consistency, in law, in enforcement, and in political behavior. The real test of reform is not in what is written, but in what is practiced.

Our citizen town halls in different states further demonstrated that people are ready to lead the change they seek. When communities are informed, institutions are strengthened. When citizens understand the law, manipulation loses power.

As we look ahead, our resolve remains firm to amplify reform-centered dialogue, build civic capacity, and create spaces where citizens can shape the systems that govern them. Reform is not an event; it is a process. And at PAACA, we will continue to stand where truth, transparency, and people-driven democracy meet.

Ezenwa Nwagwu

Executive Director, PAACA





# Electoral Technology Has Improved Credibility but Faces Legal and Infrastructure Gaps — Mr James Ugochukwu



**M**r. James Ugochukwu, Regional General Secretary of the West African Civil Society Forum (WACSOFF), has stated that while Nigeria's adoption of digital electoral tools has improved election integrity, significant legal, infrastructural, and operational challenges must still be addressed ahead of future polls.

Speaking on Electoral Reforms Half Hour, Mr Ugochukwu, a long-time election observer and civil society leader, said innovations such as the Permanent Voter Card (PVC), smart card reader, Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS), and the INEC Result Viewing Portal (IReV) have strengthened voter authentication and transparency. However, he noted that these tools alone are not sufficient to guarantee credible elections.

He traced the digital transition back to the post-2011 introduction of the PVC and smart card reader, crediting them with reducing multiple registrations. But he acknowledged limitations, including instances where biometric verification failed, a shortcoming that led to the development of BVAS, which

combines facial and fingerprint recognition to improve reliability.

On IReV, he clarified that it is not a collation portal but a public viewing platform requiring registration, enabling citizens to verify uploaded polling unit results. While he praised its transparency benefits, he also questioned the level of preparation for its nationwide deployment during the 2023 general election. According to him, the system appeared untested for the high traffic and volume of data involved in a national poll, resulting in performance failures that raised public suspicion.

Mr Ugochukwu emphasized the need for more robust legal and operational frameworks to support these technologies. He pointed out that although the 2022 Electoral Act provided legal grounds for electronic tools, challenges like network limitations in rural areas and cybersecurity risks remain largely unresolved.

He also called for true continuous voter registration, criticizing INEC's periodic approach, and encouraged early legislative action to give election stakeholders including the judiciary ample time to understand and apply electoral reforms.



Looking ahead, Mr Ugochukwu urged INEC to prioritize stakeholder training, public education, and rigorous pre-election testing of any new technology. He expressed skepticism about the readiness for electronic or diaspora voting, stressing that Nigeria's current infrastructure cannot yet support such innovations reliably.





## National Assembly Prioritizing Electoral Reforms Ahead of 2027 — Hon. Nwogu Calls for INEC Overhaul and One-Day Voting



**H**on. Dr. Matthew Nwogu, a member of the House of Representatives for Aboh Mbaize/Ngor Okpala Federal Constituency, has reaffirmed the National Assembly's commitment to pursuing critical electoral reforms that strengthen Nigeria's democratic process.

Speaking during a radio engagement on Electoral Reforms Half Hour, Dr. Nwogu emphasized that the 10th Assembly is determined to address key challenges within the electoral framework, including the process of appointing INEC leadership, gaps in electoral law, and the rising influence of money in elections. One of his key concerns was the concentration of power in the hands of the executive when it comes to appointing the Chairman and Resident Electoral Commissioners (RECs) of INEC. He argued that the current process leaves room for partisanship and called for the creation of an independent body to recommend appointments, a step he believes would protect the Commission's neutrality. Dr. Nwogu also called for greater diligence by the legislature in its oversight responsibilities, particularly during confirmation hearings. He noted that political and ethnic loyalties often interfere with objective decision-making on national matters, weakening institutional integrity. Addressing issues around party primaries, he aligned with INEC's view that internal party elections are the most important stage in the electoral process. While acknowledging that courts have ruled in favor of party autonomy, he believes INEC should have the power to intervene where necessary to ensure transparency, fairness, and constituency-based primaries.

On electronic transmission of results, Dr. Nwogu identified legal ambiguity as a persistent source of conflict and confusion. He urged the National Assembly to formalize INEC's operational guidelines within the Electoral Act to avoid last-minute changes and ensure legal clarity for all stakeholders.

He also disclosed his co-sponsorship of a bill proposing a single-day election system for all federal and state offices. According to him, such a move would reduce the overall cost of elections, streamline logistics, and increase voter participation. He dismissed concerns about logistical complexity, noting that transporting multiple ballot boxes would not significantly increase operational costs.

On vote buying, Dr. Nwogu advocated for the establishment of an independent investigative and prosecutorial body outside INEC, which he said lacks the manpower to monitor electoral misconduct. He also recommended post-election accountability for any security agents found to have enabled or ignored vote trading during polls.



Dr. Nwogu further supported the introduction of diaspora and early voting, suggesting Nigerian embassies could serve as controlled environments for vote collection. He emphasized that no Nigerian should be excluded from voting simply due to location. Concluding, he acknowledged the role of civil society in pushing for reforms and urged timely legislative action. For electoral credibility to improve, he said, Nigeria must clearly define the legal basis for result transmission and ensure early preparation and public sensitization.





## “It's About Nigeria”: Hon. Joshua Gana Urges 10th Assembly to Pass Delayed Electoral Bills



**H**on. Dr. Joshua Audu Gana, Member of the House of Representatives representing Lavun/Mokwa/Edati Federal Constituency of Niger State, has called for wide-ranging electoral reforms to enhance public trust, participation, and credibility in Nigeria's electoral process. Speaking on the Electoral Reform Half Hour, Hon. Gana reflected on his personal electoral journey, challenges he faced during the tribunal process, and the lessons that shaped his outlook on the need for legislative improvements.

He highlighted the importance of equipping the National Orientation Agency (NOA) with sufficient resources to carry out grassroots voter education. According to him, the NOA, with officers deployed across Nigeria's 774 local government areas, is strategically positioned to train citizens in local languages about electoral laws, fraud prevention, and civic responsibilities. He expressed concern that current budget allocations were inadequate, and stressed the need for a new budgeting approach to strengthen such institutions' capacity. Drawing from his own experience with electoral disputes, Hon. Gana recommended the creation of specialised courts to handle election petitions. He believes that having trained judicial personnel dedicated to electoral matters would speed up the process and ensure more consistent and informed judgments. He criticized the logistical and legal inconveniences candidates face, especially when tribunal venues are located far from their constituencies. The lawmaker also spoke on the pressing issue of

high nomination fees charged by political parties. He noted that while some parties justify the fees as a way to filter unserious aspirants, the current system discourages genuine participation, particularly by youth and women. He expressed support for reforms that would level the political playing field and improve access for



underrepresented groups. As a co-sponsor of the bill seeking to reserve legislative seats for women, he reaffirmed his commitment to improving gender representation in governance.

On the delay in passing the Electoral Offences Bill, which has lingered in the National Assembly for over 17 years, Hon. Gana attributed past failures to political resistance. However, he expressed optimism that the current 10th Assembly, with a large number of first-time lawmakers who have faced their own challenges would be more committed to pushing the reforms through. He emphasized the need to separate electoral issues from political interests and focus on strengthening institutions and upholding the rule of law. When asked to name one reform that could significantly impact future elections, Hon. Gana pointed to the need for real-time collation and public announcement of results from polling units. He stressed that while uploading results is already in practice, ensuring that electronic collation is fully standardized would minimize manipulation and build voter confidence. He concluded by reaffirming his belief in people-centered governance, promising to continue supporting bills and motions that would secure credible elections and meaningful participation for all Nigerians.





# Redesign Elections Around Citizens, Not Politicians

## —Amara Nwankpa Tells INEC



**A**mara Nwankpa, Acting Director General of the Shehu Musa Yar'Adua Foundation, has urged Nigeria to adopt a voter-centric and context-aware approach to electoral reform. Speaking in a televised interview, the public policy expert and civic technology advocate laid out a compelling argument for designing electoral systems around access, integrity, and efficiency, while acknowledging the trade-offs inherent in achieving all three. He explained that the foundation of any credible electoral process rests on three competing principles: universal access for all eligible voters, process integrity to ensure transparency and security, and systemic efficiency for sustainability and cost-effectiveness. According to him, attempts to perfect all three elements simultaneously can lead to conflicts, and therefore, election design must reflect informed compromises that are tailored to Nigeria's socio-political context. Nwankpa criticized the existing political culture, which he described as elitist and exclusionary. He argued that Nigeria's electoral process has been overly focused on political heavyweights, neglecting the importance of voter experience and trust. He emphasized that election management bodies like INEC must shift focus from merely conducting elections to building a credible process that prioritizes voter expectations even when their preferred candidates do not win. He called for reforms that empower citizens, and not just political institutions. Addressing the role of technology, Nwankpa warned against the blind trust placed in technological solutions like BVAS and IReV. While acknowledging their benefits, he argued that technology is not neutral and often centralizes power in the hands of a few. He cited international examples, such as Germany's

skepticism of digital voting systems, to urge Nigerian stakeholders to adopt a more cautious and better-informed approach to electoral technology. Nwankpa offered several suggestions to improve logistics and security in the electoral process, including the possibility of printing sensitive materials like ballot papers at the point of accreditation, similar to how airline boarding passes are issued. He also mentioned India's practice of multi-party seals on sensitive election materials as a way to build trust and prevent tampering. On the question of voter trust and engagement, he reflected on the 2011 voter registration exercise, noting how voters took ownership of the process when they were allowed to face the same screen as INEC officials during biometric registration. That sense of



transparency and inclusion, he said, was critical to the success of the exercise. He proposed that similar citizen-centered strategies should be employed in future elections to improve ownership and reduce the likelihood of electoral fraud. While supporting diaspora voting, Nwankpa emphasized that increasing voter turnout within Nigeria should remain a higher priority, especially in light of the low 29% turnout in recent elections. He also advocated for special voting provisions for security personnel and inclusive policies for groups like nursing mothers. To prevent reactive lawmaking, he called for the development of “invariants”, stable, long-term electoral principles that transcend each election cycle and create continuity in electoral policy. In closing, Nwankpa reiterated that if elections are designed around citizens rather than institutions or politicians, Nigerians themselves will protect the process. He urged policymakers to recognize the risks of exclusion, over-centralization, and reactive reforms and instead build an electoral system that is transparent, inclusive, and resilient.





## PAACA Rallies Stakeholders in Imo and Kaduna for Citizen-Led Electoral Reforms.



As part of its continued nationwide effort to strengthen democracy through civic engagement and electoral accountability, the Peering Advocacy and Advancement Centre in Africa (PAACA), with support from the MacArthur Foundation, recently convened Citizens' Town Hall Meetings in Imo and Kaduna States. These gatherings formed part of a growing series of interventions aimed at bringing citizens and stakeholders together to co-create lasting electoral reform ahead of the 2027 general elections.

Each town hall offered a space for meaningful exchange among a wide spectrum of actors including political party leaders, electoral officials, civil society organizations, security agencies, religious and traditional leaders, persons with disabilities, and concerned citizens. The shared goal was to identify what is not working, amplify citizen voices, and chart a path forward for a more transparent and inclusive electoral process.

Opening both conversations, PAACA Executive Director Ezenwa Nwagwu reminded participants that knowledge remains one of the strongest tools for accountability. He noted that political manipulation thrives where civic understanding is weak and emphasized the need to invest in voter education, proactive civic participation, and the training of dedicated polling agents. “Politicians thrive on voter ignorance,” he said. “That is why citizen vigilance and civic education must be central to any real reform.”

A recurring highlight across the town halls was the presentation and discussion of recent electoral innovations by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). Participants engaged with practical demonstrations of technologies such as the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS), the INEC Result Viewing Portal (IReV), the Continuous Voter Registration (CVR) Portal, the Voter Verification System (VVS), and the INEC Voter Enrollment Device (IVED). These tools were explored not only as technical upgrades but as systems designed to increase public confidence, reduce electoral fraud, and promote transparency throughout the process.

Further discussions introduced participants to INEC's administrative systems including the Political Party Financial Reporting platform, the Election Results Management System, INECPRES and OMIS for ad-hoc staff deployment, as well as the Election Monitoring Dashboard and Facility Locator. Attendees were encouraged to see these innovations as part of a broader effort to make elections not just free and fair but verifiable and inclusive.

In Imo State, stakeholders like Oparaugo Stellamaris Chimezirim, State Director of the National Orientation Agency (NOA), emphasized that democracy can only thrive when built on equity, participation, and justice. Assistant Commandant Chimeziri Lowell of







the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) reaffirmed the agency's commitment to peaceful elections while highlighting the importance of coordination between security outfits to maintain electoral integrity.

From Kaduna, stakeholders expressed similar concerns and priorities. Mr. Mikailu Abubakar, Chairman of the Conference of Nigerian Political Parties (CNPP), called for genuine reforms to rebuild public trust. Mr. Ndan Nicholas Kure, head of the NSCDC Election Monitoring Unit, highlighted the growing need for inter-agency synergy particularly in the face of past attacks on INEC facilities across 15 states. Religious leaders like Rev. Stephen Ibrahim of CAN and Apostle John Yayock Solomon of IPAC

participation more accessible.

Panel sessions featured highly respected stakeholders including Barr. Ndidi Anike Val-Okeoma, Barr. Yusuf Njoku, Hon. Uchechukwu Isiodu, Udochukwu Chukwu, Barr. Ekwelem, DSP Okoye Henry representing CP Aboki Danjuma, Hon. Godiya Ayuba-Lolo and others. Each speaker lent unique perspectives to the growing national conversation on credible elections.

Following the plenary sessions, participants broke into focused breakout groups where themes such as transparency, grassroots civic education, inclusion of marginalized groups, electronic result transmission, and stakeholder synergy were further unpacked. Recommendations drawn from these sessions were practical, locally informed, and aligned with PAACA's broader push for people-led reform.



challenged both citizens and politicians to act in ways that uphold peace and integrity. Voices from the disability community in both locations raised important concerns around persistent exclusion and the urgent need to make political

Both town halls reaffirmed a critical truth: reform must be people-led, inclusive, and sustained. These conversations in Imo and Kaduna form part of a wider national movement where citizens and stakeholders are not just reacting to electoral failures but proactively shaping a more democratic future. PAACA remains committed to amplifying these voices and supporting a system where every vote counts, every process is transparent, and every citizen is informed and empowered.



















## Key Electoral Reform Priorities from Hon. Ayo Balogun, Chairman, House Committee on Electoral Matters

gaps in governance.



**I**n an exclusive interview with Premium Times, Hon. Ayo Balogun, Chairman of the House Committee on Electoral Matters, outlined key pillars of the electoral reform bill set to be presented in the National Assembly. His remarks provide fresh insight into the direction of legislative efforts to reshape Nigeria's electoral process and reaffirm many of the reform themes he shared earlier this year on PAACA's Electoral Reform Hour radio program on Kapital FM.

**- Promoting Political Inclusion**  
At the heart of the proposed reforms is inclusion. Hon. Balogun emphasized the need to broaden both voter participation and political candidacy opportunities.

“What we're just trying to do in the House in terms of electoral amendments is to ensure, one, inclusion. We want to ensure that more people are brought into the vote, increase the number of voters and increase the number of people contesting,” he said.

He revealed that the committee is actively pushing for special seats for women and persons with disabilities (PWDs). This proposal, which he also championed during his earlier appearance on Electoral Reform Hour, seeks to address Nigeria's long-standing gender and accessibility

“We've pushed for special seats for women and the physically challenged so that at least they can have a sense of belonging,” he noted. “We're pushing for one candidate per state for the gender bill, and we're still working on the one for the PWD.”

**- Reforming Electoral Litigation and Timelines**

Acknowledging public frustration with prolonged post-election litigation, Hon. Balogun revealed that the committee is considering strict timelines and punitive measures for frivolous legal challenges.

“We want to ensure that electoral litigations are concluded before the swearing-in,” he said. “We're looking at areas of penalising people that come with frivolous cases just to waste the time of the court, the time of Nigerians, and the little resources that we have.”

**- Integrating NIN into the Electoral Process**  
The reforms also seek to digitize and streamline voter authentication by integrating the National Identification Number (NIN) into the voter database ultimately replacing the need for Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs).

“We want to include the NIN in the voters' register so that the area of duplication will be eradicated,” he said. “All you need to do is go there with your NIN number, confirm your biometrics, and you just go in to vote.”

**- Timeline for Bill Presentation**  
According to Hon. Balogun, the committee has completed nationwide consultations and is set to present the bill for first and second readings in the House within weeks.

“Our target is August or September at most we'll get it signed by Mr. President,” he stated confidently.





You don't have to run marathons or lift heavy weights to be healthy. Just moving your body regularly can transform your physical and mental well-being. Exercise is not just for weight loss, it's a key ingredient for living a longer, happier, and more energetic life.

### Why You Need to Get Moving

Regular physical activity helps to:

- Improve heart health
- Boost mood and reduce stress
- Control blood sugar and blood pressure
- Strengthen muscles and bones
- Support better sleep and digestion
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Sharpen memory and mental focus
- Think of it as medicine, one without side effects, only benefits!

### How Much Exercise Is Enough?

You don't need to spend hours at the gym. The World Health Organization recommends:

- At least 150 minutes of moderate exercise per week (e.g., brisk walking, cycling, dancing)

- Or 75 minutes of vigorous activity (e.g., running, aerobics)

That's just about 30 minutes a day, five days a week and you can break it into smaller chunks if needed.

### Easy Ways to Stay Active

- Take a brisk walk in the morning or in the evening
- Use stairs instead of elevators
- Do home workouts using YouTube or fitness apps
- Dance to your favorite songs
- Stretch or do yoga in the morning
- Join a fitness group or challenge with friends
- Exercise doesn't require fancy equipment or a gym membership, just a willingness to move. Your body was made to move, and the more you do, the better you'll feel. So start where you are, use what you have, and do what you can. Your future self will thank you.







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# Electoral Reform

Half Hour

Every  
**Saturday**  
**8:30PM-9:00PM**



**DSH** **GOtv** **StarTimes** **FREE TV**  
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Join the Movement: Upcoming Events and Participation  
Stay tuned for more town hall meetings and public discussions.  
Your voice is crucial in shaping a better electoral system.

Here's how you can get involved.  
Attend our Town Hall Meetings, participate in discussions,  
and share your views on electoral reforms.  
You can register: <https://tinyurl.com/PAACAtownhalls>

Watch Electoral Reform Half Hour every Saturday from  
8:30pm to 9:00pm on NTANEWS24 and you can also follow up  
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