

Public Issues Forum Workshop Held in Nigeria

ELECTORAL PROCESS: How can we gain confidence in the system?
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Introduction

The overall development and economic prosperity of Nigeria depends on her ability to maintain stable democratic governance. Since independence, however, the country's efforts to install credible democracy have been slowed down by controversial electoral results. And now, the posturing, clamours and agitations amongst citizens and the political class raise serious concerns over the sustenance of the current democratic process and by extension, the corporate existence of the nation.

This discussion guide offers four different approaches to how we might gain confidence in the electoral system in Nigeria and, therefore, provides an opportunity for the sustenance of democracy. Each of the approaches of course, has benefits and costs.

Approach One: Strengthen our security system. The proponents of this approach believe that the inability of the law enforcement agent to effectively deal with those who violate the enabling laws undergirding the electoral process is the reason for the citizens' lack of confidence in the process.

Approach Two: Enforce the rule of law. Those in support of this view argue that because the enforcement of the rule of law is critical to the success and sustainability of the electoral process, our inability to enforce it has been the bane of our democratic practice.

Approach Three: Ensure openness, accountability and transparency throughout the electoral process. The supporters of this view hold that the lack of openness, accountability and transparency, is at the root of the controversies plaguing our electoral process and that once this is in place, confidence in the electoral system will be restored.

Approach Four: Restore equity and fairness to the electoral system. The supporters of this approach hold that unless the electoral process guarantees, in practical terms, equal access and opportunities to all citizens, irrespective of social status, gender and ethno-religious inclinations, election results will continue to be controversial.

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