

Votes and Violence in Nigeria



'No to Election Violence' campaign in Oyo State, Nigeria 2007. Photo: © Pedro Vicente, CSAE.

Summary and policy conclusions

Results from a nationwide field experiment during the 2007 elections in Nigeria reveal that a range of dirty tactics, some illegal, were used by both government and opposition politicians. The tactics used differed depending on the situation of the politicians. Using violence to intimidate voters was the strategy used by the opposition politicians. Incumbent politicians tended to use vote buying and fraud.

In the first study of its kind, the Centre for the Study of African Economies (CSAE) evaluated strategies developed by ActionAid International Nigeria (AAIN) to counteract the use of violence to intimidate voters. The evaluation showed that these strategies were effective. The strategies had an effect on the voters' directly approached by the campaigners. The research showed that AAIN campaign also had an effect on those voters' perceptions who lived in the campaign area but were not directly approached by the campaigners. The campaign was most effective for the poorer sections of Nigerian society.

Policy conclusions:

- Effective campaigns to counteract voter intimidation can be mounted.
- A campaign can have an effect even on people who are not directly targeted.
- Providing such campaigns are appropriately designed, their effectiveness can be measured using modern statistical techniques. Measurement is likely to make it easier to attract outside funding for such campaigns from international and governmental donors.

Policy context

The 2007 elections in Nigeria were significant because they marked the first transfer of presidential power from one civilian to another. Given this background AAIN wanted to counteract the use of violence with its 'No to election violence campaign'. The prevalence of the use of violence in Nigeria's 2007 elections is demonstrated by the fact that over 300 people were killed during those elections.

Other, more recent, African elections, ranging from the grotesque in Zimbabwe, through the dirty in Kenya, to a clean change of regime in Ghana demonstrate that electoral violence is also a significant problem in other African countries.

Why are dirty tactics, such as vote-buying, voter intimidation and ballot fraud used by African politicians? Earlier research seems to indicate that such tactics may be effective to get into or stay in power. For example, statistical analysis of the São Tomé and Príncipe 2007 elections undertaken by the CSAE showed that vote-buying was an effective tactic in that instance.

Dirty elections may not only lead to deaths, they also appear to affect how well a country is governed after the elections. Previous CSAE research has found that properly conducted elections lead to an improvement in economic policies. Elections that are badly conducted have at best no effect. So to reduce the number of deaths and to encourage the development of good economic policies, it is important to facilitate clean elections.

The challenge for policymakers therefore is to find effective ways of counteracting the use of dirty tactics.

Overview of the 'No to Election Violence' campaign

The CSAE partnered with AAIN to undertake the first systematic empirical evaluation of a campaign to counteract the use of violence in the run up to the April 2007 elections in Nigeria. The campaign ran in January and February 2007.

AAIN is specialized in community improvement and capacity building. Its campaign consisted of holding town meetings, street theatre productions and the distribution of leaflets. The aim was to encourage citizens to go out and vote

and in so doing punish violent politicians at the polls. The campaign covered the six states of Nigeria which represent the main socio-economic regions of the country: Delta, Kaduna, Lagos, Oyo, Plateau, and Rivers.

The CSAE collected information from all locations covered by AAIN's campaign. It also ran representative household surveys, and contracted local journalists in each observed location to keep diaries of local violent events. To allow a clear attribution of the results to the AAIN campaign, comparisons were made with similar locations that were not part of the anti-violence campaign.

The campaign achievements in more detail

The key differences in areas targeted by the campaign were that relative to non-targeted areas:

- Less violence occurred;
- Violent politicians got fewer votes;
- Voter turnout increased by 10%.

The diaries of violent events reveal a consistent and statistically-significant reduction in actual violence. In addition, citizens' perceptions of violence originated by politicians changed by between 5 and 12%. These perceptions were measured using survey questions and directly-measured behaviour.

Surveys also indicate that the reason violent politicians received fewer votes was because more of their former supporters abstained.

Comparisons of the numbers of people who voted in campaign areas relative to other areas show a distinct 10% increase in voter turn-out in the targeted areas.

The campaign was especially effective with those people who were less locally integrated because they were poor or working outside the district. This group were less likely to benefit from local political deals and were therefore more receptive to the campaign messages.

The campaign had an effect on voters who were directly approached as well as those who lived in the campaign area but were not directly approached.

Ongoing and future research

The CSAE will be evaluating the effectiveness of using election monitors and mobile phone monitoring to ensure clean elections during the national elections in Mozambique in October 2009.

For more detailed information

On the fieldwork including ActionAid's campaign:

<http://www.iig.ox.ac.uk/research/08-political-violence-nigeria/default.htm>

- Lisa Chauvet and Paul Collier (2009): "Elections and Economic Policy in Developing Countries". Forthcoming in Economic Policy.
- Paul Collier and Pedro C. Vicente (2008): "Votes and Violence: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Nigeria". CSAE Working Paper. Available at: <http://www.csae.ox.ac.uk/workingpapers/pdfs/2008-16text.pdf>.
- Paul Collier (2009): "Wars, Guns and Votes: Democracy in Dangerous Places". HarperCollins, New York and Random House, London.
- Marcel Fafchamps, and Pedro C. Vicente (2009): "Political Violence and Social Networks: Experimental Evidence from a Nigerian Election". University of Oxford. Available at: <http://www.csae.ox.ac.uk/workingpapers/pdfs/2009-14text.pdf>.
- Masayuki Kudamatsu (2009): "Has Democratization Reduced Infant Mortality in Sub-Saharan Africa? Evidence from Micro Data". University of Stockholm, IIES, Working Paper. Available at: <http://www-2.iies.su.se/~masa/imr200904.pdf>.
- Pedro C. Vicente (2007a): "Evidence from a Field Experiment in West Africa". University of Oxford and BREAD Working Paper.

Available at:

<http://ipl.econ.duke.edu/bread/papers/working/161.pdf>

Information about the researchers

Paul Collier is a Professor of Economics and the Director of the CSAE, University of Oxford. His research interests are the causes and consequences of civil war, the effects of aid, and the problems of democracy in low-income rich in natural resources societies.

Marcel Fafchamps is a Professor of Economics and a Deputy Director of the CSAE, University of Oxford. His work studies the risk coping strategies of the poor, market institutions, intra-household issues, and the spatial division of labour.

Pedro C. Vicente is a Lecturer in Economics at Trinity College Dublin and a Research Officer at the CSAE, University of Oxford. He researches on the political economy of development, including in particular, vote buying, and conflict, with a special interest in Africa.



Activist putting up campaign poster in Lagos, Nigeria 2007. Photos: © Pedro Vicente, CSAE.

This document is an output from research funding by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) as part of the iiG, a research programme to study how to improve institutions for pro-poor growth in Africa and South-Asia. The views expressed are not necessarily those of DFID. Improving Institutions for Pro-Poor Growth (iiG) is an international network of applied research institutes across Africa, Asia, the USA and Europe to generate new insights about institutions' influence on pro-poor growth through an innovative programme of research, capacity building, and dissemination. The lead institution is the Centre for the Study of African Economies, University of Oxford. Other partners are the Department of International Development (QEH), Queen Elizabeth House, University of Oxford; the Suntory-Toyota International Centre for Economics and Related Disciplines (STICERD), London School of Economics and Political Science; BRAC, (formerly known as Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee), Bangladesh; Institute for Social and Economic Change (ISEC), Bangalore, India; Economic Policy Research Centre (EPRC), Kampala, Uganda; Department of Political Science, Ibadan University, Nigeria; and the African Centre for Economic and Historical Studies (ACEHS), Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. iiG research is funded by the Department for International Development (DFID), The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the Open Society Institute. **Briefing Paper prepared by Karin Loudon. Series Editor: Karin Loudon.**