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VOTERS EDUCATION (2)

VOTERS REGISTER
JULY, 1991.

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**YOUR VOTE
IS YOUR RIGHT
DON'T SELL IT.**

1. THE VOTERS' REGISTER -DEFINITION

The Voters' Register is a comprehensive list of all eligible voters in a constituency. It contains items of information about the voter such as:-

- i. Name
- ii. Age
- iii. Address
- iv. Occupation
- v. Sex

To obtain the above information for inclusion in a voters' register, people are interviewed by the registration officer.

2. THE VOTERS' REGISTER SINCE 1987.

In order to get an accurate register, 3 exercises have taken place since 1987.

- (1) There was the Voters' Registration exercise held between October 12 and November 1, 1987.
- (2) There was the registration of voters in Akwa-Ibom and Katsina States in 1989. The problem of mass movement of people arising from the creation of the two new States necessitated this exercise.
- (c) Between May 12 and 28, 1989, a revision exercise was conducted nationwide to up-date the register for the Local Government Elections of December 1990.

In spite of these exercises, it is evident that there are still some defects in the register. It is believed for example that:

- (1) Some under-aged persons may have been listed.
- (2) Names of some persons who are deceased have not been expunged.
- (3) Some names on the register are believed to be fake.
- (4) A number of people who have changed residence are still listed in the registers of the constituencies of their previous places of residence.
- (5) Names of persons who have attained the stipulated age have not been included in the register.

It is to correct any of the above defects which may be found to still exist in the voters' register that NEC has organised a Revision of voters' register for July 15 - August 30, 1991.

3. FEATURES OF THE VOTERS' REGISTER

In Nigeria's new political system, people have confused the voters' register with other issues like:

- (a) Census,
- (b) Registration for party membership

It is necessary to distinguish the registration of voters from these other events in order to highlight the features of a Voters' Register.

- (a) While every citizen can be registered during Census, **ONLY THOSE WHO ARE 18 YEARS AND ABOVE** can be included in a voters' register.

- (b) Voters' Registration is expected to include all eligible persons in a constituency, but Party membership exercise involves only those who wish to be members or officers of any of the two registered political parties.

It should be noted that the registration of voters is an original, fresh and complete event of compiling a list of all eligible persons while the revision of a voters' register is a process which involves only an update of the existing register.

4 PERSONS WHO CAN REGISTER

The Registration of Voters is not open to every person. To qualify as a registered voter, a person must:-

- (a) Be a Nigerian citizen
- (b) Not be below the age of 18 years.

Consequently, none of the following persons can be registered as a voter:-

- (a) All non-Nigerians
- (b) All Nigerians who are below the age of 18 years.
- (c) All Nigerians who by their personal acts have acknowledged allegiance or adherence to a foreign power.
- (d) Any one who does not appear in person at a registration centre.

A registration official must satisfy himself that the person who appears before him for registration has actually attained the stipulated minimum age of 18 years. If he has any doubt he must NOT register the person. The responsibility of proving that a person meets the stipulated age requirement for registration is that of the person seeking to be registered.

5 REGISTRATION PROCESS

(a) TIMING:

A fresh register of voters is normally compiled after the taking of every census.

But at its inauguration in 1987, NEC did not inherit a voters' register or any other document from the defunct FEDECO. It therefore had NO existing register to revise. The only option open to NEC was to compile a fresh list of register of voters for the Local Government Elections in 1987 pending the taking of census, fixed for a later date on the transition programme. This explains why the registration of voters in 1987 was not preceded by a Census Exercise as it should be.

However, the registration exercise was valid because the Babalakin Commisison of Enquiry on FEDECO had recommended and government accepted the recommendation that should it prove impossible to conduct a Census before any election, the electoral body should be authorised to compile a new register of voters.

(b) VENUE:

A register of voters is compiled at a registration centre. Every eligible voter is expected to be registered at a centre nearest to his ordinary place of residence. A voter should seek to be registered in a centre near his residence and not at a centre near his place of work. This is to avoid any difficulty that may be occasioned by any restriction of movement on voting day.

(c) PROCEDURE

The procedure for registration is as follows:-

- (a) The citizen presents himself for registration at the registration unit nearest to his place of residence.
- (b) The officials shall then ask such questions that could assist them to determine the eligibility of the person intending to register.
- (c) The officials will record vital information of the citizen such as name, age, sex, address and occupation.
- (d) The citizen is then issued with a card known as the VOTER'S CARD.

6 EVIDENCE OF REGISTRATION

The possession of a voter's card is the only valid evidence which a citizen has as a proof that he has been registered.

THE VOTERS CARD

The voter's card is the easiest and quickest means of identifying a registered voter. Every registered voter should therefore keep, protect and treasure his voter's card. A lost voter's card will not be replaced except it can be proved that its loss was due to a major disaster such as fire, flood or accident. A voter's card contains the following information.

- (1) The name of the State
- (2) The name of the local government area
- (3) The name of the ward
- (4) The Registration area
- (5) The Registration Unit/Polling Station
- (6) The voter's number
- (7) The voter's name
- (8) The voter's sex
- (9) The voter's age.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN A VOTER'S CARD AND A PARTY CARD

A voter's card is significantly different from a party membership card. A citizen cannot qualify as a voter simply because he holds the membership card of a political party. He has to be registered as a voter and given a voters card as evidence of his registration. His party card only entitles him to membership of the party from which he obtained the card. That card is usually only for activities within that particular party.

- (a) A voter's card is issued by NEC while a party membership card is obtained from a political party.
- (b) A NEC voters card and a party membership card do not have the same format and do not contain the same information.
- (c) While every eligible voter requires to hold a voters card, it is not every eligible voter that requires a party membership card. It is only those who wish to be members of a political party that require to hold party membership cards. In other words, a voter who holds a NEC voters card can cast his vote for a party of his choice whether or not he is a member of that party.

Every citizen is therefore advised not to mix one card for the other.

7 USES OF THE VOTERS REGISTER

The Voter's Register is used for the conduct of elections. It is the main basis for planning for an election. For example, it is used to determine:-

- (a) the total number of persons eligible to vote at an election.
- (b) the number of voters in one centre.
- (c) the number of centres for every electoral event.

8 IMPORTANCE OF THE VOTERS REGISTER

The voters' register is an indispensable document for the conduct of elections. In fact, our electoral laws state clearly that the inclusion of the name of a person in a voters' register entitles that person to vote at any election organised and conducted by the electoral body. A number of problems could arise from the absence or inaccuracy of the register. Some of such problems include:-

- (a) Malpractices and confusion at voting centres
- (b) Incorrect number of voting centres.
- (c) Shortage or excess supply of election materials.

9 REGISTRATION OFFICIALS

During a registration of Voters' Exercise, there are certain persons who would normally officiate. It is important for the citizen to know and co-operate with them for a successful exercise. These are:-

- (a) Chief Registration Officer
- (b) Registration Officer
- (c) Supervisory Assistant Registration Officer
- (d) Assistant Registration Officer.

METHOD OF SELECTION

The above listed officials are selected and appointed after being screened and considered fit by NEC. There are some categories of persons who cannot be appointed as registration officials. They are:-

- (1) A candidate at a public election
- (2) Persons banned or disqualified by the participation in politics and Election (Prohibition) Decrees No. 25 of 1987 and No. 9 of 1989.
- (3) A person who is an official or in the employment of the two political parties, the NRC and the SDP or of any defunct political party of the 1st or 2nd Republic.
- (4) Any agent of a candidate or political party at a public election such as the December, 1990, Local Government Election.
- (5) A convicted person i.e. for an electoral offence, registration offence, or criminal offence involving dishonesty.
- (6) Any other person who may be specified by the Commission from time to time.

IDENTIFICATION

Registration officials can be easily identified. Normally each of them would wear and prominently display a badge provided by NEC as evidence of his authority to register the names of the voters residing in the registration area. The public must therefore not deal with any person who presents himself as a registration official but who is not properly identified.

DUTIES OF REGISTRATION OFFICIALS

(1) Chief Registration Officer:-

- (a) Organises and supervises all matters pertaining to Registration Exercise in the State.
- (b) Ensures the appointment of all Registration Officials.

(2) Registration Officer:-

- (a) To set up a Registration Office
- (b) Secures offices for Supervisory Assistant Registration Officers and Assistant Registration Officers.
- (c) Is responsible for making arrangements for the training of the staff at the local government level.
- (d) Ensures that supervisory Assistant Registration Officers and the Assistant Registration Officers comply with official instructions.
- (e) On the completion of the registration exercise, he is required to organise the collection of all the records and files.
- (f) Ensures the proper storage of forms and materials.
- (g) Registers all eligible voters in his constituency.

- 3 **Supervisory Assistant Registration Officer:-**
- (a) Ensures the reserve stock of forms, cards, and other registration materials to meet contingencies.
 - (b) Examines the work of Assistant Registration Officers in order to resolve any difficulties.
 - (c) Ensures daily contact with all Assistant Registration Officers..
 - (d) Ensures that Assistant Registration Officers are able to render complete and satisfactory accounts of forms received from time to time.
 - (e) Should show the Assistant registration Officers the boundaries of their respective Registration Units and or polling Districts.
4. **Assistant Registration Officer:-**
- (a) Does the actual Registration of Voters at the registration Unit.
 - (b) Makes preparatory measures for organising the registration operation.
 - (c) At the end of Registration, he must ensure that he returns to the Supervisory Assistant Registration Officer all materials issued to him whether used or unused.

10. REGISTRATION AGENTS

Each of the 2 political parties is entitled to an agent at each registration centre. Although the agents are not employees of NEC and are not appointed by the electoral body it is necessary for them to be present at each registration centre to help to prevent any malpractice that could mar the exercise.

The agents are appointed by the political parties to represent them at registration centres. Notices of their appointments are usually brought to the attention of NEC not later than 10 days before the date fixed for the exercise.

The agents are not expected to interfere with the registration. They are present at each centre to OBSERVE activities and protect the interest of the parties they represent.

11. REVISION EXERCISE

(1) DEFINITION

The revision of voters' register is the process whereby the register is updated through the deletion of obsolete facts and inclusion of relevant materials.

(2) ESSENCE OF THE EXERCISE

As a result of the ever changing demographic characteristics of the populace, the voters' register can easily become inaccurate. Therefore it should be constantly reviewed in order for it to continue to be credible for elections.

12 THE PROCESSES OF REVISING THE REGISTER

(a) TIMING

A revision of voters' register may be conducted before every election. This timing is to ensure that the duration between the exercise and an election is not too long to adversely affect the accuracy of the register.

(b) VENUE

The revision exercise is conducted at a designated location known as the revision centre. NEC has arranged to ensure that such a revision centre will be the same location where the voter will cast his vote on election day. There are 220,000 revision centres throughout the federation. In each ward depending on the size, there is an average of 20-50 revision centres.

(c) PROCEDURE

At each revision centre, a list of registered voters would be on display to enable the citizen to inspect and ensure that his name is listed.

Any voter who has a claim to make in respect of the displayed list, will have his name entered into a supplementary list by the revision officer.

The supplementary list together with the existing register would comprise a new preliminary list of voters.

The preliminary list would remain on display for a stipulated period to enable any other claim or objection to be made.

A final voters register would later be printed after all necessary corrections have been made to the preliminary list.

13. CLAIMS AND OBJECTIONS

(a) CLAIM

A claim is a request made by a registered person to have any information about himself in the preliminary list to be amended or deleted

(b) OBJECTION

An objection is a request made by a person that the name of any person on the voters list be struck out for some reasons.

14. IMPORTANCE OF A REVISION EXERCISE

- (a) A Revision exercise helps to make the register to be accurate through an update of the information contained therein about voters. This mostly involves the removal of names of those deceased and the inclusion of those who since the last exercise have attained the minimum age requirement of 18 years, or those who have moved from one place to another.
- (b) It enhances effective planning and conduct of elections.

15. REVISION OFFICIALS

There are three officials who handle the revision of voters register. These are:

- (1) Senior Revision Officer
- (2) Revision Officer
- (3) Assistant Revision Officer

SELECTION

Revision Officers like registration officials are appointed after having been carefully screened and considered fit by NEC for the assignment. A revision officer must be an independent non- partisan person. He is usually one of the following:

- (a) Private Legal Practitioner
- (b) Other professionals
- (c) Justices of the Peace
- (d) Retired Public Officers
- (e) Staff of Government Departments (Federal, State and Local)
- (f) A person in good standing in the community.

IDENTIFICATION

A revision officer is expected to wear a badge provided by NEC. This badge is to be prominently displayed to notify the public of the authority of the bearer. Only persons who are so identified as genuine officials can conduct a revision exercise.

DUTIES OF REVISION OFFICIALS

(1) SENIOR REVISION OFFICER

In-charge of 10 revision centres

Supervises the revision officers

Ensures that adequate materials are available in each centre and that the correct atmosphere prevails.

(2) REVISION OFFICER

- (a) Acts as a check on the activities of registration personnel and will ensure that if any such personnel has been guilty of any malpractices these will be detected in the course of adjudicating on claims and objections.
- (b) Supervises Assistant Revision Officers appointed for each local government
- (c) Is to ascertain that the person who makes an objection to any name in the register of voters is qualified to do so.
- (d) Must arrange for the hearing of claims and objections filed by eligible voters.
- (e) For the purpose of determining claims and objections, a Revision Officer may administer oaths on any person making claims and objections.

(3) ASSISTANT REVISION OFFICER

The main function of the Assistant Revision Officer is to assist the Revision Officer in carrying out the above duties.

16. REVISION OF VOTERS' REGISTER 1991

The 1991 revision exercise is of a special kind because it incorporates features of Registration and Revision exercises.

It is a once and for all attempt to redress the defects in the existing register of voters.

In the exercise, new cards will be issued to all eligible voters and all old cards will be retrieved. The new card will replace:

- (i) Old NEC cards with names
- (ii) Old NEC cards without names
- (iii) Fake Cards
- (iv) Pieces of paper held by those who were registered after the cards had been exhausted.

Citizens who have just attained the voting age of 18 years will have opportunity to have their names on the register of voters. Persons who have moved from one place to the other will also during this exercise have their names deleted from the old register and added to the registers of the centres in their new places of residence. They will also have new cards in place of their old cards.

To ensure accuracy of the register:

- (i) All fake names and names of dead persons will now be expunged from the register

- (ii) Any one whose name is listed on the register but does not come out to obtain a new card will have his name deleted from the register.
- (iii) Only names that are verifiable during this exercise will form the new accurate voters register
- (iv) All old cards are now invalid. So it is necessary for all Nigerians to seize this opportunity to obtain new voters cards.
- (v) Double registration or registration by proxy is now useless as no one can utilise more than one card in an Open Ballot Election which holds at the same time nationwide.

17 REVISION EXERCISE JULY 1991 - PROCEDURE

All revision units throughout the nation will be fully mobilised as from Monday July 15, 1991 to receive all eligible voters wishing to ensure that they are listed in the voters register. As from that day, the existing register will be on display nationwide. At each revision centre, the following procedure will be observed.

- (a) Every person will check the register on display to ensure that his name is on it.
- (b) Those whose names are on the register and are properly written and well spelt will have their names transferred to a new preliminary list after which they will be given new cards in place of the old ones which they must surrender.

- (c) If there is any error in the way a person's name is listed or spelt, the person will point this out and ensure that his name is correctly written and spelt in the preliminary list designed for the purpose. He will then be given a new card in replacement of his old card which he must surrender.
- (d) Where the citizen's name is not on the register for any reason such as that he was not registered before or has only just attained the stipulated minimum age of 18 years, he has to satisfy the Revision Officer that he resides in the area. He will then be given a form called form EC1. His particulars which he gives by filling this form will then be used to include him in the preliminary list. He will then be issued with the new voters card.
- (e) The above actions (a-d) can be done from Monday July 15 to Sunday August 4, 1991, both days inclusive.
- (f) As from the next day, that is Monday August 5 to Friday August 9, 1991 the preliminary list will now replace the existing register on display. This is to enable any claim or objection to be made in respect of any name on the list.
- (g) From Saturday August 10 to Friday August 30, 1991, claims and objections made in respect of names in the preliminary list will be heard.
- (h) During this period of claims and objections, NEC will display a notice stating:
 - (i) day, time and place where claims and objections will be heard.
 - (ii) names of persons who made claims and objections
 - (iii) names of persons against whom objections have been made.

(i) Before hearing claims and objections, the Revision Officer must:

- (a) first ascertain that the person making a claim or an objection is qualified to do so. Only an eligible voter is qualified.
- (b) ensure that the person being objected to has been properly notified by including his name in the notice referred to at h(iii) above.

(j) The Revision Officer has power to:

- (i) administer an oath where necessary on the person making a claim or objection.
- (ii) amend the register where the claim made is upheld or where the objection has been successfully made.

(k) It is after all necessary amendments to the preliminary list have been made that the list will be printed as a new voters Register.

NOTE

To prevent frivolous and malicious requests, any person making a claim or an objection in the past was expected to pay an amount before his request could be entertained. In 1987, the amount was fixed at N25.00. But this time, claims and objections can be made FREE of charge. This is to ensure that persons who have genuine claims are not dissuaded from making them because of the fact that a fee has to be paid for the exercise.

18. REVISION EXERCISE 1991: TIME TABLE

DATES		EVENTS
1.	July 5, 1991 6	Submission of names of Party Agents to NEC
2.	16 th 5 th 15th July to 4th Aug. 1991	compilation of Preliminary list of voters
3.	6 th 5th August, 1991 to 9th August, 1991	Display of the Voters Register
4.	10th August, 1991 to 30th August, 1991	Hearing of Claims and Objections

19. OFFENCES

The following constitute offences in connection with the registration or revision of a voters register:

- (a) For a person below the age of 18 years to present himself for registration.
- (b) To possess more than one registration card with ONE or more names or to get registered more than once at any unit or in more than one unit.
- (c) For a person to knowingly make a false statement or give false information with reference to a registration or revision exercise.

- (d) For any person to hand over a voters card to any person other than an officer appointed and acting in the course of his registration or revision duty.
- (e) For any person, not being appointed as a registration or revision official to receive any voters card from any person.
- (f) For a person without lawful authority to destroy, mutilate, deface, remove or make any alteration in any notice or document required for the registration or revision of the voters register.
- (g) To obstruct or impede a registration or revision exercise.
- (h) For any person to conduct himself in any manner or to do any act that causes confusion at the registration unit or to interrupt the registration or revision exercise in any way.
- (i) For any person without authority to carry the identity card of a registration or revision official.

As for officials, stiffer penalties await any of them involved in any registration or revision offence. A Registration or revision officer is not expected to:

- (i) register any person by proxy
- (ii) copy into the Preliminary List of voters any name and particulars of any person from any list made by any person or a political party.

- (iii) Issue to any person or to any political party more than one registration card.
- (iv) include any person in the register of voters for more than one constituency or more than once in the register of one constituency
- (v) fail to perform or discharge the duties of his office
- (vi) perform any duty assigned to him fraudulently or negligently or recklessly
- (vii) commit any act or omission in breach of his duty

It should be pointed out that any person who commits any of the above offences could on conviction be imprisoned without an option of fine

20. COMING EVENTS

(a) THIRD QUARTER 1991

- (i) Party Primaries - August 24, 1991

(b) FOURTH QUARTER 1991

- (i) Governorship Elections
- (ii) Elections into Houses of Assembly in the States
- (iii) Elections for the Mayoralty and Vice Mayoralty of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja

21. SOME HINTS ON PARTY CONGRESSES

(A) WARD COMPOSITION

All registered members in the ward.

QUORUM

One-fifth OF REGISTERED MEMBERS IN THE WARD.

FUNCTIONS

- i. Elect Ward Delegates to party Congress (10 to Local Government Congress and 3 to State Congress)
- ii. Organise primaries for nomination of Local Government council Chairmen.

(B) LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMPOSITION

- i. All members of each party's Ward Executive Committee.
- ii. All members of each party's Local Government Executive Committee.
- iii. Chairmen and Councillors of Local Government Councils who are party members.
- iv. 10 members elected by the Ward Congress from each ward within the Local Government Area.

QUORUM

One-third of its members provided that not less than two-thirds of all wards in the Local Government Area are represented.

FUNCTIONS

- (1) Elect Local Government Delegates to National Convention
- (2) Ratify the results of Local Government Area primaries
- (3) Nomination of candidates for State House of Assembly - Indirect Primaries.

(C) STATE COMPOSITION

- i. The Chairmen and all other members of each party's State Executive Committee.
- ii. Three (3) delegates from each ward in the State elected by the Ward Congress.
- iii. The Chairman and Secretary of each Ward Executive Committee.
- iv. The Chairmen of Local Government Councils in the State, where produced by the party.
- v. All Councillors in the State, produced by the party.
- vi. Members of the National Executive Committee who are from the State.
- vii. All members of the Local Government Executive Committee of the party where applicable.

FUNCTIONS

- i. Organise Gubernatorial Primaries
- ii. Nomination of candidates for Federal Legislature - Indirect Primaries.
- iii. Ratify results of Local Government Primaries.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

(a) SUPPLEMENTARY LIST OF VOTERS

This is a list of voters whose names are not on the voters list. Usually, a supplementary list of voters is prepared after some citizens who have inspected a voters register on display claim that their names are not included.

(b) PRELIMINARY LIST OF VOTERS

This is a list of citizens who are eligible to be registered as voters. It is this list that becomes a voters register after it has been properly compiled and necessary corrections made to it. During a revision of voters exercise, a preliminary list is made up of the combination of the existing register and the supplementary list prepared during the exercise by the revision officer. These are put together and printed/bound into a Voters Register.

(c) DISPLAY OF VOTERS LIST

At specified periods, NEC usually displays a voters' list in each constituency to enable the citizens who reside in the area to inspect it. This exercise is an opportunity for all eligible voters to ensure that their names are on the list and that they are correctly written and well spelt. Any claim or objection in respect of any name in the list on display usually follows the exercise. Every eligible voter is advised to check for his name on the register during the period of display. Those who wait till voting day before checking their names may not receive satisfactory assistance as they would be interfering with the scheduled business of the day.

(d) CENTRE NEAREST TO RESIDENCE

Every eligible voter is expected to have his name on the register at the centre nearest to his residence. The maximum number of names that can be on a register at one centre is 500. Therefore, the size of the voting population of an area can make the area to have more than one centre. Consequently, a voter who cannot find his name in a centre nearest to his residence should check at another centre in the vicinity. This means that the term "centre nearest to residence" means a centre within the area where a voter resides.

(e) REGISTRATION BY PROXY

This happens when the name of a citizen is entered into a voters list in spite of the fact that the citizen did not physically appear in person at a registration centre. Registration by proxy is a punishable electoral offence. Every one is enjoined to avoid it.

EDITOR'S NOTE

This Pamphlet is the second in the series of voter - education documents prepared by NEC. The first was on the local government elections of December 1990. The voter-education pamphlet is designed to simplify the laws and materials for electoral events. It is hoped that this edition will meet its goal of educating the citizen on the essence of being a registered voter as well as of assisting NEC to obtain an accurate register.

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NOTE