

Campaign finance distorts Nigerian elections

Summary and policy-relevant findings



Campaign Poster in Nigeria's 2007 elections © Tiggy Ridley/IRIN www.irinnews.org

How political parties finance their campaigns is critical in any democratic election. Researchers at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria and the Centre for the Study of African Economies (CSAE), University of Oxford, U.K. investigated how political parties in Nigeria finance their campaigns. The most important question was to what extent campaign finance determines electoral victory.

The key results are:

- Candidates invest large amounts of their private savings to contend in the elections. This means that only individuals willing to invest large amounts of money become candidates.
- Money distorts the candidate selection process within parties and largely influences who wins the elections.
- Electoral laws governing how parties should secure and spend their funds are ineffective as there is a lack of knowledge about them. As a result such laws have limited enforceability.

Policy conclusion: The Nigerian government should strengthen the ability of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to monitor campaign finance. It should also demand greater accountability from candidates on their campaign spending. Enforcing such rules will be an important step forward towards improving the democratic process and stability of the country.

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Policy context

The last disputed elections in Nigeria, Kenya and Zimbabwe have shown that those institutions charged with securing democratic process need to be strengthened. One key element missing in African politics is clear legislation on how political parties should seek funding.

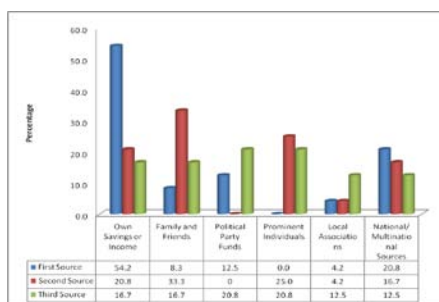
Overview of project

Two types of elite interviews were conducted. The first type of interview comprises 23 out of the 27 members of the House of Assembly in the states of Oyo, Enugu and Kaduna. The second type of interviews includes 28 officials from different political parties.

Project findings in more detail

89% of the interviewed members of the Assembly indicated that campaign funds played a major role in securing their election. Private savings were the most important source of funds. Specifically, 54.2% of respondents identified personal savings as their main funding source, 20% identified donations from national and multinational companies and other foreign actors as their main funding source. 12% of respondents mentioned political party funds, 8.3% referred to donations from friends and families, and 4.2% mentioned funds from local associations.

Figure 1: Sources of Funds for House of Assembly Election



47% of respondents believe that money in politics helps win elections. 20% of respondents indicate that money leads to bribery and the buying of votes. 7% of respondents point out that money helps boost popularity.

46% of Assembly members said that funding political campaigns should be the responsibility of political parties. 18.2% thought campaign funding should be

the responsibility of individuals. 9.1% of Assembly members said political campaigns should be funded by the government and 27% indicated that it is the responsibility of some or all of the actors mentioned.

25% of party officials strongly believe that vote rigging, the imposition of a candidate and influence obtained via money secured an Assembly candidate a seat in the National Assembly. Another quarter thinks that it is popularity that secures a win, and a further 15% think it is lavish spending that secures a win.

Among the party officials interviewed, only 43% are aware of the spending limits for campaigns that are imposed by the electoral regulations. Moreover, among those who think there is a limit, the amount indicated ranges from two million to ten million naira. This lack of awareness of spending limits may derive from the limited number of spending audits carried out by INEC. Only 40.7% of the interviewed officials indicated that INEC had audited their accounts.

For more detailed information

- Okunade, Lafenwa and Johnson 'Campaign finance in the House of Assembly during the 2007 Elections in Nigeria'. Working paper. Available from the authors: bayookunade@gmail.com
- 'Gubernatorial Election Primaries in Nigeria in 2007 Election'. Working paper. Available from the authors: bayookunade@gmail.com

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