

Stakeholders Sue For Electoral Inclusiveness Ahead of Edo, Ondo Polls

In the face of the disruptive Covid-19 pandemic, relevant agencies pledge support for INEC ahead of Edo, Ondo Polls

Stakeholders have urged the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC, to uphold the integrity of the electoral process during the conduct of the governorship elections in Edo and Ondo States later in the year.

The governorship election is billed for September 19, 2020 in Edo state while that of Ondo is scheduled for October 10.

The stakeholders spoke at a Town Hall Meeting organized by YIAGA Africa within the framework of the EU Support to democratic governance in Nigeria (EU-SDGN) programme with the following EU-SDGN partners; the Albino Foundation, International Press Centre (IPC), Nigerian Women Trust Fund (NWTf), CLEEN Foundation, European Centre for Electoral Support (ECES), Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC), Westminster Foundation, National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS), BBC Media Action, Institute of Media and Society (IMS) and Premium Times Centre for Investigative Journalism (PTCIJ).

The town hall which was conducted virtually and aired on Channels Television on Wednesday, June 3, 2020 with renowned politics editor of the station, Seun Okinbaloye as anchor and guests in the studios in Lagos and Abuja for the two-hour event, is part of civil society's contribution to ensuring electoral integrity and citizen's participation in elections during the Covid-19 pandemic

In his opening remark, the Executive Director of YIAGA Africa, Samson Itodo disclosed that the Covid-19 pandemic has changed the dynamics of how things are done, more so for the way elections would be conducted henceforth.

He said in the light of new reality, the electoral umpire in Nigeria, INEC, has put in place a policy on the conduct of elections in Edo, Ondo and some other bye- elections across the country but to protect the integrity of the electoral process, it was important for every stakeholder such as security agencies, political parties, CSOs, NGOs and the media to discuss the practicability of the



Mr Samson Itodo, Executive Director of Youth Initiative for Advocacy, Growth and Advancement, YIAGA Africa

Commission's policy regarding the pending elections.

The electoral empire said it released on May 21 centered on the safety of INEC officials and the no -facemask - no -vote policy for voters during the polls.

In his contribution, the Edo State Governor, Godwin Obaseki, who joined via the use of virtual platform, told the audience that the state government had put safety measures in place just as it had started implementing community policing and boosted its capacity to handle Covid-19 cases with the largest testing and contact tracing capacity in the country, with three standard centers.

A studio guest and scholar, Prof. Adele Jinadu, expressed worries about the sanctity of electoral process in view of inter-state lockdown that was being flouted by transporters with the aid of security officials and called on the voters to resist any form of manipulation of the electoral process.

INEC National Commissioner, Festus Okoye reassured the audience that the election would be conducted in line with the laws of the land but agreed with Jinadu that INEC might not be able to provide facemasks for voters except to enforce the protocols on physical distancing during voting.

The Director, Centre for Public Policy Research, Dr. Sam Amadi, urged the Commission to ensure fairness to all parties involved, adding that absence of campaigns as a result of Covid 19 pandemic, which is part of the process, could weaken the electoral process.

Mr. Femi Falana, SAN, urged the Commission to provide facemasks for voters, many of whom he said are are poverty stricken. He called on INEC to ensure that the process is free and fair, adding that the maximum security should be enforced to allow the opposition parties have their say.

For the Director of the International Press Center, IPC, Lanre Arogundade, Nigeria cannot completely replicate what obtains in other countries. He called on INEC to include specific roles for the media in its policy document, adding that the media/journalists covering elections face enormous challenges.

Wilson Manji of ECES, urged INEC to adhere to the policy and safety procedures for a fair electoral process.

The Vulnerable and People With Disabilities

Cynthia Mbamalu of YIAGA Africa advocated for the rights of the vulnerable to vote just as the Executive Director of The Albino Foundation, Jake Epelle also pressed INEC to make provision for the physically challenged to vote without hitches.

Security:

The Inspector General of Police, Mohammed Adamu, represented by the Commissioner of Police in charge of Counter Terrorism, Don Awunah, assured that the police are ready to ensure the safety of INEC officials and voters during the electoral process.

But the Executive Director of CLEEN Foundation Ben Oluigbo expressed concern about the infractions of security agents during Covid 19 and express fears it could worsen during the elections.

Journalists continue to face unabated official threats during news coverage

DSS Detains Journalist in Delta State



Dr Ifeanyi Okowa, Delta State Governor.

The Department of State Services in Asaba, Delta State, has detained a journalist, Tega Oghenedoro, popularly known by his pen name "Fejiro Oliver".

The journalist was reportedly detained at the instance of Governor Ifeanyi Okowa, over a story on alleged robbery incident in the Delta State Government House, published on his online newspaper, SecretReporters, with the headline "Exclusive: Despite Millions Paid To Security, Armed Robbers Mug Gov. Okowa Right Inside Government House Asaba".

Journalist Claims Imo Lawmaker Framed Him

A journalist and publisher of Newsfield newspaper, Finian Chuks was on Thursday battered by suspected thugs who, the victim alleged, were working on the orders of an Imo lawmaker, Kennedy Ibeh, during the defection of some Peoples Democratic Party, PDP officials to the All Progressive Congress Party, APC, in Owerri, the state capital.

Chuks told journalists, that his 'sin' was in publishing a story in his newspaper where he accused Ibeh of instigating a certificate scandal in the Assembly.

He also alleged the lawmaker's bank account was used to siphon N1.3 billion IMSUBEB fund meant for construction of school buildings in the state.

In his reaction, Mr Ibeh who represents Obowo State Constituency in the House of Assembly, explained the journalist was beaten up for blackmailing him to pay some undisclosed amount.

In a statement issued by his Media Consultant, Onyekachi Ifeanyi, Ibeh claimed that the journalist published falsehood against him and embarrassed him by bringing copies of the newspaper to the APC secretariat, where the assault took place.

Bauchi Gov Accuses Journalist of Provocation



Alhaji Bala Mohammed, Bauchi State Governor.

Bauchi State Governor, Sen. Bala Mohammed, threatened a reporter of The Daily Trust, Hassan Ibrahim, for asking some provocative questions during a media parley.

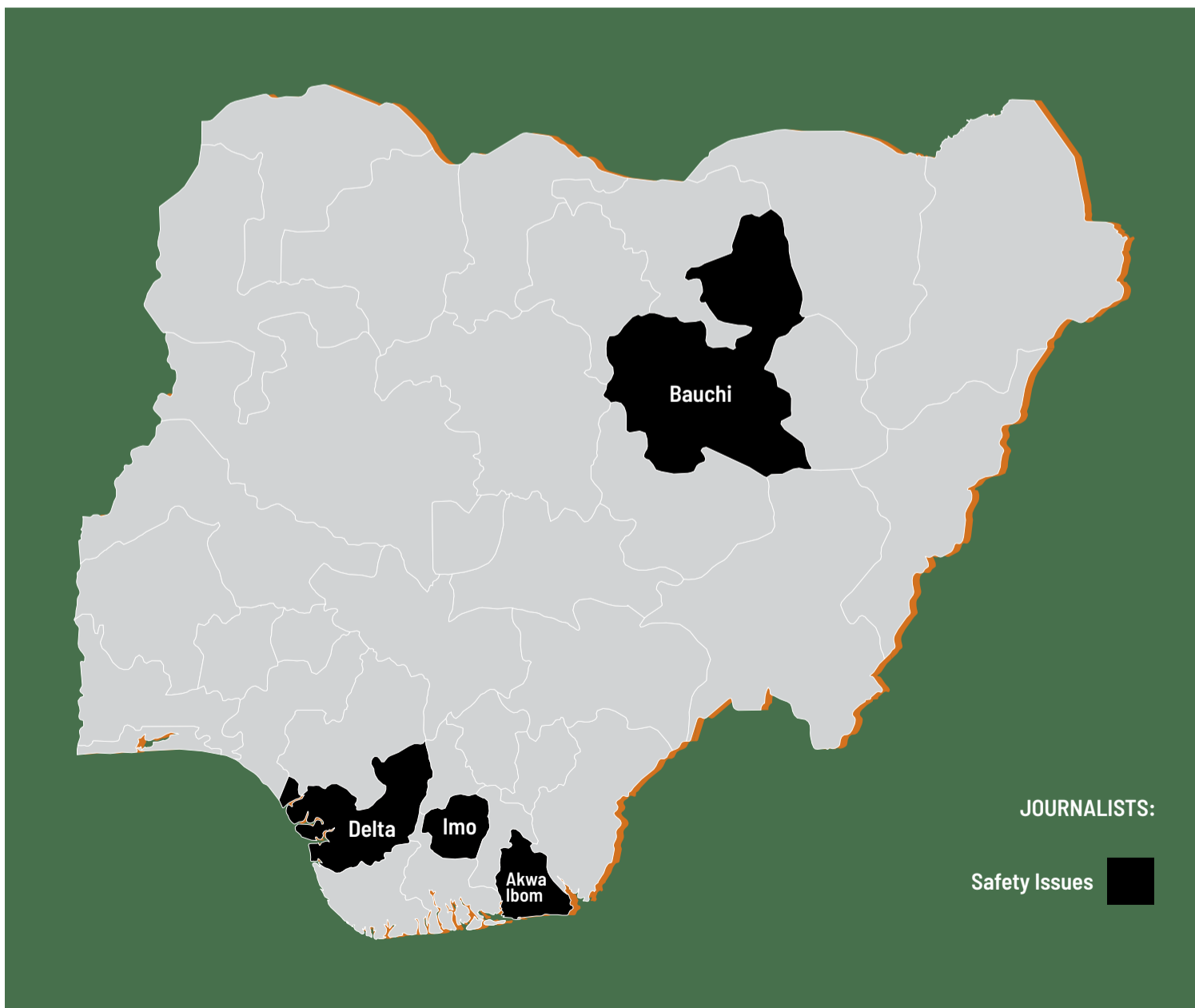
The first anniversary media chat, which was held at the Command Guest Inn Bauchi, the state capital, on Saturday, drew many journalists across the state and some members of the governor's cabinet.

Ibrahim drew the ire of the governor when he asked a question on the allegations made by the opposition party in the state, the All Progressives Congress (APC) that the governor has strangled the State House of Assembly and disregard due process in the award of contracts in the state.

Kufre Carter: Prosecution Fails to Appear in Court

The case of alleged defamation instituted by the Akwa Ibom State Government against a sport's journalist, Kufre Carter, was stalled on Monday, following the failure of the state's Commissioner for Health, Dr Dominic Ukpog, who accused the journalist of defaming him, to appear in court to give evidence.

Magistrate Umohandy adjourned the case to Friday, July 17, 2020 for commencement of trial.



Job Losses, Pay Cut Loom in the Media

Media Houses adopt cost-cutting measures to stay in business

Running full steam during Covid -19 lockdown while other businesses remained closed, the proverbial chickens are coming to roost for the media in the absence of any form of stimulus package.

From the hardest hit geo-political South West zone in the country where the media is concentrated, especially in Lagos, the nation's commercial nerve and epicenter of the pandemic, to the others zones with less media presence, the story is the same. Media readership, advertisement and circulation have fallen to an abysmal low.

As the lockdown on Covid-19 begins to bite harder, the media is adopting the same strategy to stay in business.

Some have opted to pay their staff a percentage of normal monthly salaries, while some have shed staff and others have neither paid outstanding payments nor announced any decision.

The wave of job loss, which is expected to spread across the industry has led to a call for a review of media operations in the country and recommendations of new business models.

Below is the compilation of our updates on the situation in some media houses, according to geo-political zones in the country.



South-West

The management of the medium recently issued more than 50 staff sack letters, but with the option of resigning their appointments. Those affected cut across various desks, bureau and departments.

The advert department was said to have been worst- hit with over twenty staff sent off.

While all the displaced staff would be entitled to one month's salary in lieu of notice, those who have spent up till ten years and above will have their long service award monetised, according to the Managing Director of the company, Mr Ademola Osinubu, who had earlier in the month issued a memo to the staff lamenting the impact of the coronavirus crisis on the company and hinted of some measures to be taken.

“Before the pandemic, the company's broad reengineering plan was well underway. The pace of implementation will increase to complement the recent proactive measures that the company has put in place to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on our health and operations.

“In the days ahead, the company will be exploring additional ways to keep our business afloat and thriving. While we do so, we shall take due cognisance of the interest of staff, the threats to our industry and the tremors within the Nigerian economy.

“However, one thing is certain: the company will have to adjust all facets of its operations to reflect the realities of these trying times. Such adjustments are imminent and inevitable,” Osinubu stated.



South-West

Many staff of the company has also been sent on three months compulsory leave on twenty per cent salary subject to review after the expiration.

Those retained will be entitled to fifty per cent payment of their salaries and allowances.

In the letter issued to affected editorial and non-editorial staff, the company said the decision was taken to ensure it remained in business.

The review of the effect of the situation according to the company “has left us with no choice than some painful decision. These decisions are in the best interest of our company and its key stakeholders, especially staff.

“During this period you are expected to stay away from the office business premises. You are not expected to render any service to THE NATION in any form. You are free to accept any job offer during the period but do inform us of such a development”



North-Central

Information on staff downsizing is still sketchy though us some unspecified number of staff have been reportedly disengaged. Details of the situation in other media house will be updated as soon as we have them.



Nigeria Info, Cool FM, Wazobia FM – North West, South West, and South South, North Central

Globe Broadcasting and Communications which owns the above-named stations with headquarter in Lagos and branches in Abuja, Port Harcourt and Kano sent its staff on forced leave without pay until further notice.

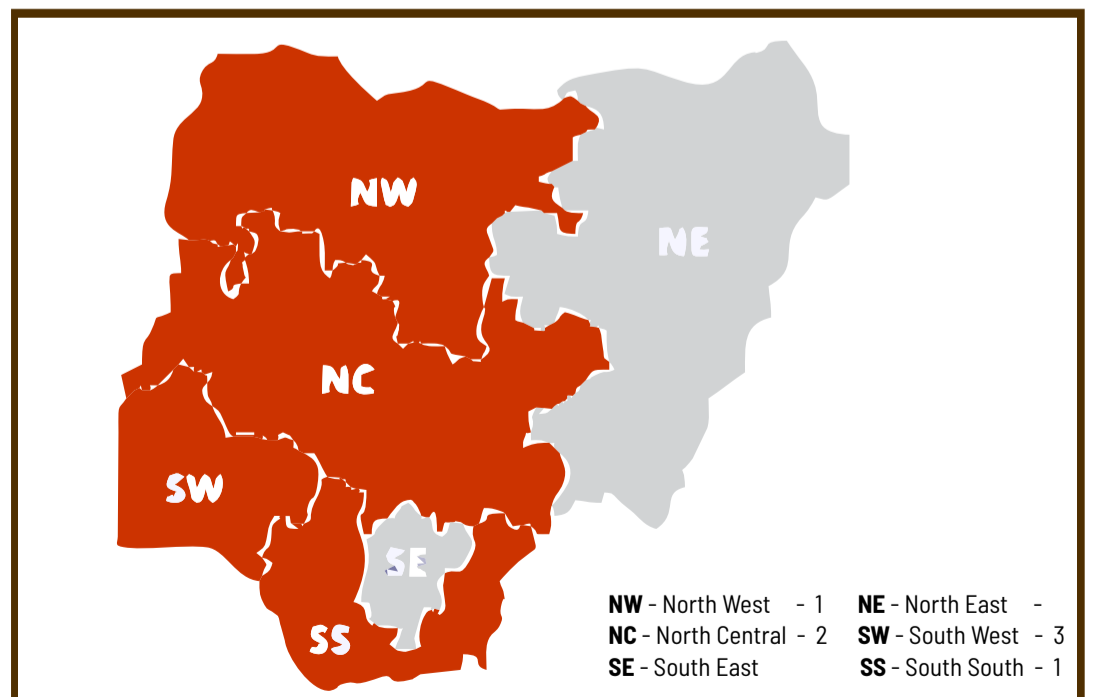
The letter to the affected staff by the Human Resources Officer stated as follows:

“This notice is to inform you that your position is included in this furlough and as such, you are being placed on a temporary, unpaid leave of absence effective, May 12, 2020 until further notice.

“If you find alternate employment during this period and do not intend to return to work at Info – FM Radio Nigeria Ltd, please notify human resources immediately of your voluntary resignation.

“The Management of Globe Broadcasting and Communications thank you for your understanding and will notify you once the situation changes for the better or hopefully normalizes.”

6 Geo-political Zones in Nigeria



Legislation, policy underway to reposition creative industry and tackle runaway cable charges in Nigeria.

House of Reps To Enforce Pay-As-You-Go for Digital Subscription

The House of Representatives ad hoc Committee investigating non-implementation of pay-as-you-go package by DSTV and other satellite providers in the country has assured Nigerians of the protection of their interest.

Chairman of the ad hoc committee, Unyime Idem, gave the assurance while addressing journalists on Tuesday in Abuja after the inauguration of the committee by the Speaker, Femi Gbajabamila.

Idem, also Deputy Chairman, House Committee on Communication, representing Ukanafun/Oruknam Constituency of Akwa-Ibom, said the matter before the committee affected vast majority of Nigerians.

“As chairman of this ad hoc committee, I want to assure Nigerians that their interest will be protected.

“When I moved the motion on the floor of the house, I stated that business of this nature, the customers should be given the right to choose what they want.

The lawmaker said all stakeholders including the regulators and service providers would be invited to deliberate on ways to open up the sector.

Nigerians Reject Increase in High Tariff



As the negative economic effects of the COVID-19 crisis continues to plague Nigerians, subscribers to DSTV and GOTV have taken to social media to reject and protest the latest increase in tariff by the company, MutiChoice.

The announcement of the tariff increase was recently circulated to subscribers via text messages and many Nigerians have lamented about the increase, calling both companies “inhuman” and “insensitive”.

Verifications from the DSTV site showed that Premium subscribers, who have been paying N15,800 should prepare to pay N16,200; Compact Plus subscribers will now pay N10, 925 instead of N10,650 while those on Compact will pay N6,975 as against the previous N6,800.

Also, customers on Confam bouquet will pay N4,615 against N4,500, while those on Yanga will from June 1 be made to pay N2,565, against the N2,500 previous payment. Those on Padi bouquet will pay additional N50 to put the price at N1,850.

Minister Inaugurates Committee On Audience Measurement in Advertising

The Minister of Information and Culture, Alhaji Lai Mohammed on Tuesday inaugurated the Task Team on Audience Measurement, charging it to develop an industry framework that will serve as a catalyst for putting in place a robust Audience Measurement System that meets global standards and supports the realization of the immense potential of the Nigerian Creative Industry.

The Minister, who inaugurated the committee virtually in Abuja, said the absence of a world class measurement regime has resulted in under-investment in the sector, which is necessary to foster the growth of the industry, as the Advertising community continues to rely on subjective factors when making decisions on the content they want, as opposed to how many viewers the content truly attracts.

Alhaji Mohammed stressed the need for an objective and scientific Audience Measurement System that articulates the value of the content to consumers, as well as the value of the audience to advertisers, particularly in the television sector.

He said for the Digital Switch Over (DSO) in broadcasting to be effective, there has to be a robust Audience Measurement System to make it sustainable for Signal Distributors, Channel Owners, TV Content Producers and Advertisers.

He further charged the committee to identify best practice Audience Measurement System that will support the sustainable growth of the Nigeria Creative Industry; recommend a Framework for supporting the sustainability of the Audience Measurement System, independent of the Federal Government; and recommend a Payment and Disbursement Framework among the key stakeholders in the industry, that is, the Broadcasting Organizations of Nigeria (BON), Media Independent Practitioners Association of Nigeria (MIPAN) and the Advertisers Association of Nigeria (ADVAN).

Responding, the Chairman of the Committee, Alhaji Bello Kankarofi, said the inauguration of the Committee is a watershed in the annals of the broadcast and advertising industry in the country, adding that there was a failed attempt in 1995 to set up an Audience Measurement System for the advertising industry.

Other members of the Committee are: Mr. Obi Asika; Hajia Sa’aa Ibrahim; Mr. Mahmoud Ali Balogun; Mrs Pauline Ehusani; Mr. Tolu Ogunkoya and Mr. Joe Mutah as Secretary.

The Committee has six weeks to submit its report.



The Minister of Information and Culture, Alhaji Lai Mohammed (right), and the Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Information and Culture, Deaconess Grace Isu-Gekpe, when the Minister inaugurated the Task Team on Audience Measurement in Advertising virtually in Abuja on Tuesday.

Editor's Note

Proactive adjustment to the lull in activity posed by the lockdown on Covid-19 pandemic has become necessary for many organizations. In four months time, specifically in September and October 2020, the people of Edo and Ondo states would be poised to vote for governors that would run their affairs for the next four years. And the Independent Electoral Commission, INEC, saddled with the duty of conducting the polls, will have to do so under the prevailing pandemic. A tasking job, you would say. But when you read our opening story on a virtual town hall organized by YIAGA Africa and implementing partners of the EU-SDGN project in Nigeria, you will find answers to the legal, security, health challenges surrounding the conduct of the two elections during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Journalists have continued to be at the receiving end of the avoidable but unrestrained anger of state governors and lawmakers for no other reason than doing their legitimate job of reporting as you would find in our stories relating to detention, assault and prosecution of journalists in Imo, Delta, Akwa Ibom and Bauchi states.

These are bad times for businesses and the media, which weathered the lockdown by reporting verified information on Covid-19 for the rest of us while others took a forced vacation, is facing an uncertain future in the absence of any form of stimulus package. Downsizing, pay cut, forced leave and staggered pay are words and phrases that have found their way into the lexicon of the media, unfortunately. We bring you the details in our page on Media Business.

As if the assault on the media is not enough, prices for pay-per-view TV that many Nigerians depend on for variety of news and leisure during Covid-19 lockdown, has increased. Many have taken to social media to register their displeasure at the increase and the federal lawmakers have taken the cue and pledged to launch an investigation with a view to bringing the prohibitive cost down.

Interestingly, this policy attention by the lawmakers is also matched by the ministerial inauguration during the week of a committee on advertisement industry to find innovative ways to reposition the creative industry post Covid-19.

Our weekly report on Covid-19, as usual, brings you a weekly breakdown of the infections across the 36 states of the federation and the FCT, Abuja, courtesy of the NCDC.

Happy reading

The Editor
Institute for Media and Society, Nigeria

NCDC Confirmed COVID -19 Cases by State, June 5, 2020

States Affected	No. of Cases (Lab Confirmed)	No. of Cases (on admission)	No. Discharged	No. of Deaths
Lagos	5,542	4,573	902	67
Kano	980	575	359	46
FCT	792	555	215	22
Katsina	385	230	136	19
Edo	351	260	77	14
Borno	322	111	185	26
Kaduna	320	122	189	9
Oyo	318	213	98	7
Ogun	316	143	164	9
Rivers	290	176	97	17
Jigawa	274	116	153	5
Bauchi	256	26	222	8
Gombe	170	36	127	7
Kwara	127	81	45	1
Delta	116	77	31	8
Sokoto	115	4	97	14
Plateau	113	29	82	2
Nasarawa	90	54	31	5
Ebonyi	80	72	8	0
Zamfara	76	0	71	5
Yobe	52	20	25	7
Osun	47	8	35	4
Imo	47	28	19	0
Akwa Ibom	45	29	14	2
Adamawa	42	11	27	4
Niger	41	23	17	1
Ondo	36	11	21	4
Kebbi	33	0	29	4
Bayelsa	30	19	8	3
Ekiti	25	5	18	2
Enugu	24	12	12	0
Taraba	18	8	10	0
Abia	15	8	7	0
Benue	13	12	1	0
Anambra	12	8	3	1
Kogi	3	3	0	0

Highlights

- On the 4th of June 2020, 350 new confirmed cases and 8 deaths were recorded in Nigeria.
- No new state has reported a case in the last 24 hours.
- Till date, 11516 cases have been confirmed, 3535 cases have been discharged and 323 deaths have been recorded in 35 states and the Federal Capital Territory.
- The 350 new cases are reported from 20 states- Lagos (102), Ogun (34), FCT (29), Borno (26), Kaduna (23), Rivers (21), Kwara (16), Ebonyi (17), Katsina (14), Edo (10), Delta (10), Kano (10), Bauchi (10), Bayelsa (9), Imo (8), Plateau (4), Ondo (3), Nasarawa (2), Gombe (1), Oyo (1)

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