

# THE GODSON TURNED GODFATHER: GOVERNOR DICKSON & BAYELSA'S 2019 ELECTION



## BAYELSA DECIDES 2019



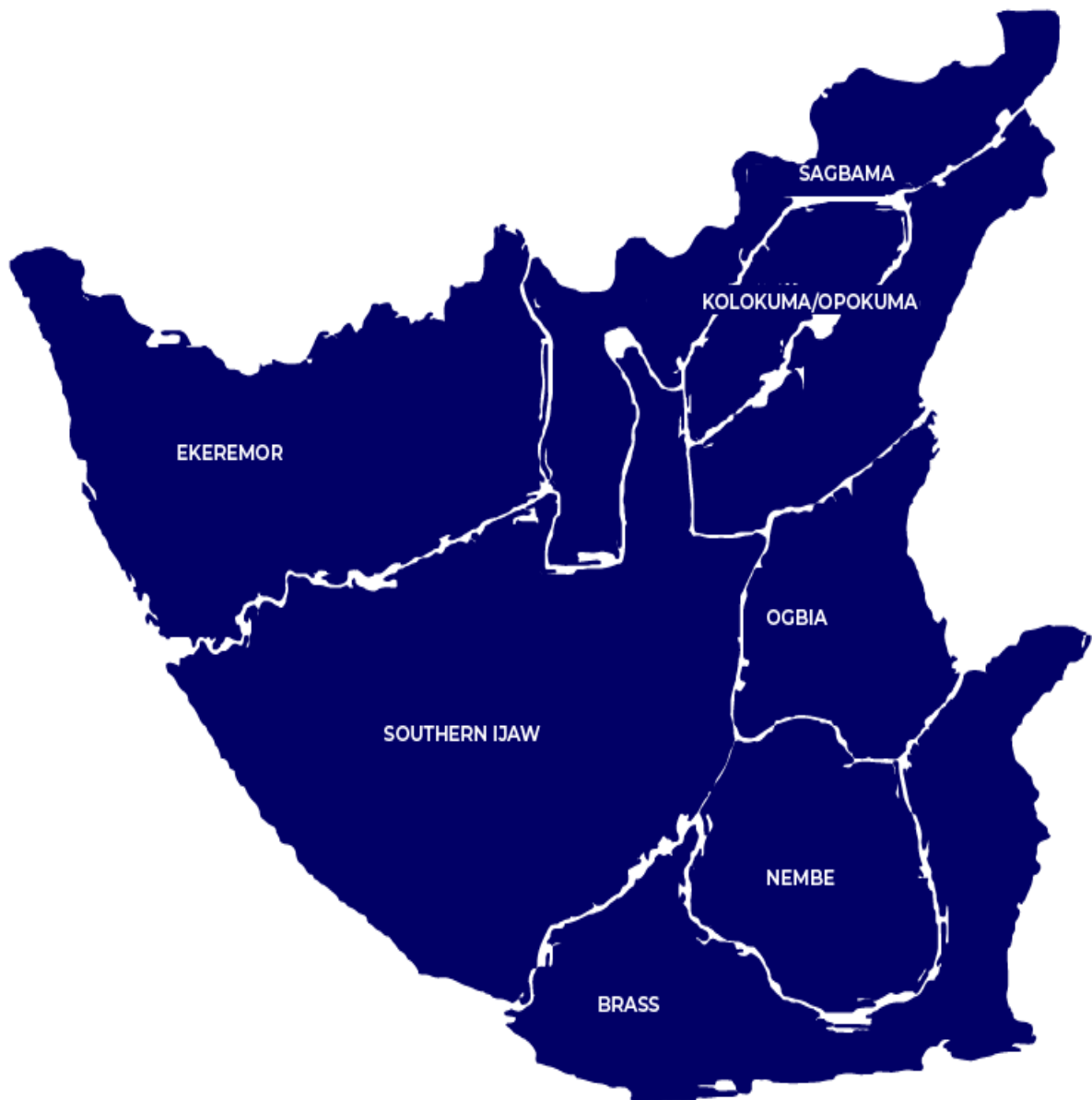
Centre for Democracy & Development  
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## Introduction

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has slated 16 November 2019 for off-cycle gubernatorial elections in Bayelsa and Kogi States. These will be the first major elections to be conducted by INEC since the 2019 general elections. The Bayelsa election is an off-cycle vote due to court dispute and decisions that occurred in 2008 and 2012 under former governor, and now Minister of State for Petroleum Resources, Timipre Sylva.

Bayelsa State was created from Rivers State on 1 October 1996. Inhabited by over two million people spread across eight local government areas (LGAs). Bayelsa State has 1,806 Polling Units, 105 Wards, three senatorial districts, five federal constituencies and 24 members of the State House of Assembly.

**Fig 1: Map of Bayelsa State**



It is the least populated state with the smallest number of local governments in Nigeria, but it is oil-rich. Since the return of democracy in 1999, five governors and two acting governors, all elected under the platform of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), have ran the states affairs (see Table 1).

S/N	Name	Time in office	Position	Senatorial District	LGA	Party
1	Diepreye Alamiyeseigha	29 May 1999 - 9 December 2005	Governor	Central	Ijaw South	PDP
2	Goodluck Jonathan	9 December 2005 - 29 May 2007	Governor	East	Ogbia	PDP
3	Timipre Sylva	29 May 2007 - 16 April 2008	Governor	East	Brass	PDP
4	Werinipre Seibarugo	16 April 2008 - 27 May 2008	Acting Governor	Central	Yenagoa	PDP
5	Timipre Sylva	27 May 2008 - 27 January 2012	Governor	East	Brass	PDP
6	Nestor Binabo	27 January 2012 - 14 February 2012	Acting Governor	West	Sagbama	PDP
7	Henry Dickson	14 February 2012 - Till date	Governor	West	Sagbama	PDP

## GOVERNING BAYELSA

Diepreye Alamiyeseigha became the first democratically elected Governor of Bayelsa State in 1999, a position to which he was re-elected in 2003 for a further four year term. However, his tenure was cut short in December 2005 when 17 of the 24 members of the state legislature impeached him after high profile, and multiple, corruption cases were leveled against him by the authorities in Nigeria and the United Kingdom. He ended up gaining notoriety as being the first governor to have been tried outside of Nigeria for money laundering.

Goodluck Jonathan, who had been Alamiyeseigha's deputy since 1999, replaced him as the governor of the state. Two years later, he vacated his seat after he was hand-picked by former President Olusegun Obasanjo to run alongside Umar

Yar' Adua as the PDP's vice-presidential candidate. Timipre Sylva succeeded

Jonathan, but his election victory was successfully challenged by the opposition party, Action Congress (AC), who had the vote nullified on 15 April 2008. Speaker of the State House of Assembly, Werinipre Seibarugo, acted as governor for one month to fill the vacuum created by the Appeal Court's Judgement, and to allow for an election to be held that was in conformity with the ruling of the court.

elections he produced two of the three Senators that came from the state, three of the five House of Representatives members and 19 of the 24 members in the State House of Assembly. The governor's preferred candidate, Senator Duoye Diri also emerged from the primary process in September 2019 as the PDP's flagbearer.

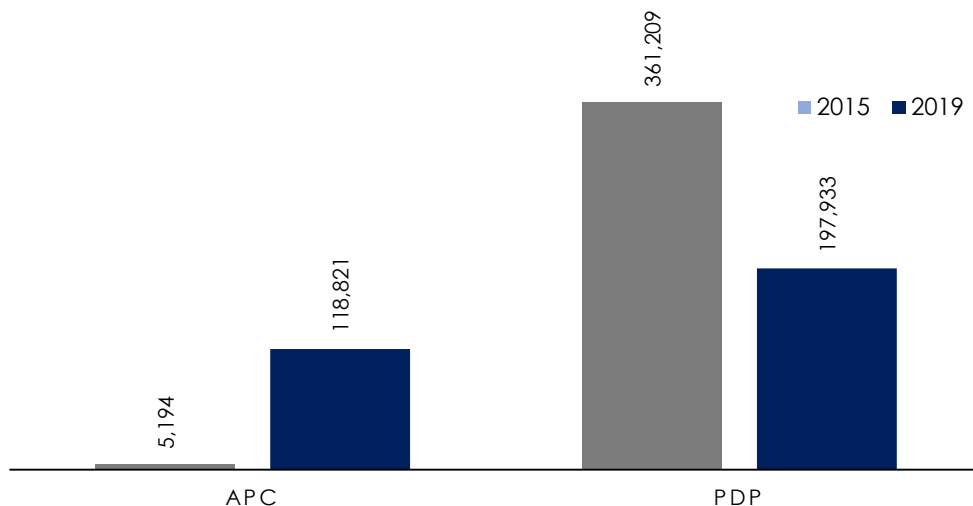


In November, Senator Diri will face off against Chief David Lyon who emerged victorious from the All Progressive Congress (APC) primary that took place in the same month. The elevation of this particular APC candidate is widely believed to have been solely facilitated by the former PDP governor and current Minister of State for Petroleum Resources in an APC administration, Timipre Sylva.

The APC faces a tough task to win in a state that has been the exclusive preserve of the PDP since the return to democracy in 1999. However, there are signs that it might have a chance of

breaking that tradition in November. In the 2019 presidential election the APC won 118,821 votes; a huge increase on the 5,194 it won in 2015. Not only did the APC vote share rise more than twenty-fold, but the PDP vote dropped from 361,209 in 2015 to 197,933 in the 2019 presidential ballot. The party also scored an unprecedented victory by winning one seat in the Senate, two in the House of Representatives and four in the State House of Assembly.

**Fig 2: Comparative Analysis of APC and PDP Votes in Bayelsa in 2015 and 2019 Presidential Elections**



Despite the fact that 43 other political parties have presented their candidates to INEC for the forthcoming election, this election will once again be a two-horse race. Like the 2015 governorship election, it is going to be a straight fight between the two prominent political parties - PDP and APC - but unlike the previous elections, the contest is likely to be much closer.

Incumbent Governor, Serieake Dickson, received 89.4% of the votes cast by the electorate in 2012 amidst turnout of 72%. The story in December 2015 was quite different. Twenty political parties took part, but the major contest was between

the PDP and APC. INEC declared the election inconclusive after it cancelled the poll in Southern Ijaw LGA following reports of widespread electoral malpractices and violence. Supplementary elections were held on 9 January 2016 in Southern Ijaw. In the end incumbent Governor Dickson won 60% of votes cast to defeat, Timipre Sylva of the APC, who fell short with 38%. Turnout was almost half of what it had been in 2012 at 37%. Dickson won in Nembe, Ogbia, Ekeremor, Sagbama, Yenagoa, Kolokuma/Opokuma and Southern Ijaw LGAs while APC candidate secured victory only in his LGA of Brass.

**Table 2: Distribution of Votes by Local Government in the 2015 Governorship Election**

S/N	LGA	PDP	APC
1	Nembe	10768	6974
2	Ogbia	13051	9106
3	Ekeremor	14602	7918
4	Brass	6516	21755
5	Sagbama	28934	5382
6	Yenagoa	24258	14563
7	Kolokuma/Opokuma	7619	6896
8	Southern Ijaw	23081	10216

The political hegemony of the PDP in Bayelsa State has remained a tough nut to crack for the APC. However, the impressive performance that APC displayed in 2019 general elections where the party won over 35% of the vote, and secured a victory in Jonathan's backyard - Bayelsa East senatorial zone - might be a sign that traditional voting patterns are less certain to hold in the 2019 governorship election.

### **Who's in the running, and from where?**

A total of 45 political parties have signified their intention to contest the Bayelsa State governorship election (for a full list, see Annex 1). The APC is the only political party that opted for a direct primary process in choosing its candidate; the rest adopted an indirect method. This is a significant increase in the number of participating political parties compared with 2015, when just 20 political parties vied for control of the state.

In the history of the state, no woman has either been elected governor or deputy governor. In 2019 just three women (7%

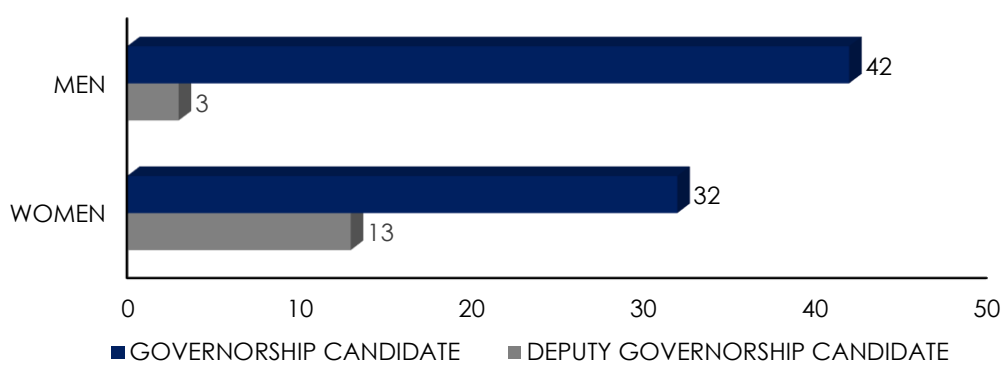
of the total) will contest for the governorship whilst 13 (29% of the total) are seeking to be chosen as deputy governor. However, with the two leading political parties - APC and PDP - having no female members of the ticket, and having won 98% of the votes cast in 2015, Bayelsa's two-decade wait for a female governor or deputy is set to continue.

Of the 42 male candidates that are contesting for this election, just 7% are between the ages of 30 and 35. Most (53%) fall into the 36 to 45 category, with 16% over the age of 55. The governorship candidate of the New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP) is the oldest contestant at 70 years old. The academic qualifications of contestants also varies. 44% of the candidates have secondary school certificates as their highest level of educational qualification, for 31% of candidates that highest-level of qualification is a Bachelor's degree. Just 2% have a Masters degree.

**Table 3: Socio-demographic Data of Governorship Candidates and their deputies**

Positions	No. of Position	Total No. of Men	Total No. of Women	% of Women	Total No. of PWDs (%)	Age 30-35 (%)	Age 36-45 (%)	Age 46-55 (%)	Age 56-65 (%)	Age 66 & Above (%)	% of all Male candidates
Governor	1	42	3	6.66	0 (0)	3 (6.66)	24 (53.33)	11 (24.44)	4 (8.88)	3 (6.66)	93.3
	Deputy Governor	1	32	13	28.88	0 (0)	5 (11.11)	26 (57.77)	7 (15.55)	5 (11.11)	2 (4.44)

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### The politics of zoning

Zoning is always a subject of discussion among political players in the prelude to any election in Nigeria. In Bayelsa State, there has already been intense scheming, alignment, realignment and horse-trading ahead of election day and even the primary process. Bayelsa Central senatorial district produced Diepreye Alameiyeseigha, the states' first governor. He hailed from Ijaw South LGA. Goodluck Jonathan who ruled after him came from Ogbia LGA in Bayelsa East senatorial zone. Timipre Sylva is from Brass LGA, the same senatorial district as Goodluck Jonathan and the incumbent Governor Dickson is of Bayelsa West senatorial district in Sagbama LGA.

Ahead of the 2019 elections, there were reported clamouring by the concerned citizens of Bayelsa State that the Kolokuma/Opokuma LGA –

the least favoured LGA in terms of political patronage of high-ranking government officials - should be given a sense of belonging. Those in support of this arrangement argue that whilst all other seven LGAs have been represented either by governors or deputy governors, Kolokuma/Opokuma has held either of the two most prominent positions in the state.

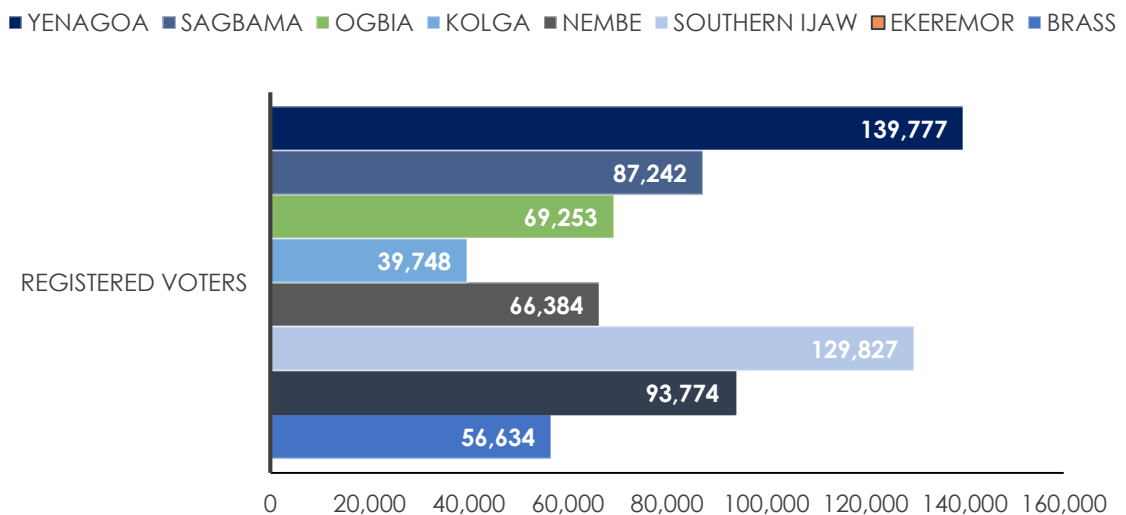
The two leading political parties, PDP and APC, factored zoning into their choice of candidate. Both are from the same senatorial district, Bayelsa Central. David Lyon, is an indigene of Southern Ijaw LGA, where the states first elected governor came from and the LGA which had the highest number of registered voters after the state capital, Yenagoa, in 2015. Lyon named Biobarakuma Degi-Eremienyo, the current Senator representing Bayelsa East who hails from Nembe LGA, as his running mate.

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PDP candidate, Senator Diri, is from the so far unrepresented Kolokuma/Opokuma LGA. The choice of his running mate generated controversy within the PDP as they debated which of the three senatorial districts and their local governments he should come from. In the end, Senator Lawrence Ewhrudjakpor from Bayelsa West senatorial zone, Sagbama LGA was selected; the same combination as the current governor. But in order to

retain the confidence of people of Southern Ijaw, the speaker of the State House of Assembly was replaced. The PDP flagbearer and the former state house speaker, Tonye Isenah, are from the same Kolokuma/Opokuma LGA. The new Speaker, Bubou Obolo hails from Southern Ijaw, the LGA of the APC candidate. The two political parties recognise the importance of Southern Ijaw, also known as “Bayelsa Kano”, for the sizeable number of votes it holds in the election. However the number of registered voters across the state has risen dramatically in the last four years; up from 654,493 to 923,182.

**Fig 4: Number of Registered Voters in Bayelsa in 2015**



### Rancorous Party Primaries

Primary contests within political parties have become an integral part of Nigeria’s electoral system. It is a process through which members of a political party vote or chose a candidate of their choice to select the flagbearer for an election race. According to Section 87 of the Electoral Act of 2010 (as amended), the procedure for the nomination of candidates by political parties for various elective positions can be by a direct or indirect process. When a political party adopts the direct method, only its registered members are allowed to vote for any candidate aspiring to vie for elective positions. Indirect primaries allow select members of a political party, called “delegates” to elect on behalf of the members.

## **The PDP ticket: Anointed by the governor**

Internal disputes within the PDP are an accumulated crisis, that started long before the Bayelsa primary race. However, the primary election conducted in Bayelsa in September 2019 may be the straw that finally breaks the camel's back. Trouble started brewing in the build-up to 2019 general elections over allegations of a skewed primary election in favour of all the National and State House of Assembly candidates loyal to Governor Dickson's "Restoration Team". Despite protests, threats of defection and a petition to the National Working Committee of the PDP, the party endorsed these aspirants and presented them as candidates in the 2019 general elections.

As the first governor to have served two full terms in the history of the state, Governor Dickson has been able to build a formidable political structure called the "Restoration Team"; a splinter group of Jonathan's political family, the "Green Movement". To underscore his dominance, all appointive and political positions including those who contested National and State House of Assemblies under the flag of PDP in the 2019 general elections were reported to have been singlehandedly selected by the governor's "Restoration Family". The same scenario was reported to have played out during local government elections held on 10 August 2019 where the party won all the seats after the APC boycotted it citing its lack of confidence in the capacity and impartiality of the State Independent Electoral Commission.

The PDP governorship primary election, conducted over 3-4 of September, was no different. In the warm-up to the primary election, Governor Dickson initially stated that he had no anointed candidate, before backtracking and stating that whoever emerges as the PDP governorship aspirant must come from the inner caucus of the restoration camp or the party would risk suffering defeat. He was unequivocal,

*"Let me tell you, Oforoma-Pepe (Dickson) is in charge; there is no candidate or aspirant in PDP, none of them that can lead our party to victory during the governorship election without my support, forget about those making mouth, we are the support base of PDP in Bayelsa".*

More than nine of the 21 contestants affirmed their allegiance to the Restoration Team, yet only three were considered 'loyal' enough by the governor: Secretary to the state government, Kemela Okara, the governor's Chief of Staff, Talford Ongolo and Senator Douye Diri. The name of the Deputy Governor, Rear Admiral John Jonah (Rtd) was conspicuous by its absence.

In voting, Senator Douye Diri beat the other 20 contestants to emerge victorious as the candidate of the party. He polled 561 votes to defeat his nearest challenger Timi Alaibe, who many believed had the support of Goodluck Jonathan, by 196 votes. Senator Diri had been a commissioner for youth and sports when Goodluck Jonathan was the state governor and was a member of the House of Representatives before his 2019 election to the Senate, where he represented Bayelsa Central.

Timi Alaibe, who before the primary, has raised concern over plots to undermine the electoral process, was quick to reject the outcome. He described the whole exercise as flawed and designed to brazenly robbed him of victory. He has filed a case to seek nullification of the primary at the Federal High Court in Yenagoa where he listed the PDP, its flagbearer and INEC among the defendants in the suit.. Alaibe has sought transfer of his case to the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja over state of insecurity in Bayelsa and that has been granted. The case is yet to be heard.

Disputes within the PDP are multilayered. Close observers of Bayelsa politics trace the crisis back to the period just after the 2015 election when Governor Dickson first stirred the hornet's nest by firing a salvo at former President Goodluck Jonathan over his ineptitude in office:

*"the Jonathan Presidency was a waste to the Ijaw nation and the Niger Delta, that it did not attract any meaningful development to the area"*

The apparent rift that has subsequently developed between Jonathan, the Godfather, and Dickson, the Godson has split the PDP in the state. Until 2015, the governor had always been under the tutelage of Jonathan.



Dickson got his major political appointment as Commissioner of Justice and Attorney General when Jonathan was Governor of Bayelsa and he served as a member of the House of Representatives when Jonathan was the vice president. This loyalty led to him being considered for governor in late 2011 after irreconcilable differences between Jonathan and Sylva emerged.

But Governor Dickson appears to have abandoned the former President's Green Movement that had initially brought him into the limelight and formed his own power base in what some pundits described as a move to have absolute control over the soul of the party in the state.

For now, the former President has made public efforts to downplay the fallout by appearing at some of the PDP events in the state and in refraining from making any castigating public remarks about Governor Dickson. However the fact that he has reportedly refused to congratulate the PDP flagbearer despite paying him a courtesy visit after the primary election or that he was not present at the campaign flag-off of the party when PDP unveiled its flagbearer to the public, has not gone unnoticed. It is being viewed as his rejection of PDP candidate.

This behind the scenes battle for supremacy of the party is seen by some as a contributory factor that led to APC scoring a significant political victory by winning some seats at the National and State Assemblies in the 2019 general election. It is not inconceivable for those results to repeat themselves in November, especially in light of the slew of defections from the PDP that followed the primary election. The current Deputy Governor's younger brother, Gabriel Jonah, took thousands of his political group 'Otita Force' to the APC; former senator and associate of Goodluck Jonathan, Nimi Brigham Amange, has dumped the party and moved to APC; and former deputy governor and a two-time Speaker of the Bayelsa State House of Assembly, Ebebi Peremobowei, resigned his membership of the party to join the opposition.

The fall-out from the primary election has also led to the resignation of close to ten cabinet members of Governor Dickson's administration. This includes Senior Special Assistant on Community Development, Ombu Napoleon; Special Adviser on Environment, Rewari-Igbeta; Special Adviser on Information and Communication Technology, Natus Zebakame; Special Adviser on Conflict Resolution and Oil and Gas-Producing Communities, Tiwei Orunmighe; and Special Assistant on Students' Affairs, Iniruo Ipogi. Some of these political appointees have moved straight to pitch their tent with APC.

As is usually the case in Nigeria, in an effort to calm frayed nerves in the aftermath of the primary election, the governor extended olive branches and pacified some of the other contestants including his Deputy Governor, John Jonah, Chief of Staff, Talford Ongolo and Keniebi Okoko. He, along with the national body of PDP, is also said to be intensifying efforts to assuage the anger of other aggrieved contestants ahead of the November election.

### **The APC ticket: Directly chosen**

The APC is also faced with a mountain of complaints over the process that led to the election of its flagbearer. After postponing the primary twice in compliance with conflicting court judgements over the mode of primary, it eventually held direct primaries for the six aspirants on 3-4 September. Oil magnate and philanthropist, David Lyon got the majority of the votes, 42,138, far ahead of his nearest rival Diseye Poweigha, who won just 1533 votes.

Although the election Collation Officer, Senator Emmanuel Dangana under the Chairmanship of Yobe State Governor, Mai-Mala Buni, described the poll as credible and peaceful, others did not agree.

One of the aspirants, Prince Preye Aganaba, wrote a petition to the appeal committee set up by the party, claiming that the primary lacked credibility and was rife with irregularities. He alleged that the Returning Officer, Mai-Mala Buni, was not in Bayelsa to witness the primary and that the party secretary remained incommunicado throughout the exercise; failing to respond to complaints raised by the aspirants.

Not satisfied by the verdict of the APC's Appeal Committee, Aganaba proceeded to the Federal High Court in Yenagoa to seek cancellation of the primary election conducted by the party. The standard-bearer of the party, David Lyon, and INEC are the defendants in the suit. Aganaba is not alone in his complaints. Immediate past Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Senator Heineken Lokpobiri is seeking redress in the law court after the party's National Working Committee failed to cancel the results of the primary election. Peter Ozobo, an aggrieved party member, has also approached the Federal High Court in Abuja over the primary that produced David Lyon. He wants the court to disqualify both the flagbearer and his running mate on the grounds that the election was not conducted through direct primary as claimed by the party. He argues that several APC members were disenfranchised from voting and there was manipulation of results in places where the election did not even take place.

In a twist to the court saga, the PDP has latched on to the APC crisis by acting as a party in the suit. The PDP flagbearer and his running mate has asked the court to disqualify the APC candidate for his unlawful nomination for the November governorship election.

Just like the ruling party, the APC had its challenges before the primary but they were not as pronounced. The mass defection of about 5,000 APC members, including leading figures to PDP last year, at the instance of Timi Alaibe appears not to have whittled down the strength of APC given its impressive performance in the state in the 2019 general elections. But a new wave of defections are also hitting the

party with prominent chieftains such as the APC Chairman in Sagbama Local Government, Peter Bofumo, a former chairman of Rural Development Area of Epe Atissa and a member of the APC Campaign Organisation Protocol Committee and the Committee on Policy and Programmer, Hon Lecky Tamama all reportedly switching their allegiance to the PDP.

The lack of internal cohesion and inability of the leadership of the APC to resolve disunity might be its undoing. Currently, two factions are laying claims to the leadership of APC in the state. One faction led by the state chairman of the party, Jothan Amos and loyal to the Minister of State for Petroleum Resources, Timipre Sylva, suspended five party executives from the opposing faction over alleged gross misconduct and anti-party activities.

That faction, controlled by the deputy chairman of the party, Ogeibiri Orubebe, is aligned with former Minister of State for Agriculture and Rural Development, Heineken Lokpobiri. It has taken similar actions, suspending seven chieftains aligned to Amos for alleged acts of misconduct and deliberately causing division within the party.

The events that led to the split in the camp of APC started prior to the primary election when rumours emerged that Chairman Amos had a premeditated agenda to ensure a particular candidate emerged as the party's flagbearer. To achieve this, he endorsed using the direct primary method. An approach that did not go down well with many on the state executive committee of the party. All attempts to nip this crisis in the bud failed. It was with a divided house that the party went into the primary and the outcome of the primary election has further compounded its internal crisis.

## Determining the winner

### Political gladiators

Former President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan is an indigene of Bayelsa State as well as a former deputy governor and governor. The stakes in this election are higher for Jonathan as a former President just as they are for PDP as the ruling party in the state. The election gives Jonathan the opportunity to restore some of his political relevance having lost his senatorial zone to APC in 2019. To lose seven seats across the National and State House of Assemblies - as they did in 2019 - would have been a big disappointment, but to lose the governorship seat would be a crushing personal political blow to him.

It is alleged that PDP members loyal to the former President are still yet to recover from the embarrassing defeat suffered in Jonathan's constituency in the 2019 general elections which was in part the result of an unpopular candidate being imposed by Governor Dickson. Whilst Jonathan will be keen to ensure a PDP victory, it is worth noting that his favoured candidate, Timi Alaibe, failed to win the PDP primary despite the backing of the former president.

Despite this power struggle, and his inability to win the presidential election in 2015, Jonathan is still a force to be reckoned with. He wields significant influence and is regarded as a revered political leader within the PDP's hierarchy. PDP governors in states like Rivers and Bauchi still frequently defer to him and seek his counsel in official matters. The party will leverage his personality during the campaign, leaving the "silent" battle between Jonathan and the Governor Dickson, which has rendered Jonathan inactive in PDP affairs in the state, as an issue to be resolved by the party after the election is won.

The growing popularity of APC in the state is coupled with the party's determination to wrestle power from a state that has traditionally been a PDP stronghold means a fierce contest is expected. Having won a senatorial seat, two seats at

the House of Representatives and four seats in the State House of Assembly in the last general elections, the APC now has its sights set on the governorship.

This Bayelsa election can also serve as a launching pad aimed at making inroads into the South-South region ahead of the 2023 general elections. It is therefore likely that the federal government will do all that is reasonably possible, and muster all the available resources, to ensure its party wins the governorship seat in Bayelsa.

Minister of State for Petroleum Resources, Timipre Sylva, who many regard as *the* godfather in the state politics is the arrowhead of this onslaught. He has a strong influence over, and requisite clout in, the local politics of the state. After 2015, when the APC was in disarray over members frustrations and perceived betrayals for not getting any tangible benefit from the APC-led government at the centre, Sylva was able to convince party members and supporters to keep faith in the APC. His efforts paid off with the APC victories in the state in the 2019 general elections. His appointment as the Minister of State for Petroleum Resources is believed to be a reward for the loyalty he showed and the hard work done.

Finally, the influence of the former Managing Director of the Niger Delta Development Commission, Ndutimi Alaibe in the politics of Bayelsa State should not be dismissed. Known as "the Principal" by his supporters, Alaibe is a politician that has traversed virtually all the major political parties in an effort to achieve his governorship ambitions. Initially defecting from the PDP to the Labour Party in 2010, he then joined the APC in 2015 before returning to the PDP fold in 2018.

Alaibe's defection from APC to PDP led to the movement of APC bigwigs such as former Secretary to Bayelsa State Government, Gideon Ekeowei, erstwhile Commissioner for Youths and Sports, Keme Prefa, one-time Chairman of Sagbama Local Government Council, Barnabas Edure, former Executive Secretary, State Universal Basic Education Board, Rhodesia Whyte and other key lawmakers.

His sojourn in different political parties has helped him to build a support base and wide connections across party lines. Given his disgruntlement with the PDP for not supporting him through the primaries to get the ticket and coupled with the manner with which he dumped APC it is not clear who Alaibe will throw his hat behind in this election. What is clear though is that his support carries a lot of weight and is pivotal to the victory of whichever candidate he decides to endorse.

### *A war of words*

The proliferation of fake news and hate speech has again been brought to the front burner ahead of the governorship election in Bayelsa State. This phenomenon is so ingrained in the country's political consciousness that Nigeria was recently described as the world's capital of fake news. In Bayelsa, political players are using fake news and hate speech in an attempt to damage the support base of their opponents and secure more votes for their candidates.

Governor, Seriake Dickson reportedly accused the Nigeria AGIP Oil Company of outsourcing terrorism to the candidate of APC David Lyon, through pipeline security and surveillance contracts. He accused the APC flagbearer of receiving money as a security and surveillance contractor to unleash mayhem and carry out criminal activities against the people of the state, including inflicting injuries on dissenting voices.

The APC fired back at the governor, insisting that the party would not stoop so low by going into the gutter with him for labelling its candidate a terrorist. But it did hold a press conference in Abuja to raise an alarm that Governor Seriake Dickson is procuring arms and stockpiling weapons to force his will on the people. Such defamatory statements on both sides are likely continue to dominate the political space ahead of the governorship election in Bayelsa State.

CDD recognises the damage fake news and hate speech could pose to electoral integrity and peaceful electioneering process.

It is leading a campaign and providing training for critical stakeholders in the state to combat and counter the spread of this menace. Fake news spread fast and is a potent security threat to the forthcoming election in Bayelsa State. Of particular concern is the deliberate attempts by the political parties to spread false information and shape the narratives before polling day. Both the APC and PDP in Bayelsa run media hubs dedicated to producing and disseminating misinformation and the spread of falsehoods.

In Bayelsa, just like in other parts of Nigeria, Facebook and WhatsApp are the two social media platforms most used to peddle fake news and misinformation. Information that can subsequently spread offline and be circulated in places like open market, football viewing centres, motor parks and bars. Allowing it to reach those who are not online or who are not digitally savvy.

### *Beyond words: the likelihood of violence*

The Niger Delta in general, and Bayelsa State in particular, have a history of electoral violence. This is compounded by widespread established incidents of insecurity that include cult violence, piracy, abductions and attacks on oil facilities. Following the Niger Delta amnesty programme, introduced by the administration of Umar Yar' Adua in 2009, many of the ex-militant warlords in the state embraced politics to maintain relevance and as a means of survival. Some have even occupied political and appointive positions. But in doing so, the majority have become a willing tool in the hands of the politicians; acting as political thugs. This situation has raised fears and concerns that ex-militants can be easily deployed to carry out political violence.

The 2011 governorship election, the first that brought Governor Dickson into power was reported to be relatively peaceful.

However, it was not free from violent incidents such as kidnappings, explosions at political gatherings, attacks on opponents and even cases of attempted murder. The 2015 governorship election was marred by pre-election violence. In the build-up to the election, there were reported acts of intimidation against political opponents, including the destruction of campaign posters, the disruption of campaign rallies, cult clashes, abductions, loss of lives and the destruction of property. Four military men were said to have been killed by unidentified gunmen following an attack on a Joint Task Force (JTF) military base in Nembe LGA.

In this climate it was no surprise that the election held on 5 December 2015 was punctuated by violence, ballot box snatching, bloodshed, assassination and hostage-taking of electoral officers. This forced INEC to cancel voting in Southern Ijaw LGA and declare the election inconclusive. The supplementary vote, originally scheduled for 6 January 2016, had to be moved until 9 January due to further widespread violence. Despite the heavy presence of security agents for the supplementary polls, there were still reports of violence committed by supporters of PDP and APC in Brass, Ekeremor, Nembe and Southern Ijaw LGAs. Five people were reported to have been killed with many more injured. The electoral violence led to the displacement of 600 people who took shelter in temporary camps in Southern Ijaw to escape further attacks. Described as one of the most difficult terrains in the Niger Delta, Southern Ijaw is also notorious for having the highest number of militant camps at the height of militancy in the Niger Delta.

Most of the communities are spread out with many only accessible by water. The area is a regular flashpoint for electoral violence with a propensity to spread it to other parts of the state. Due to the gravity of atrocities perpetrated during the 2015/16 governorship election, a judicial commission of inquiry was set up by the Bayelsa State government to probe the killings and thuggery in order to forestall a repeat.

and few, if any, of its unpublished recommendations from 2015 will not be applied in 2019.

With the reported stockpiling of dangerous weapons by the criminals and political thugs, assassination of PDP ward Chairman, Seidougha Taribi, and reports of sustained and heavy gunfire on 30 September 2019 at the premises of Bayelsa State House of Assembly over its change in leadership, there is a strong likelihood that electoral violence will be a significant feature of this forthcoming election.

### *An impartial umpire?*

One of the first elections that INEC conducted under current Chairman, Professor Mahmood Yakubu, was the 2015 governorship election in Bayelsa State: declared inconclusive after widespread violence.

By the time INEC conducts the Bayelsa State governorship election on 16 November eight months will have passed since the 2019 general elections. A period sufficient for INEC to undertake thorough planning and address some of the pitfalls that characterised the last general elections in February 2019. This includes logistical failures, disruption and manipulation of ward-level collation, vote-buying, INEC personnel misconduct and pockets of violence that led to the deaths of at least 58 people.

Bayelsa State has a unique geographical terrain. Movement within the state is mostly by limited water transportation, making it difficult to mobilise personnel and materials for elections. This has previously resulted in the late, or non-arrival of logistics including personnel. There have also been situations, as recent as the 2019 general elections, where politicians deliberate sabotage INEC efforts by making it almost impossible for its officials to transport materials to certain locations.



Despite the array of challenges facing it, INEC has reassured Nigerians that it has prepared enough and is ready for this election. The onus is on INEC to guard against situations that could cause this election to reach an inconclusive verdict, like in 2015, and to produce a credible result.

### **Towards a credible poll**

Regardless of the outcome of the governorship election, what should be of utmost concern to every indigene of Bayelsa State is that a peaceful and credible election takes place which reflects the will of the people. Voters should be wary not to be used by politicians who have drawn the battle lines and set the tone for a battle to control of the state, but which has as much to do with their own selfish interests, as it does for state-wide development. The rising incidents of vote-buying during the election period are a concern and INEC should work closely with law enforcement agencies to prevent its occurrence.

However, CDD is aware of several cases of security agents acting in connivance with the politicians to subvert the electoral process. It is important for security services to perform their constitutional role of maintaining law and order during the election period without exhibiting bias in the cause of their duties.

INEC can help by ensuring that there is timely arrival and timely deployment of personnel and logistics materials. Beyond profiling the boat and vehicle owners for security measures, concrete arrangements should be made with the operators for easy facilitation of movement of personnel and election materials during the entire election period. Furthermore, INEC should make detailed results accessible to election observers and the general public to avoid accusations of a lack of transparency.

All the relevant stakeholders should take cognisance of the history of electoral violence in Bayelsa State and put in place measures to address it both during and after the vote. Until there are sustained efforts to punish electoral offenders, such acts will continue to reign with impunity.

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## Annex 1

## List of Governorship Candidate and their Deputy

S/N	Party	Position	Candidate	PWD	Age	Gender	Qualifications
1	ACCORD	Governor	Ebizimo Dariyal		49	M	SSCE, LLB, BL
		Deputy Governor	Dangosu Macacustine Maclean		62	M	HND
2	AAC	Governor	Kalango Stanley Davies		39	M	FSLC, SSCE, NECO
		Deputy	Nathaniel Eruguadei Abule		40	F	FSLC, SSCE, HND
3	AD	Governor	Owei-Tongu woniwel		49	M	SSCE
		Deputy Governor	Ikeinka Genesis Doikumo		45	M	SSCE
4	ADP	Governor	Felagha Adika		35	M	BSc
		Deputy Governor	Tubo Ebitiene		35	F	FSLC, WASC, BSc
5	AGAP	Governor	Fayerofori T. Bob-Manuel		42	M	NECO
		Deputy Governor	Ebimene Solomon Shanker		40	M	NECO
6	ANP	Governor	Kunde Noah		56	M	Btech
		Deputy Governor	Furo Tautogu Kemmer		42	M	WASC
7	APA	Governor	Abbey E. Daniel		43	M	FSLC, WAEC, BSc
		Deputy Governor	Weleke Enebiwaikumo.s		42	M	SSCE
8	APC	Governor	Lyon David		49	M	FSLC, WAEC, NCE
		Deputy Governor	Pereworimini Biobarakuma Degi-Ereminenyio		60	M	FSLC, WAEC, BSc, MBA
9	APGA	Governor	Daniel Tonworio Benwari		44	M	Fslc, NECO
		Deputy Governor	Egbe Rose Pamela		59	F	Diploma
10	APM	Governor	Eres Aseimiegha		67	M	FSLC, WASC, Diploma
		Deputy Governor	Anthony Oyinbrakemi Sunday Funpude		52	M	FSLC, WAEC BSc
11	APP	Governor	Samuel Izbeyamadu Dandy Job		37	M	FSLC, SSCE, HND
		Deputy Governor	Ogonibe Rufus Wisaziba		48	M	FSLC
12	ASD	Governor	Awotu Oniekpe		39	M	SSCE
		Deputy Governor	Akanga Ebikibibo Davies		37	M	WAE C
13	BNPP	Governor	Joseph P. Gberebo		44	M	NECO, BSc
		Deputy Governor	Okadu Kenneth		40	M	WAEC
14	CAP	Governor	Oweifabo Felix Ebikemefa		38	M	SSCE, NECO
		Deputy Governor	Victory Izibedueniya Ishie		39	F	LLM
15	CNP	Governor	George Onume		47	M	GCE
		Deputy Governor	Denson A. Ojigbare		45	M	SSCE
16	DA	Governor	Osele Anthony		42	M	FLSC, SSCE, ND
		Deputy Governor	Isula Eburuku		47	M	FSLC, WASC
17	DPC	Governor	Seiyefa Fatepigi Echos		47	m	FSLC, WAEC, SSCE, BSc
		Deputy Governor	Moses Felix Boloukuromo		58	M	WASCE
18	DPP	Governor	Oguare Nengimonyo		37	F	FSLC WAEC

19	FJP	Governor	Akusi Pius	40	M	SSCE
		Deputy Governor	Imomotimi Werede	40	M	Bed
20	APC	Governor	Preye Benson	43	M	OND
		Deputy Governor	Keremah Eneni Mercy-George	44	F	BSc
21	GPN	Governor	Zidougha Gideon Roland Eneyi	47	M	FSLC, WASC, HND, BSc MBF
		Deputy Governor	Talbort Johnne Maclean	52	M	WAEC, LLB, BL
22	HDP	Governor	Timipa Jenkins Okponipere	45	M	FSLC, SSCE
		Deputy Governor	Ato Alfreder Alajiki	38	F	FSLC, SSCE, BSc
23	KP	Governor	Owebor Freedom	40	M	NECO
		Deputy Governor	Golden Maxson Agagowei	43	M	SSCE
24	LM	Governor	Vijah Eldred Opuama	38	M	FSLC WASC
		Deputy Governor	Ide Franklin Bokolo	37	M	FSLC, WAEC
25	LP	Governor	Numofe Ebiowei	45	M	OND
		Deputy Governor	Godfrey Friday Opuene	51	M	BSc
26	MMN	Governor	Okiah Jones Daminola	54	M	FSLC, WAEC, Diploma
		Deputy Governor	James Geoferey Mieseiyeffa	66	M	FSLC, WAEC, BSc, PGDE
27	MPN	Governor	Clement Blessing Azianagbal	43	F	SSCE
		Deputy Governor	Kpou Sergeant Thomas	66	M	SSCE, NCE
28	NCP	Governor	Miebaikedo Ebipade	42	M	FSLC, SSCE
		Deputy Governor	Franklin Pabapa Ebindeii	35	M	FSLC, SSCE
29	NDLP	Governor	Kalas Agai	45	M	ND
		Deputy Governor	Gbomoh Amaebi	41	M	ND
30	NNPP	Governor	Namatebe Inko Abraham	70	M	Grade II
		Deputy Governor	Inko Laye	39	M	SSCE
31	NPC	Governor	Alex Akpoebi BUfumoh	47	M	FSLC, SSCE, BSc, MA
		Deputy Governor	Inenegha Amada Augustus Ebiunone	37	F	SSCE
33	NUP	Governor	Paul O. Fajana	68	M	BSc
		Deputy Governor	Fajana Omjeworo Funokumo	63	M	WASC
34	PDM	Governor	Akali Tasamana Wayman	57	M	WASC
		Deputy Governor	Bipeledei Ayibaketekeme	39	F	BSc
35	PDP	Governor	Diri Duoye	60	M	FSLC, SSCE, B.Ed
		Deputy Governor	Lawrence Oborawharievwo Ewhrudjakpo	54	M	FSLC, SSCE, BSc, LLB, BL
36	PPA	Governor	Alexander Peretu Beke-Areredo	37	M	BSc
		Deputy Governor	Abraham Didekere	44	M	WASC
37	PPP	Governor	Akiki Aprala	53	M	FSLC, WAEC, BS.c
		Deputy Governor	Alokpa Meminiogha	43	F	WAEC
38	PRP	Governor	Okala Azibola	39	M	FSLC, SSCE
		Deputy Governor	Obuma Enuma	35	F	FSLC, SSCE, BS.c

39	SNC	Governor	Gwegwe Righteous Okpoebi	61	M	FSLC, Grade II,, NCE, Bed
		Deputy Governor	Eniyon Jonathan	51	M	FSLC, WAEC, BSc
40	UDP	Governor	Ikimi Inibraranye Silas	48	M	WASC GCE
		Deputy Governor	Paul Frankebona	44	F	WASC, GCE
41	UP	Governor	Kenny Justice Sotonye Fiseye	37	M	SSCE
		Deputy Governor	Okporu Bofede Torusou	44	M	FSLC, SSCE, LLB, BL
42	UPC	Governor	Ibiene Stephen Kroboh	35	M	FSLC, NECO, BSc
		Deputy Governor	Millicent Zidegha Brain	35	F	FSLC, NECO, BSc
43	UPN	Governor	Samuel J Adaga	35	M	WAEC
		Deputy Governor	Zuokemefa Woyengibara Kemi	35	M	BSc
44	UPP	Governor	Williams Woyikuro Berezi	54	M	ND
		Deputy Governor	Seobokuro Tonye James	41	F	Bed
45	ZLP	Governor	Simeon Imomotimi Karioru	43	M	Bed
		Deputy Governor	Agala Collins Azibabhom	43	M	WAEC

## Annex 2 - LGAs, Senatorial Districts and Federal constituency tables

S/N	LGA	LGA HQTERS	RAs	Pus
1	Brass	Twon Brass	10	159
2	Ekeremor	Ekeremor Town	12	198
3	Kolokuma/Opokuma	Kaiama	11	144
4	Nembe	Ogbolomabiri	13	202
5	Ogbia	Ogbia Town	13	259
6	Sagbama	Sagbama Town	14	198
7	Southern Ijaw	Oporoma	17	425
8	Yenagoa	Yenagoa	15	219
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>105</b>	<b>1804</b>

Source: PLAC



## Senatorial Districts

S/N	DISTRICT	LGA	Ras	PUs	COLLATION CENTRE
1	Bayelsa East	Brass/Ogbia/Nembe	36	622	INEC Office Brass, Brass LGA
2	Bayelsa Central	Kolokuma/Opokuma/ Southern Ijaw /Yenagoa	43	789	Yenagoa LGA Council Hall
3	Bayelsa West	Ekeremor/Sagbama	26	394	INEC Office Sagbama LGA

## Federal Constituencies

S/N	CONSTITUENCY	LGA COMPOSITION	RAs	PUs	COLLATION CENTER
50	Brass/Nembe	Brass/Nembe	23	362	INEC Office Brass LGA
51	Ogbia	Ogbia	13	360	LGA Secretariat, Ogbia
52	Sagbama/Ekeremor	Sagbama/Ekeremor	26	394	INEC Office Sagbama
53	Southern Ijaw	Southern Ijaw	17	326	Council Hall Oporoma Town
54	Kolokuma/Opokuma/Yenagoa	Yenagoa/Kolokuma/Opokuma	26	363	Council Hall, Yenagoa.