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Text of the Press Conference addressed by the Centre for Information Technology and Development (CITAD)

Date: 5th December, 2019.

Venue: Conference Hall, Hilltop Hotel, Lokoja, Kogi state.

Ladies and gentlemen of the press, good morning. I would to on behalf of the **Centre for Information Technology and Development (CITAD)** welcome you to the post-gubernatorial election press briefing holding today in Lokoja, the Kogi state capital. We are extremely happy to see an array of the media organizations present here to cover this important briefing, this is indeed commendable. We appreciate your continued support to covering and amplifying our voices. We are also grateful to you for attaching importance to the campaign against hate speech and violence against women in Nigeria.

AbouttheProject

The **Centre for Information Technology and Development (CITAD)** is implementing **Countering Hate Speech Project in Nigeria** with support from **National Democratic Institute (NDI)**. The project tracks and counters hate speech and online violence against women with a view to raising awareness as well as campaign and advocate for addressing the consequences of the phenomena. Bearing in mind that the population of Nigerians on social media platforms is speedily growing, and the online visibility of conventional media also gives room for discussion, hate speech and online violence against women are sadly becoming rampant. It is against this background that CITAD implements the project.

From Hate Speech Observatory (Monitoring Platform)

Our observatory, the hate speech collation hub has from 1st to 30th November, 2019 tracked and documented a total number of three hundred and eighty seven (387) hate and dangerous speech instances. The speech incidents were tracked by our trained monitors stationed across different parts of the country. The speech items were tracked on two social media platforms-**Facebook** and **Twitter**. Our analysis established that the speech instances occurred in **textual, video, pictorial** and **symbolic** form. Out of the total number (387) of the captured speech instances, 32% were **ethnic-based**, 26% **election related**, in the last three months the two categories have maintained lead unlike before when **religious-based hate speech** used to be at the top of the list, we have also noticed rise in the volume of **gendered hate speech** and **hate speech related to issues of attention**. The rise in the four categories is connected to the gubernatorial election here in **Kogi** and **Bayelsa** states. Most of the speech instances we saw and captured in the mentioned categories have election colouration. Presented below is breakdown of the hate speech in categories, medium through which they were made as well as gender of the speakers.

Category of the speech

1.	Elections:-----	100	(26%)
2.	Ethnicity:-----	124	(32%)
3.	Issues of Attention:-----	41	(11%)
4.	Gender-based hate speech:-----	33	(9%)
5.	Religion:-----	36	(9%)
6.	Access to Resources:-----	7	(2%)
7.	Biafra agitation-related:-----	16	(4%)
8.	Farmer-herders-----	1	(0.3%)
9.	Others:-----	30	(8%)

Total:-----387 (100%)

Medium of the speech

1. Twitter:-----229 (59%)

2. Facebook-----158 (41%)

Total:-----387 (100%)

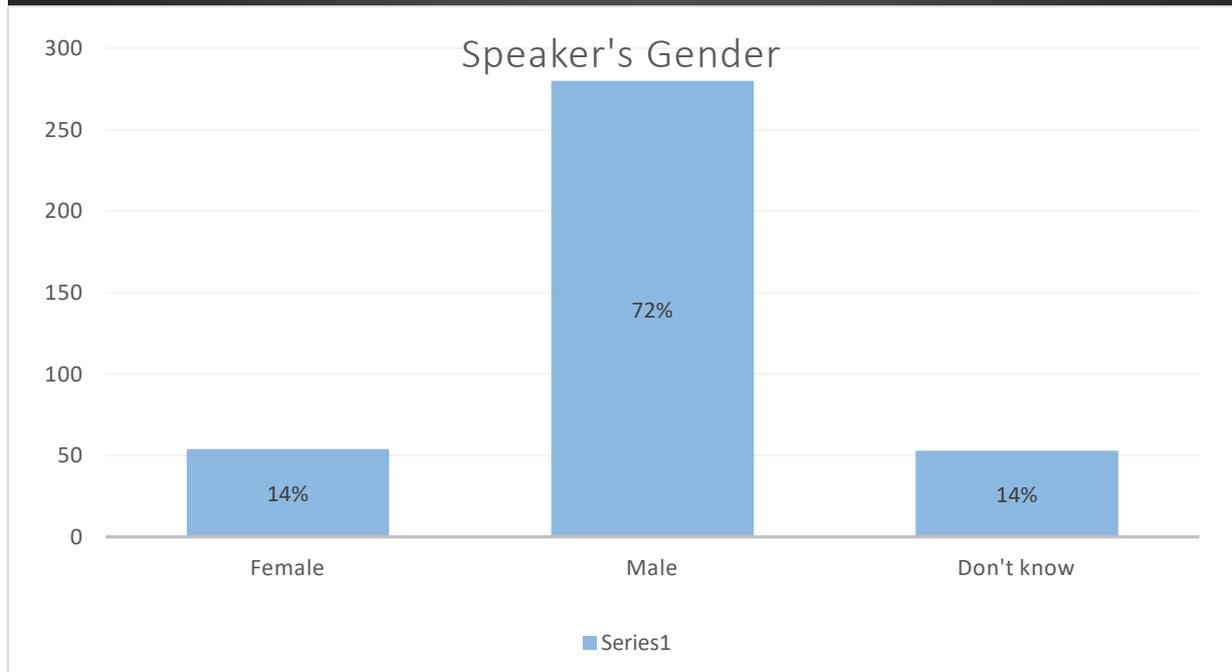
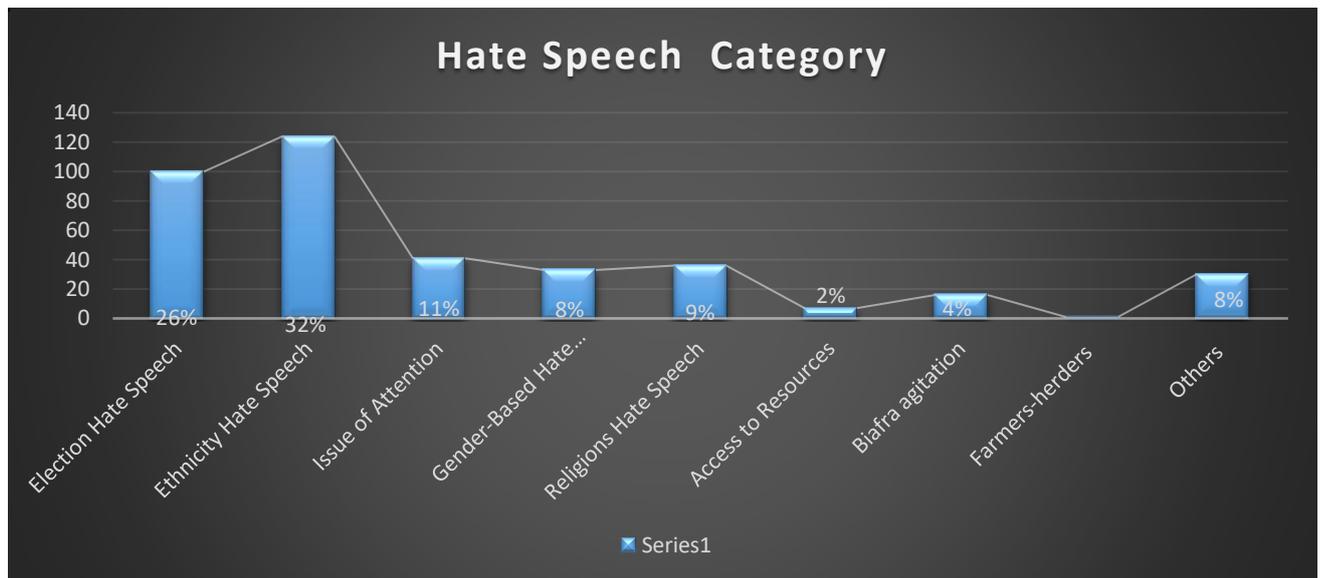
Gender of the speakers/perpetrators

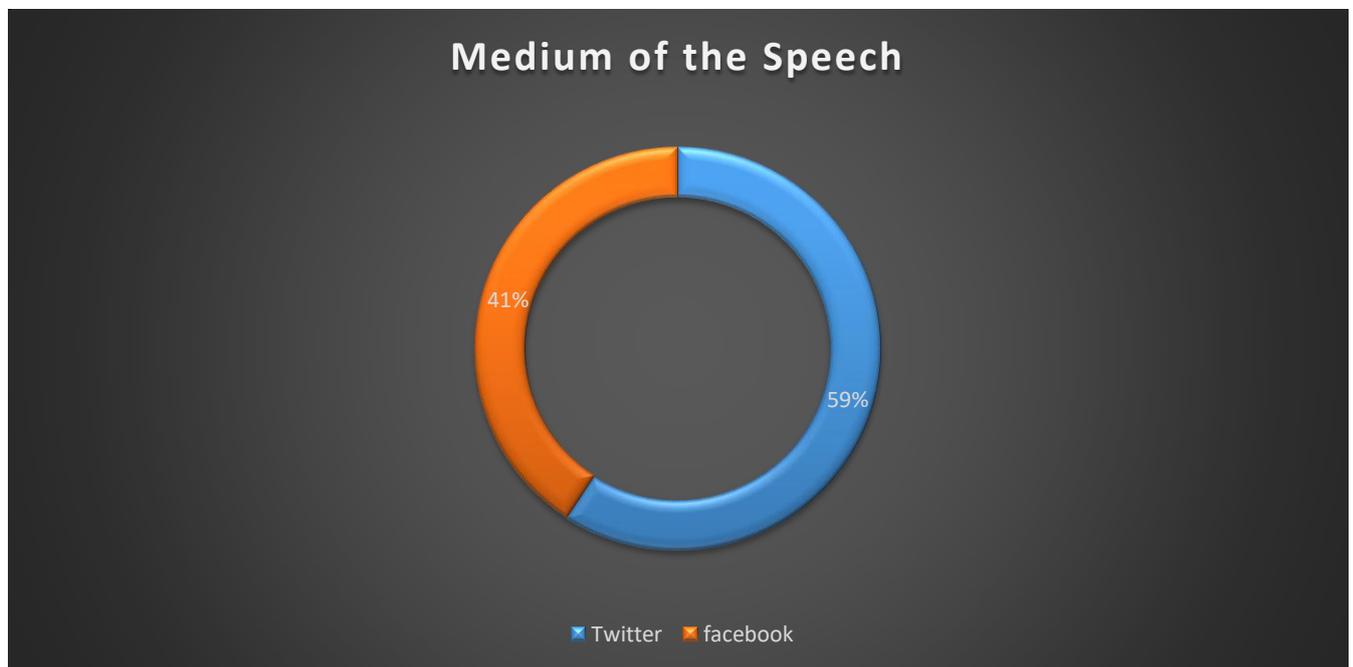
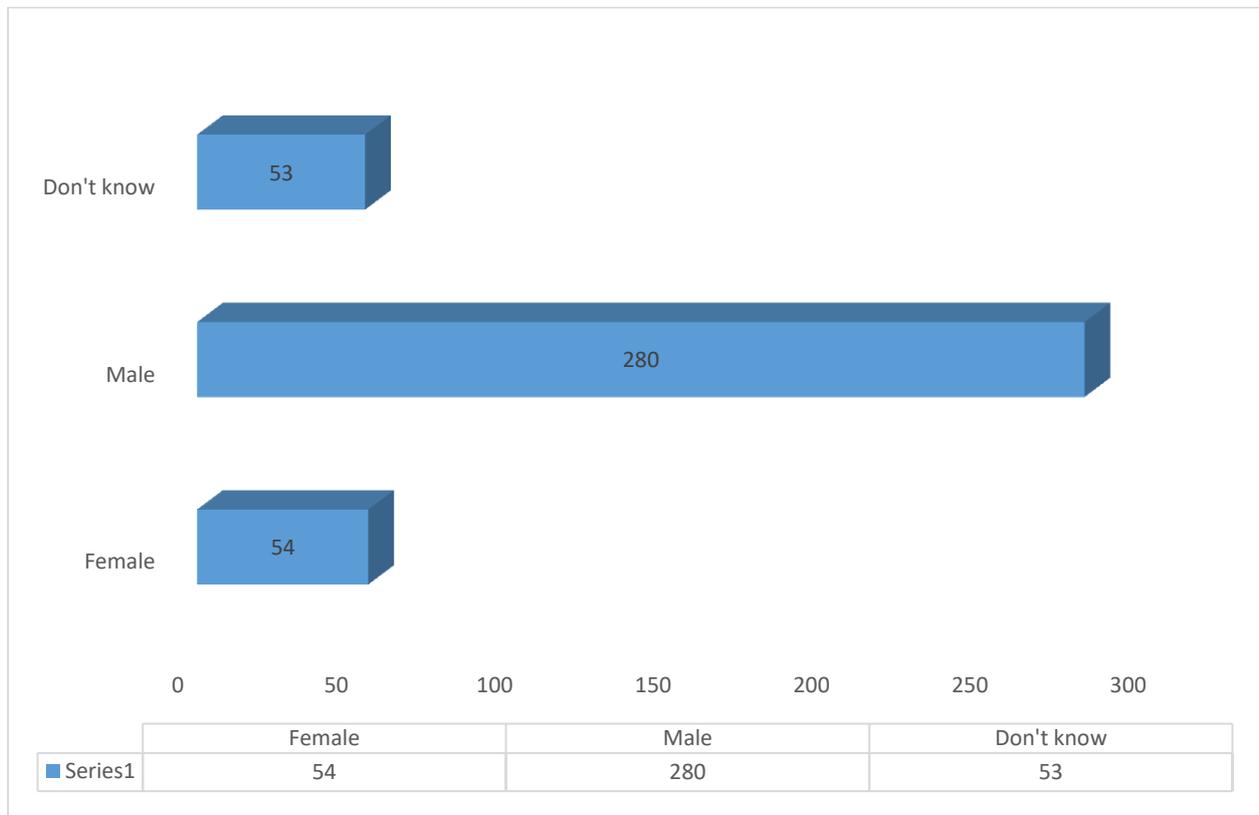
1. Male:-----280 (72%)

2. Female:-----58 (15%)

3. Don't know:-----49 (13%)

Total:-----387 (100%)





Our Concerns

Hate speech instances we saw before and during the election here in **Kogi** were highly inciting, and it was disturbing that those that engaged in the speech acts were the same politicians we have been cautioning and they seemed to be passionately inciting groups against groups in massive gatherings, we strongly condemn this unpatriotic act in totality! Acts of that nature have led other nations into nightmare. One of the very unfortunate and inciting speeches we saw was the video of a politician addressing a large crowd in native language few days to the election and he asked people to take a violent action on anyone that did not vote for their party, this is undemocratic and peace-threatening! Commendably, after reporting the inciting and inflammatory comments to **Facebook**, the platform has removed them. Apart from removing the content, it is equally important that **Facebook** audits habitual hate speakers and put them on surveillance in order to control and limit or address their harm on other users and their communities.

We have in the build up to the election tracked highly dangerous remarks especially during campaigns. And the remarks have fueled the violence witnessed, and that has set a precedent

particularly around hate and dangerous speech amongst the social media users in mostly political platforms.

It could be recalled that during our pre-election press conference we have raised concerns and cautioned particularly politicians against engaging in hate speech as well as violence against women. Despite the plea, we have unfortunately tracked and documented instances of hate speech and violence against women. Witnessing such incidents are serious blow to democracy. At this point, we would like to reiterate our appeal to particularly President Muhammadu Buhari to ensure that the heartless killing of Mrs Acheju Abuh is not allowed to go unpunished. While we commend his directive on the matter, we want to in the interest of future sustainable and peaceful electoral conduct and by extension democratic governance in Nigeria, want him to ensure that her killers are brought to book and acts of that nature on anyone are mitigated.

Barr. Natasha Akpoti's attack before the election and Mrs Abuh's murder have justified the experience Nigerian women politicians face as a result of their involvement in political process. We have recently conducted research around hindrance and challenges of women involved in political and governance processes in Nigeria, and **intimidation, harassment, assault**, and use of **thugs to frighten and disperse** them were some of the findings of the research. And women should not in anyway be discriminated against for their involvement in political or governance process, they are strong pillars whose views and choices must be respected!

Caveat

1. Hate speech has done a disastrous damage to people, communities, and countries-Rwandan genocide of 1994 remains an example.
2. Hate speech breeds and waters a prolong hatred
3. Hate speech shatters mutual coexistence amongst people who may have coexisted harmoniously.
4. Hate speech creates tension and suspicion
5. Hate speech sparks violence

Recommendations:

1. We want to specifically draw the attention of the entire people of Kogi to the dangers and consequences of hate speech and therefore urge that they give neither engage in or accommodate hate speech on social media platforms or at community gatherings.
2. We want to equally draw the attention of the **peace accord** initiators in Kogi state to the post election hate speech being circulated on social media and swiftly engage actors from all political parties on that.
3. We appeal to Gov. Yahaya Bello and Engr. Musa Wada as well as their party chairpersons to strongly caution their followers against hate speech particularly in the pages or groups they manage on their principals' behalf.
4. We urge social media users in the state to sanitize their posts and remarks and avoid engaging in hate speech.
5. We advise that Twitter and Facebook users report instances of hate speech to the platforms.
6. We enjoin entire people of Kogi to be peace-loving, shun making or negatively reacting to hateful remarks no matter the provocation.
7. It is equally our call to everyone in the state to value and practice tolerance in all their conducts.
8. We urge community and traditional leaders in the state to support our campaign against hate speech and violence against women by cautioning and enlightening their followers on the dangers of engaging in the two acts.
9. We appeal to the media bodies in the state, namely, Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Correspondents Chapel, Radio, Television and Theatre Arts Workers Union (RATTAWU), Nigerian Guild of Editors in the state to use their members and platforms to enlighten people on hate speech and violence against women as well as discourage the acts.

10. We strongly appeal to social media users to be extremely careful about their posts/reactions, we urge that they do not share, like or comment on hateful and dangerous posts, rather, they should condemn and immediately report the posts to the platforms.
11. We urge other social media platforms to speed up their review of harmful content and their eventual removal upon establishing their danger or breach of standards/guidelines. **Facebook's** approach is commendable here, because some of the inciting and harmful content we tracked were subsequently removed by the platform.

Join CITAD in the campaign and advocacy to end hate speech and violence against women in Nigeria. Shun hate speech and violence against women anywhere, anytime!

#No2HateSpeech #No2ViolenceAgainstWomen.

Signed:

Hamza Ibrahim,

Coordinator,

Countering Hate Speech Project,

Centre for Information Technology and Development (CITAD).

hamza@citad.org info@citad.org 5th December, 2019.