Election Amidst Security Threats

Yiaga Africa Watching the Vote
Anambra Pre-Election Observation Report - 1

August 27th- 9th September 2021
In June 2021, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) released the timetable for the conduct of the Anambra 2021 governorship election, slating November 6, 2021, as the date for the election. The term of the current governor is expected to come to an end on March 17, 2022, for the commencement of the term of the next Governor of the State. Election activities commenced in the state with the continuous voter's registration (CVR) process enabling INEC to update the voter's register for Anambra alongside the National CVR exercise. Political parties concluded their Party primaries in the month of July 2021. The party primaries were controversial in some of the parties leading to pre-election litigation and a worrying trend of conflicting court decisions. As campaigns commence and INEC proceeds with its activities, the likely threat to the election in the State is the activities of the secessionist group; Independent People of Biafra (IPOB) within the South Eastern geopolitical zone. The Anambra governorship election will possibly be conducted amidst apparent security threats resulting from the agitations in the southeast.

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Anambra state remains an interesting state in today’s Nigeria’s democratic election. Until the 2019 general elections, Anambra was the only state in the South-East to conduct an off-cycle governorship election and is still the only state in the country that is neither governed by the All Progress Congress (APC) nor the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). The All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) has successfully retained its position as the ruling party in the state by producing the Governor and majority of the State Assembly legislators. The PDP however, also positions itself as a prominent party in the state, with 6 members of the 11 House of Representatives members and 2 of the 3 Senators. While the 2017 governorship election was a major contest between the PDP and APGA, the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) still retained the seat of government. The 2021 contest will, however, extend beyond the PDP and APGA, with APGA currently retaining 5 House of Representatives seats and 11 State House of Assembly seats after losing 5 members to the APC. Beyond the APC, APGA and PDP, the Young Professional Party (YPP) made its debut in the politics of the state by producing one of the 3 Senators in the 2019 general elections changing the political dynamics in the state. The Anambra election is postulated to be competitive and defined by money and political godfathers. Amidst this apparent competitiveness of elections in the state, Anambra remains one of the states with very poor voter turnout. The state has consistently recorded a low voter turnout, the voter turnout in the 2013 governorship election was 26% and for 2017 was 21%, representing the worst in the history of governorship elections in Nigeria. Similarly, the recent (2019) Presidential election in Anambra state recorded a 26% voter turnout.

Without debate, these contexts have influenced the political engagements in the state as revealed by Yiaga Africa’s Watching the Vote (WTV) findings from the first observation period. Apart from APC, APGA, PDP and Young Professionals Party (YPP), there is little or no campaign activities by the other political parties. Political party campaigns are dominated by elements of voter inducements and observed by the WTV Long Term Observers (LTOs). Additionally, the activities of the secessionist group (IPOB) pose a major threat to the conduct of election activities in the state with the weekly sit-at-home orders every Monday which is increasingly becoming more unpredictable. This has a potential effect on the conduct of successful elections in the state and is a major threat to voter turnout in a state with a history of low voter turnout.

Yiaga Africa’s Pre-Election Observation (PREO) report captures activities of the key election stakeholders: INEC, Political parties, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and the National Orientation Agency (NOA), government response to COVID-19 as well indicators of electoral violence. The next section contains the key findings of the first observation period (between August 26 and September 9, 2021). Yiaga Africa’s WTV LTOs will remain deployed in the 21 LGAs till November 5, 2021. Reports of the observation findings will be shared on a bi-weekly basis and a weekly basis in some cases.
In the first WTV PREO reporting period, WTV LTOs witnessed and heard of at least one preparatory activity conducted by INEC from all 21 Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Anambra State. Specifically, the commission is currently cleaning up the updated register of voters after the Continuous Voter Registration (CVR) and the Display Claims and Objections conducted in all the wards of the 21 LGAs in the state. The WTV also received reports of ongoing recruitment of polling officials (ad-hoc staff) in the state.
WTV LTOs reported that while some voter education initiatives were observed in some LGA, there was generally low voter education across the state in this reporting phase. However, for LGA’s where voter education initiatives were observed, INEC was found to be the leading institution undertaking those voter education activities, followed by CSOs. Very few voter education and other election-related activities were undertaken by NOA. Specifically, INEC’s voter education activities were reported in Aguata, Ayamelum, Idemili North, Ihiala, Njikoka, Nnewi South and Oyi LGA, while by CSOs in Anambra East, Anambra West, Awka North, Awka South, Onitsha South, Orumba South and Ogbaru LGA. NOA voter education-related activities were reported in Anambra East, Awka South, Dunukofia and Orumba South LGA. WTV LTOs also reported that there is voter education activity targeted at marginalized groups (Women, Youth and PWDs) by INEC in Anambra East, Awka South, Ayamelum, and Idemili North LGA. NOA in Aguata, Anambra East, Awka North, Awka South, Idemili North, Oyi, Onitsha South, Orumba South and Orumba South LGA. And by CSOs in Anambra East, Anambra West, Awka South, Awka North, Ihiala, Ogbaru, Onitsha South, and Orumba South LGA in the state.
Campaign Activities by Political Party

Only a few political parties have kicked off their campaign activities such as campaign rallies in the state. This reporting period focused on tracking the commencement and visibility of the political parties at the LGA level. WTV observation findings, however, revealed that apart from APC, APGA, PDP and YPP, there was little visibility of campaigning activities by the other political parties. APC was seen campaigning in Aguata, Anambra East, Awka North, Awka South, Idemili North, Ogbaru Nnewi North and Oyi LGAs. APGA was seen campaigning in Aguata, Anambra East, Awka North, Awka South, Idemili North, Ihiala, Nnewi North, Ogbaru North, Ogbaru South Onitsha South Orumba South and Oyi LGAs. While PDP in Aguata, Anambra East, Awka North, Awka South, Idemili North, Nnewi North, Onitsha South, Orumba South, and Oyi LGAs, while YPP in Aguata, Anambra East, Awka North, Awka South, Idemili North, Nnewi North, Ogbaru, Onitsha South and Orumba LGAs...
Indicators of Voter Inducement

WTV observed signs of voter inducement in the form of purchase of PVCs and distribution of money and gift items to voters. WTV LTOs witnessed or heard of distribution of money or gift items by candidates or their supporters while campaigning in Aguata, Anambra East, Awka North, Awka South, Idemili North, Nnewi North, Ogbaru, Onitsha South, Orumba North, and Orumba South LGAs. This was accompanied by the reports of buying and selling of PVC in Nnewi North LGAs, ahead of the elections.

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Reported LGAs
- Aguata
- Awka North
- Awka South
- Idemili North
- Nnewi North
- Ogbaru
- Onitsha South
- Orumba North
- Orumba South

No Activity
- Anambra East
- Anambra East
- Ogbaru
- Onitsha South
- Orumba North
- Orumba South
- Nnewi North
- Nnewi North
- Awka South
- Awka North
Activities likely to impede the Election Process

WTV LTOs tracked and reported activities that could affect the planning and process of the election itself. Some of the activities reported are the weekly and randomly imposed sit-at-home order by the secessionist group; Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). This has also resulted in some incidents of violence and destruction of properties and attacks on citizens in the state. For instance, on Monday 23 August 2021, while imposing the lockdown order, it was reported that a furniture showroom was set ablaze by some IPOB agitators in Nibo community in Awka South LGA. The report on the sit-at-home order and wide compliance was received from WTV observers in all the 21 LGAs. Yiaga Africa is concerned that if this persists, the election would record the lowest voter turnout in the country’s recent history.
Key Recommendations

Security Agencies

- As security is indispensable in the conduct of free, fair and credible elections, we recommend early planning and coordination to meet the security challenges in Anambra State.

- Security agencies should employ preventive measures to neutralize existing security threats in the state, to enable voters to exercise their constitutional right to vote in a peaceful and secured environment.

Federal and state government

- Yiaga Africa calls on the Federal and State governments to as a matter of urgency deploy intelligence in resolving the unstable security situation in Anambra and other states in the South-East which have a negative impact on the economy, peace and security of lives and property.

  Due to the agitation of the secessionist group and the threat to safety and security in the election, Yiaga Africa urges federal and state government security agencies to be non-partisan before, during and after the governorship election in the state.

Political Parties

- Political parties should embark on voter education, to encourage voters to turn up and vote on election day.

- Political parties and candidates should desist from the inducement of voters, and invest in issues-based campaigns.

- Political parties should comply with COVID-19 protocol during campaigns, to avoid the spread of the virus.
Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)

- INEC should sustain voter education engagements across the state. In addition, collaborate with NOA, CSOs, and other relevant stakeholders to intensify voter education engagements across the state.

- INEC should leverage available partnerships and invest in popularising the new polling units in the state and the planned deployment of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS).

- INEC should ensure proper coordination with the security agencies, especially in addressing the security concerns in the state.

Election Stakeholders

- Yiaga Africa calls on election stakeholders, especially Civil Society and International Partners, to invest in multi-stakeholder collaboration for in-depth scenario planning and risk mitigation strategies towards the election.

- Yiaga Africa calls on election stakeholders to engage both the Federal and State government towards a peaceful resolution of the secessionist agitation in the South-East region.

Media

- As an essential instrument for promoting social, cultural, and political objectives, media organizations should use their platforms to educate citizens on how to exercise their democratic right to increase citizens participation.

- Media organizations should ensure all political parties and candidates are given adequate media exposure and visibility.

In conclusion, the success of the election also depends on the commitment of the people to effectively participate in the process. Yiaga Africa calls on the Citizens in the state to prepare to vote on election day, safeguard their PVCs and report incidents of violence and perpetrators of violence to the security agencies. The election remains the process that empowers the people to hold their elected officials accountable and make demands on the system through their vote. The conduct of credible, free and fair elections remains non-negotiable in Nigeria’s democracy.
Methodology

Yiaga Africa Watching the Vote recruited and trained 25 long term citizen observers (LTOs) and deployed them across the 21 LGAs of Anambra State to systematically observe the pre-election environment in their various local governments. The observation also includes monitoring of early warning signs of electoral violence that may influence the outcome of the election in Anambra State. The observers are equipped with a checklist to record the relevant information and provide verifiable findings of the pre-election happening in their various LGAs.

The LTOs send reports of their observation bi-weekly on a standard set of questions at the local government level, while the others serve as mobile observers within the state and they report critical incidents only. All 25 LTOs are also recruited from their LGAs of residence where they are expected to monitor electoral activities: voter education and information, political campaign activities, activities of marginalized groups (youth, women and PWDs), election-related violence and critical incidents all around the clock. Additionally, they track activities of electoral stakeholders like; INEC, political parties, NOA, CSOs, as well as women, youths and PWDs.

All findings from the LTOs are transmitted to the WTV data centre via coded SMS and are thereafter, analyzed and reported periodically. Yiaga Africa PREO findings are obtained from the entire LGAs within the state and not from a representative of the entire state thus providing an indication of emerging trends during the pre-election period. Unlike the WTV election-day observation methodology that relies on sample-based observation, Yiaga Africa’s WTV PREO uses a more traditional approach that investigates the activities in LGAs of Anambra State.