



**Mid-day Situational Statement on the
2023 Off-Cycle Governorship Elections
in Bayelsa, Imo and Kogi
Saturday, November 11, 2023
Delivered at the Treasure Suites Hotel, Abuja**

(As of 1:00 pm Saturday 11 November 2023)

Introduction

Yiaga Africa Watching The Vote is deploying the Process and Results Verification for Transparency (PRVT) methodology to observe the governorship elections in Imo and Kogi States. This involves the deployment of 600 stationary observers to a representative randomly selected sample of 300 polling units in each of the States and 50 roving observers in Kogi and Imo states. With the PRVT, Yiaga Africa will independently assess the quality of the process and verify the accuracy of official results announced by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). In addition to the PRVT methodology, Yiaga Africa deployed 9 roving observers in Bayelsa State. Yiaga Africa will also observe the results collation process in all Local Government Areas (LGAs) and State Results Collation Centres.

On the eve of the election, Yiaga Africa observed the deployment of election materials and personnel from the Local Government Area (LGA) to the Registration Area Centers (RAC) observed in both states. However, on election day, Yiaga Africa observed early opening of polling units in Kogi state compared to Imo State, where fewer polling units opened by 8:30 am, including those that remained unopened by 12 noon.

The Yiaga Africa's data center received critical incident reports relating to pre-filled election results sheets in Ogori Magongo and Okehi LGAs in Kogi State. Yiaga Africa calls for the immediate arrest and prosecution of all INEC officials and their accomplices involved in this grave electoral fraud and calls for the suspension of elections in the affected Wards. In addition, the report was received from wards 1 and 2 Onuimo LGA in Imo State, that the Police officials refused to deploy due to an issue relating to their allowance. INEC had to deploy its personnel and materials to the polling units unaccompanied by police officers. This was however addressed later and the Police officers deployed from 10 am to their respective polling units. Yiaga Africa also received a worrying report of manual accreditation of voters in Polling Unit 006 (**ST. MARTINS SCH., EJULE/ST. MARTIN'S SCH. EJULE**), **Ward 03, Ofu LGA in Kogi State** where the polling officials refrained from accrediting voters with the BVAS and manually accredited voters. Yiaga

Africa calls on INEC to ensure that the votes from polling units where the BVAS was not utilised for accreditation are cancelled in line with the Electoral Act 2022.

Yiaga Africa commiserates with INEC on the boat mishap in Southern Ijaw, Bayelsa State and commends the citizens who took the initiative to rescue INEC staff on national duty. Yiaga Africa also condemns the abduction of an INEC Senior Presiding Officer (SPO) in Sagbama LGA and joins other well-meaning Nigerians in calling for the release of the INEC official and prosecution of the assailants.

Yiaga Africa Watching the Vote Midday Findings

Yiaga Africa's initial findings for Imo and Kogi states are based on reports received from 212 of the 300 sampled polling units in Imo and 245 of 300 sampled polling units in Kogi and processed at 1:00 pm on election day. Additional information and updates will be provided subsequently.

1. **The arrival of INEC officials and commencement of polls:** In the polling units observed, Yiaga Africa observers noted some variation in the arrival of INEC Officials across polling units in Imo and Kogi states. Our findings reveal that INEC officials arrived by 7:30 am in only 21% of polling units in Imo state, while in Kogi, INEC officials arrived by 7:30 am in 64% of polling units.

By 9:30 am accreditation and voting had commenced in 54% of polling units in Imo and in 53% of polling units in Kogi.

2. **Deployment of the BVAS:** The BVAS was deployed in all the polling units observed in Imo and Kogi states. In Imo state, the BVAS had zero records for the total number of accredited voters on the BVAS before the commencement of the process in 96% of the polling units observed. Similarly, in Kogi state, the BVAS had zero records for the total number of accredited voters on the BVAS before the commencement of the polling process in 94% of the observed polling units.
3. **Deployment of Party Agents:** In Imo state, the All Progressives Congress (APC) party agents were seen at 96% of polling units, All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) agents were in 29% of polling units, Labour Party (LP) agents were in 88% of polling Units, People's Democratic Party (PDP) agents were in 89% of polling units..

In **Kogi**, Africa Democratic Congress (ADC) agents were seen in 46% of polling units, All Progressives Congress (APC) agents were sighted at 99% of polling units, People's Democratic Party (PDP) were sighted in 82% of polling units and Social Democratic Party (SDP) were sighted in 82% of the polling units.

4. **Deployment of Security Personnel:** Security agents were seen in 73% of polling units in Imo and 96% of polling units in Kogi.
5. **Secrecy of the Ballot compromised:** In Kogi state, the Voting cubicle was not present in 2% of polling units.
6. **Deployment of Materials:** In 1% of polling units in Imo, Indelible ink (Marker pen) and/or Official stamps were not present. In Kogi state, the Official stamp was not present in 3% of polling units.
7. **Polling Units Not Opened by 12 noon:** 8% of sampled Polling Units were not opened in Imo whilst in Kogi, all the sampled Polling Units were opened by 12 noon.

Critical Incidents

As of 1:00 pm, the Yiaga Africa WTV Data Center received and verified 30 critical incident reports. 25 of these reports were from Imo and 5 from Kogi. They include the following;

1. **Observers not allowed to observe:** An APC party agent refused Yiaga Africa to observe the election process in Umuobasi Village Square (16-16-12-011) in Umumi Isiaku ward of Ideato South LGA, Imo State the observation forms were confiscated and destroyed by the party agent. APC party agents in collusion with INEC polling officials refused to allow observers access to the Umuokpara Ehi Hall Polling Unit (16-20-02-005) in Umucheke ward, Orlu LGA in Imo state.
2. **Electoral malpractices by polling officials:** Polling officials requested monetary inducements before allowing party agents to observe the process in Umuchenta Village Square Polling Unit (16-07-06-010) in Atonerim ward of Ihitte/Uboma LGA in Imo state. In most polling units in **Ehi Ward and Okesi Ward, Ogori-Magongo LGA and**

Eika/Ohizenyi Ward, Okehi LGA in Kogi state, INEC officials arrived at the polling units with pre-filled result sheets before accreditation and voting commenced.

3. **Unopened polling units:** Yiaga Africa received reports that some polling units did not open as of 12 noon. This report cuts across 6 LGAs in Imo namely, Okigwe, Orlu, Orsu, Oru East, Oru West and Owerri West. Specifically, Comm. Sch. Ikpatu (16-19-02-003), Ama-Agbaka Square Umuokpara (16-19-02-030), Amaikpa Agbala Village. Square (16-19-03-011), Aguala Primary School (16-19-10-004), Aro Agbobu Primary School (16-19-11-001) all in Okigwe LGA in Imo state.

Preliminary Recommendations

In view of the foregoing, Yiaga Africa WTV makes the following preliminary recommendations:

1. We call on INEC to suspend elections in polling units/LGAs with reported incidents of pre-filled results forms. The commission should also arrest, investigate and prosecute the individuals responsible for this electoral offence.
2. Yiaga Africa calls on INEC to extend the voting time, especially in Imo and Bayelsa states where the voting commenced late to ensure voters have an equitable opportunity to vote.
3. Yiaga Africa calls on INEC to provide an update on when voters in locations where elections are yet to commence will vote, especially polling units affected by the late arrival of polling officials or materials destroyed due to the boat mishap in Southern Ijaw and those carted away during the abduction of INEC SPO in Sagbama LGA. And also the location where result sheets were pre-filled before voting in Ogori Magongo and Okehi LGAs in Kogi State, respectively.
4. Yiaga Africa calls on INEC and security agencies to uphold the transparency of the results collation process by complying with guidelines on results management and ensuring accredited election observers, media and party agents are present at all levels of result collation.
5. Yiaga Africa calls on INEC to cancel elections in polling units where manual accreditation was recorded.

We urge the voters to remain patient and peaceful through the voting and counting process. Yiaga Africa will provide updates as the voting process comes to an end and the results collation commences. At the end of the election, Yiaga Africa will provide statistically representative information about the conduct of the election.

The Watching The Vote project is “**Driven by Data – For All Nigerians – Beholden to None!**”

Thank you and God Bless the people of Nigeria!

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