

# EDO POLLS:

## Yiaga Africa Predict Low Voter Turnout in a Competitive Race

Yiaga Africa's Watching The Vote  
Pre-Election Observation (PREO) Report  
for the Edo 2024 Governorship Election

26 June 2024 - 22 July 2024

# Introduction

The Edo State gubernatorial election is scheduled for September 21, 2024. With campaigns ongoing across most of the local government areas in the state and contending parties showcasing their political popularity, the election is expected to be competitive. In contrast to the 2020 Edo Governorship election, the All Progressive Congress (APC), the People's Democratic Party (PDP), and the Labour Party (LP) are the three main political parties running for the governorship race. The Labour Party's prominence grew with the 2023 general election driven by the emergence of Peter Obi in the presidential race. While Edo State is historically a PDP state, the emergence of the APC in the 2015 electoral cycle shifted the political dynamics in the state and elevated the competition to a contest for political power between the APC and PDP. For the 2024 governor election, the projected growing influence of the Labour Party (LP) has its impact on the political climate as party candidates prepare for the Edo State off-cycle 2024 Governorship Election. Although it is uncertain whether the rise of new political players will impact the politics of 2024, it is however certain that Edo politics follows its unique template. Unlike some states where a political party's influence is paramount, in Edo beyond the influence of a political party, the politics for the governorship election can be impacted by the influence of candidates/political personalities with other enabling factors. For instance, the incumbent governor of Edo State; Mr Godwin Obaseki was first elected under the APC in 2016 before decamping to the PDP ahead of the 2020 governorship election when he gained reelection. As observed in the pre-election environment, intra-party conflicts have forced some political alignment and re-alignments laying a groundwork for the 2024 election, in which current political realignments and historical allegiances may be pivotal factors.

The ongoing legal dispute between the Enigie

and Oba Ewuare II, the Oba of Benin, adds to the simmering politics of the state. The Oba's suspension of the Enigie is at the heart of this legal dispute. This can change public perceptions and voter attitudes, which could greatly impact the 2024 gubernatorial race. The settlement of this legal dispute may also change the power structure of the traditional institute, with a possible impact on the Oba's authority over the political system and influencing alliances and support from other traditional leaders. A change in the established power structure like this can affect voter behaviour, especially in areas where the Oba's authority is strongly regarded, further complicating an already complex political environment.

However, regardless of the political climate, the state is experiencing a worrying degree of insecurity with kidnappings in communities is more common and sadly largely unreported. In addition, the level of cultist activities resulting in violent deaths further leaves the state vulnerable, especially with the likelihood of political utilisation of cultism to fight political opponents. Notably, the insecurity in the state may impact the quality of voters' engagement in the pre-election phase, INEC preparatory activities, voter turnout and the quality of the elections. According to the initial analysis of Yiaga Africa's violence monitoring, the several security crises ahead of the Edo election like violent incidents, cult conflicts, kidnappings, and other criminal activity have limited civic and voter engagement and other election-related activities that typically take place before elections. Yiaga Africa Pre-election indicators predict that although it is a competitive race, the election will witness low voter turnout.

The state of the economy will also be a major driver of participation in the governorship election with the growing level of poverty, youth unemployment and high cost of living. For instance, during the 2020 governorship

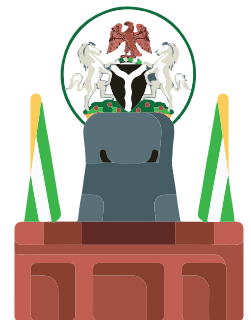
election, inflation was at 12.82% in July 2020 and 15.75% in December 2020 according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). That was the COVID-19 year when the country was just recovering from the lockdown and the effects of the pandemic. Years after, the rising cost of living has made it more difficult for citizens to survive. As reported by the National Bureau of Statistics, inflation was at 34.19% as of June 2024<sup>1</sup> with more Nigerians unable to feed and afford a minimum standard of living. While Edo state commenced the payment of the new minimum wage (N70,000) in May 2024<sup>2</sup>, its impact is not largely felt as minimum wage first targets employees in public institutions and does not guarantee the affordability of foodstuff. With more people hungry, money is expected to play a visible role in this election, with a likely show between the parties as they compare which

party can outbuy votes and manipulate the process. In addition, there is the likely effect of the economic realities on the participation of a majority of the voters whose interest may be more on searching for food to survive than engaging in the electoral process.

Amidst the politics for the 2024 governorship election, the true concerns remain the impact of insecurity and the economic realities on voting behaviour and voter participation.

Yiaga Africa' Watching the Vote (WTV) deployed carefully recruited, trained citizens Long Term Observers (LTOs) in each of the 18 LGAs in Edo State. The LTOs systematically observe, gather information and send reports concerning the pre-election environment, political campaigns as well as early warning signs of conflict and electoral violence.

# How a winner emerges in a governorship election?



There are two conditions a candidate vying for the governorship office must fulfill.

1



First, he or she **must have the highest number of votes cast at the election or what you can also call the majority of votes.**

2

However, it's not enough to declare a governorship candidate winner because he or she polled the highest number of votes – which brings us to the next condition, **The candidate is expected to have a spread. He or she must garner not less than one-quarter of all the votes cast in each of at least two-thirds of all the local government Areas in the state.**

!

So for instance

**In a state like Edo with 18 local government areas, a governorship candidate will only be declared the winner if he or she has polled the highest number of votes, and garnered 25% of votes cast in each of at least 12 of the 18 local government areas in the state.**



Well, it's possible that after the first round of election no candidate meets the requirements of the majority of votes cast and the electoral two-thirds.

**21**

**DAYS LIMIT**

In that case, a run-off election will be organized by the commission within 21 days in line with the provisions of Section 179 of the 1999 Constitution, as amended.

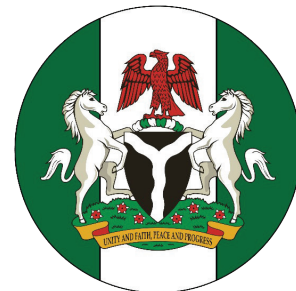
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<sup>1</sup> National Bureau of Statistics <https://nigerianstat.gov.ng/elibrary/read/1241533>

<sup>2</sup> Punch Newspaper <https://punchng.com/edo-begins-payment-of-n70000-minimum-wage-to-workers/>

# Key Findings

## Election Preparatory Activities by INEC



INDEPENDENT NATIONAL  
ELECTORAL COMMISSION

Yiaga Africa's LTOs observed ongoing election preparatory activities by INEC and monitored compliance with the election timetable in the month under review. These activities include recruiting ad-hoc staff, which started on July 15th, 2024 and will end on August 19th, 2024. Based on reports from the LTOs, the continuous voter registration and the collection of permanent voter cards (PVCs) by registered voters proceeded unhindered, despite the flooding disaster that swamped the Edo State INEC headquarters. Yiaga Africa's LTOs also reported that the commission had responded well to the flooding incident that ravaged its Edo State office. The commission had erected parts of the wall destroyed by the flood and reported replacing some of the damaged Bimodal Voter Accreditation Systems (BVAS) and mobilising more BVAS from neighbouring states. As the election draws closer, the LTOs observed that INEC is holding more meetings with different stakeholders in the state. These preparatory activities were observed across all the LGAs in the State.

### INEC Election Preparatory Activities in Edo



**Recruitment and Training  
of Election Officials**

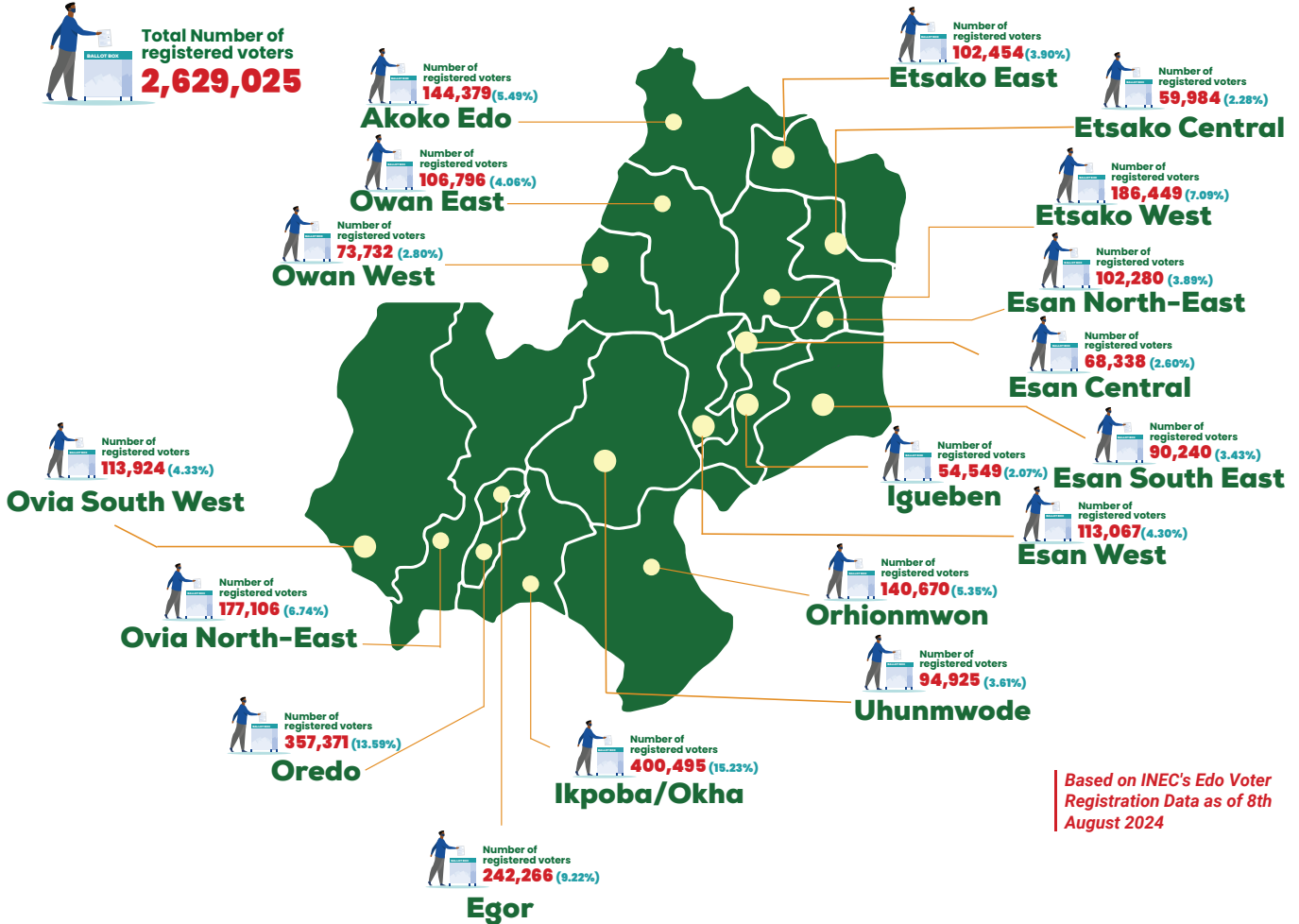


**Meetings or Consultations  
with Stakeholders**



**Voter Education  
Programs**

# Distribution of Voters by LGAs



## Distribution of Voters by Gender



**MALE**  
**1,370,061**  
(52.11%)



**FEMALE**  
**1,258,964**  
(47.89%)

## Distribution of Voters by Age



**Youth (18-35)**  
**983,133**  
(37.4%)



**Elder (50-69)**  
**530,244**  
(20.17%)



**Middle aged (36-49)**  
**914,806**  
(34.80%)



**Old (70+)**  
**200,842**  
(7.64%)

# Voter Education /Information



Yiaga Africa’s LTOs tracked and reported voter education activities conducted by key election stakeholders such as the INEC, National Orientation Agency (NOA), and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) across some LGAs in Edo. This includes voter education messages targeted at mobilising and sensitising marginalised groups, such as Youth, Women, and Persons Living with disabilities (PWD), to participate in the election.

The WTV LTOs reported to have been exposed to or heard of voter education/information messages conducted by INEC in 6 LGAs—Etsako West, Orhionmwon, Ovia North East, Ovia South West, and Uhunmwode; by NOA in 4 LGAs—Akoko Edo, Egor, Esan South East, and Ovia South West; and by CSOs in 5 LGAs—Esan North East, Esan West, Igueben, Owan West, and Uhunmwode, ahead of the election.



**WTV  
observers  
witnessed or  
heard of voter  
information  
campaigns  
by INEC in**

**6 LGAs**



**WTV  
observers  
witnessed or  
heard of voter  
information  
campaigns  
by NOA in**

**4 LGAs**



**WTV  
observers  
witnessed or  
heard of voter  
information  
campaigns  
by CSOs in**

**5 LGAs**

Additionally, Yiaga Africa LTOs tracked and reported voter education/Information targeted at the three aforementioned marginalised groups across the 18 LGAs of Edo State. The voter education messages and campaigns targeted at women, youth, and PWDs were conducted by INEC in Egor, Esan South East, and Owan East LGA and by NOA in Akoko Edo, Egor, Esan South West, Esan West, Ovia South West, and Uhunmwode LGA. CSOs similarly observed this in four LGAs—Akoko Edo, Igueben, Oredo, and Orhionmwon.

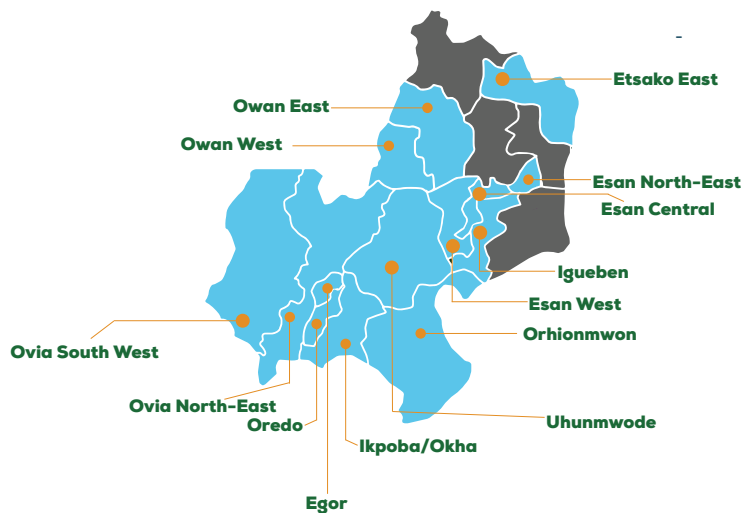
# Campaign Activities by Political Party

Yiaga Africa’s WTV tracked and documented political parties’ campaign activities on various platforms, including social media and chat rooms like Facebook and WhatsApp. In addition to rallies, political actors engage voters on social media platforms to connect with younger voters and those with greater access to technology.

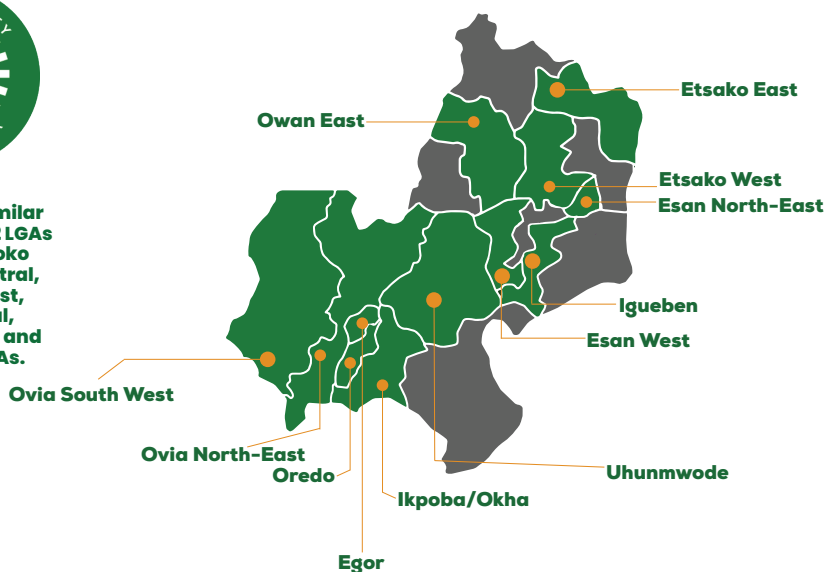
Despite the social media and chat room interactions, WTV LTOs saw billboards and campaign posters throughout the state. In addition, the APC conducted campaign rallies and campaign trails in all the LGAs except Akoko Edo, Esan South East, Etsako Central and Etsako West LGAs. The LP conducted similar activities in 12 LGAs except for Akoko Edo, Esan Central, Esan South East, Etsako Central, Orhionmwon, and Owan East LGAs. The PDP conducted rallies and campaign trails in 13 LGAs except for Akoko Edo, Esan West, Etsako Central, Etsako West, and Owan East LGA.



**APC conducted campaign rallies with campaign trails in 14 LGAs except Akoko Edo, Esan South East, Etsako Central and Etsako West LGAs.**

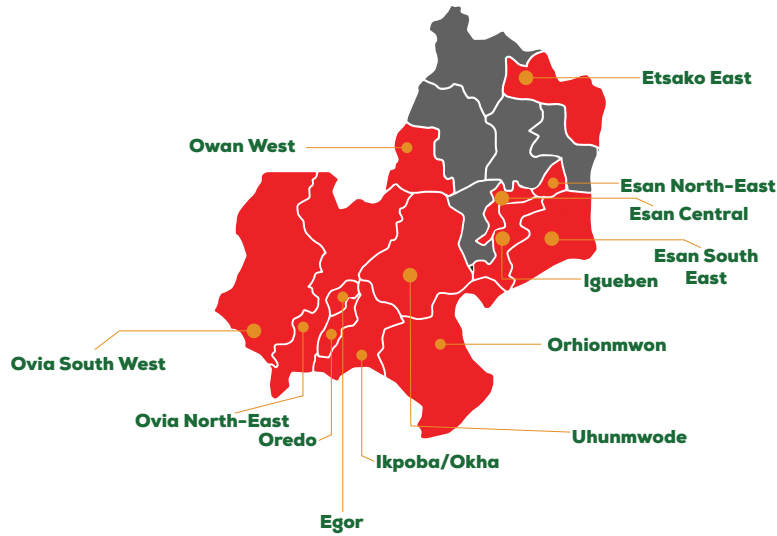


**Labour Party conducted similar activities in 12 LGAs except for Akoko Edo, Esan Central, Esan South East, Etsako Central, Orhionmwon, and Owan East LGAs.**





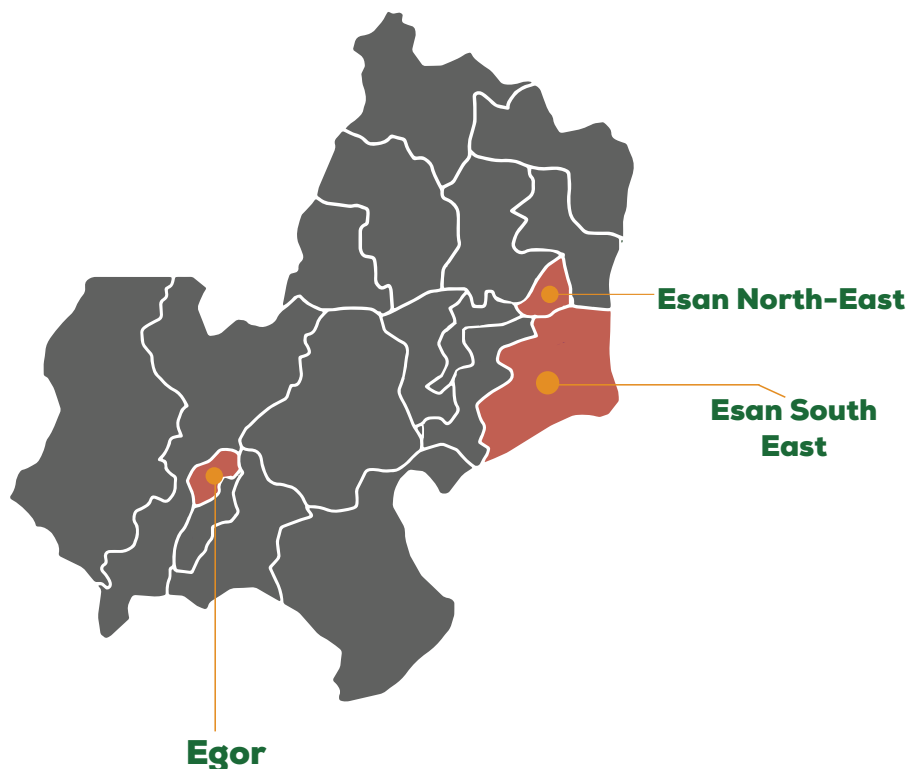
PDP conducted rallies and campaign trails in 13 LGAs except for Akoko Edo, Esan West, Etsako Central, Etsako West, and Owan East LGA.



# Voter Inducement

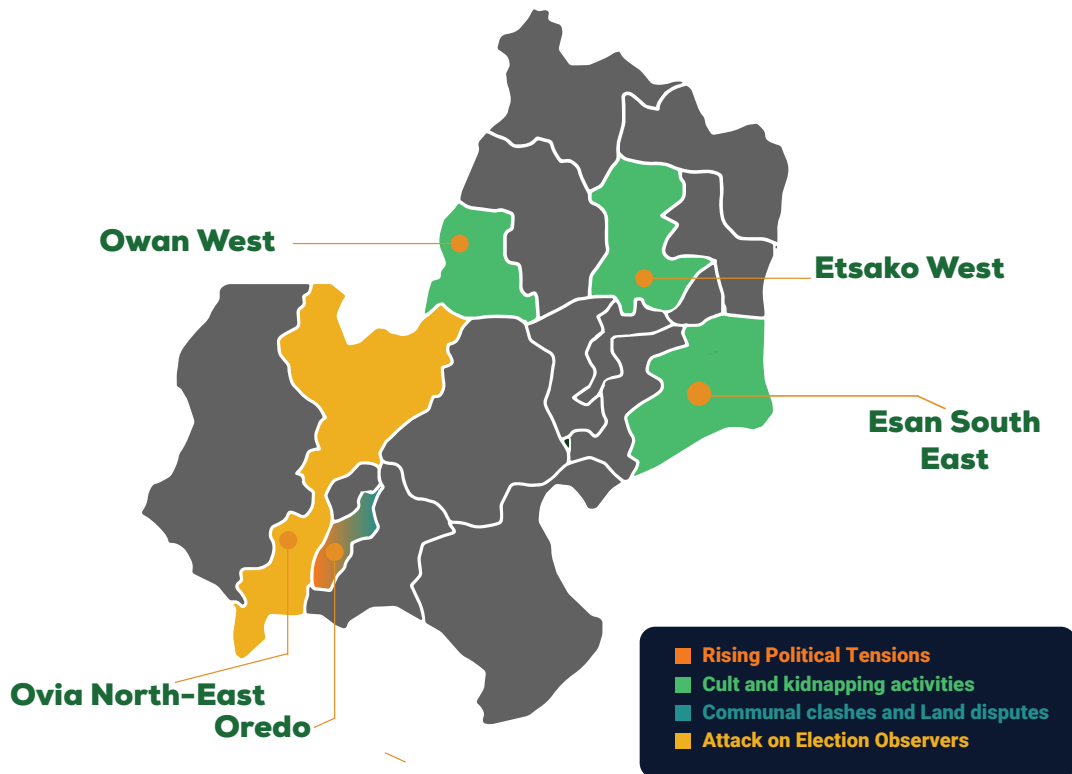
Similar to the 2020 Edo governorship elections, WTV findings reveal the inducement of voters by politicians in the state. Yiaga Africa's LTOs witnessed or heard party loyalists giving gifts and/or cash to voters at meetings and campaign rallies in an attempt to sway them. These incidents were especially observed or heard about in the Uselu market, Egor LGA, where the APC and PDP parties gave cash gifts to market women during their campaign trips, ranging from N1000 to N2000. Similarly, in the Amiebonkhian community of Esan North East LGA, women who attended the campaign gathering were given wrappers by PDP campaigners. The PDP campaigners also gave some store owners shirts, caps, umbrellas, and as much as N2000 in the Ubiaja community in Esan South East LGA.

**Yiaga Africa's LTOs witnessed or heard party loyalists giving gifts and/or cash to voters**





# Early Warning Signs



- **Rising Political Tensions:** In particular, the rivalry between the APC, LP, and PDP intensifies as the governorship election approaches. The political intensity increases as the contenders from each party fight for supremacy. Yiaga Africa received news on July 18, 2024, of a violent confrontation at Airport Road, Oredo LGA, between members of an opposing political party and supporters of Deputy Governor Philip Shuaibu. As a result, one of the police officers died, thereby increasing tension throughout the state.
- **The surge in cult and kidnapping activities:** There are more reports of cult and kidnapping activity in the state as election day approaches. These reports came from Owan East, Esan South East, and Etsako West LGA. These illicit actions made the citizens fearful, which kept them from freely engaging in political and economic activity.
- **Communal clashes and Land disputes:** Tensions have risen and could become violent due to the land dispute between the Obagia and Obanosa communities in Oredo LGA. The growing tensions may seriously threaten voter turnout in the affected communities within these LGAs.
- **Attack on Election Observers:** Ahead of election day, WTV LTOs have documented and reported attacks against election observers. Three young men armed with guns attacked Yiaga Africa's LGA coordinator, who was stationed in Ovia North East. A community member who observed the incident intervened, allowing her to proceed with her duty.

# Key Recommendations

## State Government

- Yiaga Africa calls on the state government to ensure a level playing field for free and fair political competition ahead of the governorship election.

## INEC and NOA

- Yiaga Africa calls on INEC to improve its communication and public engagement to rebuild the broken trust between the people and the Commission and promote transparency in the process.
- Yiaga Africa demands that voter education efforts be stepped up by INEC and NOA with a focus on women, youth, and people with disabilities. All LGAs should be included in these efforts to guarantee broad voter awareness and involvement.
- Yiaga Africa calls on INEC to invest in voter education and promote involvement in the electoral process by also interacting proactively with religious organisations and community leaders.

## Security Agencies

- To avoid escalation or spillover into the electoral process and to guarantee the safety of people's lives and property, security agencies should take appropriate action in response to early warning signs of electoral violence.
- The Police Force and other Security Agencies should pay particular attention to security risk LGAs like Etsako West, Esan South East, Owan East, and Oredo. Hotspots and other key areas should have a larger number of security officers stationed there.
- Community peace-based Peacebuilding initiatives should be implemented to address land and Ethnic disputes. More efforts should be geared towards intelligence gathering among security agents. Extensive investigations into cases of abduction and land disputes will guarantee prompt actions to stop conflicts from escalating worse.

## Political Parties

- Yiaga Africa calls on political parties to refrain from voter intimidation, voter inducement and any activity that undermines the democratic process. This includes refraining from giving out money or gifts campaigns rallies and meetings.
- Political parties, candidates and party leaders should publicly denounce acts of violence – most especially acts of violence or destruction carried out by their supporters and commit to peaceful and issue-based campaigns. Furthermore, candidates should caution their supporters and party members against violent acts.

## **Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Media**

- Yiaga Africa calls on all Civil Society Organizations to continue collaborating with INEC to sensitise voters to the electoral process and the importance of peaceful participation.
- This collaboration can enhance the reach and effectiveness of voter education campaigns.
- Yiaga Africa encourages CSOs to monitor the pre-election environment with vigilance and report incidents of violence to the appropriate authorities.
- Yiaga Africa calls on the media to ensure fair coverage and access to all candidates and political parties contesting in the election.
- Yiaga Africa calls on media to promote voter education and restrict messages that promote hate speech or violence.

# Methodology

Yiaga Africa Watching the Vote recruited, trained, and deployed 25 long-term citizen observers (LTOs) across the 18 LGAs of Edo State to observe the pre-election environment in their various local governments systematically. The observation also includes monitoring early warning signs of electoral violence that may influence the election outcome in the 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 every month on a standard set of questions guiding their observation at the local government level and the state capital. All the 25 LTOs were recruited from their LGAs of residence, where they are expected to monitor all the electoral activities: voter education and information, political campaign activities, activities of marginalised groups (youth, women, and PWDs), election-related violence, and critical incidents all around the clock. Additionally, they track the activities of electoral stakeholders like; INEC, political parties, NOA, CSOs, women, youths, and PWDs.

All findings from the LTOs are transmitted to the WTV data center via coded SMS and analysed and reported periodically thereafter. Yiaga Africa PREO findings are obtained from the entire LGAs within the state and not from a representative of the whole state, thus indicating 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 Edo State.

## How to keep your PVC Safe

-  No PVC, No Accreditation
-  No Accreditation, No Voting



**Shield the Card from fire**

**Shield the Card from water**



**Don't manhandle the Card, to avoid breakage**

**Don't deface the Card**



**Do not sell the PVC or disclose your Voter Identification Number (VIN)**

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# WATCHING THE VOTE

*Making Votes Count...* **ORG**

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 [www.yiaga.org](http://www.yiaga.org)