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The police
is for all not
for one party

EDO 2024: ELECTION AMIDST A CRISIS OF CONFIDENCE

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

23 July 2024 - 31 August 2024

List of Abbreviation

APC	All Progressive Congress
AEOs	Assistant Electoral Officers
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
EOs	Electoral Officers
LGAs	Local Government Areas
LTOs	Long Term Observers
LP	Labour Party
INEC	Independent National Electoral Commission
NOA	National Orientation Agency
PDP	People's Democratic Party
PREO	Pre-Election Observation
PVCs	Permanent Voters Cards
PWDs	Persons with Disability
WTV	Watching The Vote

Executive Summary

The 2024 Edo Governorship Election is a crucial political event in Nigeria, reflecting the electorate's aspirations for good governance, transparency, and accountability. The state's socioeconomic difficulties and complex historical background have shaped the political environment, with economic instability, insecurity, and infrastructure deficiencies being major concerns. Major political parties, the All Progressives Congress (APC) and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), have attempted to tackle these issues in their manifestos. However, the emergence of the Labour Party (LP) from the 2023 general elections may disrupt traditional voting patterns by appealing to young voters disenchanted with the established political structure. Yiaga Africa's Watching the Vote (WTV) observation shows that the APC, LP, and PDP are the three political parties' campaigning ahead of the September 21 governorship election. The relationship between influential individuals, such as Adams Oshiomhole and Godwin Obaseki, and the candidates vying for office will be crucial in shaping the election outcome. With 2,629,025 registered voters in Edo state, the election is expected to be closely contested between these three parties.

The key findings from this reporting phase, July 23rd to August 31st, include an update on the extent of preparations for the election by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). The weeks leading to the election also witnessed an increase in political campaigns across the local government areas with reports of voter inducement. The Security situation remains volatile with reports of activities of cultist groups and kidnappings in some local government areas. However, the current economic situation has also created an un conducive environment for voter education and voter mobilisation. Economic factors like the high fuel costs and rising costs of goods are growing impediments to voters when it comes to their participation in pre-election activities such as voter education and stakeholder engagements or meetings. The Edo election also faces a major challenge of being conducted in the context of varying levels of trust deficit. On the one hand, trust deficit in the relationship between the electoral commission and the voters on the other hand is, a trust deficit highlighted in the demands for non-interference of the federal government/presidency in the Edo elections.

Accordingly, in the days leading to the election, the Electoral Commission needs to respond proactively to issues relating to the electoral process and invest in effective engagement of the people of Edo state. Also, security agencies must respond promptly to early warning signs of electoral violence and conduct thorough investigations into abduction and cult activities. This should also include addressing the issue of firearm proliferation and using preventive measures to neutralise security threats in hotspot areas. Political parties and candidates should conduct issue-based campaigns, refrain from using hate speech, and conduct their campaigns in compliance with the Electoral Act. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and media organisations should also collaborate with INEC and the National Orientation Agency (NOA) to expand voter education efforts, particularly targeting marginalised groups, and promote voter education.

Introduction

The 2024 Edo Governorship Election is a significant political event in Nigeria's 2024 political scene particularly given the state's socio-political configuration and complex historical background. The forthcoming election beyond being a leadership contest, reflects the electorate's aspirations for good governance, transparency and accountability. The political environment of Edo State has been shaped by economic instability, insecurity, and infrastructure deficiencies, all of which are major concerns for voters. At the same time, the major political party candidates have attempted to tackle these urgent issues in their manifestos by offering their policy recommendations. The dynamics between major parties, the All Progressives Congress (APC) and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), have not changed significantly. However, an emerging political movement from the Labour Party (LP) may disrupt traditional voting patterns by appealing to young voters disenchanted with established political norms. This demographic shift sometimes comes with a more vibrant electoral engagement or exacerbates existing divisions within the electorate. In particular, the findings from Yiaga Africa's Watching the Vote (WTV) observation for the period showed that the APC, LP, and PDP are the three dominant political parties in the political space.

One of the key issues in the 2024 Edo Governorship election is the role of influential individuals who have contributed to the political landscape in the state. A key figure is Adams Oshiomhole, a former governor of the state and a prominent member of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) party, who has wielded significant influence in Edo State politics. Another influential figure in Edo State politics is Godwin Obaseki, the incumbent governor. The relationship between these influential figures and the candidates vying for office will be crucial in shaping the election outcome. Notably, the reverence to the Oba of Benin also indicates the potential influence of the traditional institution on both the process and patterns of voting.

Additionally, with 2,629,025 registered voters and projected over 2 million Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs) obtained by registered voters, the APC, PDP and LP are devising different means to win the voters and by extension the governorship election. With the politics in the pre-election phase influenced by both the inter-party conflict between the APC and PDP and the intra-party conflict in the LP, the governorship election of 2024 is anticipated to be fiercely contested with a possible controversial outcome. In addition to the political contest, the growing possibility of violence and instability—such as kidnappings and cultist activity—has fostered an atmosphere of fear that political players may take advantage of. As predicted in the WTV second series of the pre-election observation report, despite the fierce political contest for the office of the governor, the election may witness low voter turnout. The economic realities and level of insecurity in the states may be fundamental issues that will influence voting behaviour and voter turnout.

This Pre-election observation report reflects the findings between 23rd July and 31st August 2024. It is based on reports from observers in the 18 LGAs in Edo State. The observation covers 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.

Key Findings

INEC's Election Readiness



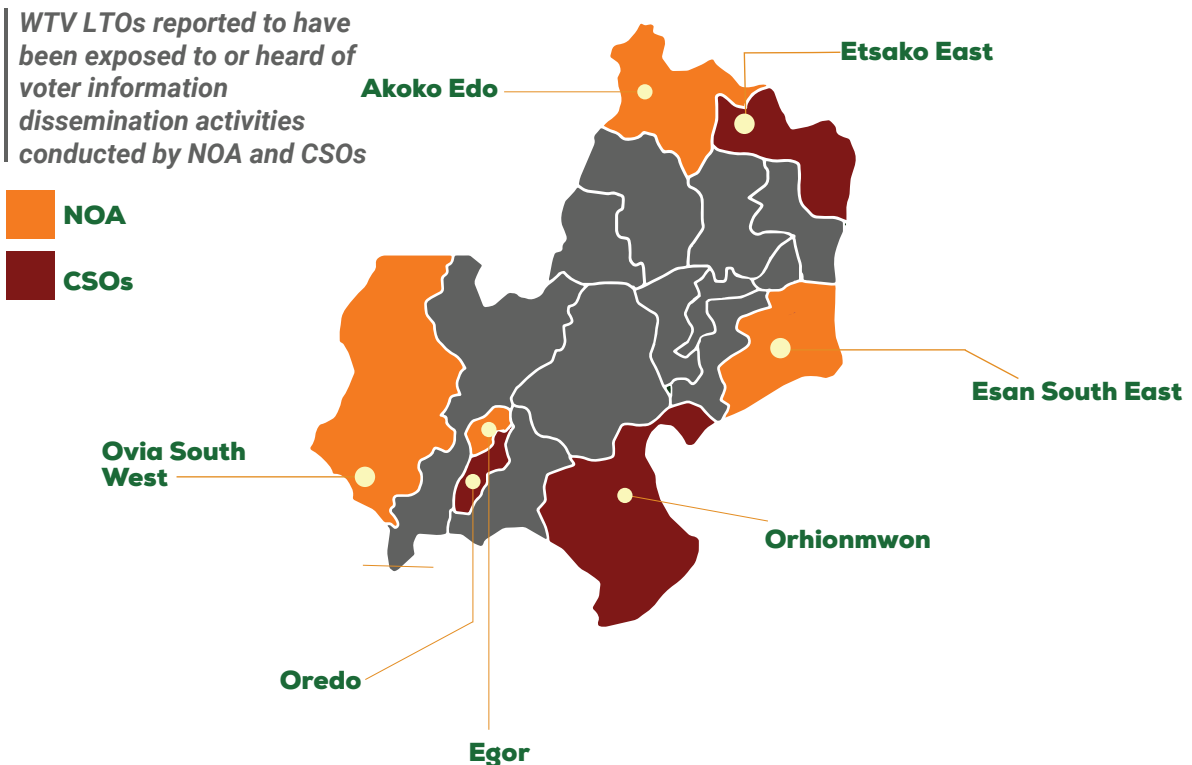
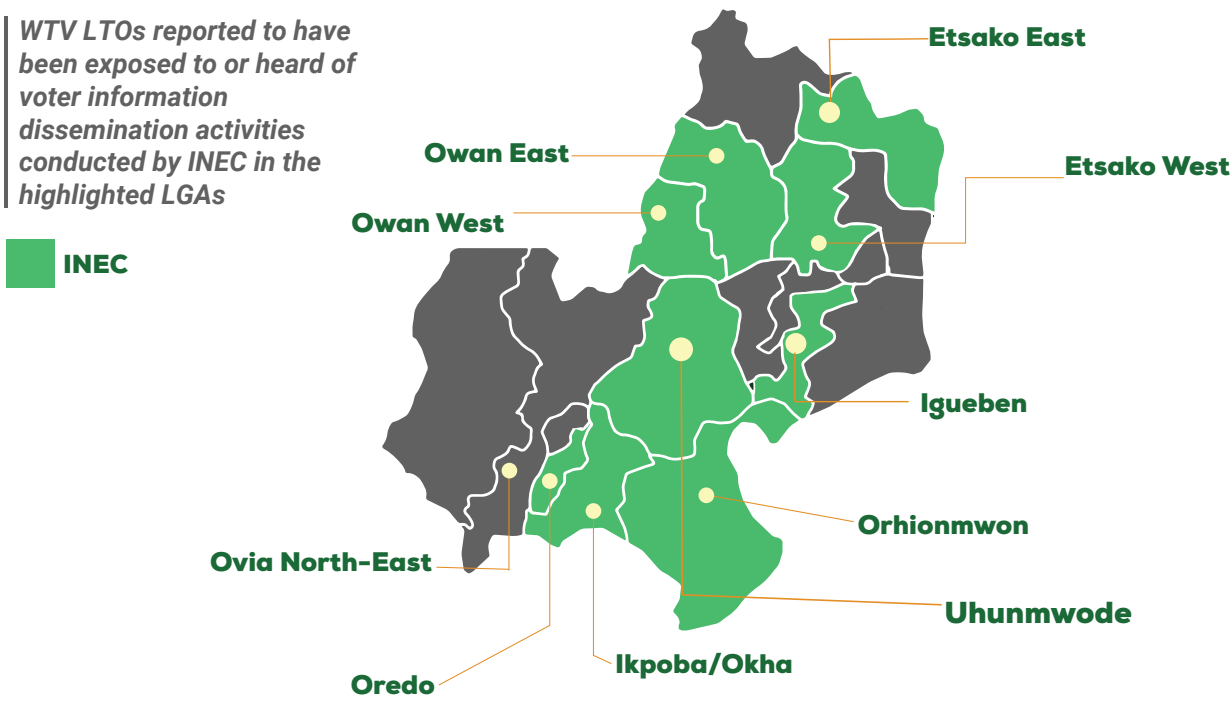
WTV findings from this reporting period reveal an increase in INEC's preparatory activities ahead of the election across the 18 local government areas. Some of the ongoing preparatory activities observed include the recruitment of ad hoc staff, which was concluded on August 19, 2024; training of Electoral Officers (EOs) and Assistant Electoral Officers (AEOs) on managing elections; meetings or consultations with stakeholders (traditional rulers, religious groups, civil society/observers groups); as well as voter education programs. In addition, the Electoral Commission presented the certified true copies of the voter's register to the political parties on 20th August 2024 which was thirty days to the election. As part of the preparations for the elections, non-sensitive materials were deployed to the state in the reporting period.

Collection of Permanent Voters Cards (PVCs)

The permanent voter's card (PVC) remains a mandatory form of identification to enable registered voters to vote on election day in line with the Electoral Act 2022. Ahead of the Edo election, INEC had conducted continuous voter registration to enable first-time voters to register as voters. In addition to the voter registration exercise, INEC also attended to requests for the transfer of voter registers or the replacement of missing/damaged PVCs. The PVC serves as an essential tool for voters, enabling them to exercise their franchise during elections. Ahead of the September 21, 2024 election, INEC commenced the collection of PVC process. WTV LTOs deployed to INEC's PVCs' collection centres to observe the collection of PVCs across the states. The PVC collection commenced on August 22 and is expected to last till September 8, 2024, starting in all the LGAs except in Esan Central and Etsako East LGAs.

Voter Education/Information

In this reporting phase, the WTV project noted a sustained level of dissemination of key electoral information by INEC, the National Orientation Agency (NOA), and CSOs. Specifically, the WTV LTOs reported to have been exposed to or heard of voter information dissemination activities conducted by INEC in 10 of the 18 LGAs—Igubeben, Etsako East, Etsako West, Owan East, Owan West, Ikpoba/Okha, Oredo, Orhionmwon, and Ovia North East LGA. The WTV project also received reports of voter information dissemination activities conducted by NOA in only 4 of the 18 LGAs in Edo State. The LGAs include Esan South East, Akoko Edo, Egor, and Ovia South West, by CSOs in 3 LGAs—Etsako East, Oredo, and Orhionmwon.



Political Party Activities and Campaigns

In line with INEC’s timetable for the election, political party campaigns commenced on 24th April 2024. Yiaga Africa observed political party campaign activities such as campaign rallies, display of posters by political parties, media engagement, and meetings by political parties contesting in the election. The campaigns have been dominated by the APC, PDP, and LP. WTV LTOs witnessed or heard of campaigns associated with PDP in all the 18 LGAs across the state, and by APC in all the LGAs except Esan South East and Akoko Edo LGA. While the campaign for LP was witnessed or heard of in 15 LGAs except for Esan Central, Akoko Edo, and Etsako West LGA.



APC conducted campaign rallies with campaign trails in 16 LGAs except Esan South East and Akoko Edo LGAs.

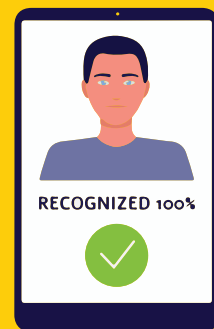
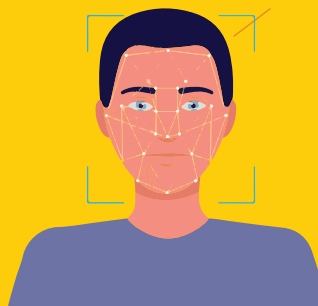


LP was witnessed or heard of in 15 LGAs except for Esan Central, Akoko Edo, and Etsako West LGAs.



PDP conducted rallies and campaign trails in all 18 LGAs.

Procedure for voter accreditation



1

On election day, ensure you show up at the polling unit on your PVC

2

When you arrive at the polling unit, a presiding officer will verify or authenticate your particulars such as fingerprints or facial identity with the use of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (also known as BVAS).

3

Once you are accredited, you will be issued a ballot to cast your vote



Where a voter’s fingerprint and face cannot be matched with the details in the BVAS after three trials, the voter shall not be allowed to vote. There shall be no INCIDENT FORMS for manual accreditation of voters.

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Early Warning Signs

■ **Physical violence and verbal attacks by political parties during party rallies/meetings/on campaign trails:** Although political campaigns in Edo have been relatively peaceful, they were not completely devoid of verbal violence/attacks, as reported by WTV LTOs. As the election in Edo State approaches, tensions continue to rise, especially between the APC and PDP. The rivalry between these parties has intensified, with both engaging in character assassination and the use of hate speech. In addition, there is the 'blame-game politics' of the APC and PDP as the former accuses the latter of using state structure (PDP) while the latter accuses the former of using the Federal structure to influence the process. This lack of trust between these parties has also extended to influencing citizens' perceptions of the electoral process. The pervasive atmosphere of hostility could destabilise the electoral process, undermine public trust, and potentially lead to violent confrontations. Addressing these tensions is essential to ensure a peaceful and credible election. Significant reports of physical violence or verbal attacks at campaign rallies or party activities were received from Ikpoba/Okha, Oredo and Ovia South West LGAs.

■ **Threats of cultism and kidnapping:** The security situation in Edo State remains volatile with this reporting phase recording reports of frequent kidnappings and a surge in cultist activities leading to violent deaths which are largely unreported in the mainstream media. This atmosphere of fear and instability poses a danger to citizens and creates an opportunity for political exploitation of the volatile security situation. These incidents were largely observed in Egor, Esan South East, and Etsako East LGAs as reported by the WTV LTOs. For instance, on August 11, 2024, at around 9 pm, two men who had gone to the Ibie community in Etsako East LGA to buy fish from a river farm were attacked while returning to their village. One of them was shot in the stomach, and the other was kidnapped. The kidnappers demanded N35 million for his release.

From the reports from the LGAs, there is a risk that political actors may take advantage of these security challenges by recruiting cultists as thugs to intimidate opponents, disrupt the election process, and manipulate outcomes in their favour. The unchecked rise of such activities may threaten the peaceful conduct of the election and the integrity of the process.

■ **Economic Challenges and Voter Apathy:** The continuous increase in fuel prices and resulting scarcity have become significant issues affecting the daily lives of Edo State residents, contributing to a deepening economic crisis. Fuel scarcity has led to sharply increased transportation costs, worsening the masses' financial difficulties. This situation poses a particular challenge for the logistics of the upcoming election, as it can directly impact the movement of voters and the distribution of election materials. The fuel crisis has also heightened voter apathy, as many citizens may need more motivation to show up at their polling stations, especially those residing in remote areas, to participate in the election. The difficulties in securing fuel have created concerns about potential disruptions on election day, which could further affect voter turnout and the overall success of the electoral process.

Key Recommendations

Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)

- Intensify voter education activities across all 18 LGAs in the state and ensure deliberate voter education activities for marginalised groups.
- Ensure that all sensitive and non-sensitive materials are adequately distributed to each LGA with an efficient logistics management system to aid the smooth deployment of election material and personnel.
- Ensure an efficient oversight system to fully comply with the rules and reduce the culture of impunity.
- Remain neutral and professional as the contest becomes heated towards election day.

Security Agencies

- Curtail the proliferation and use of firearms and other weapons and ensure appropriate sanctions for those implicated in thuggery and violence.
- Employ preventive measures to neutralise existing security threats in hotspot areas such as Egor, Esan South East, and Etsako East LGAs to prevent election-related violence and criminal activities.
- Security agencies should promptly respond to early warning signs of electoral violence to prevent escalation and ensure the safety of lives and property. They should conduct thorough investigations into cases of abduction and cult activities to take prompt actions aimed at preventing further escalation of conflicts.

Political Parties

- Political parties and candidates should conduct issue-based campaigns rather than engage in voter inducement and recruitment of thugs and cultists for violence.
- Political parties and candidates should refrain from using hate speech and character assassination during their campaigns. They should publicly pledge to conduct themselves peacefully and discourage their supporters from engaging in any violent or disruptive activities.
- Political parties and candidates should subject themselves to public scrutiny on their campaigns' manifestoes through debates, town halls and direct public engagement.

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Media Organizations

- CSOs should continue collaborating with INEC and NOA to expand voter education efforts, especially targeting marginalised groups to ensure their active participation in the election.
- Media organisations should ensure fair coverage and access to all candidates and political parties participating in the election.
- Media organisations should continue to use their platforms to promote voter education and refrain from broadcasting messages that promote hate speech or violence.
- CSOs and Media organisations should continue supporting the electoral process by raising awareness and encouraging citizens to collect their PVCs.

Citizens

- Commit some time to explore the manifestos of the political parties to influence informed decisions at the polls.
- Engage candidates and political parties on issues-based campaigns.
- To protect their PVCs and vote on election day.
- Vote based on issues and refrain from selling their voters or allowing politicians to induce them with gift items to vote for their parties.

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. 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 centre via coded SMS and analysed and reported periodically after that. Yiaga Africa PREO findings are obtained from all the 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 to investigating the activities in the LGAs of Edo State.



FINAL LIST OF CANDIDATES

2024 Governorship Election



INDEPENDENT NATIONAL
ELECTORAL COMMISSION

Edo State Saturday 21st September

	POSITION	CANDIDATE	PWD	AGE	GENDER	QUAL.
1	GOVERNOR	IYERE KENNEDY	X	50	M	SSCE
	A DEPUTY GOVERNOR	ENABULELE BRIGHT	X	49	M	MSc
2	GOVERNOR	ISEGHOHI TOM	X	60	M	WAEC
	AA DEPUTY GOVERNOR	ONAIWU MABEL OSEMWONYE NMWEN	X	60	M	WAEC
3	GOVERNOR	UDOH OBERAIFO DAVID	X	37	M	FSLC SSCE DEGREE
	AAC DEPUTY GOVERNOR	OSUNDE LORD OSAS	X	45	M	FSLC SSCE LLB
4	GOVERNOR	IZEDONMWEN OSARENREN DEREK	X	47	M	FSLC WAEC BEng
	ADC DEPUTY GOVERNOR	OSAGIE PHILIP	X	61	M	PSLC, WAEC/SSCE HSC HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE
5	GOVERNOR	AKHIMIE KINGSON	X	37	M	PRIMARY SCHOOL LEAVING CERTIFICATE
	ADP DEPUTY GOVERNOR	OBAZEE RAMATU	X	35	F	BSc ACCOUNTING
6	GOVERNOR	OKPEBHOLO MONDAY	X	53	M	PRIMARY SCHOOL LEAVING CERTIFICATE WASC, NECO, BSc BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION
	APC DEPUTY GOVERNOR	IDAHOSA DENNIS	X	43	M	FSLC, WASSC, MASTER OF LEG STUDIES
7	GOVERNOR	OSIFO ISAIAH	X	64	M	FSLC, SSCE BSc
	APGA DEPUTY GOVERNOR	BELLO ANERU	X	60	M	FSLC, SSCE BSc. Public Admin
8	GOVERNOR	UGIAGBE ODARO SYLVESTER	X	45	M	FSCL SSCE N. DIPLOMA
	APM DEPUTY GOVERNOR	EZOMO TIMOTHY EDE	X	44	M	FSLC, NABTEB, BSc.
9	GOVERNOR	ARELOEGBE AMOS OSALUMESE	X	56	M	BSc
	APP DEPUTY GOVERNOR	OYARENUA PAUL	X	57	F	BA
10	GOVERNOR	OSIRIAME EDEIPO	X	47	M	FSLC, SSCE, BSc
	BP DEPUTY GOVERNOR	OMOROGBE KINGSLEY	X	52	F	FSLC, SSCE, BSc
11	GOVERNOR	AKPATA OLUMIDE ANTHONY	X	51	M	FSLC, WASSE, LLB, BL
	LP DEPUTY GOVERNOR	KADIRI YUSUF ASAMAH				COURT ORDER
12	GOVERNOR	AZENA AZEMHE FRIDAY	X	44	M	FSLC, SSCE, HND
	NNPP DEPUTY GOVERNOR	ISOKPAN IHUEGHIAN	X	48	F	PRI SCH TESTIMONIAL WAEC

	POSITION	CANDIDATE	PWD	AGE	GENDER	QUAL.
13	GOVERNOR	DR. DENNIS OSAHON AIKORIOGIE				COURT ORDER
	DEPUTY GOVERNOR					COURT ORDER
14	GOVERNOR	IGHODALO ASUERINME	X	64	M	BA LAW
	DEPUTY GOVERNOR	OGIE OSARODION	X	63	M	FSLC, WAEC, LL.B, BL
15	GOVERNOR	KEY PATIENCE NDIDI	X	50	F	WASSCE
	DEPUTY GOVERNOR	OJO ABUOMWANDE ADVICE	X	60	M	FIRST SCHOOL LEAVING CERTIFICATE WASSCE
16	GOVERNOR	ANERUA ABDULAI ALIU	X	53	M	WAEC
	DEPUTY GOVERNOR	AMEDU PAUL	X	40	M	WAEC
17	GOVERNOR	OKUNGBOWA PAUL OVBOKHAN	X	40	M	FSLC, WAEC, BSc
	DEPUTY GOVERNOR	MUSTAPHA AHMED TIJANI	X	39	M	FSLC, NECO, BSc
18	GOVERNOR	AKHALAMHE AMIEMENOGHENA	X	43	M	FSLC, SSCE, BSc
	DEPUTY GOVERNOR	IDUBOR JOYCE OLAMILAYO	X	50	F	FSLC, SSCE

 **18**
Political Parties

 **18**
Governorship Candidates

 **17**
Male Candidates

 **1**
Female Candidate

 **0**
PWDs




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FAC



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