

Saturday, September 21,  
2024

Homeville Hotel, Benin,  
Edo State



# Mid-day Situational Statement on the 2024 Edo State Governorship Election

## Introduction

On 21st September 2024, Yiaga Africa deployed the Process and Results Verification for Transparency (PRVT) methodology to observe the Edo State governorship election. This involved 300 stationary and 25 roving observers, covering a representative sample of polling units across all 18 LGAs. The PRVT enables Yiaga Africa to independently assess the quality of election day processes and verify the accuracy of the official election results as announced by INEC. After the polls close, observers will observe the results collation process at both the LGA and state levels, ensuring timely and accurate reporting of the election process.

Yiaga Africa notes that despite a tense political climate, the Edo State governorship election began peacefully with minimal critical incidents. However, logistical challenges caused delays in the commencement of accreditation and voting in several polling units. As predicted in Yiaga Africa's pre-election statement, late openings were attributed to logistical issues and poor weather conditions, such as rainfall. Voters patiently waited to cast their votes despite these delays. The lack of vehicles to transport adhoc officials and election materials, and the absence of security personnel to accompany them, further contributed to the delays. Although most polling units observed had the presence of security agencies, Yiaga Africa observed an uneven distribution of security personnel, resulting in some densely populated polling units having limited security presence.

Yiaga Africa is concerned over reports of intimidation of INEC officials to bypass the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) in Akoko-Edo LGA, missing results sheets in Polling Unit 1 in Ward 8, Orhionmwon LGA, and disruptions caused by political thugs chasing voters from Polling Unit 5 in Uwessan Ward 2, Esan Central LGA. These infractions risk voter suppression and election manipulation. Yiaga Africa calls on INEC to strictly enforce its guidelines and to resist any pressure to deviate from the electoral legal framework.

Yiaga Africa commends the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and security agencies for their swift action in arresting suspected vote-buyers at polling units in Egor and Oredo LGAs. The commission should extend its operations to other LGAs where votes are being traded for N10,000 per voter even in the presence of security personnel. The Nigeria Police is also applauded for arresting and disarming political thugs with firearms on the eve of the election, contributing to a more secure election day environment.

## Yiaga Africa's Watching the Vote Midday Findings

Yiaga Africa's initial findings are based on reports received from 287 of the 300 sampled polling units and processed at 1:30 pm on election day. Additional information and updates will be provided subsequently.

- 1. Arrival of INEC officials and commencement of polls:** In the polling units observed, Yiaga Africa noted a slow start to the voting process, with INEC officials arriving in only 43% of polling units by 7:30 a.m. The geographical breakdown shows that in 69% of polling units in Edo North, 35% in Edo Central, and 56% in Edo South, INEC officials did not arrive by 7:30 a.m. By 8:30 a.m., only 17% of the polling units had opened for accreditation and voting, while by 9:30 a.m., 65% had commenced the voting process.
- 2. Deployment of Materials:** Yiaga Africa observed and noted adequate deployment of election materials like register of voters, voting cubicle, official stamp, Ink pad, and indelible ink, in the opened polling units observed. Yiaga Africa also noted the deployment of assistive materials for persons with disability, with Magnifying glasses deployed in only 27% of the polling unit, braille ballot guide in 38% of polling units and PWD posters in 84% of polling units.
- 3. Deployment of the BVAS:** Yiaga Africa observed that every polling unit had a BVAS deployed. Additionally, Yiaga Africa noted that 6% of the polling units had two or more BVAS devices deployed. However, in 2% of polling units, the BVAS accreditation count was not shown to voters to confirm that it was set to zero before the start of accreditation and voting.
- 4. Deployment of Party Agents:** All Progressives Congress (APC) party agents were sighted at 98% of polling units, Labour Party (LP) agents were in 77% of polling Units, and People's Democratic Party (PDP) agents were in 99% of polling units.
- 5. Deployment of Security Personnel:** Security agents were seen in 95% of polling units.

## Critical Incidents

As of 1:40 pm, the Yiaga Africa WTV Data Center received 16 verified critical incident reports primarily relating to the late opening of polls. Of additional note:

- 1. Polling units where election did not hold:** Yiaga Africa received reports of 4 polling units that failed to open. This incidence was reported in 2 polling units in Egor, 1 in Esan South East, and 1 in Etsako West.
- 2. Delayed commencement of voting due to BVAS Malfunction:** The BVAS malfunctioned in Ayogwiri Town Hall, Ayogwiri Polling Unit, of Uzairure South East ward in Etsako West LGA. As of 1pm, voting had not commenced in the polling unit.

**3. Disruption of Voting:** Voters halted the accreditation and voting process in the Ikpoba—Army Children XI polling unit (12-11-01-011) in Iwogban/Uteh Ward, Ikpoba/Okha LGA because INEC officials arrived without the official stamp. At Ebuja Market Square in Uhunwode LGA, an altercation between APC and PDP supporters over alleged bribery led to the suspension of voting and the destruction of the voting cubicle. Political thugs also disrupted voting at Anyaran Araromi Primary School in Akoko Edo LGA.

**4. Vote Buying/bribery:** Yiaga Africa observers reported incidents of vote buying in Ikpoba/Okha, Igueben, Esan West, Akoko Edo, Owan West and Uhunmode LGAs. APC and PDP party agents were seen bribing voters with cash (N10,000) at the Igueben - Idumoka Pri School polling unit (12-10-03-004) Ward 1 in Igueben LGA. Party agents for APC and PDP were also seen handing out cash gifts (N10,000) in Enikaro - Enikaro Primary School IX Polling Unit (12-11-07-009) in Ugbekun ward, Ikpoba/Okha LGA.

### **Preliminary Recommendations**

Yiaga Africa WTV makes the following preliminary recommendations:

1. INEC should extend the voting hour from 2:30pm to 5:00pm to ensure all voters in polling units with late opening are accorded the opportunity to cast their vote to avert voter suppression.
2. INEC should ensure full compliance with the guidelines regarding voter accreditation across all polling units as the process continues.
3. Security agencies should enhance their presence in polling units and wards where delays occurred due to the late arrival of INEC officials to prevent political thugs from exploiting the situation to compromise the process, especially if the process extends into the night.
4. INEC should take urgent remedial actions in polling units where cases of infractions and non compliance with the 2022 Electoral Act and INEC guidelines occurred, particularly non-use of BVAS for accreditation, non-compliance with results counting and collation procedures. This will deepen the legitimacy of the final outcome of the elections.
5. Security agencies should respond promptly to reports of voter intimidation and attacks at the polling unit to accord citizens the opportunity to exercise their constitutional right to vote.
6. INEC should ensure strict compliance with the guidelines for the results collation. Specifically, party agents and accredited media and election observers should be granted access to the results collation centers.

We urge the voters to remain patient and peaceful through the voting and counting process. Yiaga Africa will provide updates as the voting process ends and the results collation commences. We call on voters who are yet to turn out to vote to proceed to their polling units before 2:30 pm to vote for candidates of their

choice in the elections, confident that Yiaga Africa provides timely, statistically representative information about the conduct of the election.

Yiaga Africa appeals to INEC, all security agents, political party candidates and their supporters, and all residents of Edo to work together to ensure that the election is credible and peaceful.

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

Thank you, and God Bless the people of Edo State!

**Dr. Aisha Abdullahi**  
Chair of the 2024 Edo  
Election Mission

**Samson Itodo**  
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Yiaga Africa

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