



Mid-day Situational Statement on the 2024 Ondo State Governorship Election

Saturday,
November 16th,
2024

Delivered at the
Dejavu Hotel,
Alagbaka, Akure,
Ondo State

Introduction

Yiaga Africa Watching The Vote is deploying the Process and Results Verification for Transparency (PRVT) methodology to observe the Ondo State governorship election. This involves the deployment of 300 stationary observers to a representative randomly selected sample of 300 polling units across the 18 LGAs and 24 roving observers. With the PRVT, Yiaga Africa will independently verify if the official governorship election results announced by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) reflect the votes cast at the polling units. At the end of polls, Yiaga Africa observers will deploy to all LGAs and State's results collation centers to observe and report the results collation process. This deployment will enable Yiaga Africa to provide the most timely and accurate information on the governorship elections in the state.

As Yiaga Africa reported in its pre-election statement, the lead-up to the elections was relatively peaceful. On election day, the process began calmly and orderly, demonstrating citizens' interest in participating peacefully. Citizens arrived early at their assigned polling units to cast their votes in the gubernatorial elections. Additionally, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and the transport union groups successfully deployed election officials and materials across the state. By 7:30 am, election officials had arrived at 71% of the polling units. By 9:30 am, accreditation and voting were underway in 91% of the observed polling units.

Yiaga Africa observed widespread occurrence of vote buying across several polling units, which is becoming a permanent feature of our electoral process. We strongly condemn this practice, as it contributes to electoral corruption and political inequality. We commend the Department of State Security (DSS) for apprehending an individual allegedly involved in vote trading at the St. Stephen Polling Unit in Ward 4, Akure.

Yiaga Africa firmly holds the political parties and candidates accountable for the negative trends observed in our elections. Political parties cannot distance themselves from the persistent issue of vote buying that continues to mar our electoral processes.

Yiaga Africa Watching the Vote Mid-day Findings

Yiaga Africa's initial findings are based on reports received from 278 of the 300 sampled polling units and processed at 2:00 pm on election day. Additional information and updates will be provided subsequently.

- 1. The arrival of INEC officials and commencement of polls:** Yiaga Africa observers noted the early arrival of INEC officials in the polling units observed. Our findings reveal that INEC officials arrived at 71% of the polling units by 7:30 a.m. By 9:30 am, accreditation and voting had commenced in 91% of polling units. The geographical distribution indicates that 93% of polling units in the Ondo Central Senatorial District, 95% of polling units in Ondo North, and 86% of polling units in the Ondo South Senatorial Districts commenced accreditation and voting by 9:30 a.m.
- 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 28% of the polling units, PWD posters in 90% of polling units and PWD voter information and statistics (Form EC 40H) in 90% of polling units.
- 3. Deployment of the BVAS:** Yiaga Africa observed that every polling unit observed 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 all observed polling units, Labour Party (LP) agents were seen at 10% of polling units, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) agents were in 99% of polling units and the Social Democratic Party (SDP) agents were in 6% of polling units.

5. Deployment of Security Personnel: Security agents were observed in all polling units.

6. Access to polling units for voters with disability: In 31% of polling units, individuals had to climb steps or cross over gutters to access the polling units, which made it difficult for persons with disability to vote with ease.

Election Infractions

As of 2:00 pm, the Yiaga Africa WTV Data Center has received the following critical incidents:

1. Obstruction of election observation: The presiding officer and security personnel were denied access to a Yiaga Africa observer deployed at Igbelowowa Methodist Primary School polling unit in Idanre LGA. They claimed they had not been informed that observers should be allowed to observe the process.

2. Disruption of voting: Some frustrated voters disrupted voting at the Leo Hospital polling unit in the Owode/Imuagun ward of Akure South LGA due to the malfunctioning of the BVAS. Security operatives quickly arrived to calm the situation.

3. Vote-buying at polling units: The APC party agent stationed at the Odulufe, Omoke, Odosika, Ogubgobe polling units in the Ileooluji II ward of Ileooluji LGA was observed offering cash inducements of N20,000 to voters in exchange for their vote for the party. Unfortunately, security agents did not intervene to stop this action. Voters at the Ogun/Saruku Area polling unit in Ilara II ward, Ifedore LGA, revealed how they marked their ballot papers to agents of the APC party in exchange for cash gifts. The security personnel present did not respond to this situation. APC and PDP agents were observed bribing voters with cash incentives ranging from N5000 to N10,000 at the Elegiri/Ediro Compound polling unit in Ilara I ward, Ifedore LGA.

Preliminary Recommendations

Yiaga Africa WTV makes the following preliminary recommendations:

1. INEC should ensure strict adherence to the guidelines for results

- collation. Specifically, party agents, accredited media, and election observers should have access to the collation centers.
2. Security agencies should remain professional and nonpartisan throughout the voting and results collation process. They should also impose appropriate sanctions for any violation of the Electoral Act on Election Day, especially any threat to the right to vote or attempts to buy votes.
 3. All electoral stakeholders, including citizens, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), political parties and security agencies should remain committed to the peaceful completion of the election. This includes orderly conduct as the voting and counting process concludes at the polling units and the results collation commences at all levels.
 4. Yiaga Africa commends the DSS for arresting mercenaries deployed by political parties to buy votes. We call on the security and antigraft agencies to ensure diligent prosecution of individuals caught in the act of vote buying and other electoral fraud or offences.

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 Ondo 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 Ondo State!

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