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2024

Homeville Hotel, Benin,  
Edo State



# Post Election Statement on the September 2024 Edo State Governorship Election

## Edo State Governorship election fails the integrity test/standards

### Introduction

On Saturday, September 21, 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. Yiaga Africa observers also deployed to the State and LGA results collation centers to observe the process, ensuring timely and accurate reporting of the election process. Yiaga Africa has successfully deployed this methodology in two Presidential elections and sixteen off-cycle governorship elections.

Yiaga Africa's election day situation analysis statement highlighted logistical challenges that led to delays in the commencement of accreditation and voting at various polling units across the state. Inadequate planning in the supply of vehicles for transporting ad hoc officials and election materials, along with the absence of accompanying security personnel, further exacerbated the delays. Yiaga Africa also condemns acts of violence and disruption of voting and results collation process by political thugs and hoodlums, particularly violence directed at voters and election officials. These unwholesome acts undermine the integrity of the elections. Yiaga Africa extends its sympathies to citizens and polling officials who suffered severe injuries and loss of valuable properties due to these attacks and violence. Yiaga Africa calls on security agencies to thoroughly investigate these cases of attacks and intimidation against voters and polling officials.

### Statement on INEC's official results

Yiaga Africa's estimates are based on official results announced at the polling unit, from a representative random sample of polling units. As highlighted in our pre-election report, Yiaga Africa will amongst other factors consider the quality of election day processes in assessing whether the 2024 Edo governorship satisfies the electoral integrity test. In this regard, Yiaga Africa considered the integrity of accreditation, voting, counting, and collation of results.

INEC consistently applied its guidelines in managing the accreditation and voting process in a significant number of polling units. Despite some isolated incidents

of inadequate election materials, the BVAS machines functioned optimally, and all voters in the queue by 2:30pm were allowed to vote, despite the late opening of polls. The polling officials uploaded polling unit results on the IReV in a timely manner, making it possible for citizens to access polling unit level results. However, the incidents of results manipulation and disruptions during ward and local government collation in Ikpoba/Okha, Etsako West, Egor and Oredo LGAs, including intimidation of INEC officials, observers and party agents and the collation of results contrary to the provisions of the Electoral Act and INEC guidelines, severely undermine the credibility of the election results.

### **Inconsistencies in the officially announced results**

Based on reports received from the sampled polling units, Yiaga Africa can project the expected vote shares for each party within a narrow margin. However, Yiaga Africa is only able to verify the election outcome if it falls within its estimated margins. If the official results do not fall within Yiaga Africa's estimated ranges, then the results may have been manipulated.

According to INEC, the All Progressive Congress (APC) received 51.1% of the votes, People's Democratic Party (PDP) 43.3% of the votes, and the Labor Party garnered 4.0% of the votes. Based on reports from 287 of 300 (96%) sampled polling units, Yiaga Africa's statistical analysis shows inconsistencies in the official results announced by INEC. For instance, the official results announced by INEC for APC in Oredo and Egor, LGAs fall outside the PRVT estimate. In Esan West LGA, the official results for PDP fall outside the PRVT estimates. Also, in Oredo LGA, the official results as announced for LP fall outside the PRVT estimates. These inconsistencies with Yiaga Africa's PRVT estimates indicate that the results were altered at the level of collation.

The disparities between the official results released by INEC and Yiaga Africa's PRVT estimates indicate manipulation of results during the collation process. Yiaga Africa strongly condemns the actions of some biased INEC officials who altered figures during collation including the actions of some security officials who interfered with the collation process. Yiaga Africa notes that the cases of disruption in Ikpoba/Okha, Etsako West, Egor, and Oredo LGAs in the course of collation created opportunities for election manipulation, raising significant concerns about the credibility and integrity of the results collation process.

### **Turnout Estimates**

INEC's turnout and rejected ballots for the 18 LGA released are consistent with Yiaga Africa WTV PRVT estimates. Yiaga Africa is able to estimate that turnout is between 20.9% and 24.1% ( $22.5\% \pm 1.6\%$ ), while INEC's official result is 22.4%. Similarly, Yiaga Africa estimates for rejected ballots are between 2.2% and 3.2% ( $2.7\% \pm 0.5\%$ ).

Yiaga Africa notes that in terms of turnout, voters did not meet the resilience test as voter turnout plummeted despite high PVC collection rates recorded

for the governorship election. In this election, only 22.4% of the voters turned out to exercise their civic rights, lower than the 27% turnout observed in 2020. Nevertheless, Yiaga Africa commends the resilience of the voters who turned out despite the rain and voting delays, staying back to fulfill their civic duties.

## Recommendations

1. Yiaga Africa calls for the immediate investigation and prosecution of polling officials and collation officers who are engaged in results manipulation and flagrant violations of the guidelines on results collation.
2. Yiaga Africa calls on INEC to urgently clarify the inconsistencies in some of the results, especially election results from Oredo, Egor, Esan West and LGAs.
3. INEC should issue detailed guidelines for exercising its powers to review declarations and returns made contrary to provisions of the Electoral Act and regulations and guidelines. This should include procedures for receiving complaints, timeframe, format and who is eligible to submit complaints.
4. It is imperative to integrate the IReV and electronic transmission of results into the electoral legal framework to confer legality on polling unit level results uploaded on the portal. To this end, the National Assembly should expeditiously amend the Electoral Act to make electronic transmission of results mandatory.

## Conclusion

As noted in our pre-election reports, Yiaga Africa emphasized that the 2024 Edo governorship election would be assessed against three key parameters: the resilience test, impartiality test, and integrity test.

On the **resilience test**, despite early warnings of potential violence and adverse weather conditions, voter turnout was low. While voters were given the opportunity to exercise their rights, many chose not to participate, resulting in a partial failure of the resilience test. Nevertheless, Yiaga Africa commends the resilience and patience of voters who did turn out, particularly in the face of logistical challenges and rainfall that caused late opening of polls.

On the **impartiality test**, Yiaga Africa monitored the role of security agencies and their engagement with the process. While there were isolated incidents of intimidation, the security forces largely acted professionally, ensuring a peaceful and secure environment on election day. However, reports of interference during the results collation process, including the denial of access to accredited observers and party agents at collation centers, cast doubt on the neutrality of some security personnel. Additionally, the disruption of result collation raises concerns about the distribution and effectiveness of security deployment for the election.

Lastly, on the **integrity test**, Yiaga Africa concludes that the 2024 Edo governorship election fails the electoral integrity test due to the lack of

transparency in the results collation process, which led to the manipulation of results. While key processes such as accreditation, voting, counting, and recording of results at the polling unit substantially complied with procedures, the results collation process was compromised by the actions of some biased INEC officials in connivance with other actors. This manipulation severely undermines the overall integrity of the election.

As Yiaga Africa stated after the 2023 general elections and the off-cycle governorship elections of Bayelsa, Imo, and Kogi states in 2023, as well as the inconsistencies in the Edo state governorship election results, especially for the LGAs identified in the reports, it is abundantly clear that drastic steps are now needed for fundamental electoral reforms to restore public confidence in the electoral process, especially the urgent need for political actors to change their attitude towards politics.

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

**Signed.**

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

**Samson Itodo**  
Executive Director,  
Yiaga Africa

For media inquiries, please contact **Jennifer Dafwat, Media Officer**, Yiaga Africa. Tel. +234 (0) 806 899 5644, Email: [jdfwat@yiaga.org](mailto:jdfwat@yiaga.org). Learn more about #WatchingTheVote at [www.watchingthevote.org](http://www.watchingthevote.org) or on social media on Facebook at [facebook.com/yiaga.org](https://facebook.com/yiaga.org) or on Twitter @YIAGA.