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DEEPENING DEMOCRACY:  
LESSONS FROM EDO STATE  
2020 GOVERNORSHIP  
ELECTION

# DEEPENING DEMOCRACY: LESSONS FROM EDO STATE 2020 GOVERNORSHIP ELECTION

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# Introduction

The 2020 Edo gubernatorial election held on 19 September 2020 saw the victory of incumbent Governor Godwin Obaseki of the People's Democratic Party (PDP). On 21 September 2020, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) gave an official breakdown of the results, declaring the number of votes gained by each candidate.

A notable feature about this election is INEC's innovation in creating the result viewing portal. This greatly improved accountability and transparency, enabling stakeholders to not just track the results but also conduct research and analysis of the primary data. In line with this, the Electoral Hub, a programme of the Initiative for Research, Innovation, and Advocacy in Development (IRIAD), produced this document to contribute to the understanding of the Edo election and its results.

Reports by observers and INEC officials also reveal the strengths and areas of weakness in this election. From this, we can highlight important lessons to be learned from the election, and how we can use them to deepen democracy in Nigeria.

This document analyses the result of the 2020 Edo election, using INEC's result breakdown as well as data from the result viewing portal. In particular, it analyses the result sheets of selected polling units in Akoko-Edo local government area (LGA) to draw out four major themes. It then outlines the strengths and weaknesses of the election, drawing lessons from them and providing recommendations on how to improve the electoral systems and processes in the future. It is hoped that this document will be used by stakeholders to deepen democracy and improve the integrity and credibility of elections in Nigeria.

# Results Analysis

On 21 September 2020, INEC gave an official breakdown of the governorship election result, declaring that Obaseki was elected with 307,955 votes (57.3%), while voter turnout was 24.53% (see figure below). Data from INEC’s result viewing portal (see Appendix A) also reveals some wider trends about the election. At the time of writing, a total of 2,507 out of 2,627 results have been submitted on the portal. These results reveal four major themes about the election results: mathematical inconsistencies, electoral malpractices, voter turnout, and two-party voting.



Source: INEC<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> INEC Nigeria, 2020 Edo Governorship Election: Declaration of Results (21 September 2020). Available at <https://twitter.com/inecnigeria/status/1308000156135165953>

## **1. Mathematical Inconsistencies**

Many of the statement of result sheets uploaded on the portal had cancellations and corrections on them. Indeed, the numerous corrections and cancellations sometimes made the figures difficult to read. This raises questions as to likelihood of error that comes with manual voting and recording of results. In addition to cancellations and corrections, there were clear mathematical inconsistencies in the result sheets of some polling units. For instance, in Akoko-Edo, Ward 8, Unit 1 and Ward 5, Unit 14, the total number of valid votes recorded differs from the sum of the votes recorded for each party.<sup>2</sup> In one particular polling unit (Ward 4, Unit 8), voter turnout could not even be calculated because the number of accredited voters (288) was more than the number of registered voters (283).<sup>3</sup>

Some of these inconsistencies were quite significant, as in Ward 4, Unit 2, Akoko-Edo, which recorded only 306 accredited voters but 420 valid votes – a difference of 114.<sup>4</sup> These discrepancies suggest either mathematical errors on the part of election officials, or electoral malpractices such as multiple voting.

In order to reduce the likelihood of error, electronic voting, which has been recommended by many proponents of electoral reform,<sup>5</sup> should be adopted. This would also prevent people from stuffing multiple ballot papers in a ballot box.

## **2. Electoral Malpractices**

Related to the previous point, blatant multiple voting was evident in Ward 5, Unit 12 in Akoko-Edo. The election in that polling unit was cancelled for over-voting, as the number of accredited voters was only 122, but the total votes recorded was 177.

Also, the results portal revealed that in Akoko-Edo, no election was held in Ward 4, Units 9 and 10, as election materials were taken away by unknown persons. This raises questions as to how they were able to gain possession of the materials, despite the number of security agents deployed to protect sensitive election materials at polling units. Unlawful possession of election materials such as ballot papers is an offence under Section 118(3)(c) of the Electoral Act 2010, punishable by a maximum fine of ₦50,000,000 or imprisonment not less than 10 years or both. It is imperative that security agents perform their role in

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<sup>2</sup> INEC Result Viewing Portal. Available at: <https://inecelectionresults.com>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> Report of the Electoral Reform Committee, Vol 1, Dec 2008; Electoral Act Amendment Bill 2018; Pelumi Obisesan, “2019 Presidential Election: improving the electoral process in Nigeria”, *West Africa Think Tank (Wathi)* (1 March 2019). Available at: <https://www.wathi.org/opinion-election-nigeria-2019/2019-presidential-elections-improving-the-electoral-process-in-nigeria/>

safeguarding the electoral process and prosecuting offenders, to prevent events like this from recurring.

### 3. Voter Turnout

There were relatively high turnouts in some polling units in Akoko-Edo: about 51% in Ward 8, Unit 1; 53% in Ward 8, Unit 6; 63% in Ward 5, Unit 5; and 65% in Ward 5, Unit 7.<sup>6</sup> However, other areas in the same LGA saw particularly low turnout rates, such as 13.2% in Ward 8, Unit 8, and 17.1% in Ward 4, Unit 13.<sup>7</sup>

Ultimately, average voter turnout at the election was poor, with only 557,443 out of 2,272,058 registered voters (24.5%) coming out to vote on election day.<sup>8</sup> This is a reduction of about 8% compared to the previous election in 2016.<sup>9</sup> What is surprising is that even though there were more registered voters in this election, fewer people actually voted. This might be as a result of the fact that 483,868 registered voters in Edo State were unable to collect their Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs) because INEC suspended distribution due to the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>10</sup> Another contributing factor is likely the fact that voter cards were being purchased prior to the election, as observed by YIAGA Africa.<sup>11</sup> The potential for disenfranchisement was a worrying issue noted in the Electoral Hub's political context analysis,<sup>12</sup> and it appears that this worry is well founded.

To prevent the disenfranchisement of voters in the future, INEC should take steps to implement automatic voter registration. This was suggested by Obisesan, who argues that automatic registration can be done for “those whose identity documents have been confirmed and used for previous elections”.<sup>13</sup> Obisesan also suggest that registration of new voters should be done on a permanent basis, rather than just before each election.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> INEC Result Viewing Portal

<sup>8</sup> INEC Nigeria, *2020 Edo Governorship Election: Declaration of Results* (above n 1)

<sup>9</sup> Abdul-Rahman Abubakar *et al*, “APC’s Obaseki wins as PDP’s Ize-Iyamu kicks”, *Daily Trust* (30 September 2016). Available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20161001155327/http://www.dailytrust.com.ng/news/general/apc-s-obaseki-wins-as-pdp-s-ize-iyamu-kicks/164564.html>

<sup>10</sup> “Edo poll: 483,868 registered voters may not vote over unclaimed PVCs – INEC”, *Business Day* (5 July 2020). Available at: <https://businessday.ng/politics/article/edo-poll-483868-registered-voters-may-not-vote-over-unclaimed-pvcs-inec/>

<sup>11</sup> “YIAGA: Politicians buying voters card ahead of Edo election”, *The Cable* (31 August 2020). Available at: <https://www.thecable.ng/yiaga-politicians-buying-voter-cards-ahead-of-edo-election>

<sup>12</sup> *Political Context Analysis: 2020 Edo Governorship Election*, Electoral Hub Political Context Analysis 1/2020. Available at: <https://electoralhub.iriadev.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/ELECTORAL-HUB-PCA-of-Edo-State-Governorship-Elections.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Pelumi Obisesan, “2019 Presidential Election: improving the electoral process in Nigeria” (above n 5)

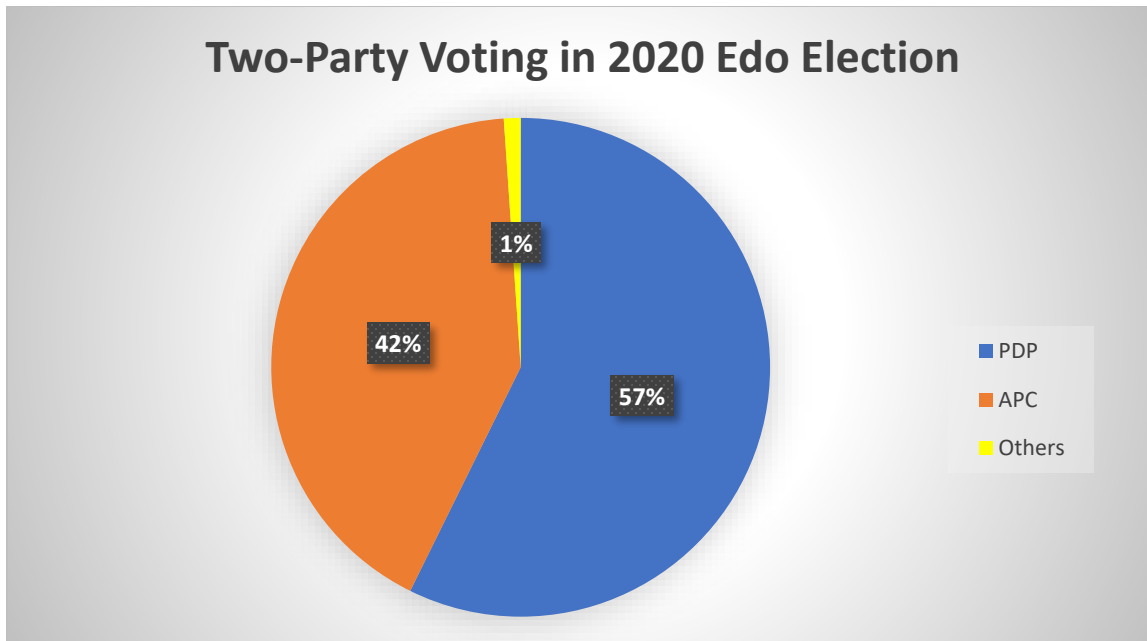
<sup>14</sup> Ibid

This would ensure that last-minute changes, like those arising from the pandemic, do not affect people’s ability to vote during elections.

#### 4. Two-party Voting

The election results demonstrate clearly the dominance of the PDP and the APC. There are eighteen registered parties in Edo, and fourteen of them presented candidates for this election. These are: Action Alliance (AA), African Democratic Congress (ADC), Action Democratic Party (ADP), All Progressives Congress (APC), All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA), Allied People’s Movement (APM), All People’s Party (APP), Labour Party (LP), New Nigerian People’s Party (NNPP), National Rescue Movement (NRM), People’s Democratic Party (PDP), Social Democratic Party (SDP), Young Progressive Party (YPP), and Zenith Labour Party (ZLP).

However, the election saw PDP emerge with 307,955 votes, while APC had 223,619.<sup>15</sup> This gives a total of 531,574. With 537,407 valid votes in the election,<sup>16</sup> this means that only 5,833 votes (1.1%) went to the other twelve parties combined. This shows that despite the presence of eighteen parties in Edo State, only two – PDP and APC – are dominant.



<sup>15</sup> INEC Nigeria, 2020 Edo Governorship Election: Declaration of Results (above n 1)

<sup>16</sup> Ibid

The election results are reflective of the pre-election environment, which saw PDP and APC dominate campaigns and media time.<sup>17</sup> Choice is an important part of democracy, but if only two parties stand a real chance at gaining power, then the citizens' choice is limited. Unequal allocation of media time among political parties or candidates is an electoral offence under Section 100(3) of the Electoral Act 2010, punishable by a maximum fine of ₦500,000 in the first instance and ₦1,000,000 in subsequent instances. Therefore, the media should ensure that each candidate or party is given equal attention during the campaign period, so as to enable the citizens make an informed choice between *all* the candidates, not just the dominant two.

Ultimately, INEC's result viewing portal has highly improved the transparency of the electoral process, which has made the research for this paper possible. It is hoped that stakeholders, including INEC, security agencies, and the media, will adopt these recommendations to prevent some of the issues in this election from recurring.

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<sup>17</sup> "2020 Edo Election: An election defined by strongarm tactics and violence", *YIAGA Africa* (September 2020). Available at: [https://www.yiaga.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/EDO\\_PREO\\_ONE.pdf](https://www.yiaga.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/EDO_PREO_ONE.pdf)



# Lessons from the Election

The Edo election highlights important strengths and areas of weakness. From this, we can learn lessons about what to emulate and what to avoid in future elections.

## 1. Strengths of the election

### a) Role of INEC

A major strongpoint of this election was the role of INEC in adopting innovative measures to improve the integrity and credibility of the election despite the COVID-19 pandemic. One of these measures was the creation of the result viewing portal, as discussed earlier. This made it possible for citizens to track the election results in real-time, regardless of their location. All Nigerians were able to participate in the process, including those not present in Edo State. The result was greater accountability, transparency, and confidence in the electoral process.

Another innovative measure adopted by INEC and which is in compliance with Covid-19 pandemic protocols was the use of a virtual situation room. This involved INEC management, national commissioners, and directors tracking the process via Zoom. As a result, INEC officials were able to give rapid responses to arising issues at different locations. The virtual situation room was also used to respond to reports and complaints from the public. For example, one polling unit was reported to be involved in vote buying and INEC immediately responded to this, ensuring that the vote buying was stopped. In this way, INEC ensured that even with the COVID-19 pandemic, distance was not a barrier to tracking and responding to events at the election in real time.



*INEC Virtual Situation Room*

Furthermore, INEC conducted numerous visits and meetings with stakeholders in Edo, not only to ensure readiness for the election but safeguard the integrity of the election, including:

- a two-day election monitoring and support centre implementers' workshop;
- a one-day advocacy meeting with religious leaders;
- a visit to the paramount ruler of Edo State, the Oba of Benin, Omo N'Oba N'Edo Uku' Akpolokpolo;
- a stakeholders' meeting to discuss issues related to the election;
- a meeting with electoral officers in Benin City, Edo State; and
- a visit to INEC head office in Benin City, as well as other INEC offices in some LGAs such as Ikpoba-Okha, Egor, and Oredo.<sup>18</sup>

Prior to the election, INEC also conducted extensive training of its election officials, particularly the Presiding Officers (POs) and Assistant Presiding Officers (APOs), across the 18 LGAs in Edo. This helped to ensure that officials were adequately equipped to conduct the elections and respond to emerging events. It is also commendable that INEC conducted this training in line with public health guidelines such as wearing of masks and social distancing, as shown in the pictures below.



<sup>18</sup> INEC Nigeria. Available at: <https://facebook.com/inecnigeria>



*INEC national commissioners training POs and APOs in Edo. Source: INEC<sup>19</sup>*

### *b) Citizen involvement*

Another strength of the election was the involvement of citizens, including those in the diaspora. Although turnout on election day was low, general citizen involvement in the pre-election and election periods, even from those who were not in Edo state, was impressive. Citizen observers and vote watchers made reports and complaints of electoral malpractices to INEC. The high level of citizen involvement was also partly due to INEC's innovative measures, such as the result viewing portal which made it possible for outsiders to track the results of the election, and the virtual situation room which enabled citizens to report complaints to INEC.

There was also a high level of citizen engagement on social media. The hashtag #EdoDecides2020 was trending on Twitter throughout election day. While turnout from citizens of Edo state on election day was not particularly impressive, the level of citizen involvement around the country throughout the pre-election and election periods is highly commendable.

### *c) Elite consensus*

As Professor Jibrin Ibrahim, Senior Fellow of the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), noted, the Edo election had turned into a contest between federal might and gubernatorial might.<sup>20</sup> Given that the head of the federal government, President Muhammadu Buhari, is a member of APC, PDP vowed to resist all attempts by APC to

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<sup>19</sup> INEC Nigeria, *Peace Accord Signing Ceremony* (15 September 2020). Available at <https://twitter.com/inecnigeria>

<sup>20</sup> CDD situation room

use the federal might in the Edo State governorship election.<sup>21</sup> However, there was elite consensus as Obaseki had a strong backing from members of both the APC and the PDP. This might be due to the fact that Obaseki was initially a member of the APC before his defection to PDP on 19 June 2020, along with 20,000 other persons.<sup>22</sup> Elite consensus was evident in a number of ways.

One, the stark absence of APC stalwarts in the electioneering activities during the run-to the elections. For instance, President Buhari was not at the grand finale of campaign rally. The candidate came to Abuja to collect the flag of support from Mr. President. Also absent were the Vice President, Professor Yemi Osinbajo, and other leaders of the APC.

Two, the APC's congratulatory message to Obaseki following his success at the election,<sup>23</sup> including Mr. President's congratulatory message on Monday September 2020.<sup>24</sup> The former National Chairman of APC, Chief John Odigie-Oyegun, also posited that no single individual or group can decide for Edo State citizens who would emerge the governor of the state.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, the Imo West Senator, Rochas Okorocha, also an APC member, asserted that Obaseki's success in the election was a revolt against injustice by the Edo people.<sup>26</sup> He suggested that the people that voted for Obaseki were not only PDP members, but also APC members. Similarly, there was marked absence of display of alleged 'federal might' unlike in previous stand-alone elections (e.g. Kogi).

Three, the collaboration of some APC politicians to weaken Tinubu's presidential aspiration. Tunde Rahman, spokesperson for the National Leader of the APC and former Lagos State governor, Bola Tinubu, alleged that some APC chieftains supported Obaseki over their own candidate, Ize-Iyamu, because of the politics of the 2023 presidential election.<sup>27</sup> Tinubu is rumoured to be eyeing the presidency in 2023 and thus, other APC

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<sup>21</sup> Ernest Chinwo, "PDP Vows to Resist Federal 'Might' in Edo Election", *This Day* (17 July 2020). Available at: <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2020/07/17/pdp-vows-to-resist-federal-might-in-edo-election/>

<sup>22</sup> "Edo Guber: 20,000 persons so far defected to PDP – Aziegbemi", *Business Day* (2 July 2020). Available at: <https://businessday.ng/politics/article/edo-guber-20000-persons-so-far-defected-to-pdp-aziegbemi/>

<sup>23</sup> Omeiza Ajayi, "Edo: APC congratulates Obaseki, says his election, victory for democracy", *Vanguard*. Available at: <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2020/09/edo-apc-congratulates-obaseki-says-his-election-victory-for-democracy/>

<sup>24</sup> "Edo 2020: Buhari congratulates Obaseki, restates commitment to free, fair elections", *Premium Times* (20 September 2020). Available at: <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/416084-edo-2020-buhari-congratulates-obaseki-restates-commitment-to-free-fair-elections.html>

<sup>25</sup> Adedayo Akinwale, "No Individual, Group Can Decide for Edo People, Says Oyegun", *This Day*. Available at: <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2020/09/15/no-individual-group-can-decide-for-edo-people-says-oyegun/>

<sup>26</sup> Bridget Edokwe, "Edo: When I saw Oshiomhole and Hope Uzodimma Leading the campaign, I knew it is either 'benjohnson' way or no victory- Okorocha", *BarristerNG*. Available at: <https://www.barristerng.com/videoedo-when-i-saw-oshiomhole-and-hope-uzodimma-leading-the-campaign-i-knew-it-is-either-benjohnson-way-or-no-victory-okorocha/>

<sup>27</sup> Eniola Akinkuotu, "Some APC chieftains supported Obaseki because of 2023 – Tinubu's aide", *Punch* (27 September 2020). Available at: <https://punchng.com/some-apc-chieftains-supported-obaseki-because-of-2023-tinubus-aide/?amp=1>

politicians who are also eyeing the presidency are alleged to have made efforts to weaken and derail Tinubu's presidential ambition by supporting Obaseki. This is because "to support Ize-Iyamu was tantamount to bolstering Tinubu as both men were joined in political alliance via Oshiomhole".<sup>28</sup>

All these suggest elite consensus across APC and PDP, which made it possible for the PDP candidate, Obaseki, to win the election.

#### *d) Rejection of godfatherism*

Much of the Edo election was centred on Oshiomhole and his role as a godfather in Edo politics. He had allegedly used his influence to get Ize-Iyamu the governorship ticket of the APC following his fallout with Obaseki. Many believed that he would have been heavily involved in issues of governance if Ize-Iyamu had won. Indeed, Salihu Lukman, director-general of the Progressive Governors Forum, said Oshiomhole hijacked the party's campaign in Edo and left Ize-Iyamu as "an onlooker".<sup>29</sup>

In this light, the "Edo no be Lagos" mantra was born, used as a reference to the way godfatherism in Lagos denied Akinwunmi Ambode a second-term ticket.<sup>30</sup> In contrast, the people of Edo were adamant on deciding for themselves who would be their leader, rather than letting godfathers like Oshiomhole make this decision for them.

Hence, the Edo election was not merely a rejection of Ize-Iyamu and the APC, but also a rejection of the influence of godfathers like Oshiomhole in Edo politics. In this light, Fasan has noted that the Edo election was "the first in which a godfather was retired from politics", and the election "is being offered as a template for the retirement of implacable political godfathers and godfatherism as a political ideology".<sup>31</sup>

#### *e) Role of the Oba of Benin*

The Oba of Benin, Ewuare II, contributed significantly to promoting peace and de-escalating tensions in the build-up to the election. As mentioned in the Electoral Hub's

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<sup>28</sup> Bassey Akpan, "Edo Election Video: Why Tinubu could not keep silent", *Vanguard* (27 September 2020). Available at: <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2020/09/edo-election-video-why-tinubu-could-not-keep-silent/>

<sup>29</sup> Chinedu Asadu, "APC gov's forum DG: PDP stronger in Edo because of Oshiomhole's antics", *The Cable* (8 August 2020). Available at: <https://www.thecable.ng/apc-govs-forum-dg-pdp-now-stronger-in-edo-because-of-oshiomholes-antics>

<sup>30</sup> Chinedu Asadu, "'Edo no be Lagos' – the mantra that sank Ize-Iyamu", *The Cable* (28 September 2020). Available at: <https://www.thecable.ng/edo-no-be-lagos-the-mantra-that-sank-ize-iyamu>

<sup>31</sup> Rotimi Fasan, "Godwin Obaseki: Edo no be Lagos", *Vanguard* (23 September 2020). Available at: <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2020/09/godwin-obaseki-edo-no-be-lagos/>

political context analysis of the Edo election, the Oba was part of the efforts at mitigating violence in the pre-election stage.<sup>32</sup> On 3 September 2020, he initiated a meeting with the two leading candidates, Godwin Obaseki and Osagie Ize-Iyamu, as well as their supporters, former governors John Odigie-Oyegun and Adams Oshiomhole.<sup>33</sup> In this meeting, he urged the politicians to maintain peace in the state, and they resolved to follow his advice. This intervention contributed to the relative peace during the election.

*f) Low level of violence*

Following on from the previous point, observers revealed that the level of violence was far less than had been anticipated.<sup>34</sup> This was true despite the highly tense environment prior to the election, including divisive and inciting speech by opposing candidates,<sup>35</sup> a violent clash between supporters of opposing candidates at King's Square on 25 July 2020,<sup>36</sup> vandalising of cars,<sup>37</sup> destruction of campaign billboards,<sup>38</sup> murder,<sup>39</sup> and attempted murder.<sup>40</sup>

Although observers noted the absence of policemen in some polling units and sporadic shootings in some areas,<sup>41</sup> as well as the congregation of thugs and alleged shooting of a person in Ikpoba-Okha LGA,<sup>42</sup> they agreed that there was relative peace during the election. This is reflective of the efforts of the Oba, INEC, and other civil society organisations (CSOs) in reducing election tension. For example, following INEC's declaration on 10 September 2020 that candidates must sign peace accords to participate

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<sup>32</sup> *Political Context Analysis: 2020 Edo Governorship Election* (above in 12)

<sup>33</sup> Adibe Emeyonu, "Seeking Peace, Oba of Benin Chides Obaseki, Ize-Iyamu over Electoral Violence", *This Day*. Available at <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2020/09/03/seeking-peace-oba-of-benin-chides-obaseki-ize-iyamu-over-electoral-violence/>

<sup>34</sup> CDD situation room

<sup>35</sup> CDD, *New Allegiances, Familiar Faces A Preview of Edo's 2020 Gubernatorial Election PRE-ELECTION BRIEFING PAPER* (August 2020), pages 15-16. Available at: [https://mcusercontent.com/c3ea48a61a89cccfe2814b1d1/files/58f95361-d1be-419b-b53e-b61aef68ccd9/EDO\\_STATE\\_PRE\\_ELECTIONS\\_AUGUST\\_2020\\_1.0.pdf](https://mcusercontent.com/c3ea48a61a89cccfe2814b1d1/files/58f95361-d1be-419b-b53e-b61aef68ccd9/EDO_STATE_PRE_ELECTIONS_AUGUST_2020_1.0.pdf)

<sup>36</sup> Peter David, "Edo election: APC, PDP supporters clash in Benin", *Punch* (25 July 2020). Available at: <https://punchng.com/edo-election-apc-pdp-supporters-clash-in-benin/>

<sup>37</sup> CDD, *New Allegiances, Familiar Faces A Preview of Edo's 2020 Gubernatorial Election PRE-ELECTION BRIEFING PAPER* (above n 35)

<sup>38</sup> Peter David, "Edo election: APC, PDP supporters clash in Benin" (above n 36)

<sup>39</sup> KDI, *Nigeria Election Violence Report (NEVR) Factsheet 1: Historical View and Current Trends of Electoral Violence in Edo State* (August 2020). Available at: <https://www.kdi.org.ng/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/KIMPACT-NEVR-FACTSHEET-ON-EdoDecides2020.pdf>

<sup>40</sup> Mudiaga Affe, "Edo 2020: Two police officers dead in accident involving Oshiomhole's convoy", *Premium Times* (2 September 2020). Available at: <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/411936-edo-2020-two-police-officers-dead-in-accident-involving-oshiomholes-convoy.html>

<sup>41</sup> Report from INEC Chairman at PLAC situation room

<sup>42</sup> CDD situation room

in the polls,<sup>43</sup> various peace accords were signed with support from CSOs such as the Conference of Non-Governmental Organisations, the Nigeria Peace Committee, the Kukah Centre for Faith, Leadership and Public Policy, and the European Centre for Electoral Support.<sup>44</sup>

These developments show how impactful intervention efforts can be. What was feared to be a deadly election with a high violence rate ended up being a relatively peaceful one. In future elections, stakeholders can help to maintain peace by adopting similar intervention methods in the pre-election phase.

*g) Political parties and Election Day internal party coordination*

The activities of the various parties on Election Day were highly commendable. Given the deep intra-party divisions leading to multiple defections prior to the election, it is noteworthy that there was no account of any party deploying zero sum approach and mechanisms (do or die) to compromise the election process. In recognition of this, the APC candidate, Ize-Iyamu, speaking with journalists after voting, commended the peaceful situation and the secrecy of voting in his polling unit.<sup>45</sup>

Rather than trying to compromise the electoral process, some parties instead resolved to track the election virtually, thereby demonstrating a high level of internal coordination. This is aptly illustrated by the incumbent party, PDP. PDP demonstrated a high level of internal coordination during the election. They employed the use of a large, well-organised situation room with “a lot of tech specialists and laptops”.<sup>46</sup> This enabled them to track the election virtually and communicate with their agents to ensure that no irregularities occur. On the other hand, following the defection of Obaseki and other members of the APC, there has been internal strife within the party. One of APC’s Board of Trustees, Prince Benjamin Apugo, attributed the party’s loss to internal strife.<sup>47</sup> It is therefore no surprise

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<sup>43</sup> Kayode Oyero, “Obaseki, Ize-Iyamu to sign peace accord Tuesday – INEC”, *Punch* (10 September 2020). Available at: <https://punchng.com/obaseki-ize-iyamu-to-sign-peace-accord-tuesday-inec/>

<sup>44</sup> Jerrywright Ukwu, “Edo governorship election: APC, 5 other political parties sign peace accord”, *MSN* (11 September 2020). Available at: <https://www.msn.com/en-xl/africa/nigeria/edo-governorship-election-apc-5-other-political-parties-sign-peace-accord/ar-BB18VpE2>; Chuks Okocha, Peter Uzoho & Adibe Emenyonu, *Nigeria: Dousing Tension, Obaseki, Ize-Iyamu, Others Commit to Peaceful Election* (16 September 2020). Available at: <https://allafrica.com/stories/202009160242.html>

<sup>45</sup> Azeezat Adedigba *et al*, “#EdoDecides2020: APC candidate, Ize-Iyamu votes, speaks on process”, *Premium Times* (20 September 2020). Available at: <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/415741-edodecides2020-apc-candidate-ize-iyamu-votes-speaks-on-process.html>

<sup>46</sup> Eric Frimpong, “PDP Monitoring Edo Election From Situation Room, *AB-TC News*. Available at: <https://ab-tc.com/pdp-monitoring-edo-election-from-situation-room-photos/>

<sup>47</sup> Clifford Ndujie *et al*, “Real reason we lost Edo to PDP, by APC chieftains”, *Vanguard* (22 September 2020). Available at: <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2020/09/real-reason-we-lost-edo-to-pdp-by-apc-chieftains/>

that PDP won the election. The high level of Election day internal coordination within the PDP is commendable, and one that other parties can learn from.



*PDP Situation Room. Source: AB-TC News<sup>48</sup>*



## 2. Areas of weakness

### *a) INEC logistics*

Despite the commendable measures that INEC adopted during the election, there is still room for improvement, particularly in relation to logistics. CDD observers noted that there was poor logistics management, especially regarding the transportation of personnel and election materials.<sup>49</sup> For example, Esan West had issues with their buses thereby finding it difficult to convey ad-hoc staff to the polling units.<sup>50</sup> The late arrival meant that the election did not commence immediately in these polling units. Late arrival of staff and/or materials has been a recurring feature in Nigerian elections. It is imperative that INEC take steps to improve its logistics management and prevent this from recurring.

Another related point is the management of technical election equipment such as card readers. Observers noted that a number of polling units experienced card reader failure either at the beginning of the voting process or during the voting process, which is a disruption to the election process as a whole. In some polling units, the failure was

<sup>48</sup> Eric Frimpong, “PDP Monitoring Edo Election from Situation Room” (above n 46)

<sup>49</sup> Report from CDD Director at CDD situation room

<sup>50</sup> PLAC situation room



addressed; in others (for instance, Ward 10, Units 3, 5, and 6), nothing was done about it. These technical failures relate to second-order integrity<sup>51</sup> issues and have the potential to compromise the overall integrity of the election. It is important for INEC to take steps to regularly maintain the card readers and ensure that they are working well before election day.

*b) COVID-19 protocols*

Prior to the election, documents were issued by INEC and the Nigerian Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) regarding the safe conduct of elections during the pandemic.<sup>52</sup> These documents recommended, among others, wearing of masks at polling units, social distancing, and regular washing/sanitising of hands. However, observers noted that the wearing of masks and social distancing were not enforced at many polling units.<sup>53</sup> It was also noted that some INEC officials only wore their masks on their chins. Ms Idayat Hassan, Regional Director of the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) suggested that the reason for the lax compliance to COVID-19 protocols was the late arrival of staff and materials.<sup>54</sup> It is therefore recommended that logistics management be fixed to ensure that all necessary protocols are followed.

*c) Electoral malpractices*

The election also shows the high need to investigate and prosecute electoral offenders to serve as a deterrent. There was vote market with flow of vote transactions very present. INEC noted vote buying in Oredo LGA, as well as voters offering to sell their votes.<sup>55</sup> CDD also observed vote buying, with video evidence to back it up.<sup>56</sup> According to CDD, parties also engaged in the distribution of between ₦1,500 and ₦5,000, as well as the sharing of ankara fabrics and spaghetti, to induce votes from people. In some polling units, young

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<sup>51</sup> See Pippa Norris 2013, 2015 and 2017; International IDEA

<sup>52</sup> NCDC, *Guidelines for Conducting Elections During the COVID-19 Outbreak in Nigeria*. Available at: <https://covid19.ncdc.gov.ng/media/files/ElectionsDuringCOVID-19July2020.pdf>; INEC, *Voting in Safety: Voters Code of Conduct (VCC) for Elections During the COVID-19 Pandemic*; INEC, *Policy on Conducting Elections in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic*, INEC Policy Number 01/2020 (21 May 2020). Available at: <https://www.inecnigeria.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/INEC-POLICY-ON-CONDUCTING-ELECTIONS-IN-COVID19.pdf>

<sup>53</sup> CDD situation room; PLAC situation room

<sup>54</sup> CDD situation room

<sup>55</sup> PLAC situation room

<sup>56</sup> CDD situation room

girls were used to sell votes. In others, tickets were issued as receipts for voters to get their ₦5,000 after voting.<sup>57</sup>

CDD also observed several layers to vote buying: one person was used as a canvasser to persuade people, another person would take the name of the voter, while another person would take the voter to the venue where they would receive their money.<sup>58</sup> According to Ms Hassan, this shows the existence of structured processes to vote buying, and both parties were complicit in this.

Another form of electoral malpractice during this election was multiple voting. As discussed earlier, the election in Ward 5, Unit 12, Akoko-Edo was cancelled for over-voting.<sup>59</sup> There were also attempts by people to use voter cards not belonging to them. However, citizens were able to point this out and someone was arrested in Esan South LGA. Additionally, there were attempts by people to vote with multiple ballot papers, but vote watchers also pointed this out and the person was prevented from doing so. These were only incidents that were pointed out by vote watchers. It is likely that many other incidents of multiple voting went unnoticed, and the inconsistencies in the data on INEC's result viewing portal further corroborate this point.

Furthermore, according to observers in Ward 9, Unit 15, Egor LGA, ballot papers were snatched and taken to a hotel called Green House Hotel.<sup>60</sup> As noted in the results analysis section, elections also did not hold in Ward 4, Units 9 and 10, Akoko-Edo, because election materials were taken away by unknown persons.

Voting buying/selling, multiple voting, and unlawful possession of election materials are offences punishable under the Electoral Act 2010. Yet, these electoral malpractices have become normalised in Nigerian elections. Ms Hassan found it worrying that despite the presence of security agents, including members of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), and the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), no person was arrested for vote buying.<sup>61</sup> There is a pertinent need for security agents to step up and investigate these blatant acts of electoral malpractices. Until electoral offenders are prosecuted, there will be no deterrent effect.

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid

<sup>58</sup> Ibid

<sup>59</sup> INEC Result Viewing Portal. Available at: <https://inecelectionresults.com>

<sup>60</sup> PLAC situation room

<sup>61</sup> CDD situation room

*d) Low turnout*

Low turnout was evident from the results analysis and it is worth discussing here again, as there are important lessons to be drawn from this. As mentioned earlier, the turnout at this election was just 24.5%,<sup>62</sup> down from 32.3% in 2016.<sup>63</sup> This is surprising, given the high level of citizen involvement throughout the election period. This raises questions regarding the extent to which citizens were disenfranchised due to the non-distribution or the selling or PVCs. INEC should consider automatic voter registration to curb this problem. There should also be intensified efforts on civic and voter education, especially now that the pandemic has reduced access for many people.

Overall, INEC and other stakeholders should use the lessons from this election to improve future elections in Nigeria such as the upcoming October 10, 2020 Ondo election and October 31, 2020 bye-elections in six states across the country.

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<sup>62</sup> INEC Nigeria, *2020 Edo Governorship Election: Declaration of Results* (above n 1)

<sup>63</sup> Abdul-Rahman Abubakar *et al*, “APC’s Obaseki wins as PDP’s Ize-Iyamu kicks” (above n 9)

# Conclusion

The 2020 Edo gubernatorial election was generally positive, and shows an improvement in Nigeria's democracy and electoral governance. From INEC's result viewing portal, to the high level of citizen involvement in the election, the electoral process was highly transparent and participatory. INEC's result viewing portal was a huge boost to enhancing the credibility and integrity of the electoral process and elections. This has brought more transparency to result management process which had been a major challenge of the electoral process. The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has also led to innovative measures such as virtual situation rooms used by INEC. It would be beneficial to continue using these innovative measures even after the pandemic, so as to strengthen our electoral process.

Furthermore, the intervention of INEC, the Oba of Benin, and CSOs suggest that pre-election intervention can help to ease tensions and result in relatively peaceful elections. Stakeholders should be conscious of this in future elections.

However, the Edo election also shows that there is room for improvement. INEC should improve its logistics management and training of staff. It should also consider reforming the voting process, in relation to electronic voting and automatic voter registration. Security agencies should investigate and prosecute electoral offenders. The media should allocate equal time to all candidates during elections. CSOs should engage more in civic and voter education, particularly regarding voting safely during the pandemic. If all stakeholders take these steps to deepen democracy in Nigeria, then future elections are bound to be even more transparent and credible than the 2020 Edo election. In this way, we can improve our electoral systems and processes.

## Appendix A: Table of Results for Selected Polling Units in Akoko-Edo

S/N	Ward	Polling Unit	Votes	Registered Voters	Accredited Voters	Voter Turnout	Valid Votes	Invalid Votes
1	Ward 8 (Enwan/ Atte/ Ikpeshi/ Egbigele)	Unit 1 (Enwan, Imiezua P/S I)	- APC: 296 - PDP: 323 - ADP: 2 - ZLP: 6 - NRM: 2	1,238	631	51%	623*	8
		Unit 2 (Enwan, Imiezua P/S II)	- APC: 267 - PDP: 195	1,092	467	42.8%	462	5
		Unit 3 (Enwan, Enwan P/S)	- APC: 94 - PDP: 158	1,154	254	22%	252	2
		Unit 4 (Enwan, Ekpari Market Sq.)	- APC: 91 - PDP: 131	1,002	224	22.4%	222	2
		Unit 5 (Enwan, Imiegesakor T. Sq.)	- APC: 242 - PDP: 317 - ADP: 4	1,236	569	46%	564	5
		Unit 6 (Enwan, Eshokari T. Sq I)	- APC: 228 - PDP: 260 - ADC: 1 - ADP: 1	926	492	53.1%	490	2

\* There are mathematical inconsistencies here:

- Ward 8, Unit 1: the total of the votes recorded for each party amount to 629, but only 623 valid votes were recorded
- Ward 5, Unit 14: the total of the votes recorded for each party amount to 345, but 346 valid votes were recorded
- Ward 4, Unit 2: there were only 306 accredited voters but the total number of valid votes recorded was 420
- Ward 4, Unit 7: there were only 359 accredited voters but the total number of valid votes recorded was 363
- Ward 4, Unit 11: the total of the votes recorded for each party amount to 283, but only 273 valid votes were recorded

S/N	Ward	Polling Unit	Votes	Registered Voters	Accredited Voters	Voter Turnout	Valid Votes	Invalid Votes
		Unit 7 (Enwan, Eshekari T. Sq II)	- APC: 135 - PDP: 177 - ADC: 1	890	315	35.4%	313	2
		Unit 8 (Atte, Maternity Centre)	- APC: 72 - PDP: 80 - ADP: 1	1,163	153	13.2%	153	0
		Unit 9 (Atte, Irhofo P/S, Atte)	- APC: 130 - PDP: 126 - ADP: 1	891	246	27.6%	257	3
		Unit 10 (Atte, Nr. Baptist Church)	- APC: 271 - PDP: 157 - ADC: 1 - ADP: 1	912	430	47.1%	429	1
		Unit 11 (Ikpeshi, Okhueromoh P/S I)	- APC: 124 - PDP: 221	1,067	357	33.5%	345	8
		Unit 12 (Ikpeshi, Okhueromoh P/S II)	- APC: 204 - PDP: 350 - ADC: 2 - ADP: 1	1,462	557	38.1%	557	5
		Unit 13 (Egbigere, Nr. Chief Aliu's House)	- APC: 180 - PDP: 163	948	348	36.7%	343	5
		Unit 14 (Egbigere, Nr. Catholic Church)	- APC: 123 - PDP: 132 - ADP: 2	592	265	44.8%	257	8
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14</b>	- APC: 2,457 - PDP: 2,790	<b>14,573</b>	<b>5,308</b>	<b>36.4%</b>	<b>5,267</b>	<b>56</b>

S/N	Ward	Polling Unit	Votes	Registered Voters	Accredited Voters	Voter Turnout	Valid Votes	Invalid Votes
			- <b>ADC: 5</b> - <b>ADP: 13</b> - <b>ZLP: 6</b> - <b>NRM: 2</b>					
2	Ward 5 (Makeke/ Ojah/ Dangbala/ Ojirami)	Unit 1 (Dangbala, Dangbala P.S. I)	- <b>APC: 172</b> - <b>PDP: 79</b> - <b>ADC: 1</b> - <b>SDP: 1</b>	597	273	45.7%	253	20
		Unit 2 (Dangbala, Dangbala P.S. II)	- <b>APC: 190</b> - <b>PDP: 119</b> - <b>ADP: 1</b> - <b>NNPP: 1</b>	684	311	45.5%	311	0
		Unit 3 (Dangbala, Old Dangbala Court Hall)	- <b>APC: 179</b> - <b>PDP: 76</b> - <b>ADC: 1</b> - <b>ADP: 3</b> - <b>NRM: 2</b> - <b>SDP: 1</b>	600	263	43.8%	262	1
		Unit 4 (Makeke, Eresha P.S.)	- <b>APC: 165</b> - <b>PDP: 117</b> - <b>ADC: 1</b> - <b>ADP: 1</b>	750	289	38.5%	284	5
		Unit 5 (Makeke, by Agbala's House)	- <b>APC: 45</b> - <b>PDP: 75</b> - <b>ADC: 1</b> - <b>ADP: 1</b> - <b>NNPP: 1</b>	200	126	63%	123	3

S/N	Ward	Polling Unit	Votes	Registered Voters	Accredited Voters	Voter Turnout	Valid Votes	Invalid Votes
		Unit 6 (Makeke, Ileteju Primary School)	- APC: 55 - PDP: 76 - ADC: 1	285	132	46.3%	132	0
		Unit 7 (Anyanwosa, Anyanwosa Ojutaiye)	- APC: 137 - PDP: 63 - APGA: 1	314	204	65%	201	3
		Unit 8 (Ojah, Oyonba P.S. I)	- APC: 234 - PDP: 73 - ADP: 1	668	308	46.1%	308	-
		Unit 9 (Ojah, Onyonba P.S. II)	- APC: 176 - PDP: 61 - ADC: 1	572	255	44.6%	239	19
		Unit 10 (Ojah, by Oba's House I)	- APC: 186 - PDP: 102	653	288	44.1%	288	-
		Unit 11 (Ojah, by Oba's House II)	- APC: 124 - PDP: 86	470	216	46%	210	5
		Unit 12 (Ojah, Ojah Comm. High School)	CANCELLED FOR OVER-VOTING Accredited voters: 122 Total number of votes: 177					
		Unit 13 (Ojirami, Dam P.S.)	- APC: 134 - PDP: 138 - ADC: 2 - ADP: 2 - ZLP: 1	1,032	280	27.1%	277	3
		Unit 14 (Ojirami, Dispensary Yard PSH)	- APC: 209 - PDP: 133 - ADC: 1	828	350	42.3%	346*	1



S/N	Ward	Polling Unit	Votes	Registered Voters	Accredited Voters	Voter Turnout	Valid Votes	Invalid Votes
			- ADP: 2					
		Unit 15 (Ojirami, Afekunu Dispensary)	- APC: 171 - PDP: 167 - ADC: 1 - ADP: 2	874	356	40.7%	341	15
		Unit 16 (Ojirami, Afekunu Market)	- APC: 242 - PDP: 155 - ADC: 2	912	404	44.3%	399	5
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>16</b>	- <u>APC: 2,419</u> - PDP: 1,520 - ADC: 12 - ADP: 13 - ZLP: 1 - NRM: 2 - NNPP: 1 - APGA: 1 - SDP: 2	<b>9,439</b>	<b>4,055</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>3,974</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Ward 4 (Ibillo/ Ekpesa/ Ekor/ Ikiran-Ile/ Oke)</b>	Unit 1 (Ibillo, Ojah P/S.)	- APC: 147 - PDP: 181 - ADP: 2 - YPP: 1	1,148	346	30.1%	331	15
		Unit 2 (Ibillo, Ibillo P/S)	- APC: 214 - PDP: 205 - ADP: 1	1,023	306	30%	420*	5

S/N	Ward	Polling Unit	Votes	Registered Voters	Accredited Voters	Voter Turnout	Valid Votes	Invalid Votes
		Unit 3 (Ibillo, by Chief Omolaju's HS)	- APC: 348 - PDP: 138 - ADC: 1 - NRM: 1	1,377	506	36.7%	488	8
		Unit 4 (Ibillo, by Chief Giwa's HS.)	- APC: 193 - PDP: 212 - ADP: 2 - NRM: 1	1,068	408	38.2%	408	5
		Unit 5 (Ibillo, Mkt. Square)	- APC: 242 - PDP: 329 - LP: 1	1,347	581	43.1%	572	5
		Unit 6 (Ibillo, by Oba's HS.)	- APC: 221 - PDP: 275 - ADC: 1 - ADP: 1	1,345	510	37.9%	498	3
		Unit 7 (Ibillo, Azane P/S.)	- APC: 145 - PDP: 214 - ADP: 4	1,087	359	33.1%	363*	10
		Unit 8 (Ibillo, Efolo P/S.)	- APC: 141 - PDP: 138 - ADC: 2 - AA: 1	282	288	N/A <sup>†</sup>	282	1
		Unit 9 (Ekpesa, Oyengba P/S)	No election as all election materials, including Form EC 8A, were taken away by unknown persons					
		Unit 10 (Ekor, Ekor Primary School)	No election as all election materials, including Form EC 8A, were taken away by unknown persons					

<sup>†</sup> Voter turnout cannot be calculated because the number of accredited voters is higher than the number of registered voters

S/N	Ward	Polling Unit	Votes	Registered Voters	Accredited Voters	Voter Turnout	Valid Votes	Invalid Votes
		Unit 11 (Ikiran Ile, by Alafin's HS.)	- APC: 165 - PDP: 118	620	291	46.9%	273*	8
		Unit 12 (Ikiran, by Suberu HS)	- APC: 233 - PDP: 175	1,310	420	32.1%	408	7
		Unit 13 (Ikiran, by Osogbo HS)	- APC: 85 - PDP: 52 - ADP: 1	815	139	17.1%	138	0
		Unit 14 (Ikiran Oke, Mkt. Square)	- APC: 135 - PDP: 165	1,247	303	24.3%	300	3
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14</b>	- <u>APC:</u> <u>2,269</u> - PDP: <b>2,202</b> - ADC: 4 - ADP: 11 - NRM: 2 - AA: 1 - YPP: 1 - LP: 1	<b>12,669</b>	<b>4,457</b>	<b>35.2%</b>	<b>4,481</b>	<b>70</b>

Source: INEC Result Viewing Portal (<https://inecelectionresults.com>)



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### **About the Electoral Hub**

The Electoral Hub (E-Hub), an organ of the Initiative for Research, Innovation and Advocacy in Development (**IRIAD**), is a multidisciplinary strategic think-tank which seeks to provide solutions to improve the credibility and integrity of the electoral process. It is conceptualized to complement the roles and activities of the different institutions, stakeholders and drivers of the electoral process and governance. The Electoral Hub's aim is to strengthen electoral governance and accountability in Nigeria through the provision of data and critical analysis supporting the credibility and integrity of the electoral process. We believe that the integrity of the electoral process is crucial in improving the electoral governance architecture and democracy in Nigeria. We also believe in contextual analysis for solutions rooted in the principles of justice and equity

Our core values are knowledge-exchange, inclusion, justice, equity, transparency and accountability.

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