KEY FINDINGS FROM REPORTING PERIOD ONE

May 25 – June 7, 2018

SUMMARY FINDINGS

YIAGA AFRICA in conducting a comprehensive, long-term pre-election observation of Ekiti 2018 Governorship election under the Watching the Vote (WTV) project deployed 24 long term observers in the 16 Local Government Areas in the State to observe the pre-election environment.

This report is the first in a series of four (4) that would be released by YIAGA AFRICA on its pre-election observation. The report highlights observations from political party primaries and pre-election activities such as voter education, political campaigns.

The report also highlights interventions aimed at facilitating the participation of marginalised groups in the political process such as youth, women and people with disabilities (PWDs) and indicators of violence monitoring. Our findings suggest that preparations for credible elections in the state are on course, however, there are opportunities for improvement. We similarly, highlighted some of the areas that require improvements and offer recommendations. The findings on the level of campaigns and participation of marginalised groups were that though few women emerged as candidates, women and youth were actively participating in the electoral process. WTV observed both women and youth groups canvassing for votes in about half of the 16 LGAs in the State.

YIAGA therefore recommends that political parties should introduce policies that encourages women, youth and PWDs to emerge as candidates in future elections. WTV also found that political party rallies and activities are ongoing throughout the state, primarily organized by the Action Democratic Party (ADP), All Progressives Congress (APC) and the People’s Democratic Party (PDP). With few incidents of violence and attacks, YIAGA encourages all candidates and parties to adhere to the electoral framework, discourage violence amongst their supporters, and desist from such illegal practices as buying and selling voters’ cards and any form of voter inducement through money or gift items. Lastly, WTV findings revealed that voter education across the State was not totally generic as WTV observed voter education targeted at women, youth and people with disabilities by INEC and Civil Society Groups (CSOs).
METHODOLOGY

Ahead of Ekiti July 14th 2018 gubernatorial election, YIAGA’s #WatchingTheVote deployed 24 long-term observers (LTO) to all the 16 Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Ekiti State to gather systematic information about the pre-election environment, including early warning signs of electoral violence. To achieve this, YIAGA’s LTOs are equipped with a checklist to observe and report on the electoral and political environment in the state. All YIAGA WTV LTOs are recruited from the local government areas within which they reside to observe electoral activities relating to voter education, political campaign activities, activities of marginalized groups (youth, women, and people living with disabilities) and election-related violence in the pre-election period. Their reports cover activities of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), civil society organizations, political parties, National Orientation Agency (NOA), women and youth groups. The observers report on their observation findings on a bi-monthly basis via coded text messages to a YIAGA WTV Data Centre. Within reporting timeframes, observers also report on early warning signs and critical incidents demanding urgent attention as soon as they happen. The reports are compiled and shared with relevant election stakeholders for needed response.

YIAGA WTV PREO observation findings are not statistically representative of the entire state but provide an indication of emerging trends during the pre-election period. Unlike the WTV election day observation methodology, YIAGA does not rely on sample-based observation to carry out its PREO observation. This report covers the period of May 25 and June 7, 2018, and WTV summary findings on the party Primaries. YIAGA, therefore, encourages users of this report to independently collaborate and respond appropriately to trends identified in this report.
Voter education workshops or campaigns are important tools for providing citizens of a democracy with basic information about participating in elections. Voter education is often provided by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), and other electoral stakeholders like the National Orientation Agency (NOA) and the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). The WTV LTOs in the period between the period of May 25 to June 7, 2018 observed some visible level voter education in Ekiti state. About 33% of the deployed observers were directly exposed to voter education workshops by INEC and 29% to voter education workshop conducted by CSOs. However, no record of voter education activities is observed or heard to be conducted by NOA.

Voter education campaigns or workshop undertaken by INEC, NOA and CSOs

Voter Information Targeted at Marginalised Groups (Women Youth and People With Disabilities (PWDs))

In the light of promoting participatory democracy and inclusion of marginalised groups, the WTV LTOs were charged with the responsibility of observing voter education/information campaigns targeted at youth, women and PWDs. The observers reported interventions aimed at enhancing the capacity or participation of women, youth and PWD candidates or voters in the upcoming election by both INEC, NOA and CSOs. Findings from this observation period reveals that voter education messages were disaggregated and targeted. Over 54% of WTV LTOs observed or heard INEC conducted voter education targeted at women and youths and 37% observed/heard CSOs conducted voter education targeted at PWD.
Voter Information Campaigns targeted at women by INEC (54%)

Voter Information Campaigns targeted at Youth by INEC (50%)

Voter Information Campaigns targeted at PWDs by CSOs (37%)
The administration of the 2018 Ekiti and Osun governorship elections will be under considerable scrutiny as they are both about or less than 8 months to the 2019 elections. Preparations for the Ekiti election were well underway during the week of this reporting period, following the completion of political party primaries by all political parties. About half (42%) of WTV LTOs reported either observing or hearing one form of election preparatory activity undertaken by the Electoral Commission. Electoral preparatory activities especially, the collection of permanent voter cards (PVCs) is reported in all the 16 LGAs.

Political Party Rallies and Activities

According to the INEC electoral calendar, the official campaign period for Ekiti governorship race begins from the 15th of April 2018. WTV LTO observed some political parties organizing rallies and other campaign activities across the LGAs. Most of the campaign activities reported are carried out by the Action Democratic Party (ADP), All Progressives Congress (APC) and the People’s Democratic Party (PDP). Across the state, 42% of the LTOs reported witnessing or hearing of ADP rallies in their LGAs, 59% reported witnessing or hearing of APC rallies, 75% reported witnessing or hearing of rallies for the PDP and only 17% reported hearing but not witnessing of rallies by the Social Democratic Party (SDP).
Participation of Marginalized and Disadvantaged Groups (Youth, Women and PWDs)

The need for a more inclusive electoral process remains fundamental in advancing electoral democracy in Nigeria. This informed the need to specially track the participation of women, youth and persons with disability in the process. Though WTV findings revealed a reasonable level of women and youth participation in the electoral process through canvassing for vote and voter education campaigns, a very poor percentage of women and youth contested as aspirants and emerged as the candidates for the parties contesting the July 14th election.

Youth and Women Groups canvassing for votes

In this reporting period, youth groups and women’s group were reported to have been actively involved in canvassing for votes. Youth groups and women’s group were seen or heard canvassing for votes at 46% and 38% of all the 18 LGAs respectively.

Women and Youth Candidacy

WTV also analysed the candidature for the Ekiti governorship election based on age and gender. 11% of the Governorship candidates are young people using the upper age limit of 35 years old while only 5% of the Governorship candidates are women. For the running mates (Deputy Governor) of the governorship candidates, young people make up 9% using the upper age limit of 35 years old, while women are 20% of the deputy governor candidates.
Voter Inducement

WTV LTOs received secondary reports of buying and selling of voters’ cards and witness/heard of distribution of money or gift items by candidates or their supports. 4% of the deployed LTOs across the state reported that they heard plausible reports of voters’ cards being sold or bought in their LGAs. More than half (54%) of LTOs either observed or witness distribution of money or gift items by politicians and their supporters. This account was recorded in Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti West, Ekiti South West, Ido / Osi, Ikole, Irepodun / Ifelodu, Ise / Orun, Moba and Oye LGA. Most notably, only 8% of the LTOs reported that they personally witnessed voters’ inducement through money or gift items.

Hate speech

The WTV pre-election observation mission also focused on observing the use of derogatory language or statements that incite hate or violence against a targeted individual or group by all electoral actors, especially political parties. This is useful for identifying early warning signs for violence and opportunities for conflict mitigation. The WTV LTOs observed major political activities such as: candidate rallies, political gatherings, media reports and statements by candidates and parties, directly and indirectly for inflammatory and divisive rhetorics directed at individuals. No LTO from the 16 LGAs reported to have witnesses or heard any candidate inciting or encouraging his or her supporters to commit acts of violence.
Attacks or Intimidation of Candidates and Supporters

During the reporting period, very few WTV observers reported hearing of political candidates or their supporters being violently attack at rallies and street political campaign trails from credible accounts. A few (8% of WTV LTOs) also reported some accounts of vandalism and destruction of property belonging to a candidate and/or supporters.

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Critical Incident Reports

During the reporting period, WTV LTOs also texted in a total of 6 verified critical incident reports from, Ado-Ekiti, Oye, Efon, Ikole and Ilejemeje LGA to identify crisis necessitating a response in real time. Most of the reports confirmed through a call-back process were associated to violent attacks on political party candidates or their supporters. Most perpetrators of these confirmed reports are also suspected to be affiliated to a political party. Other critical incidents reports were arrest and harassment of election observers.

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Political Party Primaries

Nigeria’s electoral system requires political parties participating in an election to nominate a candidate through a democratic party primaries process. According to the Time Table released by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) for the Ekiti State Governorship Election Political party primaries were to be conducted from the 15th April to the 14th of May, 2018. Political parties were required to notify INEC in writing within 21 days to the conduct of their primaries the venue, date and time for the conduct of the primaries which was done by interested parties.

In order to ensure that aspirants emerge as candidates through a democratic process, political Parties are obligated to conduct primaries either by direct- nominee selected by members of a political party or indirect- nominee selected by some members of a political party called the delegates. As part of WTV long term observation, the political party primaries of 5 political parties, Action Democratic Party (ADP), All Progressives Congress (APC), the People’s Democratic Party (PDP), Social Democratic Party (SDP) and Mega Party were observed by WTV observers. Most of the parties, APC, PDP and Mega Party adopted the indirect primary system with APC recording the highest number of aspirants (33 aspirants). Reports from the party primaries revealed that all the political parties organised their party primaries differently and, in most situations, the democratic process of polling and public counting of votes was observed by the parties. As observed, the different party primaries adopted an open secret ballot voting system, however the secrecy of the ballot had the potential of being undermined with the set-up of the voting booth not guaranteeing the secrecy of the ballot. While findings revealed that party officials were properly informed on the process of the primaries, it was observed that some of the delegates did not show proper understanding of the rules and procedure for the primaries election.

The seeming threat to the first primaries of the APC was outbreak of violence that led to the conduct of a fresh primary election. All the political parties continued with the trend of poor representation of women and other marginalized groups as we observed few female and youth aspirants in the primaries. The two major political parties did not have any visible representation in elective and administrative positions for women and persons with disability. In addition was the absence of a gender and age disaggregated delegates list for independent analysis.
WTV assessment of the 5 party primaries revealed that the ruling party in the State; PDP and the leading opposition party in the State, APC were not open to independent groups observation. Both parties failed to provide observers accreditation before the party primaries irrespective of the early efforts officially requesting for accreditation. YIAGA AFRICA had officially applied for accreditation to selected political parties to enable the WTV observers observe the process and also notified INEC as the constitutional body responsible for political party monitoring. YIAGA AFRICA calls on all political parties to be more receptive to partnership with Independent Observer groups as we work together to promote credible elections in Ekiti State.

In conclusion, YIAGA AFRICA remains committed to promoting electoral integrity and will be providing more information on the pre-election environment towards the July 14th Governorship election in Ekiti State.