Introduction

On November 16, 2019, registered voters in Kogi turned out at the polling units to cast their vote in the 2019 governorship elections organized by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). YIAGA AFRICA Watching The Vote (WTV) deployed 500 polling unit observers to a total of 250 sampled polling units in each of the 21 Local Government Areas with 27 mobile observers roving the LGAs. These observers provided real time information on the conduct of the election across the state. The WTV polling unit observers deployed by 7:00am to the sampled polling units and will remain at the polling unit till the close of polls and posting of results at the polling units. For this election, YIAGA AFRICA Watching the Vote is deploying the Parallel Vote Tabulation (PVT), an advanced and proven methodology that employs well established statistical principles and utilizes sophisticated information technologies for election observation. Using this methodology, YIAGA AFRICA can independently determine if the official result announced reflects the votes cast.

In addition to the polling units and mobile observers, YIAGA AFRICA’s WTV 21 result collation observers will be at the LGA results collation center to observe the process and send in reports on the collation process.

YIAGA AFRICA’s Watching the vote commends the people of Kogi for their resilience, commitment and determination to cast their vote in this election. YIAGA AFRICA observed early turnout of voters at the polling units. This YIAGA AFRICA WTV preliminary situational statement is based on Watching The Vote observation findings on seven process-related issues which includes: opening of polling units and presence of polling officials and Election materials; the presence of security personnel, the commencement of accreditation and voting; deployment of the smart card readers; and presence of party agents. It also highlights critical incidents that may undermine the credibility of the election.

These are preliminary findings as of 12:00 noon on election day with reports received from 221 of our 250 sampled polling units. The following data will be updated as additional reports are received from WTV observers at sampled polling units.
Watching The Vote Midday Findings

1. As at 7:30 am, YIAGA AFRICA WTV observers reported that INEC officials had arrived at 52% of polling units.
2. By 9:00 am, 79% of polling units had commenced accreditation and voting. In addition, 94% of polling units had security agents present.
3. APC party agents were seen at 97% of polling units, PDP at 78% of polling units, and SDP at 39% of polling units.
4. Card readers were observed in 98% of polling units. Other essential election materials like the: register of voters, indelible ink (marker pen), official stamp, voting cubicle, ink pad (in the voting cubicle), Governorship Ballot box, and Polling unit booklet were present in 99% of polling units.
5. The Braille Ballot guides and PWD poster (Poster EC 30E) were present in 50% and 88% of polling units respectively.

Reported Critical Incidents

As at 12:00 noon, YIAGA AFRICA received and confirmed the following critical incident reports:

1. **Voter Inducement and Vote buying**: reports on voter inducement and vote buying were observed across the LGAs. Specifically, YIAGA AFRICA received reports of voter inducement and vote buying in Adavi (PU 001 Afinorere ward), Ankpa (PU 010, Ward 01), Ibaji (PU 007, Itale Iyanu ward), Idah (PU 001, Ugwod ward), Yagba East (PU 01, ward 08), Kogi K.K (PU 005, Ukwu ward) and Ajaokuta (PU 005, Deregu ward) LGA. Voters were paid as much as N5,000 in some cases in exchange for their votes. At Aluaja, Iyano Ward in Ibaji LGA, INEC officials were given N15,000 and Security agents N50,00 to compromise the process.

2. **Observers not allowed to observe at polling units**: WTV received reports of accredited observers not allowed to observe in PU 017, Ward 12 and PU 002, Adumudume ward of Dekina LGA; PU 009 ward 09 of Okene LGA, and PU 013 WARD 06 of Bassa LGA among others. This was however rectified in some cases and still pending in a few polling units.

3. **Non-use of the Smart Card Reader for Accreditation**: YIAGA AFRICA observes cases of voters by-passing the processes of accreditation. WTV observers reported card readers were not used for verifying or authenticating the PVCs and fingerprint of some voters, specifically 4 voters in PU 010 of Ward 01 (Ankpa Township Ward) in Ankpa LGA.

4. **Intimidation and Harassment**: Unknown men and party agents of some identified political parties were found to be attacking and intimidating voters in polling units of LGAs in Dekina (PU 017, Ward 12 and PU 001 Yashi), Lokoja (PU 001, Ward C), Ofu (PU 005, Ugwalawo ward), Ankpa (Ojokwu ward 3) and Igalamela/Odolu (PU 022, ward...
08) LGA. WTV observers were beaten and their observation checklists destroyed, and, then the process, degenerated to sporadic shooting in PU 027, Ayingba Etiaga, Dekina LGA. YIAGA AFRICA also received reports of intimidation of journalists and sister election observer groups like Inclusive Friends, Nigerian Civil Society Situation Room and Search for Common Ground in the full glare of security agencies who made no effort to forestall or reprimand the political thugs.

5. **Disruption of election at the polling unit:** There were reports of disruption of the election process in PU 015, Obehira - Ugee Ward, Okene LGA, PU 027, Ayingba Etiaga, Dekina LGA and PU 012, Crowther Memorial School Lokoja Ward A.

**Preliminary Recommendations**

1. YIAGA AFRICA is concerned that despite heavy deployment of security for the elections, security officials and election day materials deployed late, resulting in polling units opening late. **YIAGA AFRICA calls on INEC to extend voting in the affected polling units Kogi from 2pm to 4pm in order to ensure voters are not disenfranchised.** YIAGA AFRICA calls for an investigation to unravel the reasons behind the delay in security deployment.

2. YIAGA AFRICA condemns the violence and brigandage in some polling units resulting to disruption of voting. **YIAGA AFRICA calls on INEC to cancel elections in those polling units with cases of snatching of ballot papers/boxes, violence, and disruption.** In the spirit of transparency, YIAGA AFRICA calls on INEC to make public the list of polling units where elections are canceled. Security agencies should ensure adequate security is provided to enable voters and INEC complete the process of voting, results collation and declaration.

3. YIAGA AFRICA condemns the blatant vote buying observed within proximity of the polling units. Voters should respect the secrecy of the ballot by complying with the laid down procedure for the folding of ballot papers and voting. Security officials are encouraged to take proactive measures by reprimand any individual or group of individuals perpetrating this heinous electoral offense.

4. Party agents and voters should conduct themselves in a professional manner and refrain from preventing accredited observers and media personnel from observing and reporting the elections.

5. YIAGA AFRICA calls on all deployed security agents to provide a speedy response to critical incidents, especially the reports of violent disruption of the process and destruction of election materials in some polling units. We also encourage security personnel to remain professional and non-partisan while on duty.
6. YIAGA AFRICA also enjoins the governorship and senatorial candidates and their political parties to show maturity and respect for the voting process and laws of our country. The candidates and the parties must restrain their agents and supporters from resorting to violence at any point in time during and after the elections. Employing extrajudicial means to redress any grievances would undermine the credibility of the electoral process and national commitment to democracy. YIAGA AFRICA calls for legal redress for the resolution of electoral disputes.

Conclusion

YIAGA AFRICA WTV will continue to observe the election and will provide timely information on the Kogi 2019 governorship election. Our observers will continue to watch the process at the end of voting and the posting of results. In addition, our LGA result collation observers will be at the LGA result collation center to observe the process and provide information on the results collation and declaration. We urge political stakeholders to show greater commitment to democracy and credible elections. YIAGA AFRICA’s WTV will observe the process until the end. Our observers will remain at polling units until accreditation, voting, and counting are completed and the official results have been announced and posted by the polling officials.

We call on all people of Kogi state, the parties and candidates, INEC and the security forces to play their parts to ensure a peaceful, credible and conclusive process.

Thank you and God Bless the people of Kogi State.

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