1. Politicians are more interested in power than democracy. Democratic institutions and processes are the only means to access and sustain this power. They are respected, followed and supported only for this purpose, and are easily eschewed when they become obstacles to politicians’ political and economic interests.

2. Electoral integrity is not relevant if electoral outcomes enjoy popular support. Once the outcome of an election is believed to enjoy popular support from the public, the integrity or credibility of the process is inconsequential, regardless of the degree of electoral fraud and manipulation.

3. Nigeria’s ineffective architecture for managing election security is deliberate because it serves the interest of incumbents at the state or national levels. The loyalty of security officials is to political leadership and not the Constitution.

4. The power vested in INEC to determine the deployment of security agencies during election is impracticable because the primary structure and lines of control in security agencies like the police and military are already domiciled in the Constitution or other laws.

5. The current timeline for the determination of pre-election matters negatively impacts election management and has broader implications for political stability. Further review of the electoral legal framework is required to establish new timelines such that pre-election matters are resolved early enough before elections to negate any negative impacts on election management.

6. For improved quality of elections, interagency collaboration is non-negotiable. Due to their complex and intertwined nature, elections require vast logistical support from diverse state and non-state actors to be successful.

7. The electoral commission is complicit in undermining electoral integrity through weak oversight on key field operations and commercialization of electoral services like selling of PVCs and INEC observer accreditation tags to politicians.

8. Electoral reform is an important element of political reform. Improvements to electoral processes and management cannot be made in a vacuum and must occur alongside reforms in other areas of Nigeria’s political system, as they are interrelated and comprehensive reforms are critical to guarantee quality elections. Electoral reforms should be connected to the federal system, reform in security governance and architecture, public service reform, economic reform, judicial reform, etc.

Recommendations

Drawing from these lessons, Yiaga Africa makes the following recommendations:

1. **The Executive**
   1. The Executive should as a matter of urgency leverage the harmonious working relationship with the National Assembly to ensure expedient passage/assent of electoral amendment bills currently being considered by the National Assembly.
   2. The President should demonstrate intolerance for electoral impunity by directing the Attorney General of the Federation and Inspector General of Police to investigate and prosecute all suspects involved in all forms of criminality and violence. This should include an executive order preventing the Attorney General from entering nolle prosequi in the prosecution of electoral offences.

2. **National Assembly**
   3. The National Assembly should accelerate the consideration of the electoral amendment bills and ensure their quick passage before the end of 2020. The National Assembly should consolidate and harmonize all electoral amendments into a Repeal and Re-enactment Electoral bill.
   4. The National Assembly should consider the following key electoral reform priorities:
      a. Provide legal recognition for electronic accreditation of voters, e-collation and electronic transmission of results;
      b. Resolve the duality of jurisdiction between Election Petition Tribunals and regular courts, review and harmonize timelines for the determination of pre-election matters to ensure pre-election disputes are resolved before the date of elections;
      c. The provision of legal grounds for the rejection of list of candidates submitted by parties to INEC as well as conditions for cancellation of elections;
      d. Subjecting declarations and returns made by Returning Officers under duress or controversial circumstances to further review by the Commission; and
      e. Establishment of an electoral offences commission.

3. **INEC**
   5. A comprehensive audit of the Bayelsa and Kogi governorship elections is required given the high level of critical incidents and malpractice. The findings of the audit must be shared with the public and sanctions met on culpable INEC officials.

6. Given the sensitive nature of elections, INEC should ensure clarity in its regulations and guidelines. Ambiguity in electoral guidelines creates room for manipulation and fraud.

7. The Commission should maintain consistency in its decisions and uphold the values of integrity, neutrality and accountability in the management of future elections.

8. Polling unit level results of elections should be posted online to facilitate public access to election results.

9. The Inter-Agency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES) should audit the performance of the security officers deployed for the Bayelsa and Kogi gubernatorial elections, particularly in areas where elections were disrupted by violence. In addition, ICCES should investigate the allegations that some police officers refused to deploy to polling units thereby giving political thugs and those in fake security uniforms an unobstructed path to disrupt the electoral process.

10. For credible elections, security agencies must remain impartial, neutral and professional in the management of election security. Loyalty must be to the Constitution not individuals.

11. Political parties should ensure a transparent and democratic candidate nomination process and allow observation of the process. Parties must comply with their own internal guidelines and electoral laws in nomination of candidates.

12. Political parties should remove members who undermine elections and promote violence through sanctions and withdrawal of membership.

13. CSOs should not despair or defer from their mandate of civic engagement despite the attacks and fatalities suffered during the elections in Kogi and Bayelsa. They should remain resilient in providing oversight of the electoral process and voter education.

14. For democracy to thrive, citizens must remain committed and strive continuously to defend it despite the challenges. Not participating in the electoral process creates greater opportunities for poor governance to thrive and accountability to fail.