

PRELIMINARY STATEMENT ON THE CONDUCT OF THE SEPTEMBER 19, 2020 GOVERNORSHIP ELECTION IN EDO STATE



19 SEPTEMBER 2020



Centre for Democracy & Development
Centre pour la démocratie et le développement

**Election
Analysis**
CENTRE

Earlier today, voters across the 18 Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Edo State headed to the polls to elect a Governor. The CDD Election Analysis Centre (EAC) has been receiving reports from our trained group of nonpartisan observers accredited by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). This preliminary statement provides an overview of our initial findings on the conduct of the election, and the extent to which poll officials, voters, and security officials adhered to key processes designed to govern the transparent and credible conduct of the election. This preliminary overview is based on data received from CDD observers on the field in Edo State.

INEC LOGISTICS



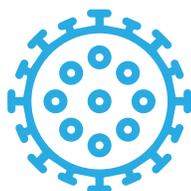
The timely arrival of officials of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) alongside election materials is a major indicator of how well other aspects of the election process will be conducted. CDD observation shows that there was late arrival of INEC officials across the state. This led to the late commencement of the election in many parts of the state and was caused by poor logistics, such as late transportation of personnel and election materials to polling units.

CDD observers reported pockets of protests by ad-hoc staff who complained over such issues as non-payment of statutory allowances. This resulted in protests by ad-hoc staff led to lengthy delays in the polling process



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POOR COMPLIANCE WITH COVID-19 PROTOCOLS



Observers reported a general non-compliance to key protocols for preventing further spread of the novel Corona Virus

CDD observers reported a general non-compliance by INEC poll officials and the voters with key protocols for preventing further spread of the novel Coronavirus. In exceptional cases where compliance was observed, it was limited mainly to the wearing of face masks. The flouting of rule of physical distancing was the order of the day. There was complete inability of INEC to maintain the 2-metre rules as provided in her guidelines.

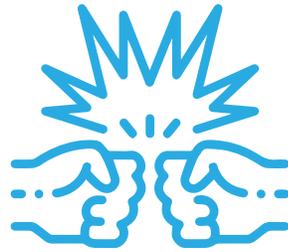
VOTE BUYING



One of the most worrisome trends during the election is the level of sophistication with which politicians engaged in the criminal act of vote buying. The tactics used by supporters of the major parties included inducements such as gifts of N1000 and N5000 in cash, Ankara fabric, spaghetti and other food items. Tickets were also given in lieu of cash for voters to vote and then return to use the ticket for collection of the cash.



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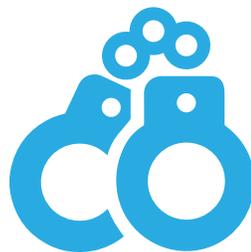
ELECTORAL VIOLENCE



CDD drew attention to the dangerous trend of baseless and outlandish claims of attacks by politicians that created a climate of fear

It is pertinent to recall that in the pre-election period, CDD drew attention to the dangerous trend of outlandish claims of attacks by politicians that created a climate of fear of expected violence. CDD observers reported incidents of violence in Ikpoba Okha, Oredo, Esan West and Oriohomwan due to the activities of political thugs who disrupted voting in different polling units. In Ologbo, Ikhoba Okha LGA, for example, one person was reported to have been shot while in Ihomwonde LGA, Ward 5 PU 1, 2, and 3, conflicts erupted amongst party agents that resulted to disruption of the

ELECTORAL OFFENCES



CDD observers reported several cases of electoral offences in the course of the election. One reported incident occurred in polling Unit 03, Egureka Ward, Esan South-East LGA where an elderly man who attempted to vote with his son's voter's card was apprehended by the police, and of a man came to the polling unit with multiple, and ballot papers.



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PROPAGANDA AND MISINFORMATION

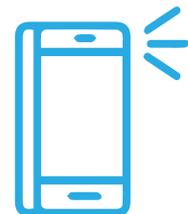


These information influence structures used multiple messaging platforms and social media platforms to spread their partisan propaganda narratives to advance their electoral advantage or to discredit the other party

The elections in Edo state has thrown up a number of interesting surprises. In the build-up to the elections, CDD had uncovered a combination of broad horizontal and vertical structures of information in both the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Progressives Congress (APC), that flowed all the way down to the LGAs. These information influence structures used multiple messaging platforms and social media platforms to spread their partisan propaganda narratives to advance their electoral advantage or to discredit the other party.

On the actual election day, we had assumed that both parties would continue the tit-for-tat attacks that had characterised much of the election campaigns. Although this assumption was largely borne out, there were some interesting peculiarities that emerged.

snapshot of online presence



The PDP proved to be far more active in their online presence. There was a clear party-driven agenda in spacing perceptions around electoral conduct. For example, PDP's official twitter handle posted up to 10 tweets explicitly accusing the APC of misconduct such as vote buying, tampering with electoral materials, and

voter interference. In many of those posts, they tagged the electoral management body – INEC. Conversely, the handle regularly uploaded posts of peaceful elections in PDP strongholds. The difference with the official APC handle was stark; there were zero tweets on their handle.

Although these zero tweets on their part might lead one to believe that the APC were unconcerned with shaping opinion, but that is not necessarily the case. It is however indicative of a clearly different set of priorities. The abundance of evidence revealing vote buying on a massive scale, shows that there is perhaps more of a desire to ‘win’ the elections, indicative of a strategic narrative later used by the APC. Looking beneath the surface however, we know that APC has a network of canvassers whose job is to spread narratives through WhatsApp groups, Facebook groups and on Naira land; therefore, one could say that APC’s information influence campaigns are more invisible than to non-existent.



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fact checking

Considering the way the media landscape played out, we conclude that CDD’s fact-checking team opted to take a measured approach to countering disinformation during the elections. Our fact-checking was necessarily targeted at countering more visible disinformation because our guiding philosophy is not to popularise fake news that has no public traction.



Our biggest findings however have been in our general observations that, either through party agents, or the party themselves, the accusations of wrongdoing have not stopped

While we found that many false news stories were variations of the same theme, our online tracking logged over 25 threads of fake news. During that time CDD released 5 fact-checks; perhaps the most overt piece of disinformation was the claim by PDP that the APC had hijacked electoral materials in Egor LGA and moved them to a hotel known as 'Play house'. This was found to be false by our fact-checkers. Our biggest findings however have been in our general observations that, either through party agents, or the party themselves, the accusations of wrongdoing have not stopped. Social media posts have accused both parties of wrongdoing, they are either both lying, or both telling the truth, in which case, they are guilty either way.

CONCLUSION



There was a lot of fear that the election would be conducted under high levels of violence by thugs. As of the time voting ended, the level of violence was minimal and most citizens who wanted to vote were able to do so. The election is now going into the critical phase of counting and collation of votes and we call on all stakeholders to keep the peace, respect the election guidelines and ensure that EDO 2020 will enter the annals of our electoral history as relatively free, fair and violence-free

Signed:

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The Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) was established in the United Kingdom in 1997 as an independent, not-for-profit, research training, advocacy and capacity building organisation.



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