

Report of Pre-Election Assessment of the 2023 Imo State Governorship Election



**REPORT OF PRE-ELECTION
ASSESSMENT OF THE
2023 IMO STATE
GOVERNORSHIP ELECTION**

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INTRODUCTION

The Imo State governorship election will be held on 11 November 2023. The election will be the seventh in the series of governorship elections held in the State since Nigeria's return to civil rule in 1999. Remarkably, the election will be the first off-season governorship election in the State and Imo has become the eighth state in Nigeria with off-season governorship elections.¹ The Imo State governorship election was taken off the normal 4-year cycle of general elections in Nigeria following the Supreme Court ruling in January 2020 which nullified the declaration of Emeka Ihedioha as the winner of the 9 March 2019 governorship election and affirmed Hope Uzodinma as the lawful winner of the election. Hope Uzodinma was sworn in as the Governor of Imo State on 15 January 2020.

The November 2023 governorship election in Imo State will be contested by seventeen political parties. All the parties in the contest have concluded their primaries and submitted their candidates to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). The incumbent governor, Hope Uzodinma, who is seeking reelection emerged as the candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC). Other notable candidates in the list published by INEC include Samuel Anyanwu of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and Athan Nneji Achonu of the Labour Party (LP).

1 Other states with off-season governorship elections include Kogi, Bayelsa, Edo, Ondo, Anambra, Osun and Ekiti.

The forthcoming governorship election in Imo State has all the trappings of a contest that will command the attention of the stakeholders in Nigeria's electoral process. Among other things, the election is likely to be characterized by keen competition between the ruling party and the opposition, strong mobilization of sectional identities, massive vote buying, strong involvement of security agencies, and deliberate suppression of votes. This foreboding draws from a number of factors, including the history of past elections in the State and early signposts of desperation and violence, fuelled by the underlying contestation between the three main power blocs in the State (Owerri, Okigwe and Orlu zones), the situation of mass poverty exacerbated by deteriorating economic conditions in the country, and widespread insecurity in many parts of the State.

The above-mentioned issues make it imperative for INEC to take adequate care in managing the election and ensuring that the credibility of the electoral process is maintained. In this regard, the Commission must systematically address the challenges that affected the 2023 general election in the State and apply the lessons learned from its post-election review to address issues that can undermine the credibility of the November election. It needs to pay ample attention to areas of recurrent challenge such as election logistics management, election technology management, management of election officials and staff, management of voters and voting infrastructure, information management and strategic communication, as well as engagement and mobilization of security agencies. In particular, there is an urgent need to address the security challenges that affected elections in some Local Government Areas of the State during the 2023 general election and the accompanying feeling of helplessness on the part of voters and citizens. This will require, among other things, focused engagement with key stakeholders, especially the security agencies, the traditional and religious leaders, as well as the youth population based on a sustained campaign for peaceful elections.

This report presents an assessment of the broad geographical, demographic, socio-economic, and political context that will shape the conduct and outcome of the 2023 governorship election in Imo State. The report provides useful insights into the history of elections in the State, an analysis of the socio-cultural aggregates that make up the State and how political identities formulated by these groups will shape political contests and the election. It also highlights the implications of insecurity for the election including the challenges that widespread violence will pose to the election. It further provides an assessment of the political developments in the State before the election, possible areas of concern during the election and broad suggestions in terms of the role of stakeholders in making the outcome of the elections credible and peaceful.



CONTEXT OF THE 2023 IMO STATE GOVERNORSHIP ELECTION

Imo State, named after the Imo River, was created when the former East Central State of Nigeria was split into Anambra and Imo states on 3 February 1976. The State is located in the tropical rainforest zone of West Africa and occupies the area between the lower River Niger and the upper and middle Imo River. It is bounded on the east by Abia State;² on the north by Enugu; on the west by Anambra and on the south by Rivers State. Imo State is centrally located at the heart of the former Eastern region of Nigeria; hence it is called the “Eastern Heartland”. The city of Owerri is the capital of Imo State and the major cities of the nine states of the former Eastern region are equidistant from Owerri. Besides Owerri, Imo State has several other cities and towns like Okigwe, Orlu, Oguta, Isu, Atta Ikeduru, Akokwa, Mbaise, Mbaitoli, Mbieri, Ohaji/Egbema, Nkwerre, Ngor Okpala, Omuma, Mgbidi, Awo-Omamma, Izombe, Orsu, and Mbano.

The 2006 Population Census puts the population of Imo State at 3,934,899.³ Since the 2006 Census, the population of Imo State has grown exponentially, reaching an estimated 6.35 million people in 2022.⁴ With a land area of about 5,289.49 km², Imo State is one of the states with the highest population density in Nigeria. The population density of the State varies

2 In June 1991, the eastern portion of Imo State was carved out to create Abia State.

3 Federal Republic of Nigeria Official Gazette (2007), Vol. 94, No. 24. Lagos, Government Printer.

4 Budget, State of States 2022 Edition: Subnational Governance Reforms for a New Era, <https://yourbudget.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/2022-State-of-States-Report.pdf>.

from 230 – 1,400 people per square kilometre. While English is the official language, Imo State is a predominantly Igbo-speaking state, with Igbo people constituting 98 per cent of the population. Christianity is the dominant religion in the State, though some adherents of traditional religion and Islam also live in the State. Among the Christian denominations, the Anglicans and Catholics are the majority.

Like many Igbo communities, most of the communities in Imo State are governed by a traditional ruler and elderly male descendants of the lineages legislate and adjudicate on issues that concern their community. The traditional rulers are also the chief security officers and custodians of the customs and traditions of their respective communities. Sometimes, they liaise with the leadership of their town unions for security and development projects. Other governance institutions at the community level include Age Grades, Masquerade societies, and Women's Associations such as the Umuada (group of first-married daughters).

Politically and administratively, Imo State, like other states in Nigeria, is organized into three senatorial districts, namely Imo East (Owerri), Imo West (Orlu) and Imo North (Okigwe). The State has ten Federal Constituencies, 27 State Constituencies, 27 Local Government Areas, and 305 Registration Areas or Wards. Details of the senatorial districts, federal and state constituencies, Local Government Areas and Registration Areas/Wards as well as other electoral delimitation information in Imo State are shown in the Appendices.

Since 1976 when Imo State was created, it has had nine military and seven civilian governors, making a total of 16 governors (See Table 1 below). The State has had five governors since the return to civil rule in 1999.

Table 1: Past and Present Governors of Imo State (1976 – Date)

S/N	Name of Governor	Period in Office	Sen. Dist. of Origin
Before 1999			
1	Commander G. Ndubuisi Kanu	3 Feb. 1976 – 9 Aug. 1977	
2	Commodore Adekunle S. Lawal	10 Aug. 1977 – 23 July 1978	
3	Col. Sunday A. Adenihu	25 July 1978 – 30 Sept. 1979	
4	Chief Samuel O. Mbakwe	1 Oct. 1979 – 31 Dec. 1983	Imo North
5	Brigadier Ike O. S. Nwachukwu	4 Jan 1984 – 27 Aug. 1985	
6	Navy Capt. Alison Madueke	4 Sept. 1985 – 28 Aug. 1986	
7	Commander Amadi Ikwechegh	29 Aug. 1986 – 2 Sept. 1990	
8	Commander Anthony Oguguo	3 Sept. 1990 – 1 Jan 1991	

9	Chief Evan Enwerem	2 Jan. 1992 – 12 Dec. 1993	Imo East
10	Navy Capt. James N. J. Aneke	13 Dec. 1993 – 16 Aug. 1996	
11	Col. Tanko K. Zubairu	17 Aug. 1996 – 29 May 1999	
Since 1999			
1	Chief Achike Udenwa	29 May 1999 – 29 May 2007	Imo West
2	Chief Ikedi Ohakim	29 May 2007 – 29 May 2011	Imo North
3	Owelle Rochas Okorocha	29 May 2011 – 29 May 2019	Imo West
4	Rt. Hon. Emeka Ihedioha	29 May 2019 – 15 Jan. 2020	Imo East
5	Sen. Hope Uzodinma	15 Jan. 2020 – till date	Imo West

Over the years, there have been serious contestations among the three senatorial districts in the State (that is, Imo East - Owerri, Imo West - Orlu and Imo North - Okigwe) over the election of the governor. As Table 1 above illustrates, indigenes of Imo West Senatorial District (Orlu zone) have tended to dominate the governorship position, especially since 1999. Indigenes of the area have held the position of governor for an unprecedented 20 years out of the 24 years of civil rule since 1999. Indigenes of Imo East Senatorial District (Owerri Zone) have occupied the position for the least period of time. This is perhaps why the declaration of Emeka Ihedioha, an indigene of the zone, as governor following the 2019 general election was widely celebrated in the State. The same reason partly informs the disillusionment that trailed the Supreme Court judgement that nullified the election of Ihedioha and declared Hope Uzodinma as the governor.

With a majority of the State's population (42 per cent) and the LGAs in the State (12 out of 27) located in the Imo West Senatorial District,⁵ it seems justified that the area has an upper hand in terms of control of the governorship position. However, a strong case has been made by the people of Imo East and North Senatorial Districts for equity and justice in office distribution in line with the Imo Charter of Equity⁶ and in the spirit of the federal character principle enshrined in Nigeria's Constitution. Political mobilization and contestation along the lines of struggle for power among the senatorial districts is expected to be a defining factor in the upcoming election.

5 Based on the 2006 Population Census, Imo West Senatorial District has approximately 42 per cent of the State's population (that is, 1,654,067 out of 3,934,899), while Imo East and North Senatorial Districts have 32 per cent (1,480,823 out of 3,934,899) and 20 per cent (800,009 out of 3,934,899) of the State's population, respectively.

6 John Nwanegbo-Ben & Protus Nathan Uzorma, Restoring Imo Charter of Equity: Elites and Socio-Political Development of Imo State, Nigeria, International Journal of Novel Research in Humanity and Social Sciences, 2(1): 63-71, 2015.

The people of Imo State are predominantly subsistence farmers and the economy of the State depends primarily on agriculture and commerce.⁷ The State has the largest palm oil plantation complex in West Africa and is blessed with abundant deposits of natural resources (including natural gas,⁸ limestone, salt, and gypsum). Yet, the State's government has been unable to harness these resources for economic growth, development and prosperity of the people. The state's economic development records are largely unimpressive. For instance, the State ranked 26 out of 36 in the 2022 Fiscal Performance Ranking compiled by a civic organisation – BudgIT.

With an increasing debt stock,⁹ rising operating expenses,¹⁰ and growing overhead costs,¹¹ experts are worried that the state government is undermining its fiscal well-being. They argue that increased spending on overhead and operating expenses is an indication of the inability of the state government to limit the cost of governance, especially at a time of dwindling federal transfers.¹² Poor fiscal governance in Imo State reflects on the inadequate attention the government has devoted to critical sectors such health and education. While spending on overhead and operating expenses is increasing, spending on health and education tends to be dwindling. In 2021, the State ranked second to the last, only behind Ondo State, on the education spending per capita index, having recorded an education spending per capita of 308.65 naira. Similarly, the state performed poorly on health spending per capita as it spent 581.13 naira — the second lowest spending among the 36 states.¹³

The implications of poor fiscal governance on the socio-economic and political development of Imo State are numerous including unemployment, poverty, poor access to education and health, as well as insecurity and conflicts. A recent study indicates that Imo State has the highest rate of unemployment in the country with 57 per cent of its population unemployed as of the fourth quarter of 2020.¹⁴ This figure implies a 39 per cent

7 Emenalor, F.U. and Akanwa, P.C. (2007). *From Land of Hope to Eastern Heartland: Government and People of Imo State from 1976 – 2006*. Owerri: BAF Communication.

8 The State has over 163 oil wells at 12 different locations.

9 Imo State is the 6th most indebted State in Nigeria and the most indebted State in the South-East region having grown its total debt stock by 28.39 per cent from N186.72billion in 2020 to N239.74 billion in 2021.

10 According to the State's 2021 Audited Financial Statement, Imo State government spent more on operating expenses in 2021, having spent N80.09bn which was 59.7 per cent of the State's total expenditure, than it did on capital expenditure which received N39.98bn (33.3 per cent).

11 The State had the largest growth in overhead cost in the South East region in 2021 following an increase in its overhead cost by 68.61 per cent from N10.37 billion to N17.49 billion.

12 See Budgit, State of States 2022 Edition: Subnational Governance Reforms for a New Era, <https://yourbudgit.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/2022-State-of-States-Report.pdf>.

13 See Ibid, pp. 141-142.

14 Ukpe Philip, Imo State Retains top Spot as Nigeria's Unemployment Capital – NBS, The Whistler, 15 March 2021, <https://thewhistler.ng/imo-state-retains-top-spot-as-nigerias-unemployment-capital-nbs/>.

point increase in the State's unemployment rate which was 28 per cent in 2018.¹⁵

The National Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) report released by the NBS in 2022, which assessed poverty across four dimensions: health, education, living standards, and work and shocks, classified 41 per cent of Imo State's population as living in multidimensional poverty. Imo State ranked third in the South East region in terms of the proportion of its population experiencing multidimensional poverty, worse than Abia and Anambra States. With regards to access to education, data from the National Bureau of Statistics show that a total of 275,800 children in Imo State lacked access to education in 2018, making it the state with the highest number of out-of-school children in the South East region. Finally, regarding the under-5 mortality rate, that is, the probability of a child dying between birth and their fifth birthday, Imo State had the second highest under-5 mortality rate in the South East region in 2018 with 81 deaths per 1,000 live births. However, the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey released in 2022 indicates that the state has made some progress in reducing under-5 mortality, with the rate estimated at 56 deaths per 1,000 live births. It now ranks as the third state with the highest under-5 mortality rate in the South East region.¹⁶

The preceding analysis reveals the current socio-economic condition of the people of Imo State and the stark reality of the economic adversity faced by the people of the State. Overall, the interaction between economic adversity, mobilization of sectional identities and intense political contestation is likely to undermine the quality of the forthcoming governorship election in the State.

15 See Dennis Amata, "How Well did Hope Uzodinma of Imo State Perform in his First Term?", Dataphyte, 14 July 2023, <https://www.dataphyte.com/latest-reports/elections/how-well-did-hope-uzodinma-of-imo-state-perform-in-his-first-term/>.

16 While this improvement is noteworthy, it is important to emphasize that the state is still far from achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) target of 20 deaths per 1,000 live births.



ISSUES THAT WILL SHAPE THE 2023 IMO STATE GOVERNORSHIP ELECTION

Drawing from the foregoing background and current political developments in Imo State, six major issues can be identified as the defining factors in the forthcoming governorship election. These issues include:

- a. The legitimacy crisis precipitated by the emergence of Hope Uzodinma as governor.
- b. The politics of power shift among the three senatorial districts/power blocs in the State and political mobilization of sectional identities.
- c. The Peter Obi factor and the rise of the Labour Party as a 'Third Force' in Imo and Nigerian politics.
- d. The declining public trust in the integrity of INEC and the credibility of the electoral process following the disappointing conduct of the 2023 general election.
- e. The worsening economic conditions in the state and the country in general.
- f. The deteriorating security situation in Imo State and the strong possibility of electoral violence during the election.

1. Hope Uzodinma's Legitimacy Crisis

The emergence of Hope Uzodinma as governor of Imo State in January 2020 following a Supreme Court ruling was upsetting to many considering that he secured a distant fourth position in the result declared by INEC and that the basis for the Supreme Court's decision is perceived to be unconvincing. The judicial route through which Governor Uzodinma emerged poses a serious question to the legitimacy of his administration. For many, Governor Hope Uzodinma's rise to power was not on account of the popular mandate handed to him by the people of the State. Rather, he is seen to have been imposed on the people of the State by the Supreme Court.

Consequently, in the forthcoming election, Governor Uzodinma will be under immense pressure to demonstrate that he actually enjoys popular support and that he rightly won the 2019 election. On the contrary, the opposition parties will strive to show that they have stronger control of the state and that the emergence of Uzodinma was a 'legal mishap' that should not have occurred in the first place. The efforts by the incumbent and the opposition to exact political control in the State have the potential to negatively affect the process and outcome of the election.

2. Mobilization of Sectional Identities and Politics of Power Shift

The emergence of Hope Uzodinma as Governor of Imo State in January 2020 reopened the lingering political question of power shift in the State by altering the configuration of power rotation among the three Senatorial Districts in the State. By declaring Uzodinma, who is from Orlu zone as the Governor, the Supreme Court brought to futility what the people of Imo State had considered their greatest political breakthrough in the last two decades - shifting power to Owerri zone (Imo East Senatorial District) after 16 years of political ascendancy by the Orlu zone (Imo West Senatorial District). The implication of the Supreme Court's ruling is that at the end of Hope Uzodinma's first term in January 2024, the Orlu zone would have controlled the governorship for 20 out of 24 years of civil rule since 1999, leaving Owerri and Okigwe zones with a paltry 4 years and half years in office. If Hope Uzodinma secures a second term, it then means that Orlu zone would have held the governorship for 24 out of 28 years since 1999.

The forthcoming election will witness an intense struggle by the people of Owerri and Okigwe zones to wrestle power out of the hands of the Orlu zone, and this struggle will significantly shape the quality of the election. All indications point to the fact that the November 11 governorship election in Imo State will be a very keen contest between the incumbent governor, Hope Uzodinma of the APC (from Orlu zone) and his main challengers – Samuel Anyanwu of the PDP (from Owerri zone) and Athan Achonu of the LP

(from Okigwe zone). From the background of the candidates, it is obvious that the frontline political parties considered the issue of sectional identity and the politics of power shift in nominating their candidates. Each of the three main parties will attempt to build a support base in each of the three senatorial districts while striving to make incursions in the other areas. In this sense, while the APC will attempt to dominate Orlu zone, the PDP will try to control Owerri zone, and the LP will attempt to establish its ascendancy in Okigwe zone.

The current political situation in Imo State indicates that the electioneering process and appeals for votes have been coloured by the mobilization of sectional identities around the issue of power shift. Recently, the Chairman of the Imo State Council of Traditional Rulers, Eze Emmanuel Okeke, convened his colleagues from Orlu zone to an event where he placed a curse on anyone challenging the re-election of Governor Uzodinma and particularly on any Orlu indigene that will not vote for the incumbent governor in the forthcoming election.¹⁷ In a counteraction, the titled men in Amaimo Clan in Ikeduru LGA conducted special traditional rites to reverse any curse against their son and candidate of the PDP, Sen. Samuel Anyanwu, his supporters and voters across the State.¹⁸ This sort of action from traditional and political leaders in the State is a signpost to the intense mobilization of sectional identities going on in various parts of the State.

It is regrettable that the political class in Imo State has made the issue of power shift, as important as it may be, the focus of electioneering rather than addressing the critical issue of governance. While concerns about the performance of the incumbent governor with regard to security, poverty alleviation, development of rural communities, improving workers' welfare, management of the State's resources and so on should elevate governance as the key campaign issue, the force of sectional identity mobilization appears to be thriving, thereby forcing the issue of governance to the background.

3. The Obi Factor and the Rise of the Labour Party

The rise of Peter Obi in the campaign for the 2023 presidential election has shaken up Nigeria's politics, hitherto dominated by two major parties since the end of military rule in 1999. Against the backdrop of the disillusionment caused by the failure of the PDP and APC regimes, Peter Obi campaigned with the message of hope - that it is possible to rejuvenate Nigeria through frugal economic management. For him, the key to addressing Nigeria's socio-economic and security

17 Tony Iwuoma, Imo monarchy: Ridiculous Reign of the Absurd, The Sun, 25 September 2023, <https://sunnewsonline.com/imo-monarchy-ridiculous-reign-of-the-absurd/>.

18 Joshua Chibuzor Andrew, Sen Anyanwu, Uzodinma's Governorship Bid Unsettle Imo Traditional Rulers, as Owerri Monarchs Reverse Curses against Candidates, 247Ureports, 10 September 2023, <https://247ureports.com/2023/09/sen-anyanwu-uzodinmas-governorship-bid-unsettle-imo-traditional-rulers-as-owerri-monarchs-reverse-curses-against-candidates/>.

crises is simply to transform the country from a consumption-driven to a production-driven economy. Obi's message, together with his frugal lifestyle despite him being a wealthy businessman as well as his track record as a competent administrator who is not mired in corruption scandals during his tenure as the governor of Anambra state, endeared him to many.

When Peter Obi resigned from the PDP and joined the Labour Party (LP) based on the claims that PDP leaders were attempting to manipulate the party primaries, he moved with his supporters to the Party. The LP, which identifies itself with "social democracy" and opposes "neoliberalism" upheld by both the mainstream parties, worked hard to incorporate within its manifesto several key demands of the Nigerian labour movement. With the presence of Obi and the support of many young people and the working class, the LP has emerged as a realistic "third force" in Nigerian politics.

During the 2023 general election, Obi amassed 6.1 million votes, but trailed behind Bola Tinubu with 8.7 million votes and Atiku Abubakar with 6.9 million votes. In the assessment of many analysts, Obi's performance is nothing but decent considering that he and his party are relatively new entrants in the presidential race. The performance of the Labour Party in the 2023 general election is even more astounding. The party won the governorship election in Abia State, clinched six senatorial seats and 34 seats in the House of Representatives, as well as several seats in the State Houses of Assembly.

The Imo State governorship election is a litmus test of the Labour Party's support following the 2023 general election. To some observers, the Labour Party has built a formidable platform in Imo State to wrestle power from the incumbent governor and the ruling party. Yet, current developments in the party point to the contrary. It is apparent that the Labour Party in Imo State is experiencing a serious internal crisis.

The governorship election primaries of the Labour Party exposed the deep cracks in the party with different factions of the party holding separate primaries. On one hand, the camp supervised by the Caretaker Committee led by FBI Onyekwulisi returned Basil Maduka as their governorship candidate, while on the other hand, the camp led by Prof. Ukachukwu Awuzie returned Athan Achonu as her own candidate. In the end, the national leadership of the Labour Party affirmed the candidacy of Athan Achonu forcing Basil Maduka to challenge his nomination up to the Supreme Court. On 28 September 2023, the Supreme Court ruled that Athan Achonu is the rightful candidate of the Labour Party for the November 11 governorship election in Imo State, and dismissed Basil Maduka's case for lack of locus standi.¹⁹ It is observable that the divisions caused by the struggle for the party's ticket are deep and latch onto existing differences within

¹⁹ Adebayo Folorunsho-Francis, Supreme Court affirms Imo LP gov candidate, Punch, 29 September 2023, <https://punchng.com/supreme-court-affirms-imo-lp-gov-candidate/>.

the party. In all, it is now left to see how the party will address its internal differences in order to mobilize a united and cohesive opposition against the APC.

4. The Question of INEC's Integrity

The outcome of the 2023 general election raised serious questions about the integrity of INEC in particular, and the credibility of the electoral process in general. Prior to the polls, INEC repeatedly assured Nigerian and international audiences of its preparedness to conduct credible and hitch-free elections that would be acceptable to all. Based on INEC's assurances, stakeholders thought that the 2023 election would consolidate and improve on the gains made from the electoral reforms and innovations introduced since 2011. However, these assurances and expectations were dashed as several observers reported that the credibility of the 2023 election was greatly tarnished by numerous pitfalls, including inefficient management of permanent voter cards (PVCs) distribution, failure of operational and logistical arrangements, malfunctioning of election technology, inefficient handling of results management procedures, lack of transparent results collation and declaration process, and poor crisis communication. The high level of election violence and the extensive vote-buying that occurred further undermined the credibility of the 2023 election.

In Imo State, the outcome of the 2023 general election was particularly disappointing. There were reports of late arrival of electoral materials and officials, shoddy accreditation of voters, interference in the electoral process by party agents, misconduct by election and security officials, as well as outright violence in many voting centres.²⁰ Indeed, the aftermath of the 2023 general election has gravely shaken public confidence in the credibility of the electoral process and the capacity of INEC to conduct elections. It is in the context of this battered public trust in INEC and the electoral process that the 2023 Imo State governorship election will be conducted. In the light of the declining public trust in the integrity of INEC and the credibility of the electoral process, voter turnout may dwindle to an unprecedented level. Poor voter turnout will create more opportunities for vote suppression, vote rigging and malfeasance by officials.

Ahead of the 2023 Imo State governorship election, extraordinary efforts will be required to re-establish trust. In this regard, INEC must demonstrate that it has drawn lessons from the post-election review of the 2023 general election by improving the voting experience during the forthcoming election. In particular, the Commission must ensure that delays to the commencement of voting arising from the late arrival of election materials and officials are addressed. In addition, the Commission must work with security agencies to identify and address sources of threats to

²⁰ Victor Duruamaku, Overview of the 2023 General Elections in Imo state, *Champion*, 24 March 2023, <https://championnews.com.ng/overview-of-the-2023-general-elections-in-imo-state/>.

voters, election officials, and other election workers. INEC must focus more attention on the conduct of its officials and staff, including the National and Resident Electoral Commissioners, to identify and address any form of misconduct. The Commission must resist political interference in election management, increase oversight of election administration, tackle vote buying, and improve its strategic communication during elections. On its part, the Bola Tinubu administration should utilize the opportunity provided by the Imo State governorship election to demonstrate its interest and commitment to addressing the persistent challenges with the electoral process in Nigeria by adequately supporting all the agencies involved in the process and committing to further electoral reform.

5. Worsening Economic Conditions

The economic situation in Nigeria has deteriorated since the 2023 general election. On 29 May 2023, in his inaugural speech, the newly elected President Bola Tinubu announced the removal of the decade-long subsidy on petroleum products. Two months after the removal of the fuel subsidy, petrol prices rose by about 255 per cent (from 189 to 617 naira per litre), the highest in the history of the country.²¹ The removal of fuel subsidy has produced a domino effect that has triggered a steep rise in inflation, which has further perpetuated the widespread poverty in the country.

On 14 June 2023, the Nigerian government followed up the removal of fuel subsidy with a new foreign exchange policy which involves the unification of all segments of the Nigerian foreign exchange market.²² With the new policy, foreign currencies can now be bought and sold at rates determined by the market – not by the central bank. This move, according to officials, is part of the Nigerian government's efforts to improve liquidity and stability in the market and attract foreign investors into the Nigerian economy.²³ Yet the effect of the policy on the citizens, in an economy that is overwhelmingly import-dependent, has been extremely deleterious. As the banks are unable to supply the dollars required to meet Nigeria's importation demands, importers have to turn to the black market, widening the gap between official and black market exchange rates. This situation defeats the essence of the new foreign exchange policy and adversely affects the value of the Naira. On 21 September 2023, the foreign exchange crisis in the country reached a new height with a dollar exchanging for over 1,000 naira at the black market compared to 760 naira on 14

21 Aljazeera, Nigerian Petrol Prices reach Record High after Subsidy Removal, 18 July 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/7/18/nigerian-petrol-prices-reach-record-high-after-subsidy-removal>.

22 Ayodeji Adegboyega, Updated: CBN Announces Unification of FX Windows, Abolishes Naira4Dollar Scheme, Premium Times, 14 June 2023, <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/604550-just-in-cbn-announces-unification-of-fx-windows-stops-naira4dollar-scheme.html#lnheu89n0oyi5gi0j67>.

23 Ayodeji Adegboyega, Updated: CBN Announces Unification of FX Windows, Op. Cit.

June 2023 – a 32 per cent increase.²⁴

As shown by the foregoing, government policies have tended to exacerbate the deplorable economic conditions of many Nigerians, pushing millions of citizens into extreme poverty and hardship. It is well known that economic adversity has a particularly significant effect on the quality of elections, especially with regards to poor voter turnout,²⁵ vote buying²⁶ and electoral violence. With the current economic realities in Nigeria, it is likely that these factors – poor turnout, vote buying and electoral violence – will play a defining role in the Imo State governorship election.

6. The Deteriorating Security Situation in Imo State and the Likelihood of Electoral Violence

Before 2015, Imo State was among the states with the lowest number of violence per capita in Nigeria. Data from the civic group – The Fund for Peace - show that incidents of violence at that time were recorded mostly in the LGAs around the capital city of Owerri and that they included street-level criminality, vigilante/mob justice and public unrest.²⁷ However, in the past few years, incidents of violence in Imo State have spiralled and the State now tops the list of violence-prone states in Southern Nigeria.²⁸ In April 2022, the Foundation for Partnerships Initiatives in the Niger Delta (PIND) reported that over 400 deaths were recorded as a result of violent incidents in Imo State between January 2019 and December 2021.²⁹ Violent incidents in Imo State involve attacks on civilians, state security agents, and members of non-state armed groups as well as the destruction of properties belonging to individuals, public institutions and security agencies.

Like in other South East states, officials of INEC and security personnel are major targets of attacks in Imo State by suspected gunmen linked to the Biafra agitation. In April 2022, four masked gunmen released a video warning the Nigerian government not to hold the 2023 general election in the South East and threatened to deal with any election official seen in the region. Within the same period, unidentified gunmen killed an INEC official, Anthony Okorie, when they attacked a Polling Unit at Ihitte Uboma Local Government Area of Imo State, where the continuous voter

24 Abiodun Alade, Naira Crosses N1,000/\$ in Black Market, Daily Trust, 22 September 2023, <https://dailytrust.com/naira-crosses-n1000-in-black-market/>.

25 Steven J. Rosenstone, Economic Adversity and Voter Turnout, *American Journal of Political Science*, 26(1): 25-46, 1982.

26 Peter Sandholt Jensen & Mogens K. Justesen, Poverty and Vote Buying: Survey-based Evidence from Africa, *Electoral Studies*, 33: 220-232, 2014.

27 The Fund for Peace, Conflict Bulletin: Imo State – Patterns and Trends, January 2012 – June 2015, <https://fundforpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/conflictbulletin-imo-1508.pdf>.

28 Godfrey George, Imo Tops List of Violence-prone States – Report, Punch, 18 August 2022, <https://punchng.com/imo-tops-list-of-violence-prone-states-report/>.

29 Vivian Chime, Report: Attacks in Imo led to over 400 deaths within three years, The Cable, 23 April 2022, <https://www.thecable.ng/report-attacks-in-imo-led-to-over-400-deaths-within-three-years>.

registration was being held.³⁰ The Nigerian government has accused the outlawed Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) of being responsible for the deadly attacks, but the group has repeatedly denied the accusation.

Ahead of the Imo State governorship election, the security situation in the State has deteriorated. On 19 September 2023, gunmen attacked members of a Joint Task Force comprising soldiers, police officers, and Civil Defence Corps who were in two Hilux vans in Umualumaku community in Ehime Mbano LGA. In the aftermath of the attack, security officials suspected to be soldiers reportedly invaded the community and set fire to several houses and businesses in what was described by many as a reprisal attack; forcing many people to flee the community.³¹ On 26 September 2023, the Nigerian Air Force launched aerial attacks on suspected IPOB/ESN locations at Mother Valley Orsumughu in Nnewi South Local Government Area of Anambra State and Aku Ihube in Okigwe Local Government Area of Imo State.³² Recently, the Foundation for Partnerships Initiatives in the Niger Delta (PIND Foundation) reported that the current wave of violence in the Imo State has claimed more than 300 lives between January 2021 and June 2023. The group described the wave of violence as organized crime capable of disrupting the November 2023 governorship election in the state.³³

The government's response to the deteriorating security situation in Imo State has been twofold. In the first place, the state government has tried to boost the morale and capacity of the Nigeria Police by deploying the military to assist in maintaining law and order in the State. However, extrajudicial killings by state security forces and their inability to swiftly deal with the violent gangs have eroded public confidence in the ability to deliver the desired results. The widespread dissatisfaction with the capacity of state security services to provide public safety and security intensified pressure on the state government to intervene in the situation.

Consequently, Governor Hope Uzodinma rallied other governors of South East states and they hurriedly announced the establishment of a regional security outfit, code-named Ebubeagu, on 12 April 2021, without the enactment of enabling law to establish the security outfit. In addition to the absence of an enabling law, the Ebubeagu security outfit suffered several other shortcomings that made it difficult for it to take off as a regional outfit.

30 Chinonso Alozie, Hoodlums Kill INEC Official in Imo, say no Election will hold in 2023, Vanguard, 14 April 2022, <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2022/04/hoodlums-kill-inec-official-in-imo-say-no-election-will-hold-in-2023/>.

31 Lawrence Njoku, Renewed insecurity, killings threaten guber poll in Imo, The Guardian, 27 September 2023, <https://guardian.ng/politics/renewed-insecurity-killings-threaten-guber-poll-in-imo/>.

32 Titus Eleweke, Air Force Bombs IPOB Hideouts in Anambra, Imo, Daily Trust, 27 September 2023, <https://dailytrust.com/air-force-bombs-ipob-hideouts-in-anambra-imo/>.

33 The Southern Examiner, PIND Foundation Calls Undying Violence In Imo Organised Crime, 8 September 2023, <https://thesouthernexaminer.com/pind-foundation-calls-undying-violence-in-imo-organised-crime-p10603-268.htm>.

These include a lack of a standard operational structure and a sustainable funding mechanism as well as an unequal commitment to the regional security arrangement by governors of South East states.³⁴

Under immense pressure to address insecurity in Imo State, Governor Hope Uzodinma went ahead to establish the Ebubeagu Security Network, as a community vigilante group in the State. But the activities of the outfit appear to have instead worsened the insecurity in the state. The outfit has been accused of extra-judicial killings, torture and rights abuses.³⁵ In particular, there is a widespread allegation that the state government uses the outfit as a tool to harass and eliminate perceived opponents of the government.³⁶

There are reports of serious mobilization of force ahead of the Imo State governorship election by state security forces, pro-government militia and other armed groups. For instance, in August 2023, the INEC's Resident Electoral Commissioner (REC) in Imo State, Sylvia Agu, disclosed that the military is planning to deploy 2,300 soldiers from three battalions of the Nigerian army for the 11 November governorship election in the state.³⁷ This is in addition to the number of personnel that would be mobilized by the Nigerian Police as part of the inter-agency security deployment for the election. Under the current security situation in Imo State, it is hard to see how the voters can conveniently access the polling units and freely cast their votes without facing serious risks. There have been reports that a huge number of prospective ad hoc staff have declined to participate in the forthcoming election due to security concerns.³⁸ Overall, widespread insecurity and the risk of electoral violence are major potential impediments to the smooth conduct of the Imo State governorship election. The grave security situation in the State has the potential to adversely affect voter turnout and provide an opportunity for further violence and suppression of votes.

34 At the end of the December 2021 deadline set by the governments for the full operation of the outfit in the five states, only Ebonyi and Imo States have successfully launched the outfit. The Anambra State government has continued to sponsor the Anambra Vigilante Services, while the Abia State government is unrelenting in its support of the Abia Vigilante Services. In Enugu State, the government abandoned the Ebubeagu idea and established what it called the Forest Guard, specifically, to mitigate the violent activities of Fulani herdsmen.

35 For instance, Amnesty International Nigeria, like many other rights groups, has repeatedly accused Ebubeagu of extra-judicial killings under the pretext of attacking IPOB members in the state and region.

36 Governor has repeatedly attributed the insecurity in the state to the political opposition in the State. In a 2021 interview on Channels Television, the governor said the state was about unearthing those behind the insecurity in Imo – see, Akinola Ajibola, *Those Behind Violence In Imo Will Be Exposed Soon, Says Uzodinma*, Channels Television, 5 May 2021, <https://www.channelstv.com/2021/05/05/those-behind-violence-in-imo-will-be-exposed-soon-says-uzodinma/>.

37 Chidi Nkwopara, *2,300 soldiers set for November poll — Imo REC*, Vanguard, 18 August 2023, <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2023/08/2300-soldiers-for-poll-imo-rec/>.

38 Chidi Nkwopara, *2,300 soldiers set for November poll — Imo REC*, Op. Cit.



PREPARATIONS FOR THE IMO STATE GOVERNORSHIP ELECTION

Preparations for the 2023 Imo State governorship election commenced in October 2022 following the release of the Timetable and Schedule of Activities for the election by INEC. In the Timetable and Schedule of Activities for the election, INEC indicated that the Imo State governorship election would be held on 11 November 2023 in line with Sections 178(1) and (2) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 which mandates the Commission to conduct elections not earlier than 150 days and not later than 30 days before the expiration of the term of the last holder of the office. The tenure of the incumbent Governor of Imo State ends on 14 January 2024. The Timetable and Schedule of Activities for the election further indicated that the statutory Notice of Election will be published on 14 November 2022, in fulfilment of the requirement of Section 28(1) of the Electoral Act 2022 which mandates the Commission to publish the Notice of Election not later than 360 days before the date fixed for the elections. Party primaries were scheduled to hold from 27 March to 17 April 2023, while the online portal for the submission of nomination forms (EC9 and EC9B) by political parties was scheduled to open at 9.00 am on 24 April 2023 and close at 6.00 pm on 5 May 2023. The final list of candidates was scheduled to be published on 9 June 2023, while the campaign by political parties was scheduled to commence on 14 June 2023 and end at midnight on 9 November 2023. INEC has diligently followed these timelines and implemented the various electoral activities without any major hitch.

The release of the Timetable and Schedule of Activities for the Imo State governorship election by INEC provided the framework for the commencement of election preparations by various political parties. For instance, in February 2023, the All Progressives Party (APC) released a Schedule of Activities and Timetable for the Imo State governorship election which indicated that the party would conduct its primary election on 10 April 2023. According to the Schedule, the sale of nomination forms was planned to open on 15 February and close on 22 February 2023. The party fixed the cost of the Expression of Interest and Nomination Form at 50 million naira.

Although the primaries of most political parties were generally hitch-free, the exercise was characterized, as usual, by intrigues, controversies and political manoeuvres. In the People's Democratic Party (PDP), for example, the National Secretary of the Party, Samuel Anyanwu was elected unopposed as the party's candidate after his main rival, Emeka Ihedioha, withdrew from the race citing manipulation of the process by the leadership of the party. Supporters of Emeka Ihedioha were deeply appalled that the party leadership allowed Anyanwu, a sitting National Secretary of the Party, to supervise the primaries for which he is a contestant. "It is shocking that as the National Secretary, Senator Anyanwu was himself "screened" as an aspirant and later on signed the clearance certificate of the "successful" aspirants including himself. "Ihedioha, we understand, complained to political leaders about this grave violation of this elementary principle of natural justice that a man should not be a judge in his own cause, to no avail. Indeed, allowing Sen. Anyanwu to supervise his election primaries cannot stand legal or moral scrutiny by any fair-minded person."³⁹

At the end of the period allowed for the nomination of candidates, 17 political parties submitted candidates to INEC. Notably, none of the candidates participating in the election is female, indicating that the 11 November poll is exclusively contested by male candidates. Furthermore, among the 17 male candidates, only two selected female running mates - Hope Uzodinma of the APC and Steve Nwoga of the Action Democratic Party (ADP). Additionally, it is worth noting that among the 17 candidates, one is a person living with disability (PWD) – Athan Achonu of the Labour Party (LP). The youngest candidate in the race is 35-year-old Isaac Iwuanyanwu of the Boot Party (BP), while Hope Uzodinma and Athan Achonu of the APC and LP, respectively, are the oldest candidates in the race - they are both 64 years old. Detailed information about the candidates presented by the various political parties, including name, position, age, gender, qualification and disability status, is provided in the table below.

39 Chibuzo Ukaibe, Why Ihedioha Withdrew From PDP Imo Gov'ship Primaries – Group, Leadership, <https://leadership.ng/why-ihedioha-withdrew-from-pdp-imo-govship-primaries-group/>.











FINAL LIST OF CANDIDATES

2023 Governorship Election

Imo State
11th November, 2023


	POSITION	CANDIDATE	PWD	AGE	GENDER	QUAL.
1	GOVERNOR	OKERE JOHNJUDE UCHENNA	X	49	M	WAEC NATIONAL DIPLOMA
	DEPUTY GOVERNOR	IBE KENECHUKWU	X	52	M	WAEC
2	GOVERNOR	OGUNWE LINCOLN KEONYEMERE JACK	X	60	M	F.L.S.C WAEC B.ENG
	DEPUTY GOVERNOR	UKENNA MARCEL ONUOHA	X	62	M	FSLC WAEC LLB (HONS), BL (HONS)
3	GOVERNOR	AWULONU EMMANUEL IFEANYI	X	54	M	FSLC GCE LL.B
	DEPUTY GOVERNOR	KORIE MICHAEL OBILOR	X	44	M	FSLC WAEC LL.B
4	GOVERNOR	OKOROMA JAMES OTUMBADI	X	56	M	FSLC WAEC B.A. ED, MA, PHD
	DEPUTY GOVERNOR	UCHE CHIGOZIE EDWIN	X	43	M	FSLC GCE BSC
5	GOVERNOR	NWOGA ONYEKACHI STEVE	X	54	M	FSLC WAEC MB., BS
	DEPUTY GOVERNOR	OTTIH VIVIAN OGECHI	X	42	F	FSLC SSCE LLB, BL, BSC
6	GOVERNOR	UZODIMMA ODIDIKA GOODHOPE	X	64	M	OZUM PRIMARY SCH. (FSLC) MGBIDI SEC. SCH. (WASC)
	DEPUTY GOVERNOR	EKOMARU CHINYERE IHUOMA	X	56	F	FSLC GCE NCE
7	GOVERNOR	EJIOGU ANTHONY	X	49	M	FSLC. FIRST DEGREE, MASTERS DEGREE
	DEPUTY GOVERNOR	UCHE ANSELEM EJIKE	X	66	M	FSLC. GENERAL CERTIFICATE OF EDUCATION B.Sc. HSL
8	GOVERNOR	EDOZIEM CLINTON CHIBUIKE	X	40	M	FSCL NECO B. Sc
	DEPUTY GOVERNOR	NZEOGU JOHN UCHECHUKWU	X	35	M	WASSCE
9	GOVERNOR	ACHILIKE ANDERSON OBIEZE	X	41	M	FSLC WAEC LL.B
	DEPUTY GOVERNOR	IKEAGWUONU OBINNA UCHENNA	X	42	M	WAEC B.ENG
10	GOVERNOR	IWUANYANWU ISAAC	X	35	M	FSLC SSCE
	DEPUTY GOVERNOR	ALIGEKWE EUGENE ALAOMA	X	64	M	FSLC WAEC BACHELOR
11	GOVERNOR	ACHONU NNEJI	OTHERS	64	M	FSLC WASC
	DEPUTY GOVERNOR	NWULU-ONYEULO ANTHONY	X	44	M	FSLC WAEC
12	GOVERNOR	ODUNZEH UCHE BEN	X	42	M	AFFIDAVIT FOR LOSS OF FSLC CERT, WAEC
	DEPUTY GOVERNOR	SAMUEL GODSTIME CHUKWUBUIKEM	X	35	M	FSLC WAEC HND

Report of Pre-Election Assessment of the 2023 Imo State Governorship Election

	POSITION	CANDIDATE	PWD	AGE	GENDER	QUAL.
13	 GOVERNOR	OKWARA LAWRENCE COLE	X	46	M	WEST AFRICAN SCHOOL CERTIFICATE DOCTOR OF EMPLOYMENT
	 DEPUTY GOVERNOR	NWACHUKWU CHIKWENDU JOSEPH	X	56	M	FIRST SCHOOL LEAVING CERTIFICATE WEST AFRICAN SCHOOL CERTIFICATE
14	 GOVERNOR	ANYANWU SAMUEL NNAEMEKA	X	57	M	FSLC WASC B.SC
	 DEPUTY GOVERNOR	ONYERERI CHUKWUDI VICTOR JONES	X	55	M	FSLC GCE B.SC
15	 GOVERNOR	EKWEBELEM OBINNA BRIGHT	X	43	M	FLSC WAEC B.S.C INDUSTRIAL CHEMISTRY
	 DEPUTY GOVERNOR	NLEM UCHENNA CYRIL	X	47	M	PRIMARY SCHOOL WAEC B.S.C
16	 GOVERNOR	OPARA KEMDI CHINO	X	63	M	WAEC - SECONDARY SCHOOL CERTIFICATE B.Sc. MBA B.Sc. DOCTORATE
	 DEPUTY GOVERNOR	OKEREKE LEO. NWAFOR	X	78	M	FULL TECHNOLOGICAL CERTIFICATE B.Sc. M.Sc
17	 GOVERNOR	ANDY CHIBUIKE	X	40	M	WAEC
	 DEPUTY GOVERNOR	NWIGWE PASCHAL UGONNA	X	36	M	SSCE

 **17**
Political
Parties

 **17**
Governorship
Candidates

 **17**
Male
Candidates

 **0**
Female
Candidates

 **1**
PWD

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In preparation for the Imo State governorship election, INEC did not resume the Continuous Voters Registration (CVR) exercise suspended on 5 February 2023 ahead of the 2023 general election. However, the Commission provided an opportunity for registered voters to collect their Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs) which is a prerequisite for voting. In September 2023, the Commission approved the resumption of the collection of Permanent Voters' Cards (PVCs) for registered voters who could not collect their PVCs before the suspension of the exercise in February 2023. The collection of PVCs commenced on 11 September and closed on 9 October 2023. The exercise took place on weekdays (Monday – Friday) from 9.00 am to 3.00 pm. The INEC Local Government Area offices served as the PVC collection centres while the Commission created other designated centres in areas with a large number of uncollected PVCs. While reports indicate that there were more than 134,000 uncollected PVCs in Imo State before the commencement of the exercise, the Commission is yet to release the final figures of PVCs collected in the State after the exercise.⁴⁰ Meanwhile, on 12 October 2023, INEC presented soft copies of the complete register of voters for the State to the political parties participating in the elections as required by law. The Register showed that there are 2,419,922 registered voters in Imo State.⁴¹

Regarding the management of election technology, INEC has expressed commitment to deepen the deployment of technology for voter accreditation and result management. To this end, the Commission conducted a mock accreditation of voters in Imo State on 14 October 2023 to ascertain the level of the functionality of the BVAS and test-run upload of Polling Unit results to the INEC Results Viewing (IReV) portal. The Commission hopes that lessons learnt from the exercise will be taken into consideration to ensure the seamless deployment of both the BVAS and IReV on Election Day. However, observers are worried that such exercises in the past have not produced the expected results. Ahead of the 2023 general election, the Commission conducted a pilot test of the BVAS, of which the outcome was positive. However, the technical glitches experienced in the use of the device were a major pitfall that marred the outcome of the election. The failure of election technology during the 2023 general election as well as the Presidential Election Tribunal ruling which seem to have undermined the legal obligation of INEC to deploy technology in elections have eroded public confidence in the use of technology in elections. Against the backdrop of the 2023 general election, the people of Imo State are going into the November 11 polls with low expectations that technology will help eliminate the issues that have dented the credibility of elections in the country.

40 Gift Habib et.al., INEC Laments as 241,715 Bayelsa, Kogi, Imo Voters Shun PVCs, Punch, 28 September 2023, <https://punchng.com/inec-laments-as-241715-bayelsa-kogi-imo-voters-shun-pvcs/>.

41 Tony Ezimakor, 5.41m Registered Voters for Bayelsa, Kogi, Imo Guber Polls — INEC, Independent, 11 October 2023, <https://independent.ng/5-41m-registered-voters-for-bayelsa-kogi-imo-guber-polls-inec/>.



RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)

INEC should take convincing measures to improve public confidence in the credibility of the electoral process by:

- i. Improving adherence of its officials to laid down electoral laws, regulations, guidelines, processes and procedures on the basis of the lessons learned from past elections, especially the 2023 general election.
- ii. Ensuring early and adequate training of all categories of ad hoc staff, especially on election technology and results management processes.
- iii. Holding confidence-building dialogues and engagements with different sections of the public in Imo State to promote openness and transparency of the electoral process.
- iv. Leveraging its relationship with the security agencies through the platform of the Inter-Agency Committee on Election Security (ICCES) to be able to track electoral violence and identify the perpetrators of violence with the aim of arresting and prosecuting them.
- v. Strengthening its oversight of the behaviour of political parties in the lead-up to and during elections – strictly enforcing political party regulations and guidelines and code of conduct for political parties.
- vi. Facilitating high-level peace dialogue that would bring together prominent citizens of the State across the three senatorial districts to promote a shared understanding of the need for peaceful elections, including promoting a Peace Accord.

2. Political Parties and Candidates

- i. Political parties and their candidates should conduct themselves in an orderly and peaceful manner, and rein in their supporters with regard to democratic conduct including non-violent conduct and adherence to electoral rules.

3. Security Agencies

The security agencies should:

- i. Improve security arrangements by identifying and sanctioning individuals and groups using inflammatory rhetoric, inciting violence or plotting to perpetrate it.
- ii. Incorporate within the security arrangement for the Imo State governorship election, the need to block the inflow of armed non-state actors from neighbouring states and to curb the activities of the ones within the State.
- iii. Strengthen inter-agency cooperation and provide election security in a non-partisan and wholesome manner.
- iv. Work in synergy with INEC to ensure adequate and even deployment of security personnel across polling units and other electoral sites as well as between urban and rural areas.

4. Civil Society Organizations

Civil society organizations should:

- i. Work with INEC and other relevant agencies to strengthen civic and voter education across the state to improve voter awareness about peaceful conduct during elections, the need to eschew vote buying and selling, and the civic importance of voting and mandate protection.
- ii. Ensure adequate mobilization of election observers by improving their training and ensuring balanced deployment across the State.
- iii. Work closely with the Police Service Commission to monitor the conduct of security personnel during the election.

Appendices



Appendix 1:**Local Government Areas, their Headquarters and Major Communities**

S/N	Local Government Areas	LGA Headquarters	Major Communities
1	Aboh-Mbaise	Aboh	Aboh, Nguru-Nweke, Nguru-Ahiato
2	Ahiazu-Mbaise	Afor Oru	Afor Oru, Oru-Ahiara, Ogbe, Lude/Nnara-Mbia, Obodo-Ahiara, Ekwere-Azu, Obohia, Umuokirika, Obodo-Ujichi, Ogwuama/Amuzi, Akobor, Nkpam
3	Ehime Mbano	Umuezeala	Umezeala, Agbaja, Umueze, Umukobia, Nneoto
4	Ezinihitte Mbaise	Itu	Itu, Amumara, Akpodim, Azuzuahia-Eziudo, Chokoneze, Owagia-Eziudo, Ife, Obizi, kpofe, Onicha, Ihitte, Akp dim, and Udo
5	Ideato North	Urualla	Akpullu, Umualaoma, Osina, Isiokpo, Akokwa, Uzii
6	Ideato South	Dikenafai	Ntueke, Umuchima, Ubiohia, Umuobom, Umueshi, Umuakam/Umuago
7	Ihitte Uboma	Isinweke	Amakoha, Umuezegwu, Ato-werem, Abuke, Umuoma, Amainyi, Awuchinumo, Umuihi, Ezimba & Onichi-Uboma
8	Ikeduru	Iho	Abasu, Akabo, Amaimo, Amakohia, Amatta, Atta, Avuvu, Ezima, and Owu-binubi
9	Isiala Mbano	Umuelemai	Umuduru, Osu-Owerre, Asu-ama, Umosu, Amausari, Amaraku, Obollo, Umunkwo, Ogbor, Uguri, Ibeme, and Oka
10	Isu	Umundugba	Umunu-Ugba, Amadugba, Ekwe, Amurie-Amanze, Isunjaba, Uburu Ekwe and Oboro-Amurie
11	Mbaitolu	Nworieubi	Eziama Obiato, Umunoha, Orodo, Afara, and Ogwa
12	Ngor Okpala	Umuneke Ngor	Nguru, Umuowa, Umukabia Ngor, Ntu, Alulu, Oburu, Obokwe, Alatia
13	Njaba	Nnenasa	Umuaka, Okwudor, Amucha and Attah
14	Nkwerre	Nkwerre Town	Nkwerre, Owerre-Nkwoji, Eziama Obaire, Amaokpara, Umudi, Umuezeanoruo, Umuwala
15	Nwangele	Amaigbo	Abbe, Isu, Umuozu and Abajah
16	Obowo	Otoko	Avutu, Ehume, Umuariam/Achara, Alike Obowo, Amuzi-Obowo, Ikwuato, Umunachi, Umuokeh, Umuosochie and Umuungwa
17	Oguta	Oguta	Oguta, Agwa, Orsu Obodo, Egwe, Nnebukwu, Egbuoma, Awa, Akabor, Mgbelle, Ezi Orsu, Nkwesi, and Izombe
18	Ohaji-Egbema	Mmahu-Egbema	Nwari-Agwa, Egbema, Ohoba, Assa, Obile, Umuokanne, Awara-Ikwerede, Mgbirichi, Umuopu
19	Okigwe	Okigwe Town	Otanzu, Amuro, Umulolo, Ihube, and Otan-Chara
20	Onuimo	Okwe	Okwe, Ofeahia, Umuanameze, Okwelle and Umucheke

Report of Pre-Election Assessment of the 2023 Imo State Governorship Election

S/N	Local Government Areas	LGA Headquarters	Major Communities
21	Orlu	Orlu	Umuzike, Umuowa, Umutanze, Umuna, Umudioka, Okporo, Orlu, Ogberuru, Obibi-Och, Mgbée, Ihitte-Owerre, Ihioma, Ebe, Eziachi, Amaike
22	Orsu	Awo-Idemili	Amaruru, Assa-Ubirielem, Awo-idemili, Ebenator, Eziawa, Ihitte-Nasa, Ihitte-Ukwu, Umuhu-Okaiba
23	Oru East	Omuma	Akatta, Akuma/Amagu, Amiri, Ofekatai, Omuma, Eziawo, and Awo - Omama
24	Oru West	Mgbidi	Amaofuo, Eleh, Aji, Mgbidi, Ibi Asoebe, Nempi Otulu, Ohakpu, Ubulu and Ozara
25	Owerri Municipal	Owerri Town	Owerri Urban and New Owerri
26	Owerri North	Orie Uratta	Egbu, Ulakwo, Emekuku, Emii, Agbala, Naze, Awaka, Azaraubo, Amakohia Uratta, Ezimba and Orji
27	Owerri West	Umuguma	Avu, Nekede, Ihiagwa, Obinze, Umunwoha, Okukuv (Obogwu), Okolochi, Eziobodo and Oforola

Appendix 2:

State Constituencies and their Composition

S/N	Name of State Constituency	State Constituency Code	Composition of State Constituency
1	Aboh Mbaise	SC/394/IM	Enyigogu, Nguru Ahiato, Nguru Nwenkwo, Nguru Nweke, Mburu, Uvuru I, Uvuru II, Lorji, Amuzu, Umuhu, Lagwa, Ibeku
2	Ahiazu Mbaise	SC/395/IM	Ogbe, Otulu/Aguneze, Oru Na Lude, Nnarambia, Okirika Nwenkwo, Amuzi/Ihenworie, Okirika Neke, Obohia/Ekwereazu, Mpam, Oparandim, Umunomo/Umuchieze, Ogbor/Umueze
3	Ehime Mbano	SC/396/IM	Agbaja, Umukabia, Nsu'a' Ikee, Nsu'b' Ihitte, Nzerem/Ikpem, Umualumaku/Umuihim, Umunakanu, Umunakamo, Umezeala, Umueze I, Umueze Ii/Umueleke
4	Ezinihitte	SC/397/IM	Amumara, Itu, Okpofe/Ezeagbogu, Onicha I, Onicha II, Onicha III, Onicha IV, Eziudo, Udo-Na-Obizi, Ihitte, Oboama/Umunama, Chokoneze/Akpodime/Ifé
5	Ideato North	SC/398/IM	Akpulu, Isiopo, Umuokwara/Umue, Zeaga, Akwu/Owerre, Umuopia/Umukegwu, Ndiheh Asondizuogu, Izuigu I, Izuogu II, Ndimoko, Ibodoukwu, Osina, Uzi/Umua/Aoma, Ezemazu/Ozuomee, Ozuakoki/Umuago
6	Ideato South	SC/399/IM	Amanator/Umueshi, Dikenafai, Isiekensi I, Isiekensi II, Ntueke, Ugbelle, Ogboko I, Ogboko II, Umuakam/Umuago, Umuchima, Umuma/Siaku, Umuobom
7	Ihite/Uboma	SC/400/IM	Abueke, Amakohia, Amainyi, Atoneerim, Awuchinumo, Dimneze, Ikpere, Jere, Okata, Umuezeagwu, Umuhi
8	Ikeduru	SC/401/IM	Akabo, Amatta, Iho, Inyishi/Umudim, Amaima, Amakohia, Avuvu, Atta I, Atta II, Ugirike/Okwu/Eziana, Ngugo/Ikembara, Uzoagba
9	Isiala Mbano	SC/402/IM	Amaraku, Umunkwo, Ogbor, Ibeme, Osu-Owerre I, Osu-Owerre II, Osuama/Anara, Ugiri/Oka, Amauzai, Obollo, Umuoze, Osu-Achara
10	Isu	SC/403/IM	Amandugba I, Amandugba II, Umundugba I, Umundugba II, Amurie Omanze I, Amurie Omanze II, Ekwe I, Ekwe II, Isu-Njaba I, Isu-Njabba II, Isu-Njabba III
11	Mbaitoli	SC/404/IM	Afara/Eziana, Ogbaku, Umunoha/Azara, Ubomiri, Ifakala, Ogwa I, Ogwa II, Orodo 'A', Orodo 'B', Umunnoha/Mbieri/Umuawau, Amaike Mbieri, Ezinihitte Mbieri
12	Ngor Okpala	SC/405/IM	Amala/Alulu/Oburu, Obokwe/Ntu, Elelem/Obike, Ozuzu, Eziana/Okpala, Imerienwe, Nguru/Umuowa, Ngor/Ihitte/Umukabia, Ohekelem Nnorie, Umuhu, Obiagwu, Logara/Umuohiagu
13	Njaba	SC/406/IM	Atta I, Atta II, Atta III, Amucha I, Amucha II, Nkume, Okwudor, Umuaka I, Umuaka II, Umuaka III, Umuaka IV

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S/N	Name of State Constituency	State Constituency Code	Composition of State Constituency
14	Nwangele	SC/407/IM	Onusa, Nnanano, Umukor, Umunobo/Nkwerre IV, Nkwerre Urban V, Owerre Nkworji I, Owerre Nkworji II, Umudim/Umuwala, Amaokpara, Eziana Obaire
15	Nkwerre	SC/408/IM	Amano/Umudurumba/Amigbo I, Umuanaisi/Amaigbo IV, Umuanu/Amaigbo II, Amaju/Amaigbo III, Ezeobolo/Ofeahia/Amaigbo V, Abba, Umuozu, Kara-Na-Orlu, Dim-Na-Nume, Abamjah I, Abajah II
16	Obowo	SC/409/IM	Alike, Amanze/Umungwa, Amuzi, Avutu, Ehume, Odenkume/Umuosoché, Okenalogho, Owuohia, Umuariam/Achara, Umunachi
17	Oguta	SC/410/IM	Akwai I, Egwe/Egbuoma, Izombe, Mbala/Uba, Ndeulokwu/Umuowerre, Obuji/Aro, Oguta 'A', Oguta 'B', Oru, Osseemotor/Enuigbo, Uwaorie
18	Ohaji/Egbema	SC/411/IM	Assa/Obile, Awara/Ikwerede, Egbma 'A', Egbema 'B', Egbema 'C', Egbema 'D', Egbema 'E', Ekwuato, Obititi/Mgbishi, Ohoba, Umuagwo, Umuapu
19	Okigwe	SC/412/IM	Okigwe Urban I, Okigwe Urban II, Ihube, Aku, Ogi, Ezinachi, Umualumoke, Amuro, Ndimoko/Ofeimo/Umuwaibu, Umulolo, Agbobu
20	Onuimo	SC/413/IM	Eziana, Umucheke, Owerre-Okwe, Ezelu, Ofeahia/Umuanameze, Aboh/Okohia, Ozimo/Umuneeze, Umuna, Okwelle I, Okwelle II
21	Orlu	SC/414/IM	Ohafor/Ofporo/Umutanze, Ohaeke/Okporo, Ebenese/Umueze/Nnachi, Ihioma, Okwuabala Ihioma, Umuna, Umudioka, Ihitte Owerre, Amaife/Umuowa, Eziachi/Amaike, Ogberuru/Obibi, Orlu/Mgbee/Govt. Station
22	Orsu	SC/415/IM	Umuhu Okabia, Ebenator, Okwufuruaku, Okwuamaraihe I, Okwuaramaihe II, Okwuetiti, Orsu Ihiteukwa, Ihitenansa, Assah Ubiñielem, Eziawa, Amaruru
23	Oru East	SC/416/IM	Awo-Omamma I, Awo-Omamma II, Awo-Omamma III, Awo-Omamma IV, Amiri I, Amiri II, Akuma, Amagu, Akatta, Omuma
24	Oru West	SC/417/IM	Nempi/Eleh, Otulu, Aji, Ibiase Egbe, Amatuo, Ohakpu, Ozara, Ubulu, Mgbidi I, Mgbidi II
25	Owerri Municipal	SC/418/IM	Aladinma I, Aladinma II, Ikenegbu I, Ikenegbu II, Azuzi I, Azuzi II, Azuzi III, Azuzi IV, GRA, New Owerri I, New Owerri II
26	Owerri North	SC/419/IM	Awaka/Ihitte-Ogada, Naze, Egbu, Emii, Emekuku I, Emekuku II, Orji, Ihitte-Uratta I, Obibi-Uratta II, Obube/Agbala/Ulakwo, Obibi/Ezena
27	Owerri West	SC/420/IM	Avu/Oforola, Umuguma, Okuku, Emeabiam/Okolochi, Eziobodo, Ihiagwa, Nekede, Obinze, Amakohia-Ubi/Ndegwu/Ohi, Irete/Orogwe

Appendix 3: Federal Constituencies and their Composition

S/N	Name of Federal Constituency	Federal Constituency Code	Composition of Federal Constituency
1	Ehime Mbano/Ihite-Uboma/ Obowo	FC/129/IM	The entire Geographical Area of Ehime Mbano/Ihite-Uboma/Obowo L.G.As
2	Isiala Mbano/Okigwe/Onuimo	FC/130/IM	The entire Geographical Area of Isiala Mbano/Okigwe/Onuimo L.G.As
3	Ideato North/Ideato South	FC/131/IM	The entire Geographical Area of Ideato North/ Ideato South L.G.As
4	Isu/Njaba/Nkwerre/Nwangele	FC/132/IM	The entire Geographical Area of Isu/Njaba/Nkwerre/Nwagele L.G.As
5	Oguta/Ohaji-Egbema/Oru West	FC/133/IM	The entire Geographical Area of Oguta/Ohaji-Egbema/Oru West L.G.s
6	Oru East/Orsu/Orlu	FC/134/IM	The entire Geographical Area of Oru East/Orsu/Orlu L.G.As
7	Aboh Mbaise/Ngor Okpala	FC/135/IM	The entire Geographical Area of Aboh Mbaise/Ngor Okpala L.G.As
8	Ahiazu Mbaise/Ezinihitte	FC/136/IM	The entire Geographical Area of Ahiazu Mbaise/Ezinihitte L.G.As
9	Ikeduru/Mbaitoli	FC/137/IM	The entire Geographical Area of Ikeduru/Mbaitoli L.G.As
10	Owerri Municipal/Owerri North/Owerri West	FC/138/IM	The entire Geographical Area of Owerri Municipal/Owerri North/Owerri West L.G.As

Appendix 4:
Senatorial Districts and their Composition

S/N	Name of Senatorial District	Senatorial District Code	Composition (LGAs)
1	Imo East	SD/046/IM	Aboh Mbaise, Ahiazu Mbaise, Ezinihitte, Ikeduru, Mbaitoli, Ngor Okpala, Owerri Municipal, Owerri North, Owerri West
2	Imo West	SD/047/IM	Ideato North, Ideato South, Isu, Njaba, Nkwere, Nwangele, Oguta, Ohaji/Egbema, Orlu, Orsu, Oru West, Oru East
3	Imo North	SD/048/IM	Ehime Mbano, Ihite/Uboma, Isiala Mbano, Obowo, Okigwe, Onuimo

Appendix 5:**Imo State Electoral Delimitation Data**

S/N	LGA	PU	RA	RAC	SUPER RAC	No of Registered Voters	No. of Collected PVCs as of 2023 General Election
1	Aboh Mbaise	212	12	0	3	111,207	107,966
2	Ahiazu Mbaise	185	12	0	5	98,887	93,135
3	Ehime Mbano	154	11	0	4	79,212	74,772
4	Ezinihitte Mbaise	175	12	0	4	91,595	83,643
5	Ideato North	196	14	0	4	86,905	82,298
6	Ideato South	152	13	0	4	79,310	77,794
7	Ihitte Uboma	117	10	0	4	52,108	50,225
8	Ikeduru	227	12	5	3	119,987	112,706
9	Isiala Mbano	196	12	0	3	99,149	92,917
10	Isu	123	11	0	3	55,203	53,158
11	Mbaitoli	287	12	0	6	153,283	150,012
12	Ngor Okpala	193	11	0	4	102,048	90,639
13	Njaba	134	11	0	3	64,068	57,035
14	Nkwerre	131	10	0	5	59,899	57,668
15	Nwangele	113	11	0	5	55,808	51,756
16	Obowo	128	10	0	4	68,690	62,157
17	Oguta	184	11	0	3	95,287	95,095
18	Ohaji Egbema	210	12	0	3	107,456	99,107
19	Okigwe	154	11	0	4	76,250	72,257
20	Onuimo	97	10	0	5	36,548	35,446
21	Orlu	209	13	0	4	103,223	101,732
22	Orsu	137	11	0	4	57,721	48,946
23	Oru East	171	10	0	5	85,902	83,500
24	Oru West	147	10	0	3	71,183	69,813
25	Owerri Municipal	239	11	0	5	134,194	117,854
26	Owerri North	236	12	0	3	134,557	123,766
27	Owerri West	251	10	0	4	140,242	134,942
	Total	4758	305	5	107	2,419,922	2,280,339

ABOUT

PLAC hosts the secretariat of the Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room and is a member of its steering committee. The Situation Room provides a co-ordinating platform for civil society engagement on governance issues. It is also a platform for information sharing among civil society groups working on elections and topical national issues. It intervenes in the electoral process by promoting collaboration, proactive advocacy and rapid response to crisis in the electoral process. The Situation Room provides a forum of advance planning, scenario building, evidence based analysis, constructive engagement with various stakeholders in the electoral process and observation of elections.

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