THE ELECTORAL HUB



POLITICAL CONTEXT ANALYSIS:

2023 KOGI STATE GOVERNORSHIP ELECTION

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About The Electoral Hub

The Electoral Hub, an affiliate of the Initiative for Research, Innovation and Advocacy in Development (IRIAD), is a knowledge and advocacy hub which seeks to provide solutions to improve the credibility and integrity of the electoral process. It is committed to promoting electoral knowledge, integrity, and accountability in Nigeria. Our aim is to strengthen electoral governance and accountability in Nigeria through the provision of critical and contextualized process. We believe that the integrity of the electoral process is crucial in improving electoral governance and sustaining democracy in Nigeria. We also believe in solutions rooted in the principles of justice and equity.

Our core values are knowledge-exchange, inclusion, justice, equity, transparency and accountability.

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Acronyms

A	Accord Party
AAC	African Action Congress
ADC	African Democratic Congress
ADP	Action Democratic Party
APC	All Progressives Congress
APGA	All Progressive Grand Alliance
APM	Allied Peoples Movement
APP	Action People Party
BVAS	Bi-Modal Voter Accreditation System
CDD	Centre for Democracy and Development
CHRCR	Conscience for Human Rights and Conflict Resolution
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
CVR	Continuous Voter Registration
DMO	Debt Management Office
FC	Federal Constituency
FCT	Federal Capital Territory
KONGONET	Kogi NGOs Network
ICCES	Inter-Agency Consultative Committee on Election Security
INEC	Independent National Electoral Commission
IPC	International Press Centre
IRIAD	Initiative for Research, Innovation, and Advocacy in Development
LGA	Local Government Area
LP	Labour Party
NGP	National Gender Policy
NiMet	Nigerian Meteorological Agency
NTA	Nigerian Television Authority
NNPP	New Nigeria Peoples Party
NRM	National Rescue Movement
PEPT	Presidential Election Petition Tribunal
PCA	Political Context Analysis
PIBCID	Participation Initiative for Behavioural Change in Development
PDP	Peoples Democratic Party
PRP	Peoples Redemption Party
PU	Polling Unit
PVCs	Permanent Voter Cards
PWDs	Persons with Disabilities
RA	Registration Area
SC	State Constituency
SCR	Smart Card Readers
SD	Senatorial District
SDP	Social Democratic Party

TEH	The Electoral Hub
WFD	Westminster Foundation for Democracy
WIPF	Women in Politics Forum
YPP	Young Progressives Party
ZLP	Zenith Labour Party

Executive Summary

Background

The upcoming Kogi Governorship election on November 11, 2023 follows the 2023 general election in Nigeria, presenting an opportunity for applying lessons learned and enhancing electoral governance. Noteworthy is the use of technological innovations by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), such as the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) and the INEC Result Viewing (IReV) Portal, along with the implementation of the Electoral Act, 2022. The election's outcome is crucial for restoring public trust in INEC after challenges in the 2023 general election. The election is to be held amidst post-election grievances, economic instability, and societal concerns. This pre-election analysis aims to provide stakeholders with a comprehensive understanding of the institutional, legal, and sociopolitical factors influencing the Kogi Governorship election, including key players and interest groups, threats to credibility, and measures to safeguard the process.

Constitution and Legal Framework

The legal foundation for Nigeria's electoral processes includes the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended), the Electoral Act of 2022, and INEC's Regulations and Guidelines for the Conduct of Elections, 2022. The forthcoming Kogi State governorship election will adhere to these legislative frameworks. INEC, guided by Section 148 and Section 149 of the Electoral Act, 2022, prioritizes its Regulations and Guidelines, asserting its precedence over previous regulations until revised or updated. INEC's COVID-19 policy is still in force, but implementation could be a challenge as was the case in the general election. The Code of Conduct and Rules of Engagement for Security Personnel on Electoral Duty outlines guidelines for ensuring a peaceful election, covering issues such as operational procedures, use of force, and conduct during elections amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Kogi State Electoral Background

Kogi State has 21 Local Government Areas (LGAs), three senatorial districts, and nine federal constituencies. There are 1,932,654 registered voters, and due to INEC's expansion, the polling units now total 3,508. The state's electoral officials include three Senators and nine members of the House of Representatives, along with 25 members of the State House of Assembly. The current Governor, Yahaya Adoza Bello, assumed office in 2015. The election process adheres to constitutional requirements, as candidates must be Nigerian citizens by birth, aged at least 35, affiliated with a political party, and educated to at least the School Certificate level. The election outcome relies on a simple

majority system, necessitating a winner with the highest votes and at least 25% in two-thirds of the state's LGAs. In the absence of such a majority, a run-off election is held between the top two candidates.

Kogi State Geography

Kogi State which covers 29,833 square kilometers, is located in Nigeria's North-central region and is known as the confluence state due to the convergence of the Niger and Benue Rivers in its capital, Lokoja. Established on August 27, 1991, Lokoja holds historical significance as the first British settlement in Nigeria and served as the capital during the colonial era. Notable features include the Niger/Benue confluence and the Usikokoko cave in Konto-Karfe. The state's cultural diversity is evident in major towns such as Lokoja, Okene, and Idah, with three primary ethnic groups— Igala, Ebira, and Okun—alongside various minority tribes. Kogi State boasts economic strength, housing the Ajaokuta Steel Company and Obajana Cement Factory, and is rich in mineral resources. However, recurrent flooding, as experienced in 2022, poses a challenge, prompting the government's proactive measures, such as the "Kogi State Flood Humanitarian Preparedness Plan for 2023," to mitigate potential impacts on the upcoming election, recognizing issues like displaced voters and lost PVCs due to flooding.

The Kogi State Electorate

Kogi State has a diverse population of approximately 4,466,800 (NBS) /4,473,500 (State Government) people, comprised of three major ethnic groups (Igala, Ebira, and Okun) and several minority tribes. The electorate (registered voters) is 1, 932, 654 out of the population figure. The state exhibits religious diversity, with Christians, Muslims, and African traditional worshippers coexisting. English is the official language. Despite high literacy rates, issues like infant mortality, inadequate water sources, and poverty persist. The poverty headcount rate is 28.5%, with a Gini coefficient of 24.4. Out-of-school children account for 25% of the school-age population, and poverty remains a challenge, affecting 35.9% of the population. The economy is predominantly agrarian, with cash crops and animal husbandry as major contributors. Kogi State's revenue heavily relies on federal allocations, urging a need for internal revenue generation. Tertiary institutions, including Federal University, Lokoja, and Kogi State University, contribute to educational development. Despite economic challenges, Kogi State saw a notable reduction in domestic debts in 2021.

Political Environment

Kogi State was created on August 27, 1991, by General Ibrahim Babangida. Since then, the state has witnessed various administrations, with the current Governor being Alhaji Yahaya Adoza Bello since 2016. The 2023 Governorship election involves four key

parties: APC, PDP, SDP, and ADC, each fielding candidates within strongholds. Intra-party issues and defections, notably within the APC and PDP, have added complexity to the political landscape. The ongoing legal battles and disputes may impact the electoral preparations. The February 25th and March 11th 2023 elections witnessed widespread voter apathy, necessitating sensitization efforts towards improving participation. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic adds a layer of complexity, as compliance with safety protocols remains a challenge despite INEC's guidelines. The election, scheduled for November 11, 2023, holds significance for the future governance of Kogi State.

Contesting Political Parties

Eighteen political parties are participating in the upcoming governorship election in Kogi State. These include Accord Party, Action Alliance, African Action Congress, Action Democratic Congress, Action Democratic Party, All Progressive Congress (APC), All Progressive Grand Alliance, Allied Peoples Movement, Action People Party, Boot Party, Labour Party, New Nigeria Peoples Party, National Rescue Movement, Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Peoples Redemption Party, Social Democratic Party, Young Progressives Party, and Zenith Labour Party. The major contenders are the APC, the ruling party, and the PDP, the main opposition party. Both parties have a strong presence in the state, with a history of alternating governance since 1999. Notably, APC is the current ruling party at both the state and national levels. Senator Dino Melaye represents the PDP as a prominent candidate, bringing attention to the race. The SDP and ADC also play significant roles, particularly in challenging the dominance of the major parties. The electoral dynamics suggest a competitive race primarily between the APC and the PDP, with factors such as the power of incumbency conjectured to hold a possible influence on the outcome. The Okun ethnic group, historically marginalized, hopes to secure representation through candidates from PDP and ADC. Lesser-known parties face challenges due to limited media attention and low voter awareness, affecting its chances in the election.

Inclusion and Representation

The Kogi State Governorship election exposes ongoing challenges in achieving inclusive political representation in Nigeria. Among the eighteen candidates for the Governorship position, only one woman (5.6%) and two young candidates (11.1%) are present, revealing gender and age imbalances. Notably, there are no candidates with disabilities. The Deputy Governorship positions show a slight improvement with three women (16.6%), but the overall representation falls short of the 35% minimum reserved for women. The reluctance of political parties to address the monetization of the electoral process contributes to this exclusion. Recommendations include introducing affirmative

action legislation and quotas to enhance inclusivity and reducing financial barriers for underrepresented groups in politics. Stakeholders are urged to reconsider their engagement with political parties to address these challenges effectively.

Main Political and Socio-Cultural Actors

The main political actors in the Kogi State include Dino Melaye, a former Senator and PDP candidate known for his vocal and controversial stances; Yahaya Adoza Bello, the current APC Governor of Kogi State; Adeyemi Smart Adeyemi, a Senator with a history of political contests; Edward Onoja, the Deputy Governor of Kogi State; Ibrahim Idris, a former Governor; Emmanuel Dangana Ocheja, a respected figure in Kogi State politics; and Natasha Akpoti, a politician and social entrepreneur. Socio-cultural actors include HRM Matthew Opaluwa, the Attah of Igala Kingdom; HRM Dr Abdul Rahman Ado Ibrahim, the Ohinoyi of Ebiraland; and HRM Oba Solomon Dele Owoniyi, the Obaro of Kabba. Each plays a significant role in the political and cultural landscape of the state.

Civil Society Organizations

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) play a crucial role in promoting democratic values in Nigeria, particularly during elections. Several active CSOs have contributed to the electoral process in the off-cycle elections in Kogi State. Examples include The Electoral Hub, focused on promoting electoral knowledge, accountability and integrity; FIDA Nigeria, advocating for women's rights and the signing of the Women Charter by gubernatorial candidates; Women in Politics Forum (WIPF) Kogi State, working to prevent violence against women in elections; Participation Initiative for Behavioural Change and Development (PIBCID), emphasizing women's recognition in policies and accountability measures for governorship candidates; Conscience for Human Rights and Conflict Resolution (CHRCR), engaging citizens on civic responsibilities and promoting issue-based campaigns; a Coalition of Civil Society Organizations monitoring campaign activities to prevent violence; Kogi NGOs Network (KONGONET) advising political actors to focus on beneficial policies and urging INEC to maintain transparency; and Yiaga Africa, actively engaging in election observation and highlighting emerging political and security trends. These organizations collectively contribute to enhancing the democratic process in Kogi State.

In(security) and Violence

Despite sharing boundaries with 10 states, Kogi State in Nigeria has historically been deemed secure, as affirmed by INEC's 2019 security report. However, the experience during the 2019 Governorship election saw a shift in this trend as violence and election malpractices were pervasive. Subsequent elections, including the 2023 general elections have witnessed a recurring pattern of violence, posing threats to security. Some recorded

incidents of electoral violence ahead of the 2023 Governorship elections include an assassination attempt on the SDP Governorship candidate, attacks on Governor Yahaya Bello's convoy, kidnapping, vandalism of campaign materials, and destruction of political offices. The escalating security challenges underscore the need for immediate action by stakeholders, political actors, security agencies, and INEC to address security concerns in the state.

Efforts at Mitigating Violence

In response to security challenges ahead of the November 2023 Kogi State Governorship election, INEC has taken proactive measures. A meeting with the Inter-Agency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES) emphasized the need for security agencies to curb violence, vote-buying, assaults on officials, and electoral interference. INEC Chairman, Prof. Yakubu Mahmood, stressed on impartiality and collaboration with security agencies to ensure a secure environment. The Resident Electoral Commissioner of Kogi State and the Police Command jointly assured peaceful elections, conducting workshops to sensitize the media on its roles. The Nigerian Police Force organized a meeting to enhance community engagement for a violence-free election, with the AIG warning stakeholders. INEC engaged political parties, urging decorum and cautioning against actions endangering electorates. The Commission pledged ongoing collaboration with security agencies for a peaceful election.

Role of INEC

INEC, the Nigerian Election Management Body (EMB) is responsible for overseeing the Kogi State Governorship election, as well as other state and national legislative and Governorship elections. The Commission commenced voter registration in June 2021, involving online pre-registration and offline full registration, resulting in 1,932,654 registered voters in Kogi state. INEC employs the Bi-Modal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) for the election, replacing Smart Card Readers, with results uploaded on the INEC Result View Portal. To improve voter access, INEC increased polling units from 2,548 to 3,508 in Kogi State. Stakeholder engagement, including meetings with political party leaders, the Inter-Agency Consultative Committee on Election Security, and media executives, is a crucial aspect of INEC's preparations. Various activities, such as publishing notices, candidate lists, election monitoring, Journalist accreditation, party agent registration, and ad hoc staff recruitment and training, contribute to the comprehensive planning for the election.

Election Observation and Observers

Observers significantly influence the transparency and acceptance of election outcomes, with their presence serving as part of the evidence of process transparency. Reports from

election observers are often considered reliable records of the conduct of elections, contributing to the validation of elected governments. In preparation for the 2023 Governorship election in Bayelsa, Imo, and Kogi States, INEC Chairman Mahmood Yakubu approved 145 organizations as observers, deploying 7,896 observers to monitor the elections and contribute to more credible and widely accepted electoral outcomes.

Conclusion

The Kogi State Governorship election holds significance as it provides an opportunity for electoral stakeholders, particularly INEC, to enhance the legitimacy and integrity of the electoral process through various interventions and innovations. Despite emerging trends of insecurity, including kidnappings and political violence, optimism exists that stakeholders' actions such as advocacy and campaigns will successfully mitigate these issues. Intra-party conflicts within APC and PDP, along with associated litigations, pose a potential negative impact on the election. The disregard for COVID-19 protocols during elections raises concerns, and the challenging terrain of Kogi State may affect logistical preparations. Low representation of women, youth, and people with disabilities among candidates challenges democratic inclusivity. The election serves as a chance for INEC to rebuild trust, especially after issues with result transmission in the previous election. The active involvement of CSOs, observers, and groups contributes to preserving the election's integrity, but the rise in election offenses, notably violence and voter intimidation, raises questions about electoral fraud and impunity. Lessons learned from the general election are crucial for improving the conduct of elections and restoring confidence in the Commission.

Introduction

1.1 Background and Context

The Kogi Governorship election is scheduled to be held on November 11, 2023. Since the start of Nigeria fourth republic and return to civilian rule in 1999, there have been six Governorship elections in Kogi State. Governorship elections were conducted on January 9, 1999, April 19, 2003, April 14, 2007, December 3, 2011, November 21, 2015, and November 16, 2019. This election is one of the off-cycle elections to be conducted by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) after the 2023 general election.

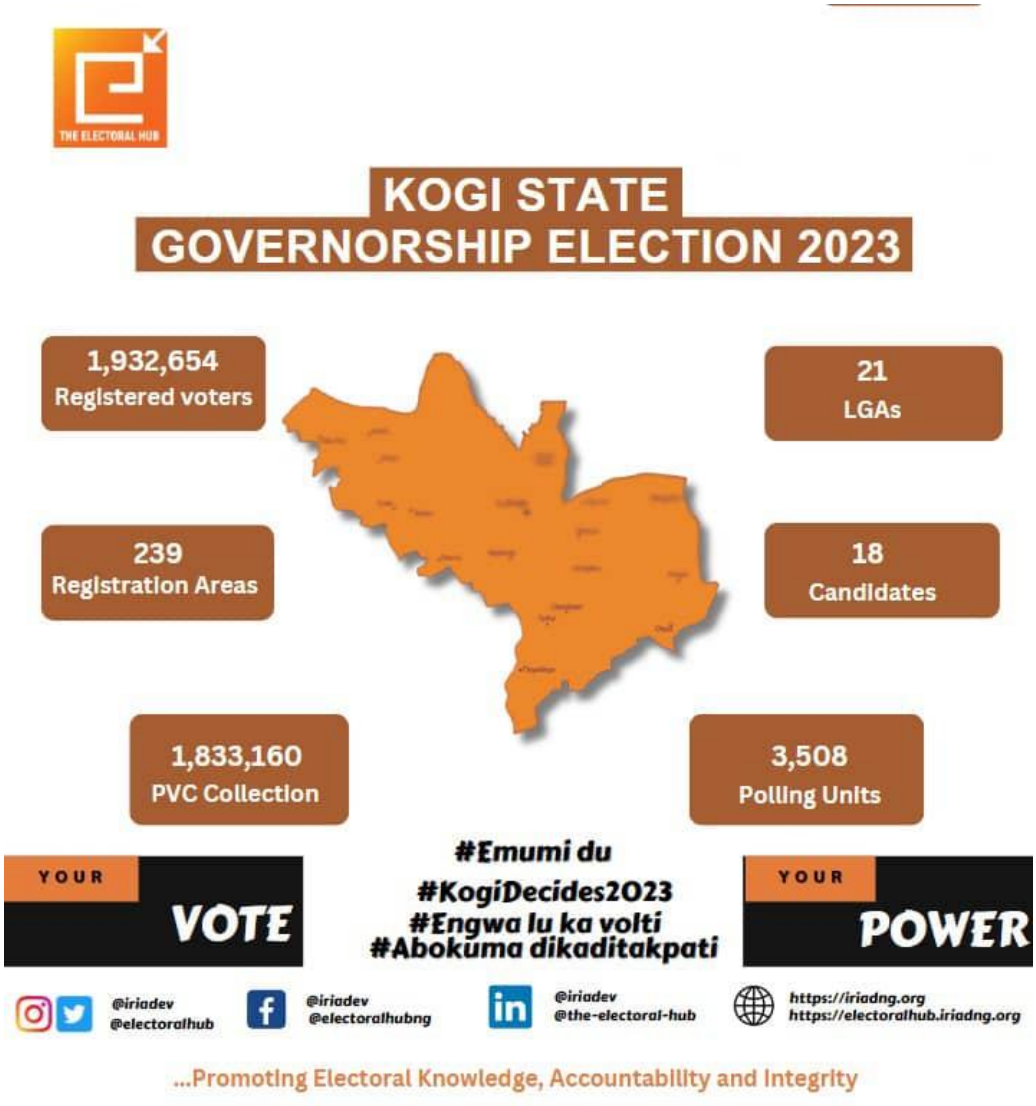
One of the unique features of the Kogi Governorship election is that it is coming after the conduct of the 2023 general elections. The general elections were conducted on February 25 and March 18, 2023[1]. The election thus provides an opportunity for electoral stakeholders to apply the lessons from the general election into action as well as learn new lessons to improve electoral governance and integrity in Nigeria. It provides the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) an opportunity to effect improvement in the use of its innovations like the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) and the INEC Result Viewing (IReV) Portal. It also creates a chance for INEC to implement the provisions of the Electoral Act, 2022.

It is trite to note that the outcome of this election will be crucial in determining whether public trust in the Commission will be restored after the fallout and technical challenges experienced during the general elections in 2023. The election is happening in the context of the post-election grievances because of the outcome of the general election and the judgment of the Presidential Election Petition Tribunal (PEPT). Additionally, it is occurring in a time of increasing costs of living, anxiety over food security, severe electricity shortages, and economic instability. Considering this, and in line with The Electoral Hub's commitment to promoting electoral knowledge, accountability, and integrity we have created this political context analysis (PCA), a pre-election analysis to aid stakeholders in understanding the contexts and dynamics in which the Kogi Governorship election will be conducted.

[1] Initially slated for March 11, 2023, but was postponed due to technical issues. https://punchng.com/just-in-inec-postpones-gov-election-by-one-week/

1.2 Task and Method

An overview of the institutional, legal, and sociopolitical aspects that influence elections is provided in this analysis, along with details on the main players and interest groups that impact election-related events, the electoral body, and the electoral system. It also discusses the threats and obstacles to a credible process, as well as internal and external influences that can help safeguard and strengthen its integrity and credibility. This analysis is based on unbiased research into historical election trends, current political and social dynamics in the nation, including the post-election crisis and Kogi State in particular, as well as voter and political observer perceptions of the election.



Constitutional and Legal Background

Nigeria's electoral legal framework consists of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended), the Electoral Act of 2022, and INEC's Regulations and Guidelines for the Conduct of Elections, 2022. The procedures for the Kogi State governorship election of 2023 will be governed by the rules established in these legislative frameworks.

The Independent National Election Commission (INEC) released its Regulations and Guidelines for the Conduct of Elections, 2022 in accordance with Section 148 of the Electoral Act, 2022, which states that "The Commission may, subject to the provisions of this Act, issue regulations, guidelines, or manuals for the purpose of giving effect to the provisions of this Act and for its administration."[2]. Also, in pursuant to section 149 of the Electoral Act, 2022 which states that "Notwithstanding any other provisions of this Act, any defect or error arising from any actions taken by an official of the Commission in relation to any notice, form or document made or given or other things done by the official in pursuance of the provisions of the Constitution or of this Act, or any rules made thereunder remain valid, unless otherwise challenged and declared invalid by a competent court of law or tribunal", the Commission revealed that the Regulations and Guidelines for the Conduct of Elections, 2022 take precedence over all other regulations and/or guidelines the Commission has issued regarding the conduct of elections, and they will continue to be in effect up until new regulations and guidelines are issued, or until they are revised or updated and supported by decision extracts from the Commission or an official gazette[3].

The other guiding policy for election is INEC's COVID-19 policy on Conducting Elections in the context of COVID-19[4]. Due to the non-revision or abolition of the INEC COVID-19 Policy on Conducting Elections, INEC will uphold its COVID-19 policy in the conduct of the Kogi election, which calls for voters to maintain a two-meter (6-foot) social distance from one another on election day and wear facemasks or shields.

The Code of Conduct and Rules of Engagement for Security Personnel on Electoral Duty is a document that guides security personnel on how to carry out their electoral duty,

[2] INEC (2022). Regulations and Guidelines for the Conduct of Elections, 2022. https://inecnigeria.org/wpcontent/uploads/2022/06/REGULATIONS-AND-GUIDELINES-FOR-THE-CONDUCT-OF-ELECTIONS2022_updtd.pdf

[3]Premium Times (2022), 2023: INEC Releases Guidelines for Conduct of Elections https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/534667-2023-inec-releases-guidelines-for-conduct-of-elections.html?tztc=1

[4] INEC (2022). Regulations and Guidelines for the Conduct of Elections, 2022

ultimately leading to a peaceful election[5]. The document is divided into two parts: the Code of Conduct and the Rules of Engagement. The Code of Conduct covers issues such as the mandate of ICCES in securing the electoral process, general guidelines, standard operational guidelines, parade mustering/briefing and debriefing rules, dress and accoutrement rules, procedures/rules on managing political party conventions/rallies and good control/rules, use of force/lethal weapons, rules for escorting/protecting electoral materials, rules for checkpoints/roadblocks, general conduct, conduct during elections amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and other health emergencies. The Rules of Engagement cover issues such as application of force, procedure for arrest, caution to personnel effecting arrest, and reportorial requirements. The document would properly guide security personnel on how to carry out their electoral duty, considering the security atmosphere in the state.

One regulation that has been a constant battle between civil societies and the legislature is passing into law the Electoral Offense Commission (Establishment) Bill 2021. There has been much focus and pressure on the National Assembly to pass the Bill into law, while the law has been passed into law by the Senate, but the House of Representatives has yet to do the same[6]. The bill is critical to promoting electoral integrity as it is aimed at providing the legal framework for the investigation and prosecution of electoral offenses. Regarding the Bill, the Commission revealed that the passing of the Bill into law as well as the establishment of the Electoral Offense Commission would ensure that electoral offenders are prosecuted and punished, also noting that it would serve as a deterrent to electoral offenders and their financers in engaging in electoral offenses[7].

[5] INEC (2022). Code of Conduct and Rules of Engagement for Security Personnel on Electoral Duty. https://www.inecnigeria.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/CODE-OF-CONDUCT-2022_A5.pdf

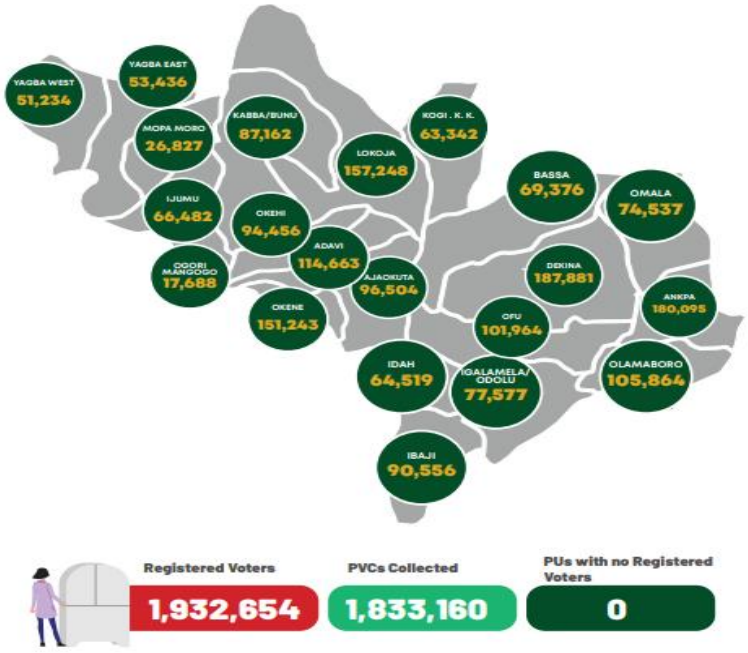
[6]Premium Times (2023), National Electoral Offences Commission Bill Passes Second Reading in House of Representatives. https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/540020-national-electoral-offences-commission-bill-passes-second-reading-in-house-of-reps.html?tztc=1

[7]Habib G. (2023). Prosecution of Electoral Offenders, Sponsors will Curb Recurrence- INEC. *Punch*. https://punchng.com/prosecution-of-electoral-offenders-sponsors-will-curb-recurrence-inec/

Kogi State Electoral Background

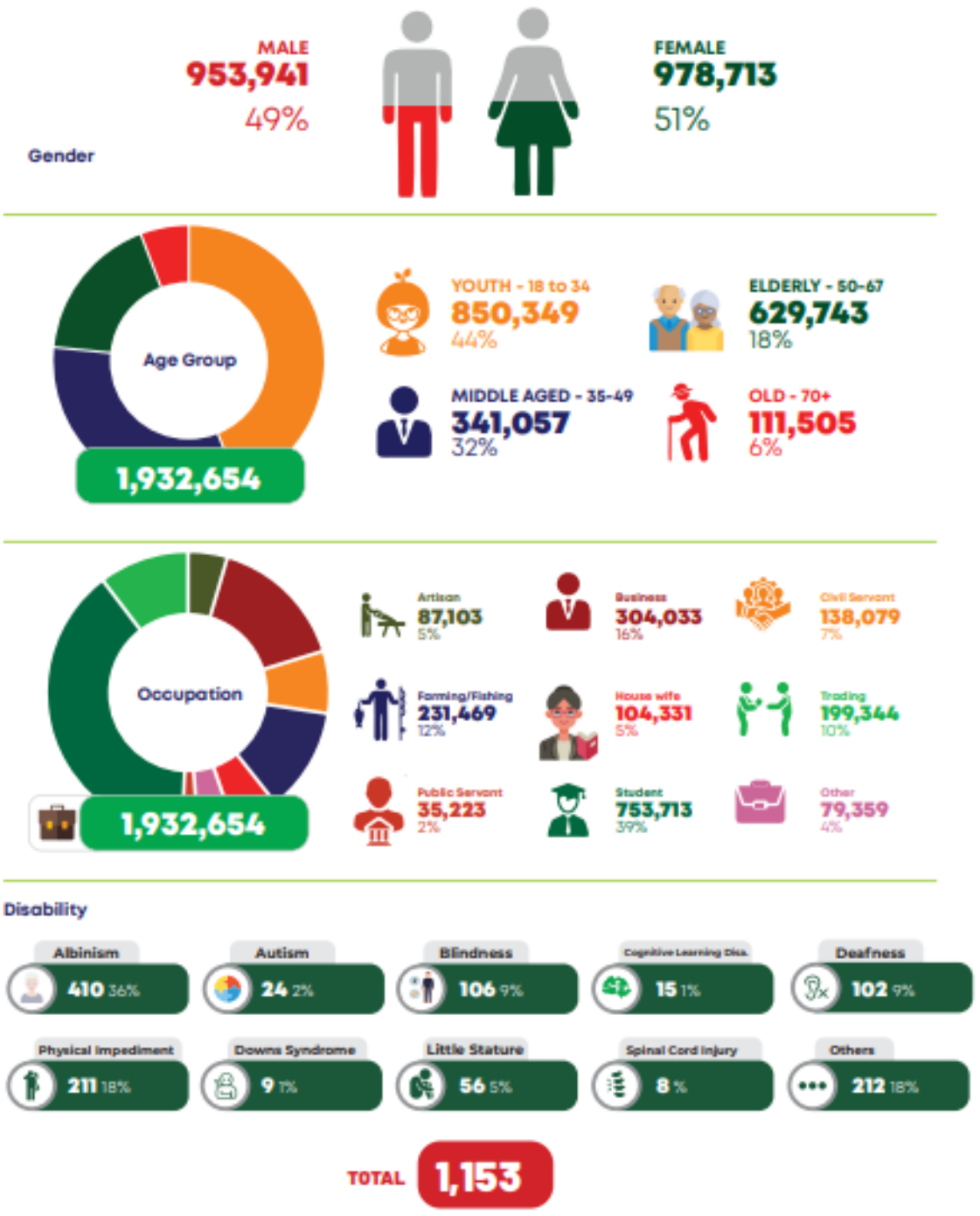
3.1 Electoral Delimitation

Nigeria is a federal state where powers is divided between the federal government, the 36 state governments, and the 774 local governments. Kogi state has 21 Local Government Areas (LGAs)[8]; and 239 Registration Areas/Electoral Wards[9]; It is divided into three senatorial districts: Western Senatorial District, Central Senatorial District, and Eastern Senatorial District[10]. Additionally, it has nine (9) federal constituencies: Okene/Ogori-Magongo, Ajaokuta, Okehi/Adavi, Kabba-Bunu/Ijumu, Yagba, Lokoja/Koton-karfi, Idah/Igala-mela/Ofu, Dekina/Bassa, and Ankpa/Omala/Olamaboro[11]. Kogi State also has 25 state Constituencies[12]. See figures and table below:



Kogi State Registered Voters by LGA[13]

[8] https://kogistate.gov.ng/structure/
[9] https://businessday.ng/politics/article/eight-reasons-november-11-kogi-guber-election-should-mater-to-nigeria/
[10] https://www.vanguardngr.com/2021/08/kogi-at-30-the-journey-so-far/
[11] Ibid, https://www.manpower.com.ng/places/federal-constituencies/23/kogi-state
[12] https://www.shineyoureye.org/place/kogi
[13] INEC. (2023). Information Booklet on the Bayelsa, Imo and Kogi Governorship Election. https://inecnigeria.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/DELIMITATION-DATA-FOR-BAYELSA-IMO-KOGI-ELECTION.pdf



Kogi State Registered Voters by Categories[14]

[14] INEC. (2023). Information Booklet on the Bayelsa, Imo and Kogi Governorship Election. https://inecnigeria.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/DELIMITATION-DATA-FOR-BAYELSA-IMO-KOGI-ELECTION.pdf

Table 1: Electoral Delimitation/Statistics of Kogi State

Sen. District	Fed. Const.	State Const.	LGA	Headquarters	Wards	PUs	Voters
Kogi Central	Kogi Central Federal Constituency I	Adavi/Okehi	Adavi	Adavi	11	227	114,663
			Okehi	Okehi	11	188	94,456
	Kogi Central Federal Constituency II	Ajaokuta	Ajaokuta	Ajaokuta	14	146	96,504
			Okene	Okene	11	284	151,243
	Kogi Central Federal Constituency III	Okene/Ogori-Magogo	Ogori-Magogo	Ogori-Magogo	10	67	17,688
Total	**3**	**3**	**5**	**5**	**57**	**912**	**474,554**
Kogi East	Kogi East Federal Constituency I	Ankpa/Omala/ Olamaboro/	Ankpa	Ankpa	13	334	180,095
			Omala	Omala	11	148	74,537
			Olamaboro	Olamaboro	10	174	105,864
	Kogi East Federal Constituency II	Bassa/Dekina	Bassa	Bassa	10	130	69,376
			Dekina	Dekina	12	351	187,881
	Kogi East Federal Constituency III	Idah/Igalamela Odolu/Ibaji Ofu	Idah	Idah	10	120	64,519
			Igalamela Odolu	Igalamela Odolu	10	113	77,577
			Ibaji	Ibaji	10	174	90,556
			Ofu	Ofu	11	184	101,964
Total	**3**	**3**	**9**	**9**	**97**	**1728**	**952,369**
Kogi West	Kogi West Federal Constituency I	Ijumu/Kabba-Bunu	Ijumu	Ijumu	15	121	66,482
			Kabba-Bunu	Kabba-Bunu	15	168	87,162
		Kogi Lokoja/Kogi	Lokoja	Lokoja	11	273	157,248

	Kogi West Federal Constituency II		Kogi K. K.	Kogi K. K.	11	115	63,342
	Kogi West Federal Constituency III	Yagba East/Yagba West/Mopamuro	Yagba East	Yagba East	11	74	53,436
			Yagba West	Yagba West	13	97	51,234
			Mopa Muro	Mopa Muro	10	53	26,827
Total	**3**	**3**	**7**	**7**	**86**	**901**	**505,731**
Grand Total	**9**	**9**	**2**	**21**	**239**	**3508**	**1,932,654**

Source: INEC[15]

[15]https://inecnigeria.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/DELIMITATION-DATA-FOR-BAYELSA-IMO-KOGI-ELECTION.pdf; https://www.eduweb.com.ng/kogi-state-lga-wards-and-new-polling-unit/; https://www.shineyoureye.org/place/kogi

There are 1,932,654 registered voters for the Kogi governorship election[16]. Also, due to INEC's expansion of access to polling unit exercise, which involved the conversion of some Voting Points to Polling Units, there was an additional 960 polling units to the previous 2,548 Polling Units bringing the total number of polling units to 3,508 Polling Units[17].

Table 2: Kogi State Electoral Delimitation and Demography

Number of LGAs	21
Number of RAs	239
Number of Senatorial Districts	3
Number of Federal Constituencies	9
Number of State Constituencies	25
Total Number of Polling Units	3,508
Total Number of Registered	1,932,654
Total Number of PVCs Collected	1,833,160
Total Number of PVCs Uncollected	99,494
Total Number of Parties Contesting	18
Total Number of Candidates	18

Source: INEC[18]

Table 3: Kogi State Senators at the Tenth National Assembly

S/N	Name	District	Party	Sex
1	Ohere Sadiku Abubakar	Central	APC	M
2	Isah Jibrin	East	APC	M
3	Karimu Sunday Steve	West	APC	M

Source: INEC[19]

Table 4: Kogi State House of Representatives at the Tenth National Assembly

S/N	Name	Constituency	Party	Sex
1	Abdulmaleek A. Danga	Adavi/Okehi	PDP	M
2	Ozigi Muhammed Tijani	Okene/Ogori-Magongo	APC	M
3	Abdullahi Ibrahim Ali	Ankpa/Omala/Olamaboro	APC	M

[16] https://www.inecnigeria.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/PVCs-Collected-Registered-Voters.pdf, https://www.channelstv.com/2023/10/11/5-4m-voters-registered-for-kogi-imo-bayelsa-polls-inec/

[17] https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2022/03/03/inec-registers-new-113255-voters-creates-960-polling-units-in-kogi

[18] https://inecnigeria.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/DELIMITATION-DATA-FOR-BAYELSA-IMO-KOGI-ELECTION.pdf

[19] https://twitter.com/inecnigeria/status/1633135608309710848/photo/3

4	Abdulraheem Egide Sanni	Ajaokuta	APC	M
5	Hassan Abduullahi	Dekina/Bassa	NNPP	M
6	David Idris Zacharias	Idah/Igalamela/Odulu/Ibaji/Ofu	APC	
7	Idris Salman	Ijumu/Kabba Bunu	APC	M
8	Aguya Suleiman Danladi	Lokoja/Kogi K.K.	APC	M
9	Abejide Joseph Leke	Yagba East/Yagba West/Mopa Muro	APC	M

Source: INEC[20]

Table 5: Kogi State House of Assembly Members

S/N	Member	State Constituency	Party
1	Abu Onoru-Oiza Jibrin	Ajaokuta	APC
2	Akus Lawal	Ankpa 1	APC
3	Aliyu Umar Yusf	Lokoja 11	APC
4	Amodu Seidu Shehu	Ofu	APC
5	Asema Baba Haruna	Adavi	APC
6	Bello Oluwaseyi Victor	Kabba/Bunu	APC
7	Bin-Ebaiye Shehu Tijjani	Lokoja	APC
8	Comfort Ojoma Inwuchiola	Ibaji	APC
8	Daku Sunday	Bassa	PDP
9	Enefola Major	Igalamela-Odolu	APC
10	Falede Rotimi	Yagba West	ADC
11	Ibrahim Abbas	Ankpa 11	APC
12	Idrees Aliyu	Kogi (k.k)	APC
13	Ishaya Omotayo Adeleye	Ijumu	APC
14	Jacob Sam Olawumi	Mopamuro	APC
15	Obaro Emmanuel	Yagba East	APC
16	Ochidi Usman Shehu	Dekina/Biraidu	APC
17	Ogunmola Bode Gemini’	Ogori/Magongo	PDP
18	Otokiti Alhassan Zakariya	Okehi	APC
19	Paul Enema	Okura	APC
20	Suleiman Abdulrazak	Okene Town	APC
21	Ujah Alewo Anthony	Olamaboro 1	APC
22	Usman Halidu Adejoh	Idah	APC
23	Yahaya Umar	Omala	APC

[20] https://inecnigeria.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/LIST-OF-MEMBERS-ELECT-OF-THE-HOUSE-OF-REPRESENTATIVES.FEB_.2023.pdf; https://twitter.com/inecnigeria/status/1633150687331721224/photo/4

24	Yusuf Zakari Eneve	Okene 11 (South)	APC

Source: Compiled by The Electoral Hub

3.2 Key Governmental Stakeholders

Each State in the Federal Republic of Nigeria has its own Executive, and Legislature, in this case the State House of Assembly and Judiciary. Kogi State is not left out with the Governor as the Head of the Executive, the Legislature which is the Kogi State House of Assembly is headed by the Speaker, and the Chief Judge is the head of the Judiciary. Presently the office holders are:

Table 6: Heads of the Three Arms of Kogi State Government

Arms	Head	Name	Sex	Tenure
Executive	Governor	Yahaya Adoza Bello	M	2016-Date
Legislature	Speaker	Aliu Umar Yusuf	M	2023
Judiciary	Chief Judge	Justice Josiah Majebi	M	2023

Source: Compiled by The Electoral Hub

Governors are elected for no more than two terms of four years each. Section 177 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended) outlines the qualifications/requirements to contest for the Office of the Governor; thus,

- is a citizen of Nigeria by birth.
- has attained the age of thirty-five years.
- is a member of a political party and is sponsored by that political party, and
- has been educated up to at least School Certificate level or its equivalent.

The governorship election is decided by a simple majority system, which means the winner must have a plurality of the votes cast and at least 25% of votes cast in at least two-thirds of all the local government areas of the state. Where no candidate meets these requirements, the two candidates with the highest number of votes compete in a run-off election until a winner is determined.

Kogi State Geography

Kogi State is 29,833 square kilometers in size and is situated in the North-central region of Nigeria[21]. It is regarded as the confluence state as River Niger and River Benue meets as its capital, Lokoja, which in contemporary Nigeria, serves as the nation's first administrative capital[22]. The state was formed on August 27, 1991, by the military administration of General Ibrahim Babangida from Kwara/Benue state[23]. It was carved out from parts of Kwara State and Benue State. Lokoja is the State's capital[24]. The first British settlement in Nigeria was Lokoja. It served as the capital of the British Northern Protectorate and, as a result, continued to serve as a useful administrative center for the British colonial authority even after the Northern and Southern protectorates were combined to form Nigeria in 1914.

4.1 Topography and Tourist Sites

One of the unique features of Kogi State is the Benue and Niger Rivers, which are in Kogi State, and are the two largest rivers in West Africa. The Niger/Benue confluence is where the river Benue, which originates in one of the Cameroon Mountains, and river Niger, one of the world's longest rivers, which originates at the Futa Djallon plateau on the borders of Sierra Leone and the Gulf of Guinea, converge in Lokoja[25]. Another unique feature is the Usikokoko cave in Konto-Karfe which served as a refuge for thousands of people in the Igu Kingdom during intertribal conflicts[26]. Other tourist sites of Kogi State, including the Iron of Liberty, Osome Falls, Ukpogo, the late Ohinoyi of Ebira Palace, Mount Patti, Awo Tunnel, and the Inikpi Statue[27].

4.2 Cultural Composition

Kogi State is heterogeneous in terms of culture, language, and tradition. The major towns and cities in Kogi State are Lokoja, Okene, Idah, Kabba, Anyigba, Egbe, Ankpa, Ajaokuta, Koton-Karfe and Obajana[28]. Kogi State is bordered by ten (10) States with the Federal Capital Territory (Nigeria) to the North, Nasarawa State to the Northeast, Benue State to

[21] https://www.nigeriagalleria.com/Nigeria/States_Nigeria/Kogi/Brief-History-of-Kogi-State.html, https://www.kogipedia.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Historic-Facts-and-Figurs.pdf, https://kogistate.gov.ng/
[22] https://www.facts.ng/nigerian-states/kogi/
[23] Ibid, https://kogistatehub.com/unbelievable-facts-about-kogi-state/
[24] Ibid
[25] Ebiloma, S. O. (2019). Showcasing the Tourism Potentials of Lokoja, Kogi State, Nigeria. *Open Journal of Social Sciences, 07*(07),318–332. https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2019.77027
[26] ibid
[27] https://thedailysblog.com/facts-about-kogi-state
[28] https://latitude.to/map/ng/nigeria/regions/kogi-state/cities; https://kogistatehub.com/the-major-cities-and-towns-in-kogi-state/

the East, Enugu State to the Southeast, Anambra State to the South, Edo State to the Southwest, Ondo State to the West, Ekiti State to the West, Kwara State to the Northwest, and Niger state to the North[29]. For this reason, the state is usually referred to as the junction state[30]. The people are of three major ethnic groups namely, Igala, Ebira, and Okun,[31] together with other minority groups like the Ogori Magongo, Agatu/Idoma, Gwari, and Nupe speaking tribes, Kakanda, Bassa, and Kupa[32].

4.3 Economic Endowment

Kogi State is well known as an economic powerhouse in Africa since it is home to the biggest iron and steel company in Nigeria, Ajaokuta Steel Company Limited, as well as one of the largest cement manufacturers in Africa, Obajana Cement Factory[33]. Mineral resources in Kogi State are abundant and are usually used for commercial purposes[34]. Some of the mineral resources include crude oil, gold, coal, bitumen, magnesium, gemstones, iron ore, cassiterite, tantalite, and columbite, as well as limestone, marble, clay, mica, silica sand, feldspar, dolomite, gypsum, kaolin, talc, tin, and quartz[35].

4.4 Flooding

Kogi state has been deeply affected by flooding occurrences due to the River Benue and River Niger situated in the state. The most recent flooding incident was that of 2022 which cost the lives of many and damage to properties. According to reports, the flood submerged many buildings, led to loss of lives, and over 600 hectares of rice farmland was flooded due to the water brought on by the Lagdo dam opening and the severe downpour[36]. The Nigerian Meteorological Agency (NiMet) in its Annual Seasonal Climate Prediction (for 2023)[37] forecasted flooding in some states and in that regard, the Kogi state government held a meeting tagged "Kogi State Flood Humanitarian Preparedness Plan for 2023 Stakeholders Engagement" in Lokoja[38]. The meeting was aimed at identifying the current government resources that can be used to contribute to the flood early warning and readiness system, identifying needs connected to early warning and preparedness for the

[29] https://kogistatehub.com/unbelievable-facts-about-kogi-state/
[30] Ibid
[31] https://www.facts.ng/nigerian-states/kogi/
[32] https://thedailysblog.com/facts-about-kogi-state
[33] Ibid
[34] https://kogistatehub.com/unbelievable-facts-about-kogi-state/
[35] Ibid
[36] https://punchng.com/deaths-losses-tears-as-floods-overrun-kogi-anambra-gombe-others/, https://leadership.ng/kogis-bitter-experience-under-the-water/
[37] https://punchng.com/on-nimets-2023-seasonal-climate-prediction/
[38] This Day (2023), Kogi Restates Commitment to Mitigate Effects of Flooding. https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2023/07/20/kogi-restates-commitment-to-mitigate-effects-of-flooding

predicted flooding[39]. This action shows the government's effort to prevent a repeat of the 2022 disaster caused by flooding. While the election will be conducted at the end of the rainy season, it is important to note that flooding disasters before the election could have a negative impact on the election. For example, voters who have been displaced from their houses may not be able to vote because of the relocation, and voters who have lost their PVCs because of the building destruction brought on by flooding could have misplaced them. Since precautions were taken to avoid it, there were no significant floods this year.

[39] Ibid

Kogi State Electorate

5.1 Population

According to the 1991 population census, Kogi had a population of 2,147,756. While the National Bureau of Statistics NBS (2016) population projection places Kogi State's population as 4,466,800 at 1.9% annual population change while Kogi Government reflects a population of 4,473, 500[40]. From the 2006 population census, Kogi had a population of 3,314,043 (males- 1,672,903 and females- 1,641,140)[41]. Kogi state is heterogeneous in nature as it is home to people of different ethnic groups. Kogi State electorate is made up of three major ethnic groups; Igala, Ebira, and Okun,[42] and other minority groups like the Ogori Magongo, Agatu/Idioma, Gwari, and Nupe speaking tribes, Kakanda, Bassa, and Kupa[43]. The state is home to a diverse population of Christians, Muslims, and African traditional worshippers. Like the rest of the nation, it is cosmopolitan, with residents from all over the country living there. English is the official language.

Table 7: Kogi State Population Distribution/Statistics

S/N	Name	Population Census 1991	Population Census 2006	Population Projection 2016
1	Adavi	157,092	217,219	293,200
2	Ajaokuta	97,904	122,432	165,300
3	Ankpa	…	266,176	359,300
4	Bassa	88,496	139,687	188,600
5	Dekina	177,513	260,968	352,300
6	Idah	…	79,755	107,700
7	Igalamela-Odolu	…	127,572	172,200
8	Ibaji	…	147,048	198,500
9	Ijumu	66,603	118,593	160,100
10	Kabba/Bunu	…	144,579	195,200
11	Kogi	82,483	115,100	155,400
12	Lokoja	…	196,643	265,400
13	Mopa-Muro	…	43,760	59,100
14	Ofu	108,095	191,480	258,500
15	Ogori/Magongo	…	39,807	53,700

[40] https://kogistate.gov.ng/structure/
[41] https://kogistate.gov.ng/sftas/structure/#, https://citypopulation.de/en/nigeria/admin/NGA023__kogi/
[42] https://www.facts.ng/nigerian-states/kogi/
[43] https://thedailysblog.com/facts-about-kogi-state

16	Okehi	146,264	223,574	301,800
17	Okene	…	325,623	439,500
18	Olamaboro	104,705	158,490	213,900
19	Omala	…	107,968	145,700
20	Yagba East	88,780	147,641	199,300
21	Yagba West	76,936	139,928	188,900
Total		2,147,756	3,314,043	4,473,500

Source: Kogi State Government[44]

According to the Human Development Index, 40.04% of people use better sources of drinking water, 83.93% of the people are literate, infant mortality is 44.39%, and the total fertility rate is 2.38%[45]. In addition, 82.6% of households are connected to the national grid and 72.1% of households have access to electricity[46]. While the rate of literacy is high, it is necessary that issues of infant mortality, poor sources of drinking water, etc. should be addressed. Kogi State's poverty headcount rate for 2018/2019 is 28.5%, the poverty income gap is 0.062, and the Gini coefficient is 24.4[47].

According to the Universal Basic Education Commission 2018, out of the total school-age population in the State, Kogi State has 25% out-of-school children[48]. NBS (2018)[49] revealed that Kogi State had 124,290 children without access to education, with 30% males and 70% females; placing the number of boys without access to education at 37,487 and for girls, 86,303 did not have access to education. According to the data released Kogi state had the second lowest out-of-school children in the North-Central region and holds the 9th position nationally. Despite this feat, the State government launched the "School Adoption and Mentorship Programme"[50] which was aimed at addressing education challenges in the state as well as ensuring that every school-age child goes to school[51].

[44] https://kogistate.gov.ng/structure/
[45] https://nigeria.opendataforafrica.org/
[46] NBS (2020) Nigeria Living Standards Survey 2018/2019, page 87 https://nigerianstat.gov.ng/download/1123
[47] The World Bank (2022) Nigeria Poverty Assessment 2022: A Better Future for All Nigerians. Accessed from https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099730003152232753/pdf/P17630107476630fa09c990da780535511c.pdf
[48]Akinpelu Y. (2021), Special Report Kano, Akwa Ibom, Eight other States Housed Most of Nigeria's Out-Of-School Children. *Premium Times*. https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/483619-special-report-kano-akwa-ibom-eight-other-states-housed-most-of-nigerias-out-of-school-children.html?tztc=1
[49] https://www.dataphyte.com/latest-reports/how-well-did-yahaya-bello-of-kogi-state-perform-in-his-administration/
[50] Oyewale I. (2022), No Child of School Age Should Roam the Streets in Kogi- Bello Warns Parents. *This Day*. https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2022/01/27/no-child-of-school-age-should-roam-streets-in-kogi-bello-warns-parents/
[51] Ibid

The World Bank 2022 Poverty Assessment states that Kogi State has a Median deflated consumption per person/year of ₦171,148[52], and 35.9% of its people are multi dimensionally poor[53]. According to the Nigeria Living Standards Survey 2018/2019, Kogi State has an average household size of 4.94 family members[54]. Kogi State has a dependence ratio of 0.90 and an average proportion of 27.1% of households with female heads[55]. Its workforce is 55.9% of the total population[56] and 74.3% of households receive remittances, including 2.5 remittances internationally and 73.9 remittances domestically[57]. In Kogi State, the percentage of People with Disabilities is 1.44% for men and 2.72% for women[58].

5.2 Livelihood Sources

Kogi State's economy is mostly dependent on agriculture, with coffee, cashew, groundnut, cocoa, oil palm, and yam making up the majority of the state's crops. Other important businesses include the production of crude oil and animal husbandry, which involves the management of sheep, goats, and cattle[59]. Kogi State is renowned as an economic powerhouse in Africa since it is home to one of the largest cement factories in Africa, Obajana Cement Factory, and the largest iron and steel business in Nigeria, Ajaokuta Steel Company Limited[60].

5.3 Living Conditions

The Internally Generated Revenue statistics released by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) show that Kogi State stood at ₦9.6 billion as of the first half of the year 2021[61]. Kogi receives 76.59% of its revenue from the federation and only 23.41% from the state, indicating an over-dependence on federal allocations[62]. Therefore, the State must develop means to internally generate revenue thereby reducing over-dependence on federal allocations and ultimately enhancing its fiscal sustainability[63]. In 2021 Data from the Debt

[52] The World Bank (2022) Nigeria Poverty Assessment 2022: A Better Future for All Nigerians, Page 28. https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099730003152232753/pdf/P17630107476630fa09c990da780535511c.pdf
[53] Ibid, Page 44
[54] NBS (2020) Nigeria Living Standards Survey 2018/2019, page 9 https://nigerianstat.gov.ng/download/1123
[55] Ibid
[56] Ibid Page 49
[57] Ibid Page 62
[58] NBS (2020) Nigeria Living Standards Survey 2018/2019, page 42 https://nigerianstat.gov.ng/download/1123
[59] https://thedailysblog.com/facts-about-kogi-state
[60] Ibid
[61] NBS (2021), Internally Generated Revenue At State Level (H1 2021), https://nigerianstat.gov.ng/elibrary/read/1241089#:~:text=The%2036%20States%20and%20FCT,it%20amounted%20to%20N450%2C864%2C040%2C568.57.
[62] https://www.dataphyte.com/latest-reports/how-well-did-yahaya-bello-of-kogi-state-perform-in-his-administration/, https://yourbudgit.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/State-of-States-report-2021-web.pdf
[63] Ibid

Management Office (DMO),[64] showed that Kogi State recorded the highest reduction of domestic debts owed by the state government by N59.15 billion between December 2019 and September 2020[65].

5.4 Tertiary Institutions

There are numerous tertiary institutions located within the State, including Federal University, Lokoja, Ahmadu Bello University, Kabba College of Agriculture, Federal Polytechnic, Idah, Kogi State University Anyigba, Confluence University of Science and Technology (CUSTECH), Osara, Kogi State University, Kabba, Kogi State Polytechnic, Lokoja, Salem University, Lokoja, Federal College of Education, Okene, College of Education Ankpa.

[64] https://guardian.ng/business-services/kogi-tops-states-with-reduced-domestic-debts-in-2020-dmo/, https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/more-news/434966-kogi-kastina-bauchi-top-list-of-states-with-reduced-domestic-debts-report.html
[65] Ibid

Political Environment

In Nigeria's electoral and political context, off-cycle governorship elections brought on by court processes that interfere with the main electoral cycle has become a norm. Kogi state governorship election is one of the off-cycle elections that is conducted after the general election.

6.1 Brief History

The movement to establish Kogi State was launched in 1981 when several well-known residents of the former Kabba Province, including Professor Albert Ozigi, Joseph Abu Ogbeha, Liman Umar, Walter Bako, and Timothy Elukpo, mobilized and formed a committee under the leadership of Senator Ahmadu Ali to push for the establishment of the State[66]. In the 1980s, the group presented a document to the National Assembly calling for the establishment of Kogi State[67].

The Okun Yoruba, the Ebira, and other ethnic minorities from the southern region of the former Kwara State as well as the Igala from Benue State were to be a part of the planned State at that time[68]. The agitation for establishing the State was unabated even though the endeavor did not bear fruit before the Shagari government's final overthrow a few years later. As soon as the Buhari military government took office, the agitation was revived. However, after General Ibrahim Babangida took over, the agitations substantially gained momentum.

The formation of Kogi State was announced on August 27, 1991, by the former military president General Ibrahim Babangida (Rtd)[69]. For its natives, the establishment of Kogi State was an important event as it brought about the reunion of a people who shared historical roots[70]. Since its creation, Kogi State has had nine (9) regimes and administrations. The table below shows that four of these were military administrations and others civilian rule.

Table 8: Kogi State Administration Since Creation in 1991

S/N	Names	Party	Year
1	Danladi Mohammed Zakar	Military	1991-1992
2	Abubakar Audu	NRC	1992-1993

[66] https://www.kogipedia.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Historic-Facts-and-Figurs.pdf
[67] Ibid, https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/03/ogbeha-wife-begged-babangida-create-kogi-state/
[68] Ibid
[69] https://kogistate.gov.ng/history/
[70] Ibid

3	Colonel Paul Omeruo	Military	1993-1996
4	Colonel Bizigu Afakirya	Military	1996-1998
5	Augustine Aniebo	Military	1998-1999
6	Abubakar Audu	APP[71]/ANPP	1999-2003
7	Ibrahim Idris	PDP	2003-2011[72]
8	Clarence Olafemi	PDP	2008-2008[73]
9	Idris Wada	PDP	2012-2016
10	Alhaji Yahaya Adoza Bello	APC	2016 till date

Source: Compiled by The Electoral Hub[74]

6.2 The 2023 Governorship Election

The Kogi governorship election is a four-horse race between the ruling party, All Progressive Congress (APC), the major opposition party, Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Social Democratic Party (SDP), and Action Democratic Congress (ADC). This is because these parties' nominated candidate with strongholds. For the ruling party, Usman Ododo is perceived to be the Governors anointed candidate, while PDP, Senator Dino Melaye is a dominant political figure in Kogi politics, and this puts him in the forefront of the race. The candidate of SDP was the former deputy national publicity secretary of the APC, after his resignation from the party he emerged as the SDP governorship candidate[75]. Leke Abejide the governorship candidate of ADC is presently a member of the House of Representatives[76].

Usman Ododo, the candidate of the ruling party, the APC, is from Okenne LGA, while his running mate, Joel Oyibo Salifu, is from Ofu LGA. While the PDP candidate Senator Dino Melaye is from Ijumu LGA and his running mate Muhammed Deen Habiba, Ankpa LGA. The Social Democratic Party (SDP) candidate, Yakubu Murtala, hails from Igala Mela LGA and running mate, Abenemi Sam Ranyi is from Lokoja LGA. The Action Democratic Congress (ADC) candidate, Abejide Leke Joseph is from Yagba East LGA and his running mate Omeide Idris hails from Dekina LGA. This includes four candidates from Kogi East

[71] Abubakar Audu won the governorship election under the All People's Party (APP) which later became the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) after merger with United Nigeria Peoples Party (UNPP)
[72] He was re-elected for a second term.
[73] When the then Governor was removed from office due to a political crisis, he was given the responsibility of governing the State during this time.
[74] From https://www.kogipedia.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Historic-Facts-and-Figurs.pdf
[75] https://www.icirnigeria.org/november-govship-polls-behold-the-major-candidates-in-imo-bayelsa-kogi/
[76] Ibid

senatorial zone, three candidates from Kogi West senatorial zone and one candidate from Kogi Central zone.

In line with the INEC timetable and schedule for the Kogi State governorship election, campaigns by political parties began officially on 14 June 2023 and it is to end on 9 November 2023[77]. Since the beginning of campaign each political party have carried out consolidated efforts towards ensuring the victory of its candidates in the election. Campaign rallies have witnessed party chieftains showing support for the party's candidate. For instance, the Vice President, Shettima Kassim officially launched the commencement of APC campaign during the mega rally in the State[78]. The rally was attended by the APC National Chairman, Abdullahi Ganduje, Governor Yahaya Bello, Ogun State Governor, Dapo Abiodun, the APC governorship candidate in Kogi, Ahmed Ododo and other party faithfuls[79]. In another event, the incumbent governor of the State, Governor Yahaya Bello had shown his support for the party's flagbearer during a rally where he urged the people to vote for the party in the forthcoming election[80].

Also, members of the National Contact and Mobilization Committee in the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) including Former Minister of Police Affairs, Barrister Humphrey Abba, Chairman of Kogi state chapter of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) Chief John Odawn and former State commissioner, Mrs. Ruth Eke Iyaji and the National Campaign Council's committee chairman on contact and mobilization, Professor Jerry Gana; North Central Zonal chairman Dakas Shawn had shown their support for the party's flag bearer during his visit to Dekina local government[81]. Former Senate President Bukola Saraki, and Governor Ademola Adeleke of Osun State were present at the PDP's flag-off campaign in Kogi state to show their support for the party's governorship candidate[82].

It is interesting to note that all the political parties contesting in the election are confident of attaining victory come November 11, 2023. Each of the governorship candidates has made promises and assured the people of developing the state if elected as the Governor of the State.

[77] https://www.inecnigeria.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/TIMETABLE-FOR-2023-KOGI-BAYELSA-IMO-GOVERNORSHIP-ELECTION-1.pdf
[78] https://punchng.com/kogi-poll-shettima-kicks-off-apc-campaign-vows-ajaokuta-revival/
[79] Ibid
[80] https://pmnewsnigeria.com/2023/10/22/massive-crowd-as-yahaya-bello-leads-apc-governorship-campaign-to-kogi-east/
[81] https://thenewsnigeria.com.ng/2023/09/21/kogi-2023-kogi-east-pdp-leaders-rally-round-dino-melaiye/
[82] Vanguard (2023), Kogi guber: Saraki, Adeleke storm PDP campaign flag-off. https://www.vanguardngr.com/2023/10/video-kogi-guber-saraki-adeleke-storm-pdp-campaign-flag-off/

6.3 Intra Party Issues and Defections

All-Progressives Congress (APC)

In the lead-up to the Kogi governorship election, there was a fall-out between Governor Yahaya Bello and APC party faithful, Yakubu Murtala Ajaka. This was assumed to be linked to the outcome of the APC presidential primaries which the governor participated in[83]. Yakubu Murtala Ajaka was then suspended from the party, also the High Court in Lokoja restricted him from participating in the primaries[84]. However, a counter-judgement was given by a Federal Capital Territory High Court operating in the Abuja Judicial Division which issued a temporary injunction preventing the APC from acting on the alleged suspension of Ajaka[85]. The primary was conducted and Governor Yahaya Bello's anointed candidate, Ahmed Ododo was declared the APC governorship candidate[86]. The fallout continued with several allegations labeled against each other of plotting attacks, the Governor as well as the now SDP candidate, Yakubu Ajaka had both alleged that the other carried out attacks against them[87].

Another wave of crisis rose following the declaration of Usman Ododo as the APC flagbearer for the Kogi governorship election, aggrieved aspirants in the primaries were not pleased with the outcome as he was perceived to be Governor Yahaya Bello's anointed candidate, and so they demanded the cancellation of the primaries[88]. Two of the aspirants Smart Adeyemi and Shuaibu Abubakar filed a suit to question the result of the primaries[89]. The suit by Senator Smart Adeyemi was dismissed by The Federal High Court noting that the case against Usman Ododo was not valid and as such he remains the party's flagbearer

[83]Akinfehinwa J. (2023), Kogi Guber: Governor Bello, SDP Candidate Akaja in Tough Battle. *Daily Post*. https://dailypost.ng/2023/07/18/kogi-guber-gov-bello-sdp-candidate-ajaka-in-tough-battle/
[84] Ibid
[85] Ibid
[86] Ibid
[87]This Day (2023), Yahaya Bello, SDP Candidate in Verbal War Over Attack by Gunmen. https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2023/06/04/yahaya-bello-sdp-guber-candidate-in-verbal-war-over-attack-by-gunmen, https://www.channelstv.com/2023/10/01/kogi-poll-sdp-alleges-attack-on-ajaka-police-cp-orders-probe/
[88] Ejekwonyilo A. (2023), Kogi Governorship Aspirants Ask Court to Nullify Primary Election. *Premium Times*. https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/595442-kogi-apc-governorship-aspirants-ask-court-to-nullify-primary-election.html, https://www.channelstv.com/2023/04/27/kogi-apc-governorship-primary-smart-adeyemi-shuaibu-abubakar-others-demand-cancellation/
[89] Ibid

for the election[90]. Senator Adeyemi's lawyers appealed the decision at the Court of Appeal, Abuja Division, arguing that the trial judge had violated the law by attempting to provide a legal shield for the Kogi State APC primaries[91]. The Court of Appeal also dismissed the suit noting that the claims were to be proven by the complaint[92]. This prompted Senator Smart Adeyemi to present his case at the Supreme Court. After hearing the case presented, the Supreme Court adjourned its judgment to October 23, 2023[93]. The case was also dismissed by the Apex Court on the grounds of concrete evidence to back up claims[94].

People's Democratic Party (PDP)

The Kogi State chapter of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) had witnessed some crisis as some of the aspirants rejected the primaries delegate list on the grounds that the list was made to protect the interest of a particular aspirant[95]. The aggrieved aspirants: Abayomi Awoniyi, Abdullahi Haruna, Ruben Atabo, Mohammed Usman, Musa Wada, Kingsley Lona, Gedion Ojata, and M. Bolufemi filed a case seeking the invalidation of the delegate list[96]. The High Court of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, dismissed the case on the grounds that the court lacked authority to hear the case[97].

The crisis worsened as some party faithful in the State accused the party's presidential candidate of trying to impose Senator Dino Melaye as the governorship candidate[98]. Following the emergence of Senator Dino Melaye as the governorship candidate, key party stakeholders in Kogi resigned their membership of the party. For instance, a member of the State Working Committee of the Kogi State Peoples Democratic Party, PDP, Mr. Stephen Onoji, who also served as the Youth leader for Kogi State PDP, resigned his membership

[90] Premium Times (2023), Again, Court Affirms Ododo as Kogi APC Governorship Candidate. https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/more-news/610507-again-court-affirms-ododo-as-kogi-apc-governorship-candidate.html, https://www.thecable.ng/court-dismisses-smart-adeyemis-suit-seeking-nullification-of-kogi-apc-guber-primary

[91] https://tribuneonlineng.com/kogi-primaries-as-battle-shifts-to-appeal-court/

[92] https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2023/09/30/scourt-to-deliver-judgement-on-apc-primary-oct-23-as-adeyemi-insists-on-proceeding-with-appeal

[93] https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2023/09/30/scourt-to-deliver-judgement-on-apc-primary-oct-23-as-adeyemi-insists-on-proceeding-with-appeal

[94] https://www.channelstv.com/2023/10/23/apc-primary-supreme-court-dismisses-adeyemis-appeal-against-ododo/

[95] https://www.vanguardngr.com/2023/04/pdp-governorship-senatorial-aspirants-in-kogi-cry-foul-over-primary-election-delegates-list/

[96] Premium Times (2023), Kogi Governorship Primaries: Court Dismisses Suit Seeking to Nullify PDP Delegates List. https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/more-news/593212-kogi-governorship-primaries-court-dismisses-suit-seeking-to-nullify-pdp-delegates-list.html

[97] Ibid

[98] Sahara Reporters (2023), Crisis Rocks Kogi PDP as Chieftains Accuse Atiku Plotting to Impose Dino Melaye as Governorship Candidate. https://saharareporters.com/2023/04/04/crisis-rocks-kogi-pdp-chieftains-accuse-atiku-plotting-impose-dino-melaye-governorship

of the party[99]. Another example is that a few weeks before the election, Arc. Abayomi Awoniyi, one of the aggrieved aspirants who expressed concerns about the conduct of the primaries[100] tendered his resignation letter to the Chairman of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in Mopamuro Local Government Area of the State[101]. Similarly, the Peoples Democratic Party, PDP, Chairman in Okehi Local Government Area of Kogi State, Mr. Adinoyi Aroke also resigned his membership of the party in the lead-up to the election[102].

These developments have implications for the outcome of elections, particularly in the case of the All Progressive Congress (APC) where the Court is still presiding over pre-election litigations just weeks before the election. This brings the possibility of the Court mandating INEC to make changes to previous preparations, and this would distort preparations that had been made by the Commission.

6.4 Citizens' Participation and Apathy

Elections that are free, fair, and credible depend on citizen involvement. Voter education must be ongoing and continue through election-day to encourage participation. Sensitization, awareness-building, and voter mobilization are all components of promoting public engagement in the election process. Free and fair elections are essential to democracy, as they allow people to select their political leaders and then to hold them accountable. They give people the opportunity to evaluate the past, debate the future, approve policies for the country, address wrongs, and/or protest the limitation of their rights. Elections are key to establishing voters' and the individual's political rights and legitimizing the government.

6.5 COVID-19 Pandemic

The INEC policy for conducting elections in the framework of COVID-19 is still appropriate, notwithstanding the fact that experience to date indicates that voters rarely [103]abide by COVID-19 protocols. This is also because the Commission is yet to revise its COVID-19 policy. The Policy stipulate, among other things, the usage of facemasks in polling places as well as a social distance of two meters, the use of sanitizers, and mentholated spirits to clean the accrediting machines and other surfaces. Similar to

[99] https://dailypost.ng/2023/07/19/kogi-pdp-youth-leader-resigns/
[100] https://www.pulse.ng/news/politics/kogi-pdp-guber-primaries-not-credible-awoniyi/jx9txfb
[101] Omole A. (2023), More Trouble for Kogi PDP as Ex-Deputy Governor Awoniyi Dumps Party. *Leadership*. https://leadership.ng/more-trouble-for-kogi-pdp-as-ex-deputy-gov-awoniyi-dumps-party/
[102]Akinfehinwa J. (2023), PDP Chairman Resigns in Kogi. *Daily Post*. https://dailypost.ng/2023/09/12/pdp-chairman-resigns-in-kogi/
[103]https://covid19.ncdc.gov.ng/media/files/ElectionsDuringCOVID-19July2020.pdf

previous recently held elections, there is a strong probability that COVID-19 regulations would not be followed as Nigerians have returned to their pre-covid19 way of life.

Contesting Political Parties

Eighteen political parties will be participating in the election including Accord Party (A), Action Alliance (AA), African Action Congress (AAC), Action Democratic Congress (ADC), Action Democratic Party (ADP), All Progressive Congress (APC), All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA), Allied Peoples Movement (APM), Action People Party (APP), Boot Party (BP), Labour Party (LP), New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP), National Rescue Movement (NRM), Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Peoples Redemption Party (PRP), Social Democratic Party (SDP), Young Progressives Party (YPP) and Zenith Labour Party (ZLP)[104]. The political parties and candidates for the 2023 Kogi governorship election are:

Table 9: Contesting Political Parties and Candidates

Party	Position	Candidates	PWD	Age	Sex
A	Governorship	Jubrin Usman Oyibe	X	63	M
	Deputy governorship	Olamife Raphael	X	59	M
AA	Governorship	Braimoh Olayinka Adenehon	X	46	M
	Deputy governorship	Tijani Yahaya Imam	X	46	M
AAC	Governorship	Achimugu Augustine Abu	X	48	M
	Deputy governorship	Bamidele Oladeji Victor	X	45	M
ADC	Governorship	Abejide Leke Joseph	X	48	M
	Deputy governorship	Omeide Idris	X	60	M
ADP	Governorship	Elukpo Julius	X	77	M
	Deputy governorship	Adaava Abdullahi	X	42	M
APC	Governorship	Ahmed Usman Ododo	X	45	M
	Deputy governorship	Salifu Joel	X	55	M
APGA	Governorship	Ilonah Idoko Kingsley	X	44	M
	Deputy governorship	Yakubu Abubakar Bawa[105]	X	52	M
APM	Governorship	Isah Dauda Utenwojo	X	41	M
	Deputy governorship	Olege John Kola	X	61	M
APP	Governorship	Onaji Sunday Frank	X	35	M
	Deputy governorship	Kekere Rahanatu	X	35	F
BP	Governorship	Muhammed Kabir Umar	X	40	M
	Deputy governorship	Eleojo Victoria	X	42	F
LP	Governorship	Okemeh Adejoh	X	40	M

[104] INEC (2023), https://inecnigeria.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/List-of-Candidates-Kogi-State.pdf45

[105]INEC had amended the candidate list following court order to input Yakubu Abubakar Bawa as the right candidate. https://inecnigeria.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/AMENDED-LIST-OF-CANDIDATES-FOR-THE-2023-KOGI-STATE-GOVERNORSHIP-ELECTION-PURSUANT-TO-COURT-ORDERS-.pdf

	Deputy governorship	Hamza Mohammed	X	55	M
NNPP	Governorship	Hassan Abdullahi[106]	X	35	M
	Deputy governorship	Oni Felix Sunday	X	56	M
NRM	Governorship	Dirisu Bala Abdulghafar	X	44	M
	Deputy governorship	Onoja Ernest Enemona	X	43	M
PDP	Governorship	Melaye Daniel Dino	X	49	M
	Deputy governorship	Muhammed Deen Habiba	X	45	F
PRP	Governorship	Dr. Abdullahi Bayawo	X	54	M
	Deputy governorship	Sunday Dennis Ozomata	X	48	M
SDP	Governorship	Yakubu Murtala	X	45	M
	Deputy governorship	Abenemi Sam Ranyi	X	62	M
YPP	Governorship	Omale Samson Agada	X	64	M
	Deputy governorship	Suleman Mohammed Siyaka	X	41	M
ZLP	Governorship	Suleiman Taiye Fatima	X	48	F
	Deputy governorship	Omolowo Mathew	X	46	M

Source: INEC[107]

Since the return to civilian rule in 1999, power in Kogi state had been alternated between the PDP and APC[108]. They have both governed the state for 12 years, while PDP ruled in 2003-2008, 2008-2012, and 2012-2016, APC ruled in 1999-2003, 2016-2019, 2019-2023. APC is the ruling party currently in Kogi State. Strong political actors from both parties are prevalent in the State as evidenced in the section on Political Actors.

The All Progressive Congress (APC) in addition to being the ruling party nationally is also the ruling party at the State level. It occupies the three senatorial seats in the National Assembly, seven out of the nine House of Representative members are of the APC, also 21 House of Assembly members are from APC[109]. This feat serves as strength for the party in the upcoming election.

The PDP which is the major opposition party in the State also has its strength as it has won 3 governorship elections in the State. It used to be the ruling party at the national level having ruled from 1999-2015. Currently, it has one member in the House of Representatives and two members in the State House of Assembly.

[106]INEC had amended the candidate list following a court order to input Hassan Abdullahi as the right candidate. https://inecnigeria.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/AMENDED-LIST-OF-CANDIDATES-FOR-THE-2023-KOGI-STATE-GOVERNORSHIP-ELECTION-PURSUANT-TO-COURT-ORDERS-.pdf
[107] Ibid
[108] As APP/ANPP in 1999. ANPP is one of the parties that merged with others to form APC in 2014.
[109] See Table 3, 4, and 5, section 3- Electoral Background.

The PDP candidate, Senator Dino Melaye is a popular politician in the State having served as Senator. He is known for his numerous controversies and scandals[110]. Other parties and candidates to look out for are SDP's Yakubu Murtala and ADC's Abejide Leke Joseph. It is interesting to note that both parties have never produced the government both at the federal level and at the state level. SDP had gain recognition in the State with the candidature of Senator Natasha Akpoti as the governorship candidate in the last governorship election. This time around the candidature of Yakubu Murtala a former member of the ruling party has also given the party a hedge in the election. The constant attacks on the party can also attest to this fact.

Other political parties that have fielded candidates are not well-known in the state, as they have not received much media attention, and have not come up frequently in conversations among the general population. Additionally, the electorate is less informed and knows little to nothing about them because of this lack of awareness. The parties' chances of winning the election are significantly impacted by this low degree of popular participation. It is evident from current patterns that the race is between major opposition party, the PDP, and the incumbent party, the APC. They hold the best chance of being elected and becoming the State's next governor. The ruling party have a higher chance of winning as power of incumbency can influence the election, in addition the APC governorship candidate Usman Ododo is Governor Yahaya Bello's preferred candidate[111].

Amongst the major opposition parties, two are from Okunland the marginalized ethnic group in the State as they have never produced a governor in the State. PDP and ADC have both fielded candidates from the Okun ethnic group, and the people are hopeful that they will produce a governor in this election[112].

[110] https://dailytrust.com/10-unforgettable-things-about-senator-dino-melaye/
[111] https://www.channelstv.com/2023/04/13/yahaya-bello-endorses-ododo-as-onoja-others-quit-kogi-apc-primary/
[112] https://gazettengr.com/melaye-group-wants-okunland-to-produce-next-kogi-governor/

Inclusion and Representation

Democracy is embodied in inclusive political participation and representation in democratic institutions and processes, where everyone has an equal opportunity to engage in and contribute to decision-making[113]. This goes beyond the right to vote, rather it ensures the right to vote and be voted for freely without fear or intimidation[114]. Yet, after 24 years of uninterrupted democratic rule in Nigeria, reports of exclusion from electoral activities for women, youths and Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) tagged the marginalized populations lingers[115].

However, initiatives to strengthen our democracy are ongoing, and visible advancements are being achieved in the form of laws and policies that defend the rights of marginalized populations, such as women, young people, and PWDs. Some of these regulations include; the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa (The Maputo Protocol), the African Youth Charter, The Nigerian Constitution, The Electoral Act, 2022, the Discrimination Against PWDs (Prohibition) Act, and National Youth Policy[116].

The Kogi State governorship election presents us with another empirical opportunity to gauge our progress towards an inclusive and representative democracy with a demographic breakdown of the candidates vying for the highest seat in the state presented below:

Table 10: Inclusivity of Governorship Candidates

S/N	Party	Contestant	M	F	PWDs	Youth
1	A	Jubrin Usman Oyibe	√	-	-	-
2	AA	Braimoh Olayinka Adenehon	√	-	-	-
3	AAC	Achimugu Augustine Abu	√	-	-	-
4	ADC	Abejide Leke Joseph	√	-	-	-
5	ADP	Elukpo Julius	√	-	-	-
6	APC	Ahmed Usman Ododo	√	-	-	-
7	APGA	Ilonah Idoko Kingsley	√	-	-	-
8	APM	Isah Dauda Utenwojo	√	-	-	-

[113] IDEAS (2013) Inclusive Political Participation and Representation https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/inclusive-political-participation-and-representation.pdf
[114] Ibid
[115] PLAC (2022) REPORT ON INCLUSIVITY IN NIGERIA'S ELECTIONS https://placng.org/i/wpcontent/uploads/2022/04/Report-on-Inclusivity-in-Nigerias-Elections.pdf
[116] The Electoral Hub (2022) POLITICAL CONTEXT ANALYSIS: 2022 OSUN STATE GOVERNORSHIP ELECTION

9	APP	Onaji Sunday Frank	√	-	-	√
10	BP	Muhammed Kabir Umar	√	-	-	-
11	LP	Okemeh Adejoh	√	-	-	-
12	NNPP	Hassan Abdullahi[117]	√	-	-	√
13	NRM	Dirisu Bala Abdulghafar	√	-	-	-
14	PDP	Melaye Daniel Dino	√	-	-	-
15	PRP	Dr. Abdullahi Bayawo	√	-	-	-
16	SDP	Yakubu Murtala	√	-	-	-
17	YPP	Omale Samson Agada	√	-	-	-
18	ZLP	Suleiman Taiye Fatima		√	-	-

Source: INEC[118]

Table 10 above presents the governorships candidates involved in the Kogi state elections. Out of the eighteen candidates across the political parties, one female candidate (5.6%) makes the list with the remaining seventeen (94.4%) males. Also, only two of the eighteen candidates contesting are between the constitutional youthful ages of 18 – 35 years while no PWD makes the list. Once again this exposes the unbalanced and unequal inclusivity and representation of the marginalized groups. A combined marginalized group having a low percentage of 16.6% out of a possible 100%. For women, only the candidates of the ZLP represent the group. While, despite the positive enactment of the "Not Too Young to Run" policy, the youth are still under-represented by the candidates of APP and NNPP alone. It is a catastrophic situation for PWD having no single candidates vying for the governorship position. Hence, we continue to witness historic trends from previous elections.

Table 11: Inclusivity of Deputy Governorship Candidates

S/N	Party	Contestant	M	F	PWD	Youth
1	A	Olamife Raphael	√		-	-
2	AA	Tijani Yahaya Imam	√		-	-
3	AAC	Bamidele Oladeji Victor	√		-	-
4	ADC	Bamidele Oladeji Victor	√		-	-

[117]INEC had amended the candidate list following court order to input Hassan Abdullahi as the right candidate. https://inecnigeria.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/AMENDED-LIST-OF-CANDIDATES-FOR-THE-2023-KOGI-STATE-GOVERNORSHIP-ELECTION-PURSUANT-TO-COURT-ORDERS-.pdf

[118] INEC (2023) PUBLICATION OF THE FINAL LIST OF CANDIDATES FOR BAYELSA, IMO AND KOGI STATES GOVERNORSHIP ELECTIONS https://inecnigeria.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/List-of-Candidates-Kogi-State.pdf

5	ADP	Adaava Abdullahi	√		-	-
6	APC	Salifu Joel	√		-	-
7	APGA	Yakubu Abubakar Bawa[119]	√		-	-
8	APM	Olege John Kola	√		-	-
9	APP	Kekere Rahanatu		√	-	√
10	BP	Eleojo Victoria		√	-	-
11	LP	Hamza Mohammed	√		-	-
12	NNPP	Oni Felix Sunday	√		-	-
13	NRM	Onoja Ernest Enemona	√		-	-
14	PDP	Muhammed Deen Habiba		√	-	-
15	PRP	Sunday Dennis Ozomata	√		-	-
16	SDP	Adenemi Sam Ranyi	√		-	-
17	YPP	Suleman Mohammed Siyaka	√		-	-
18	ZLP	Omolowo Mathew	√		-	-

Source: INEC[120]

Table 11 above shows the candidates under the deputy governorship positions in the Kogi state off cycle elections. While this demonstrates a better outing for the marginalized group owing to three (16.6%) females making the list out of the eighteen candidates across political parties which represents the Women Group, one (5.5%) out of the eighteen candidates contesting between the youthful ages of 18 – 35 years representing the Youth Group, once again no PWD is represented across the political parties. However, this higher percentage seen under the deputy governorship position with 22.2% for marginalized groups which is still grossly inadequate. This shows an abysmal level of inclusivity and representation, prompting the need for more continuous efforts geared towards having stronger democratic institutions.

Overall, out of the possible thirty-six candidates (eighteen governorship and eighteen deputy governorship), four (11.11%) are women which falls short of the minimum of 35% reserved for women in the National Gender Policy (NGP). While the three (8.3%) young candidates do not place the "Not too Young to Run" policy in a good light. The zero (0%)

[119]INEC had amended the candidate list following court order to input Yakubu Abubakar Bawa as the right candidate. https://inecnigeria.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/AMENDED-LIST-OF-CANDIDATES-FOR-THE-2023-KOGI-STATE-GOVERNORSHIP-ELECTION-PURSUANT-TO-COURT-ORDERS-.pdf

[120] INEC (2023) PUBLICATION OF THE FINAL LIST OF CANDIDATES FOR BAYELSA, IMO AND KOGI STATES GOVERNORSHIP ELECTIONS https://inecnigeria.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/List-of-Candidates-Kogi-State.pdf

representation from both the governorship and deputy governors' positions across the political parties calls for an urgent policy consideration for this group.

It is imperative to place into perspective the fact that men tend to dominate party hierarchy because they make up a superior majority of party members. This has an impact on who receives what and how, including who flies the party flag at elections which might explain the possible low women representation[121]. Research has also acknowledged that financial resources which play a crucial role in political ambitions is a major constraint limiting women in politics[122]. Due to the discrepancy and unequal access to the resources required to start and support a successful career in politics, women are at a disadvantage. Even when a few women succeeding to breaking into politics, they still have to deal with prejudice and other difficulties associated with maintaining a career in politics[123].

However, it has been argued that the main causes of political exclusion in Nigeria are the unwillingness of political parties to address the issue of monetization of the electoral process. It claimed that political parties are not even following its inclusionary constitution "All the political parties may seem highly inclusive on paper, notably in terms of processes, provisions and opportunities for women, young people, and persons with disabilities" but in truth, it is just the opposite[124]. Hence, stakeholders and development partners must reconsider its relationship with political parties in the wake of the 2023 general elections because of the disappointing results and the scandalously low number of women in elective offices[125]. The National Assembly has been requested by the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) to introduce affirmative action legislation that will establish quotas for women, young people, and people with disabilities in elected and appointed positions[126]. The report stated that "Legislators should institute quotas at all levels that include rank orders rules for candidate lists for women, young people, persons with disabilities, and introduce both incentives and sanctions (financial and non-financial) for relevant stakeholders" to ensure more inclusivity going forward. They also encouraged the

[121]Ashindorbe, K. (2022) Two Decades of Democracy in Nigeria https://www.eisa.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/2022-journal-of-african-elections-v21n2-two-decades-democracy-nigeria-consolidation-regression-eisa.pdf
[122] The Electoral Hub (2022), Political Context Analysis: 2022 Osun State Governorship Election
[123] Ashindorbe, K. (2022). Two Decades of Democracy in Nigeria https://www.eisa.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/2022-journal-of-african-elections-v21n2-two-decades-democracy-nigeria-consolidation-regression-eisa.pdf
[124] Premium Times (2023). Political Inclusion: WFD asks National Assembly to introduce laws on quotas for women, PWDs https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/625136-political-inclusion-wfd-asks-national-assembly-to-introduce-laws-on-quotas-for-women-pwds.html
[125] Premium Times (2023). Gender Gap: Group calls for review of strategy on achieving women inclusion in electoral processs. https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/more-news/617384-gender-gap-group-calls-for-review-of-strategy-on-achieving-women-inclusion-in-electoral-process.html
[126] Ibid 10

lawmakers to evaluate current legislation to promote inclusivity and lower the costs of standing for elective positions across the several tiers of political party structures, ward, local government, state, and national for women, young people, and PWD[127]. This will help address the enormous burden of needing a hefty financial base to be able to compete and maintain a sustainable political career.

[127] Ibid 10

Main Political and Socio-Cultural Actors

9.1 Political Actors

Dino Melaye was a former senator and a member of the 8th Nigerian National Assembly, representing Kogi West Senatorial district[128]. He was also a member of the People's Democratic Party. He left the PDP in 2015 to join the All Progressives Congress (APC), but after months of conflict with the governor of Kogi State, he joined the PDP again in the run-up to the 2019 elections[129]. He once served as the Chairman, Senate Committee on Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja[130] and shortly as the Senate Committee Chairman on Aviation in Nigeria[131]. He served as the spokesperson for Atiku Abubakar, the People's Democratic Party's candidate for in the 2023 presidential election[132], he also served as the national collation agent for the People's Democratic Party (PDP) where there were controversies over his actions during the collation process[133]. He is the Candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), the major opposition party in Kogi State for the November 11 governorship election. He is known for his vocal and sometimes controversial political stances. He is one of the major candidates in the election.

Yahaya Adoza Bello is a businessman and politician who has served as the governor of Kogi State since 2016 till date. Following the death of former APC candidate Abubakar Audu on November 22, 2015 when the election was declared inconclusive, Yahaya Bello was declared the winner of the Kogi State governorship election on December 6, 2015[134]. Throughout his tenure in office, he has been the youngest governor of Nigeria[135]. He contested in the APC primaries that saw the emergence of Senator Bola Ahmed Tinubu the President of Nigeria as the party's flagbearer for the 2023 presidential election[136].

Adeyemi Smart Adeyemi in April 2007 was elected as a senator for Kogi State, Nigeria's Kogi West seat. He ran for office on the platform of the People's Democratic Party (PDP). In April 2011, he ran for the Kogi West Senator seat once more and was successful in the

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[128]Sunday O. (2023). Dino Melaye joins Kogi guber race after Atiku's presidential election loss. *Daily Post*. https://dailypost.ng/2023/03/29/dino-melaye-joins-kogi-guber-race-after-atikus-presidential-election-loss/

[129] https://businesspost.ng/general/dino-melaye-returns-to-pdp-dumps-apc/

[130] https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/03/962156/

[131] https://punchng.com/ndume-amosun-nnamani-dino-others-head-senate-committees/, He was replaced by Smart Adeyemi after the court invalidated his victory in the 2019 NASS election. https://dailypost.ng/2019/12/21/smart-adeyemi-gets-dino-melayes-senate-appointment/

[132] https://www.channelstv.com/2022/08/04/2023-election-atiku-names-dino-melaye-daniel-bwala-as-campaign-spokespersons/

[133] https://www.arise.tv/dino-melaye-others-stage-walkout-on-inec-chairman-want-result-collation-in-abuja-stopped/

[134] https://www.channelstv.com/2015/12/06/yahaya-bello-wins-kogi-state-governorship-election/

[135] https://apc.com.ng/home/team/yahaya-bello/

[136] https://www.thecable.ng/apc-primary-highly-compromised-but-yahaya-bello-fought-well-says-campaign-group

PDP primary to face off for reelection. On April 4, 2011, a court declared the PDP primary election invalid, citing a failure to adhere to the Electoral Act definition of due process. On April 7, a new primary was held, and Adeyemi emerged victorious over Abiye Abinso. Adeyemi was re-elected on April 9, 2011, in the elections. Adeyemi ran for office a third time, this time defeating Dino Melaye in a supplementary election following the Court of Appeal order[137]. He participated in the APC primaries for the 2023 Kogi governorship election that produced Usman Ododo as the party's governorship candidate. He was one of the aspirants who rejected the outcome of the primaries, he filed a case in the Federal High Court, Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court where his case was dismissed on the grounds of inadequate merit[138].

Edward Onoja is the Deputy Governor of Kogi State. He served as Buhari/Osinbajo's State Director of the Kogi Youth Arise Group in 2015[139]. He also served as the Director-General and Chief Strategist of the Alhaji Yahaya Bello Campaign Organization in front of the Kogi State 2015 governorship election[140]. Prior to taking up the position of Deputy Governor of Kogi State on October 21, 2019, he served as the Chief of Staff to the Governor of Kogi State[141]. This was due to the impeachment of Deputy Governor Simon Achuba by the Kogi State House of Assembly[142].

Ibrahim Idris was elected the governor of Kogi State in 2003[143]. He was reelected in 2007 for a second term[144] He is a member of the Peoples Democratic Party. Captain Idris Wada, his brother-in-law, took over as his successor after winning the December 2011 election and sworn-in in January 2012[145]. In Kogi State politics, he is still a significant figure.

Emmanuel Dangana Ocheja served as a Senator representing Kogi East senatorial district at the National Assembly from 2011 - 2015[146]. He contested in the PDP primary for the 2023 Kogi governorship election but he lost to Alhaji Ibrahim Idris[147]. Ocheja is the principal of the Nigerian legal business Dangana Global Legal Services (previously

[137] https://www.thecable.ng/breaking-smart-adeyemi-defeats-melaye-to-win-kogi-west-senatorial-seat, https://punchng.com/appeal-court-sacks-melaye-orders-rerun-within-90-days/
[138] https://www.vanguardngr.com/2023/09/supreme-court-adjourns-smart-adeyemis-case-against-kogi-apc-candidate-ododo/, https://www.channelstv.com/2023/10/23/apc-primary-supreme-court-dismisses-adeyemis-appeal-against-ododo/
[139] https://factualtimesng.com/kogi-2023-read-impressive-profile-of-edward-david-onoja/
[140] Ibid
[141] https://www.celebsagewiki.com/edward-david-onoja
[142] Ibid
[143] https://www.eduweb.com.ng/2003-kogi-state-governorship-election-results/
[144] https://www.eduweb.com.ng/2007-kogi-state-governorship-election/
[145] https://www.channelstv.com/2012/01/30/wada-sworn-in-as-kogi-governor/
[146] https://citizenssciencenigeria.org/public-offices/persons/emmanuel-dangana-ocheja
[147] https://allfamousbirthday.com/emmanuel-dangana-ocheja/

Dangana, Musa & Co.), which has offices in the states of Lagos, Kano, and Abuja. He is well-liked in his own constituency and a well-known figure in Kogi State politics[148].

Natasha Akpoti is a politician, lawyer, and a social entrepreneur. She is currently a member of the 10th Assembly. Her social venture, Builders Hub Impact Investment Program, was founded with the goal of reviving Nigeria's underutilized indigenous industries and generating employment opportunities[149]. She announced in 2018 that she would be running under the Social Democratic Party (SDP) in the Nigerian Senate to represent Kogi Central[150], but she lost to Yakubu Oseni of the All Progressives Congress (APC)[151]. In 2022, she clinched the PDP Kogi Central Senatorial candidate at the primary conducted[152]. Following the collation of the Kogi Central Election results, the APC's Mr. Sadiku-Ohere was declared the district's winner by INEC[153]. However, in a judgment by the Kogi State Election Tribunal, Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) was declared the winner of the Senatorial seat[154].

9.2 Socio-Cultural Actors

HRM Matthew Opaluwa was crowned the 28th Attah of Igala Kingdom in March 2022[155], following the approval of Governor Yahaya Bello[156]. He earned a master's degree in business administration at Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria. Prior to his appointment, he was a Deputy Director in the INEC, Katsina state[157]. He served in the Commission for over 30 years[158].

HRM Dr Abdul Rahman Ado Ibrahim became the new Ohinoyi of Ebiraland on June 2, 1997, following the death of the previous one, Alhaji Sanni Omolori, who held the position for forty years and forty days[159]. He graduated from London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) with a B.Sc. in Economics in 1954 and Harvard Business School with an MBA in 1959[160]. Thousands of Ebiras and foreign diplomats attended his

[148] https://www.politiciansdata.com/content/emmanuel-dangana-ocheja/
[149] https://m.facebook.com/1861390220812450/posts/natasha-h-akpotis-biography-and-educational-credentials-natasha-hadiza-akpoti-bo/2171082029843266/?locale=es_LA
[150] https://www.detectmind.com/natasha-akpoti-uduaghan-biography-age-occupation-and-net-worth/
[151] https://punchng.com/apc-wins-kogi-central-senate-seat/
[152] https://dailypost.ng/2022/05/25/natasha-akpoti-picks-pdp-senatorial-ticket-for-kogi-central/
[153] https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/619985-tribunal-declares-natasha-winner-of-kogi-central-senatorial-election.html
[154] Ibid
[155] https://von.gov.ng/attah-igala-coronated-in-idah/
[156] https://punchng.com/bello-approves-prince-matthew-opaluwa-as-attah-elect-of-igala-kingdom/
[157] https://ait.live/inec-officer-michael-opaluwa-emerges-new-attah-of-igala/
[158] https://stalliontimes.com/2021/10/18/prince-matthew-alhaji-opaluwa-is-new-ataigala/
[159] https://www.facebook.com/E2Dworldmagazine/posts/brief-biography-of-ohinoyi-of-ebira-land-his-royal-majesty-alhaji-dr-abdul-rahma/291122778950842/
[160] Ibid

coronation as the Ohinoyi of Ebiraland, which was a great ceremony that was featured on prominent Nigerian television channels for several days[161]. In January 2023, the Governor of Kogi state, Yahaya Bello issued a query to the traditional ruler on the grounds that he refused to come out to welcome the then-president, Muhammadu Buhari who had visited the state at that time[162]. The issue was resolved as Dr Abdul Rahman Ado Ibrahim pledged his support for the governor at the peace meeting that was held at the burial of the late Tafida of Ebira Land, Dr. Abdulazeez Umar Farooq[163].

HRM Oba Solomon Dele Owoniyi is the Obaro of Kabba and Chairman, of Okun Area Traditional Council. He was appointed the 44th Obaro of Kabba on October 20, 2018[164]. Before retiring, he worked as a news editor for the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) for twenty-seven years. During that time, he excelled in the Customs Service, rising to the position of Deputy Comptroller[165].

[161] Ibid
[162] https://saharareporters.com/2023/01/06/governor-yahaya-bello-queries-threatens-depose-kogi-prominent-monarch-ohinoyi-ebiraland
[163] https://tribuneonlineng.com/finally-yahaya-bello-ohinoyi-of-ebiraland-resolves-rift/
[164] https://kogireports.com/obaro-of-kabbas-coronation-citation-of-oba-solomon-owoniyi/
[165] Ibid

Civil Society Organizations

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) are voluntary non-state actors that promote and contribute to the awareness, growth, and sustainability of democratic values across the world. In Nigeria, their actions have been renowned in the areas of consolidating and elevating the electoral process and deepening knowledge of democratic institutions and values through advocacy, voter education and capacity building of stakeholders involved in democracy[166]. CSOs have been active throughout the 2023 electioneering season and have continued to act in the off-cycle elections in Kogi state. The following are some of the active participants in the Kogi off-cycle election.

10.1 The Electoral Hub

The Electoral Hub is the electoral arm of the Initiative for Research, Innovation and Advocacy in Development. The organization has been an active stakeholder in the electoral space, promoting electoral knowledge, integrity and accountability. Ahead of the 2023 off-cycle elections, The Electoral Hub prepared a factsheet and Political Context Analysis to provide insight into the political and social environment ahead of the election[167]. On November 7, 2023, The Electoral Hub also held a roundtable on Citizens' Rights and Impact of Insecurity on Elections[168]. This is part of its project supported by the **Open Society Foundations** and targeted at providing support to INEC through the production, policy dialogue and dissemination of three well-researched policy and briefing papers on the impact of insecurity on elections.

The Electoral Hub also proffered recommendations for improving ad-hoc staff performance drawing from its Electoral Ad-hoc Staff Experience Sharing Roundtable. They have also disseminated election-related information through infographics aimed at to improve knowledge public knowledge about the electoral process, enhancing voter education, and strengthening their quality of participation.

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[166] The Electoral Hub (2022). Political Context Analysis: 2022 Osun State Governorship Election. https://electoralhub.org/publications/political-context-analysis/political-context-analysis-2022-osun-state-governorship-election/

[167] www.electoralhub.org/publications

[168] https://electoralhub.org/news-and-events/gallery/
https://electoralhub.org/publications/policy-papers/impact-of-insecurity-on-inecs-preparedness-for-the-2023-general-election/
https://electoralhub.org/publications/policy-papers/gender-and-inclusion-dimension-of-impact-of-insecurity-on-the-2023-general-election/
https://electoralhub.org/publications/policy-papers/threat-of-electoral-violence-during-and-after-the-2023-general-election/

10.2 Federation of Women Lawyers

FIDA Nigeria is non-political, voluntary association of women lawyers who stand firmly on its principles of transparency, accountability, integrity, mutual respect, commitment, and service in seeking for the rights of women and children[169]. In the forthcoming elections FIDA has met with the gubernatorial candidates to demand for the signing of the Women Charter and sought for legislation encouraging women to actively participate in elections[170].

10.3 Women in Politics Forum, Kogi State

Women in Politics Forum (WIPF) is a non-governmental organization that seeks to increase the participation of women in the political and leadership space of Nigeria. The group has been active in ensuring that the reoccurring violence against women in previous elections are not experienced further in the 2023 Kogi governorship election through its advocacy for actors to desist from action of violence[171].

10.4 Participation Initiative for Behavioural Change and Development

Participation Initiative for Behavioural Change in Development (PIBCID) is a Non-overnmental Organization in Kogi that works against all forms of poverty by ensuring the fulfillment of the human right to live in dignity and peace by empowering the oppressed and marginalized people[172]. The group has ensured the recognition of women in governmental policies in Kogi state and have quizzed the governorship candidates to clearly state its agenda with regards to women in Kogi state. They have produced a working document to show as an agreement with the candidates in the election that will be used to hold all candidates accountable[173].

10.5 Conscience for Human Rights and Conflict Resolution (CHRCR)

CHRCR hosted diverse electoral stakeholders on its weekly phone-in program, *Perspectives*. For instance, it partnered with INEC on voter education on the radio platform where INEC used the platforms to disseminate electoral information. It hosted the INEC REC seven times on the program. It conducted advocacy visits to the Police and Civil Defence on electoral security and violence.

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[169] FIDA https://fida.org.ng/about-us/
[170] Freshangle International Guber Poll: Kogi Women Demand More Inclusion In Governance https://freshangleng.com/30175/guber-poll--kogi-women-demand-more-inclusion-in-governance
[171] Ibid
[172] PIBCID https://pibcid.wordpress.com/who-we-are/
[173] Freshangle International (2023) Guber Poll: Kogi Women Demand More Inclusion In Governance https://freshangleng.com/30175/guber-poll--kogi-women-demand-more-inclusion-in-governance

With support from MacArthur Foundation, CHRCR also conducted sensitization and education campaigns in the three Senatorial Districts Work on voting process, electoral corruption targeted at reducing the menace of vote trading during election. To amplify the message, it produced stickers and shirts to campaign against electoral corruption. Other electoral activities include partnership with civil society situation room to recruit, train and deploy election observers[174].

CHRCR organized a multi stakeholders one-day program engagement and sensitization of in Kogi East Senatorial District on women inclusion in political parties, political and leadership process. It advocated for issue-based subjects during campaigns and the need to engage elected political leaders to hold them accountable to its campaign promises, and for INEC to adequately engage citizens on the collection of PVCs[175].

10.6 Coalition of Civil Society Organizations

The coalition of Civil Society Organizations made up of 25 CSOs has been monitoring campaign activities of the Kogi governorships elections across the political parties to prevent security breaches and utterances that can have negative bearing on the buildup to elections and possible violence. In a statement issued after a three-day preview workshop on the off-cycle elections called on the security agencies to be on alert and caution any stakeholder found inciting violence[176].

10.7 Kogi NGOs Network

Kogi NGOs Network (KONGONET) during its annual general meeting with the theme "Civil Society and Democracy" advised all political actors in the state to maintain campaigns fixated on policies and solutions that were beneficial to the state. In the same vein the group urged INEC to maintain transparency, steadfastness and competence throughout the election while imploring the people of Kogi to shun any divisive acts, violence and embrace peace in the election[177].

[174] Comrade Idris Abdul Miliki, Executive Director, Conscience for Human Rights and Conflicts Resolution (CHRCR)

[175] This Day (2023) CSO Tasks INEC to Engage Citizens to Collect PVCs in Kogi https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2023/10/11/cso-tasks-inec-to-engage-citizens-to-collect-pvcs-in-kogi

[176] The Guardian Newspaper (2023) 25 CSOs warn Kogi SDP candidate, others against wild allegations, ethnic profiling https://guardian.ng/news/25-csos-warn-kogi-sdp-candidate-others-against-wild-allegations-ethnic-profiling/

[177] Nigerian Tribune (2023) Kogi 2023: Pursue issue-based campaign, NGO urges political actors https://tribuneonlineng.com/kogi-2023-pursue-issue-based-campaign-ngo-urges-political-actors/

10.8 Yiaga Africa

Yiaga Africa one of the leading Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) actively engaging the electoral process carried out a report titled the "Emerging Political and Security Trends in Bayelsa, Kogi, and Imo States". The report highlights emerging issues as well as contextual background ahead of the Off-cycle elections on November 11, 2023. Some of the emerging issues identified include, insecurity, distrust in Government institutions/weak institutions, unfair competition/executive impunity, intimidation of political opponents, poverty/economic crisis[178]. Yiaga Africa would also be engaging the Kogi governorship election through the #WatchingTheVote a citizen led election observation initiative[179].

[178] https://yiaga.org/publications/political-and-security-trends-in-bayelsa-kogi-and-imo-state/
[179] Ibid

In(security) and Violence

The overall security challenges in Kogi State have been reported to be insignificant despite being the doorway to the north, south, and western parts of the Country[180]. This is despite sharing borders with nine other states including states in North Central Nigeria where killings and mass kidnapping have become a norm[181]. This claim was further confirmed by INEC's security report on the build-up to the 2019 Governorship election. Out of the 17 Local Governments surveyed by INEC to ascertain the security risk level, 15 were deemed to have high chances of peaceful elections[182]. Also, before the 2019 elections, the then Kogi State's Commissioner of Police, Hakeem Busari, had assured the people that their lives and property would be protected since sufficient personnel were to be deployed for the elections[183].

However, these submissions were made null during the 2019 governorship election. According to the report of the Centre for Democracy and Development, across the 21 Local Governments in Kogi State, 10 people were killed and 79 issues of violence and election malpractices were recorded which included but were not limited to the kidnapping of ad hoc Staff, attacking of election observers, violent hijacking of electoral materials and intimidation of voters[184]. Furthermore, it was observed that the house of an APC chieftain was burnt by angry youths who were exasperated by the actions of some political thugs while journalists covering the elections were attacked at the polling unit of Dino Melaye[185]. One of the notable incidents of violence in the Kogi state 2019 governorship election was the gruesome murder of the People's Democratic Party women leader Acheju Abuh who was on the Wada/Aro campaign council, Ochadamu ward after the results of the election were announced[186].

[180] Blueprint Newspaper (2021). An Assessment of Security Situation in Kogi State. An assessment of security situation in Kogi state - Blueprint Newspapers Limited

[181] Ibid

[182] INEC (2019) Election Security Threats Assessment for Kogi State Governorship Election https://www.inecnigeria.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/ELECTION-SECURITY-THREATS-ASSESSMENT-FOR-KOGI-STATE-GOVERNORSHIP-ELECTION-2019.pdf

[183] Nextier (2023) Emerging Kogi Violence https://thenextier.com/emerging-kogi-violence/

[184] Premium Times Newspaper (2019) 10 deaths, 129 violent electoral crimes recorded in Kogi, Bayelsa elections - CDD https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/364034-10-deaths-129-violent-electoral-crimes-recorded-in-kogi-bayelsa-elections-cdd.html

[185] Ibid 4

[186] Punch Newspaper (2023) Insecurity: The monster threatening Kogi, Bayelsa, Imo off-season polls https://punchng.com/insecurity-the-monster-threatening-kogi-bayelsa-imo-off-season-polls/

This previously unknown violent trend continued in the build-up to the February 2023 Presidential and National Assembly elections in Kogi state so much so that it was tagged "*a usual spot for election violence*"[187]. According to the Nextier Violent Conflict Database, Kogi state was found to be among the probable states to witness electoral violence and reported intrusion in places like Anyigba and Dekina by thugs almost resulted in the cancellation of elections by INEC[188]. The 2023 general elections in Kogi state for Presidential and National Assembly had 4 episodes of clashes that resulted in 2 deaths and 11 kidnapped[189].

The story of the buildup of the November 2023 off-cycle elections in Kogi state is no different and has been threatened by pre-election violence and insecurity[190]. Several incidents perpetuated by political actors have been recorded across different timelines and noted to have reached overwhelming heights leading to the election which are narrated as follows:

1. On June 3, 2023, there was an assassination attempt on the Kogi State SDP governorship candidate, Muritala Ajaka, who was fortunate to escape the violent attack on his convoy[191].

2. Also, on June 3, 2023 along the Abuja-Lokoja highway Governor Yahaya Bello's convoy was reported to have been attacked by the supporters of the SDP, injuring his aides in the process[192].

3. On June 7, 2023, hoodlums raided Greenland community in Ajaokuta Local Government Area of Kogi State, three family members were kidnapped during the incident[193].

[187] Punch Newspaper (2019) Bloody gov polls: Four killed in Kogi, violence rocks Bayelsa https://punchng.com/bloody-gov-polls-four-killed-in-kogi-violence-rocks-bayelsa/
[188] Ibid
[189] Ibid
[190] Punch Newspaper (2023) Insecurity: The monster threatening Kogi, Bayelsa, Imo off-season polls https://punchng.com/insecurity-the-monster-threatening-kogi-bayelsa-imo-off-season-polls/
[191] Punch Newspaper (2023) Insecurity: The monster threatening Kogi, Bayelsa, Imo off-season polls https://punchng.com/insecurity-the-monster-threatening-kogi-bayelsa-imo-off-season-polls/
[192] Ibid
[193]Gbenga O. (2023), Gunmen kidnap three family members in Kogi. https://punchng.com/gunmen-kidnap-three-family-members-in-kogi/

4. On July 10, 2023, billboards featuring President Bola Tinubu and the SDP governorship candidate that were adjacent to each other were vandalized by suspected thugs who also broke into the SDP campaign office[194].

5. On June 20, 2023, gunmen abducted the Oba of Idofin, Shedrack Durojaye Obibeni, and his wife along the Makutu-Idofin route[195].

6. In Lokoja, the Kogi State's capital, on July 24, 2023, the Social Democratic Party's campaign office was deliberately destroyed by thugs[196].

7. On October 19, 2023, thugs attacked members of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) during a rally in Ejule, Ofu Local Government Area of the State[197].

This heightened security threat arising from past and present elections where lives, properties, and election materials have been lost, destroyed, and vandalized respectively calls for urgent steps to address the security menace by stakeholders, political actors, security agencies, and INEC. It is also imperative to address this prevailing issue so as not to undo the hard work carried out by Governor Yahaya Bello to confront the security issues of kidnapping, banditry, herder/farmer clashes, and terrorism devastating the Country[198].

[194] Ibid

[195]Vanguard (2023). Gunmen kidnap Oba, wife in Kogi. https://www.vanguardngr.com/2023/06/gunmen-kidnap-oba-wife-in-kogi/#:~:text=Gunmen%20on%20Monday%20kidnapped%20the,road%20at%20about%205%20p.m., https://leadership.ng/gunmen-abduct-monarch-wife-in-kogi/

[196] Ibid

[197]Sahara Reporters (2023), Gunmen Suspected To APC Thugs Attack Kogi SDP Gov Candidate, Ajaka's Rally In Ejule, Damage Vehicles, Others. https://saharareporters.com/2023/10/19/gunmen-suspected-apc-thugs-attack-kogi-sdp-gov-candidate-ajakas-rally-ejule-damage

[198] The Nation Newspaper (2021). Tackling security challenges in Kogi. https://thenationonlineng.net/tackling-security-challenges-in-kogi/

Efforts at Mitigating Violence

Security challenges in Kogi state have been identified as the major obstacle to the conduct of a successful November 2023 off-cycle Kogi governorship election[199]. On July 28, 2023, INEC held a meeting with the Inter-Agency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES)[200]. During the meeting, INEC Chairman, Prof. Yakubu Mahmood stated the need for Security agencies to take decisive action against promoters of violence and other anti-democratic behaviors like vote-buying, assaults on election officials, and interference with the electoral process while upholding absolute impartiality[201].

INEC through its chairman Mahmood Yakubu had taken measures to address these threats by engaging security agencies and working with the agencies on the best strategies to provide an enabling environment that is secure enough to achieve a peaceful and credible election[202]. This was on the backdrop of a meeting held with the Inter-Agency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES) on the review of the 2023 general elections[203].

Notably, to consolidate these efforts the Resident Electoral Commissioner (REC) of Kogi State, Dr Gabriel Longpet, and SP Williams Ovye-Aya of the Kogi Police Command jointly issued an assurance statement of peaceful and credible elections for the people of Kogi at a workshop in Abuja. The International Press Centre (IPC) media workshop was organized to sensitize the media practitioners in Kogi on its roles to ensure that the outcome of the governorship election was peaceful[204].

The Kogi State Command and Zone B Headquarters of the Nigerian Police Force organized a meeting themed "Strengthening Community Engagement Towards Violence-free November 2023 Governorship election in Kogi State"[205]. During the meeting the Assistant

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[199] Punch Newspaper (2023) Insecurity: The monster threatening Kogi, Bayelsa, Imo off-season polls https://punchng.com/insecurity-the-monster-threatening-kogi-bayelsa-imo-off-season-polls/, https://www.vanguardngr.com/2023/10/security-challenge-is-our-major-concern-in-kogi-guber-poll-inec/

[200] Ogunseyin O. (2023), INEC Wants Security Improved for Bayelsa, Imo and Kogi Governorship Elections. *Guardian*. https://guardian.ng/news/inec-wants-security-improved-for-bayelsa-imo-kogi-governorship-elections/

[201] Ibid

[202] Ibid

[203] The Guardian Newspaper (2023) INEC wants security improved for Bayelsa, Imo, Kogi governorship elections https://guardian.ng/news/inec-wants-security-improved-for-bayelsa-imo-kogi-governorship-elections/

[204] Ibid

[205]Oyewale I. (2023), Kogi Guber: Police Warns Stakeholders against Violence. *This Day*. https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2023/07/13/kogi-guber-police-warns-political-stakeholders-against-violence, https://dailypost.ng/2023/07/12/kogi-guber-aig-zone-8-cautions-political-actors-against-violence-during-election/

Inspector General of Police (AIG) issued a warning to key stakeholders in the coming election, warning them to prevent violence-free governorship election in the state[206].

INEC has further engaged political parties calling for decorum in the Kogi governorship elections while also charging the parties to ensure its followers were adequately cautioned to desist from acts capable of endangering the life of electorates and a threat to a peaceful and credible election[207]. The Commission referenced the reported clashes of supporters of political parties and called on candidates of the parties to refrain from actions and utterances leading to such acts. On October 8, 2023, Sam Olumekun the INEC National Commissioner and Chairman of its Information and Voter Education Committee maintained that the Commission would continue to engage with security agencies and monitor activities to ensure the conduct of the election was peaceful[208].

[206] Ibid
[207] Vanguard Newspaper (2023). Security Challenge is our Major Concern in Kogi Guber Poll — INEC https://www.vanguardngr.com/2023/10/security-challenge-is-our-major-concern-in-kogi-guber-poll-inec/
[208] Ibid

Role of INEC

The Kogi State governorship election will be supervised and conducted by INEC[209], the body that is constitutionally tasked with, among other things, holding governorship elections.

13.1 Voter Registration

CVR training virtually started in June 2021 via the platform at cvr.inecnigeria.org. Voter registration includes both an online pre-registration phase and an offline full registration phase that involves biometrics capturing and calls for physical presence at INEC's local offices. According to the Commission, there are 1,932,654 registered voters in Kogi state[210].

13.2 Use of Bi-Modal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS)

The Commission informed the general public that the Bi-Modal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS), which replaced the Smart Card Readers (SCR), would be utilized, in the Kogi governorship election as it was used for the elections in Anambra, the FCT, Osun and Ekiti, including the 2023 general election[211]. The Commission also noted that the results would be uploaded on the INEC Result View Portal (IReV)[212]. The Commission had carried out mock accreditation exercises in three polling units from each senatorial zone in the three states, which are 9 senatorial districts and 27 polling units[213].

13.3 Increasing Access to Polling Units

Delivering effective electoral services is a fundamental concept and a gauge of election integrity. In accordance with this notion and to enhance voters' access to polling units INEC raised the number of polling units around the nation. In Kogi, INEC increased the state's 2,548 existing polling units to 3,508. This is to ensure that voters have easier access and fewer queues in casting their votes.

While this is a good innovation, it is relevant that the Commission effectively manage the process to ensure that the main goal of the exercise is not defeated. For instance, during the 2023 general election Observers from The Electoral Hub observed that many persons were confused on election day as their polling units had been changed. This eventually led to the

[209] Third Schedule, part I, Paragraph F, Section 15 (a), CFRN, 1999 (as amended)
[210] https://www.vanguardngr.com/2023/10/inec-announces-5-4m-registered-voters-for-kogi-imo-bayelsa-polls/
[211] https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/633789-bayelsa-imo-kogi-election-results-to-be-uploaded-on-irev-inec-chairman.html, https://radionigeria.gov.ng/2023/10/17/inec-to-deploy-bvas-irev-in-kogi-imo-bayelsa-polls/
[212] Ibid
[213] https://inecnigeria.org/?page_id=12938

disenfranchisement of some voters who went to their old polling unit only to realize that their polling unit had been changed[214].

13.4 Engagement with Stakeholders

Engagement with stakeholders is a crucial part of the election process and is expected and a basic duty of EMBs. In accordance with this tenet, and in order to prepare for the election, INEC conducted a number of stakeholder interactions with various electoral stakeholders and voters at both its Abuja headquarters and its Kogi state office. These interactions are meant to guarantee a fair and orderly election in Kogi State. The following are a few of the stakeholder gatherings for the Kogi governorship election:

- On July 25, 2023, Mahmood Yakubu, the Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), and national commissioners of the electoral umpire met with leaders from political parties[215].
- The meeting was aimed at reviewing the 2023 general elections and preparing for the off-cycle governorship elections in Imo, Kogi, and Bayelsa states[216].
- On July 28, 2023, INEC held a meeting with the Inter-Agency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES)[217]. During the meeting, INEC Chairman, Prof. Yakubu Mahmood stated the need for Security agencies to take decisive action against promoters of violence and other anti-democratic behaviors like vote-buying, assaults on election officials, and interference with the electoral process while upholding absolute impartiality[218].
- The Commission released the Guide for Media Accreditation for 2023 Bayelsa, Imo and Kogi States Governorship election. The portal was also opened for Media organizations intending to deploy Journalists to cover any or all the three Governorship elections to apply online to the Commission via the designated website; https://imap.inecnigeria.org[219].

[214] The Electoral Hub (2023). 2023 Post-election Report.
[215] Channels (2023), INEC Chair, Party Leaders Review 2023 Elections. https://www.channelstv.com/2023/07/25/inec-chair-party-leaders-review-2023-elections/
[216] Ibid
[217] Ogunseyin O. (2023), INEC Wants Security Improved for Bayelsa, Imo and Kogi Governorship Elections. *Guardian*. https://guardian.ng/news/inec-wants-security-improved-for-bayelsa-imo-kogi-governorship-elections/
[218] Ibid
[219] https://imap.inecnigeria.org/accreditation-guide

— Ahead of the elections for governor of Imo, Bayelsa, and Kogi, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) opened the portal for ad hoc staff recruitment on August 31, 2023[220].

— As part of the preparations for the Kogi State Governorship election on November 11, 2023, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) held a one-day engagement with all media executives in Kogi State[221].

13.5 Other Activities

On the Timetable and Schedule of Activities for the Kogi state elections, the Commission's other activities include publishing the election notice and the final candidate list, election and party monitoring, accrediting journalists and election observers, registering party agents, and hiring and training ad hoc staff. Each of these tasks is to be completed for the election.

[220] Egobiambu E. (2023), Apply: INEC Begins Recruitment of Ad-hoc Staff for Imo, Bayelsa and Kogi Polls. *Channels TV*. https://www.channelstv.com/2023/08/31/apply-inec-begins-recruitment-of-ad-hoc-staff-for-imo-bayelsa-kogi-polls/, https://inecnigeria.org/?page_id=12870

[221] INEC Twitter (2023), {@inecnigeria}, https://twitter.com/inecnigeria/status/1706657856450138318

Election Observation and Observers

The democratic and electoral processes are not complete without election observation. The credibility of the election, and consequently the electoral process, is increased by election observation. Electoral observation, among other things, prevents fraud and identifies electoral irregularities. Allowing observers to participate in an election is a sign that the Election Management Body is ready to hold credible elections[222].

It is also among the simplest ways to compile reliable election-related data. Election observers have a significant impact on how transparent and credible elections are, as well as how widely accepted election outcomes are[223]. The acceptance of observers is further proof of the electoral process transparency. Election evaluations by observers also validate elected government. Additionally, observers' reports are frequently considered to be reliable records of how elections were conducted.

Ahead of the 2023 governorship election in Bayelsa, Imo and Kogi States, the Chairman of INEC, Mahmood Yakubu, has been quoted to have asserted that a total of 145 organizations have been approved as observers, who would be deploying 7,896 observers across the three states.[224] By monitoring the conduct of the elections, observers can contribute towards more credible processes and more acceptable electoral outcomes.

[222] https://openelectiondata.net/en/guide/electoral-integrity/election-observation/
[223] African Union. (2013). Election Observation Manual. https://www.eisa.org.za/pdf/au2014EOMmanual.pdf
[224] https://punchng.com/kogi-bayelsa-imo-elections-crucial-inec/#:~:text=Yakubu%20noted%20that%20the%20commission,145%20organisations%20deploying%207%2C896%20observers.%E2%80%9D

Conclusion

Elections are intricate processes with several actors and actions. The Kogi State governorship election is significant because it gives electoral stakeholders, especially INEC, the chance to increase the legitimacy and integrity of the electoral process through a variety of interventions, innovations, and engagements for the election. The Kogi election is one of the off-cycle elections conducted after the general election. Therefore, it is expected that lessons gain during the general election would be deployed and implemented in the election.

It can be concluded from observations of the contexts and dynamics of Kogi State that:

1. Emerging trends of insecurity, such as kidnappings and political violence are being seen as the Kogi election is being held. However, there is optimism that action taken by a variety of stakeholders to reduce violence, such as advocacy activities, campaigns, and other interventions, will be successful in mitigating ahead of the election.
2. Intra-party conflicts and rivalry within the ruling party APC and the opposition PDP which have resulted in inter-party defections and numerous litigation cases could have a negative impact on the parties outing during the election if not properly addressed.
3. Based on recent events, it would appear that COVID-19 protocols have been completely disregarded during elections. Given that none of the duty bearers are now strictly enforcing these laws.
4. For electoral preparation, logistics, and deployment, Kogi State's terrain and topography have importance. There are places with tough terrain that is mountainous, and riverine locations may be impacted by flooding or rain in ways that could impede the deployment and distribution of election materials as well as the mobility of election officials.
5. The low representation of women, young people, and People with Disabilities (PWDs) among the election candidates makes it difficult to uphold the fundamental democratic principles of inclusivity and representation. 11.11% women, 8.3% youth, and 0% people with disabilities are represented.
6. The election provides an opportunity for the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to regain the people’s trust in the Commission. Recall that the

failure to transmit election result for the presidential as promised deeply affected the people's trust in the Commission.

7. The several actions carried out for the election, which represent the high degree of involvement by electoral CSOs, observers, and other groups in the Kogi election, will aid in preserving the integrity of the election.
8. The rising number of election offenses, particularly those involving violence, intimidation, and the inciting of voters as well as vote buying and selling (transactions), raise serious questions about electoral fraud and impunity. Particularly in light of the general election conducted recently which recorded high level of voters' intimidation and ethnic profiling in specific localities such as Lagos State.

In conclusion while this election is coming after the general election, it is important that lessons learned are deployed to improve and achieve better outcome in the conduct of elections which will ultimately aid in regaining lost confidence in the Commission.

...promoting electoral knowledge, accountability, and integrity

ABOUT THE ELECTORAL HUB

The Electoral Hub, an affiliate of the Initiative for Research, Innovation and Advocacy in Development (IRIAD), is a knowledge and advocacy hub which seeks to provide solutions to improve the credibility and integrity of the electoral process. It is committed to promoting electoral knowledge, integrity, and accountability in Nigeria. Our aim is to strengthen electoral governance and accountability in Nigeria through the provision of critical and contextualized analysis, and solutions to improve the credibility and integrity of the electoral process. We believe that the integrity of the electoral process is crucial in improving electoral governance and sustaining democracy in Nigeria. We also believe in solutions rooted in the principles of justice and equity.

Our core values are knowledge-exchange, inclusion, justice, equity, transparency and accountability.

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