



REPORT ON OBSERVATION OF THE 2023 GUBERNATORIAL ELECTIONS IN ZAMFARA STATE



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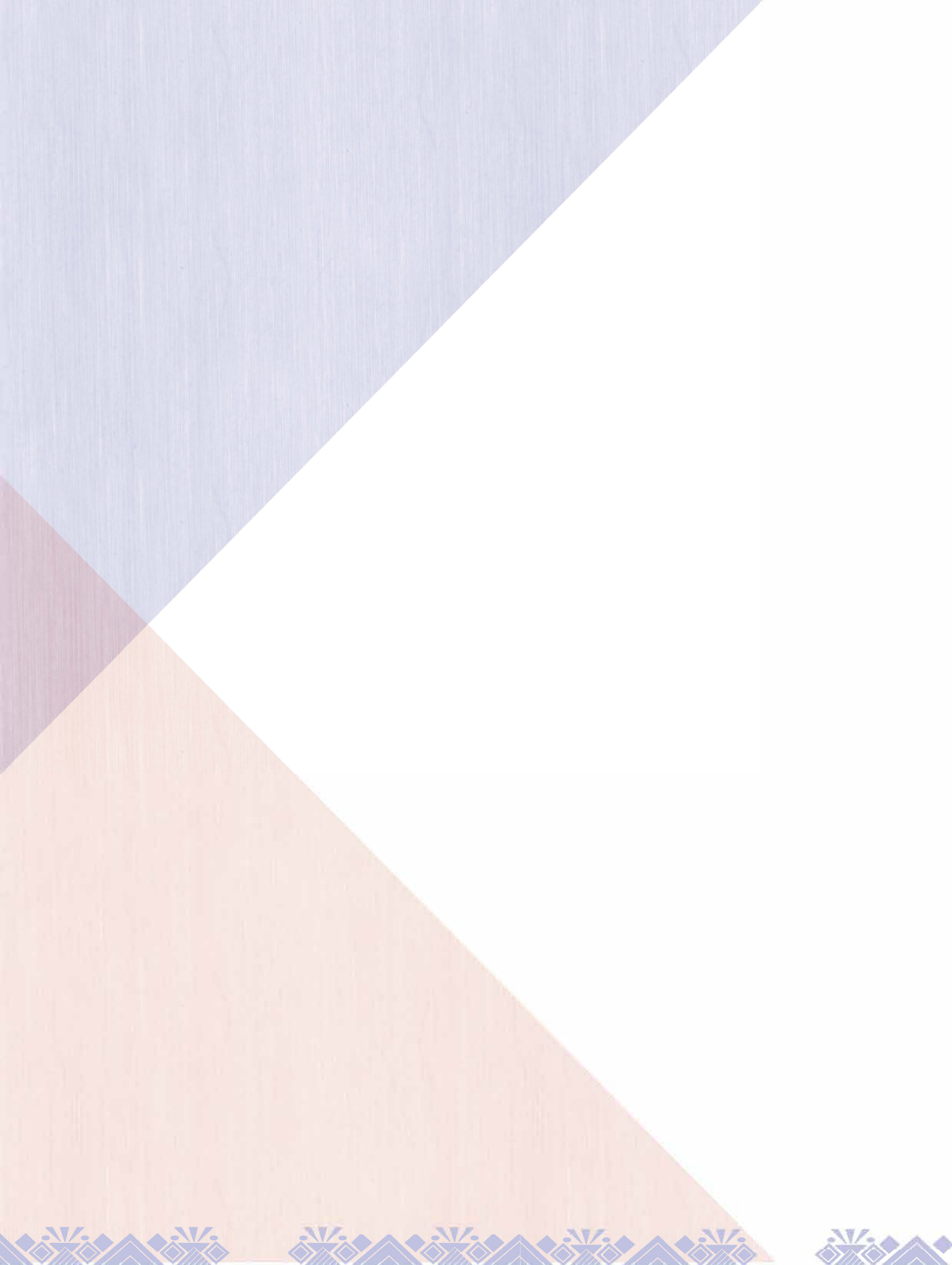


Table of Contents

Introduction		01
Framework and Methodology	Electoral Statistics	
03	04	
Pre-Election Activities	Election Day	Conclusion
08	09	31
The Collation of Results	Declaration of Results	Feedback
19	25	33





INTRODUCTION

The 2023 Gubernatorial Elections in Zamfara State have marked a significant milestone in the annals of electoral processes and democratic evolution. This report, painstakingly compiled by ARDP/ZamTraka with the charitable support of the MacArthur Foundation under its On Nigeria 2.0 Project, represents a groundbreaking initiative by local stakeholders in a context traditionally characterized by minimal engagement in such systematic observation and analysis of electoral proceedings. The initiative is a pioneering effort, not merely in its execution but in its foundational aspirations—to foster a culture of social accountability within the electoral dynamics of Zamfara State.

This report is the first of its kind initiated, conducted, and compiled entirely by local entities within the state. This distinction is crucial, as it marks a departure from reliance on external observers to a more self-sustained approach towards ensuring electoral integrity and transparency. This shift is significant, considering the state's historical context, where such culture of indigenous electoral scrutiny has been either nascent or non-existent. The essence of this initiative lies in its core objective: to instill a culture of social accountability in Zamfara's electoral dynamics. The term “social accountability” here refers to the collective efforts by citizens and local organizations to closely monitor electoral processes and outcomes to reflect the genuine will of the people. It is a vision of a democratic process where votes not only count but are counted transparently, fairly, and credibly in the eyes of all the stakeholders.



The importance of this vision cannot be overstated. In a state where electoral processes have often been marred by questions of integrity and fairness, the endeavor to inculcate a culture of social accountability represents a beacon of hope. It is an affirmation of the belief that democracy is not just about the act of voting but about ensuring that every step of the electoral process is conducted with the highest standards of transparency and fairness. While this report represents a modest attempt in scale, it carries with it grand aspirations. The methodology adopted by ARDP/ZamTraka, under the auspices of the MacArthur Foundation's On Nigeria 2.0 Project, combines traditional observation techniques with innovative approaches to real-time election monitoring. This blend of methodologies is designed to provide a comprehensive overview of the electoral process, identifying strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement.

One of the report's most notable achievements is the demonstration of real-time election monitoring at an unprecedented level in the history of Zamfara State. This achievement is particularly noteworthy, given the logistical and infrastructural constraints that often characterize remote and rural areas in the state. The use of technology and social media to disseminate real-time observations played a pivotal role in enhancing the transparency of the electoral process, allowing stakeholders at all levels to gain immediate insights into the conduct of the election.

This real-time monitoring capability represents a significant leap forward in efforts to ensure electoral integrity. It provided an added layer of accountability, enabling immediate responses to potential irregularities and fostering a sense of confidence among the electorate that their votes would indeed count and be counted correctly.

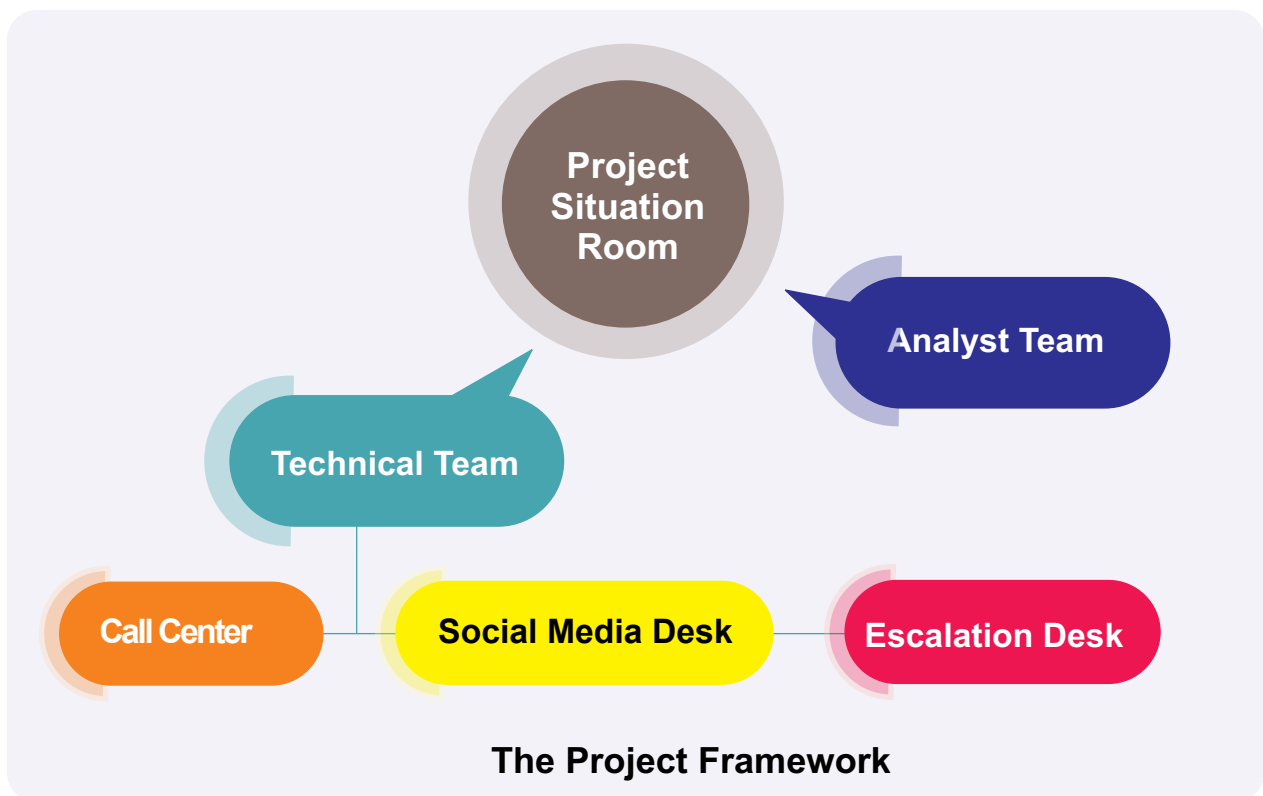
The 2023 Gubernatorial Elections in Zamfara State, as observed by ARDP/ZamTraka, have set a precedent that will reverberate far beyond the borders of the state. This report embodies the aspirations of a people determined to take ownership of their democratic processes, to ensure that elections are not just conducted, but conducted in a manner that is free, fair, transparent, and credible. It is a testament to the power of local initiative, the importance of technological innovation in enhancing electoral transparency, and the unyielding spirit of a community committed to democratic integrity.

As readers embark on the journey through this report, it is crucial to recognize the broader implications of this initiative. It is a call to all stakeholders—local communities, government bodies, international partners, and civil society organizations—to rally around the cause of enhancing electoral integrity. The lessons learned and the successes achieved in Zamfara provide a blueprint for building more resilient democratic institutions and processes. This report, therefore, is not just an account of an election but a narrative of hope, resilience, and the enduring power of collective action in the face of challenges.



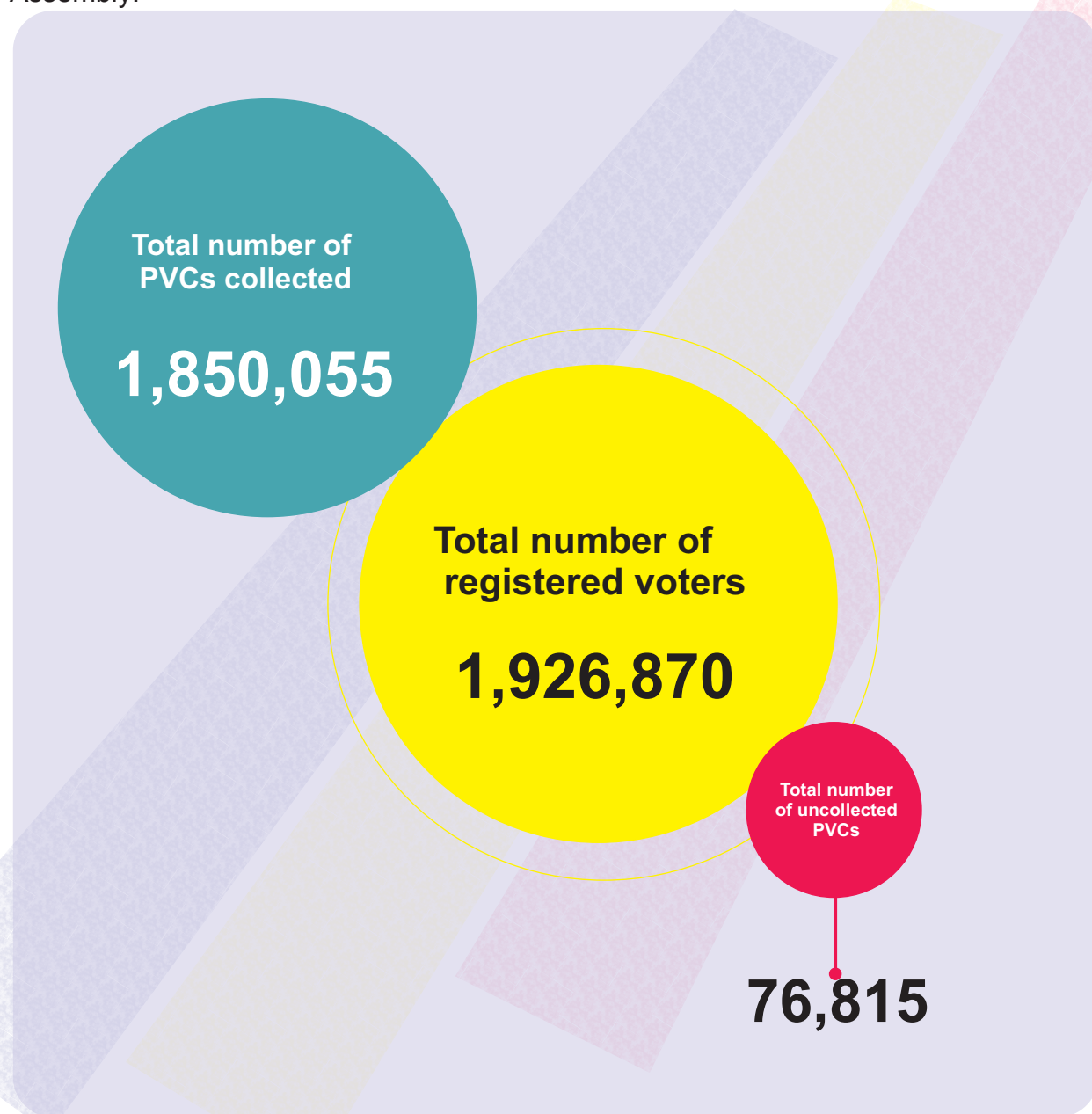
PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

In addition to the 99 field election observers, the central co-ordination team of 9 is divided into two: the technical team and the analyst team. The technical team is further divided into three groups: call center, social media desk and escalation desk. The call center communicates with accredited field observers deployed to the polling stations to gather reports on the conduct of the election, and also receive reports from citizen observers on dedicated telephone lines and other social media platforms. Verified reports are documented and published on Zamtraka's social media platform which provided real-time updates on the 2023 Gubernatorial Election in Zamfara State. Incidents' reports are verified and escalated to relevant agencies particularly INEC and the Police for intervention, depending on the nature of the incidents. The escalation desk did the follow up to confirm if reported issues are resolved or not.



ELECTORAL STATISTICS

In Zamfara State there is a total of 1,926,870 registered voters across the 14 local government areas out of which a total number of 1,850,055 Permanent Voters Card (PVCs) has been collected as at the end of the PVC collection deadline of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). A total number of 14 political parties contested in the gubernatorial elections, with one female candidate contesting for Governorship position and two contesting for the Deputy Governor seats. 6 females contested for the House of Assembly seats. In all only one candidate from among persons with disabilities contested for the House of Assembly.


















Registered Voters Per Local Government Area

Local Government	Number of Voters
Anka	82,195
Bakura	113,089
Birni Magaji	101,360
Bukkuyum	98,651
Bungudu	183,981
Gummi	125,411
Gusau	316,389
Kaura Namoda	146,883
Maradun	104,819
Maru	117,929
Shinkafi	93,082
Talata Mafara	148,098
Tsafe	165,705
Zurmi	129,278



Breakdown of Candidates Fielded by Parties

	Number of Governorship Candidates	Deputy Governorship Candidates	State Assembly Candidates	Male Candidate	Female Candidate	Total Number of fielded candidates
 Accord Party	1		0	1	0	1
 Action Alliance	1	1	22	23	1	24
 African Democratic Congress	1	1	23	25	0	25
 All Progressives Congress	1	1	24	26	0	26
 All Progressive Grand Alliance	1	1	24	26	0	26
 Action Peoples Party	1	1	24	23	3	26
 Action Democratic Party	1	1	23	22	1	25
 Boot Party	1	1	3	5	0	5
 Labour Party	1	1	22	23	1	24
 National Rescue Movement	1	1	19	21	0	21
 Peoples Democratic Party	1	1	24	1	1	26
 Social Democratic Party	1	1	18	19	1	20
 Young Peoples Party	1	1	9	11	0	11
 Zenith Labour Party	1	1	2	3	1	4
 New Nigeria Peoples Party	1	1	24	26	0	26

Although fourteen (14) political parties fielded candidates but in practical sense only four (4) political parties were visibly active. These are the All Progressives Congress (APC), the Peoples democratic Party (PDP), the Labour Party (LP), and the National Rescue Movement (NRM).

Parties Visible at the Polls



All Progressives Party



New Nigeria Peoples Party



Peoples Democratic Party



National Rescue Movement





PRE-ELECTION ACTIVITIES

Assessment Meeting

On the 15th of March, 2023 ARDP/ZamTracka held an assessment meeting to discuss issues bordering around the preparedness of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to conduct the 2023 Gubernatorial Election in Zamfara State on the scheduled date. The meeting considered reports and field assessments and was convinced that the electoral body had made all the necessary arrangements for the elections, and that all relevant election materials have been delivered under the custody of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Gusau Branch.

Training of Election Observers

ARDP/ZamTracka organized training sessions on the 11th of March and later on the 16th of March 2023 in Gusau, Zamfara State for a group of selected 99 field election observers and 10 coordinating staff. The training session covered topics that included update on the political environment, overview of election observation checklist, code of conduct for election observers, and the reporting template, among others. In view of the security situation in the State, possible crisis flash-points were identified appropriate contingency responses were discussed.

Procurement and Distribution of Election Observer kits

ARDP/ZamTracka procured and distributed Election Observer Kits for the 99 field election observers. The kits included items such as branded jackets, bags, name tags, jotter, pens, and election reporting forms. These kits, in addition to providing proper identification also help to give the election observer some aura of authority in conducting his/her job.





ELECTION-DAY

Deployment of Observers

Besides our team of election observers, there were no other identifiable group of election observers that covered the 2023 Gubernatorial Election in Zamfara State. One of our officials who was coordinating our election observers deployed in Gusau Local Government reported having seen two persons; one wearing a garment with the wordmark of "Connected Development" at the back at Gada-Biyu Polling Unit in Gusau and another person wearing the wordmark of "Yaga" at the State Collation Centre in Gusau. On our part however, ARDP/ZamTracka deployed 99 observers across 11 Local Government Areas. In the other 3 Local Government Areas, namely, Shinkafi, Zurmi and Maru Local Governments, where security situation was volatile we used 27 resident volunteers to cover those areas.

Arrival of election officials and opening of polls

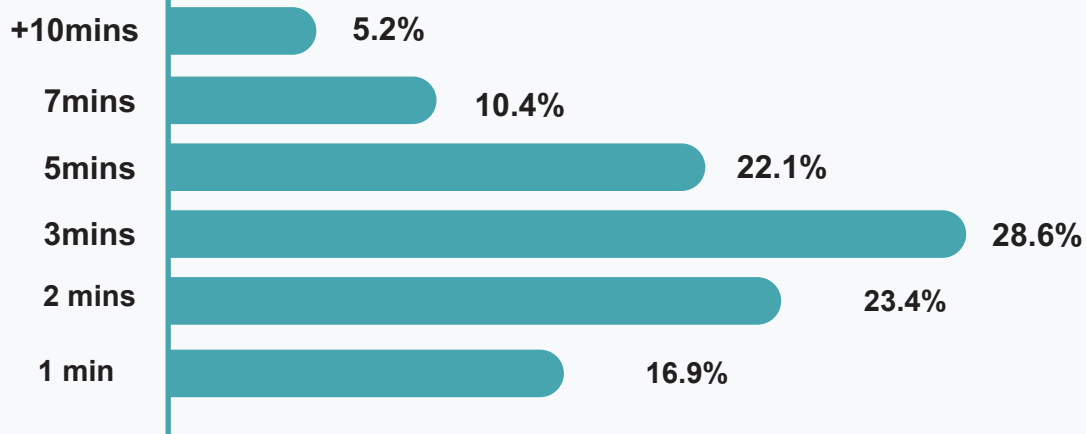
On the election day our observers reported an appreciable early deployment of personnel and materials across the State by INEC in cohort with security personnel. In most local governments within the Central Zone INEC officials arrived at an average time of 8.30 AM, and in the other local governments areas they arrived at an average time of 9:30 AM. By 10 AM, all election officials have arrived to the polling units and voter accreditation process had began.



Technical Challenges with the BVAS

Our observers reported frequent malfunctioning of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) which caused delays in accreditation and voting process. In many places, the device had failed to detect facial recognition and authenticate voters. Our observers also reported that in many places voting was slowed down due to the failure of BVAS to detect photos and fingerprints of voters. In some places also the BVAS machine had no Subscriber Identification Module (SIM) Data Card for upload of information which caused confusion in the affected polling units. When the Poll Officials escalated such challenges to technicians, the responses were very slow in fixing the problem. Similarly, a good number of election poll officials displayed inadequate knowledge of the accreditation device, the BVAS, causing continuous automatic logging out of the operator. This incident delayed the accreditation and voting process in many polling units, leading to agitation among voters in the affected locations.

Reports indicated that it took an average of 4 minutes to accredit a voter. These challenges were more serious in Birnin Magaji and Tsafe Local Government Areas as well as in the metropolitan part of Gusau Local Government, particularly in Madawaki and Tudun Wada Wards.



Average Accreditation time using BVAS



Priority Voting

It has been the practice in the State that Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) and those with special needs are given priority in the process of accreditation and voting at polling centres. Our observers thus noted that in almost every polling unit in the State, persons with disabilities, the elderly, pregnant women were given priority in the accreditation process and in the casting of votes.

Availability/Use of Assistive Facilities for Persons with Disabilities and the Vulnerable Groups

Despite the imbibed practice of according priority in voting processes to persons with disabilities our observers noted the unfortunate lack of assistive facilities for certain categories of PWDs, especially those using skates. In the polling centers there were no structural facilities or assistive tools to adequately help certain categories of PWDs to navigate through the polling area in order to cast their votes. In many places the voting cubicles were too high for some categories of PWDs voters who had to place the ballot papers on their hands to vote. Also, there were no accessories like stands or wheelchairs to help certain PWDs voters with different degrees of mobility issues in all polling units observed. This issue needs to be addressed by the electoral body and the relevant authorities concerned.

Local Government	Number of Wheelchairs	Any other assistive tool
Anka	0	NIL
Bakura	0	NIL
Birni Magaji	0	NIL
Bukkuyum	0	NIL
Bungudu	0	NIL
Gummi	0	NIL
Gusau	2. both spoilt	NIL
Kaura Namoda	1	NIL
Maradun	0	NIL
Talata Mafara	0	NIL
Tsafe	0	NIL
Maru	0	NIL
Shinkafi	0	NIL
Zurmi	0	NIL

Vote Buying

Our observers reported widespread incidences/scenarios of vote-buying statewide. In all the 14 local governments areas our election observers witnessed widespread vote-buying at most polling units. Women were mostly the target of this electoral malpractice whereby party agents, strategically positioned around the polling units, relentlessly pursued them with the intention of buying their votes. The most common scenario was that the vote-buying party agent strikes a deal with a voter who after thumbing on the vote-buying agent's party/candidate will raise his ballot paper to the confirmation of the agent before casting it into the box. In some cases, vote-buying agents will accompany paid voters into the booths to make sure they voted as per the deal.

The main culprits in this electoral infraction were the two main contending parties: the All Progressives Congress (APC) and the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP). These parties had vote-buying agents strategically stationed in most of the polling units in the State. The price for a vote ranges between Two Thousand Naira (N2,000) and Five Thousand Naira (N5,000) in cash. In fact, from the reports gathered by our election observers, vote buying drive by the two major contending parties started two days before the election day when food items and cloth materials were distributed to the prospective voters of strategically identified polling units across the State.



Staff of the EFCC Inspecting a Vehicle of a Party Agent with Suspected Materials for Vote Buying



From the reports gathered by our elections observation team, Gusau, the State Capital was the epicenter of vote buying as the two major contending parties fought to win the votes in the capital. At the polling units in Gusau, vote buying was an open contest between the APC and the PDP. In the metropolitan wards such as Galadima, Madawaki and Tudun Wada party agents came to polling units with vehicles full of textile wrappers, where one wrapper goes for every vote. In few cases security agents, such as the staff of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Police apprehended suspected party agents who were openly engaged in the activities of vote buying.

The table below shows the range of prices often paid by party agents in the 14 Local Government Areas of the State as reported by our election observers.

Local Government	Average Price per Vote
Anka	N1,500 - N3,000
Bakura	N1,500 - N3,000
Birni Magaji	N500 - N2,000
Bukkuyum	N500 - N2,000
Bungudu	N1,500 - N3,000
Gummi	N500 - N2,000
Gusau	N3,000 - N5,000
Kaura Namoda	N3,000 - N5,000
Maradun	N500 - N2,000
Talata Mafara	N1,500 - N3,000
Tsafe	N3,000 - N5,000
Shinkafi	N500 - N2,000
Maru	N500 - N2,000
Zurmi	N500 - N2,000

Electoral Violence

Our observers reported that the 2023 Gubernatorial Election in Zamfara was generally peaceful despite the occurrence of a number of incidents in some polling units in Gusau, Kaura Namoda, Gummi, Maradun, and Tsafe Local Government Areas

There were a few cases of serious electoral violence particularly in Gusau and Kaura Namoda Local Governments. In Samanja Polling Unit of Madawaki Ward, in Gusau Local Government, a voter carted away a ballot box when voting was in progress. It took the intervention of some military personnel attached to the unit to chase the individual and retrieve the box before voting could resume. Also, in polling unit 001 of Bakin Masallaci at Tudun Wada Ward, a serving female Commissioner, whose residence is a stone throw from the polling unit, ordered the ballot box to be destroyed while counting was on due to perceived apparent negative polling outcome against her party, the APC.

In Yandoton Daji Ward, Tsafe Local Government Area, our observers reported serious altercations between supporter of the two main contending political parties at various polling units due to glaring acts of vote buying by one of the parties. In one particular case a polling unit was shifted from its original location to a new location very close to the residence of a former Senator and a candidate for senatorial seat.

In Zugu Ward, Gummi Local Government Area, a political office holder in the State ordered for the destruction of the ballot box of his polling unit during the counting of votes when it was clear that his party, the APC, was losing the unit. This created confusion at the polling unit that led to the destruction of the ballot box and all the election materials at the polling unit.



The Scene at a Polling Unit in Zugu Ward where the Ballot Box and Materials were Destroyed on the Order of a Political Office Holder in the State



Collation Process and Uploading of Results to IReV Portal

In view of the delays in opening of polls as a result of the challenges encountered with BVAS in the early stage of accreditation, voting times were extended into the night, particularly in Gusau, Tsafe, Gummi, Kaura Namoda and Maradun Local Government Areas. In Maradun Local Government, in particular, the Presiding Officer had to close collation process due to lack of adequate lighting system. Thus, on the aggregate, while collation process at the ward levels were completed before midnight on the election day, the collation process at the local government levels spilled over to the day after the election.

Unlike the technical hitches experienced with the BVAS devices during the authentication of voters at several polling units across the State, uploading of results to the IReV portal was rather smooth as majority of results from wards have been uploaded by midnight of the election day. Of course, there were reported cases where the SIM cards of the BVAS machine were missing or network coverage for uploading results was problematic, but, in the general sense, the process of uploading results to IReV Portal was rather smooth.



Turnout and Conduct of voters

Our observers reported that the turn out of voters for the Gubernatorial Election was generally impressive. As early as 8 AM large turnouts of voters were noticeable in most of the polling units across the State. By 10 AM almost all the polling units in the State had near-full house of registered voters keenly awaiting to exercise their civic duties. From the analysis of categories of voters, our reports indicated preponderance of women and youth, particularly the first time voters. Historically, women and youth have had higher turnout of voters in Zamfara State since 1999. However, given the context of the security challenges which had caused serious demographic dislocations and disruptions of emotional well-being and stability of several communities, the turnout zeal of voters for the 2023 elections was rather unprecedented.

Similarly, the conduct of voters during the election processes was generally orderly and peaceful. Voters queued up in to two distinct lines, one for either gender and waited for their turns to cast their votes. Despite the activities of vote buying party agents within the vicinity of polling centers, there were no acts of intimidation, harassment or coercion from any quarter as voters, for whatever reason, willingly voted for candidates of their choice.

This state of affairs was largely facilitated by the presence of security personnel who kept vigilance at the polling units as well as the oversight activities of our election observers and some members of youth civil organizations who have taken special interest in keeping open eyes on the conduct of the election processes.



Challenges of Insecurity

Zamfara State has been the epicenter of banditry activities in the Northwest geopolitical zone of the country. As a result, conducting the 2023 Gubernatorial Election in the State would require adequate planning which could involve possible scenario building exercise and contingency plans. Reports from our observers indicate improved security network by the statutory agencies over the previous elections in the State. As a result, there were no serious security breaches during the election period contrary to the apprehension of possible attacks in three Local Government Areas, namely: Maru, Shinkafi and Zurmi Local Government Areas.

Our election observers, including the residents observers in the three (3) anticipated volatile local government areas) conducted their activities without any serious security concerns.

The Birnin Magaji Incidence

In spite of the general peaceful atmosphere during the election, there were some incidences that are worth reporting. In Birnin Magaji Local Government, for example, elections did not hold in four (4) out of ten (10) wards due to fear of insecurity. As a result of this, our election observers in this area spent two days on their job. On the election day, there was no preparation to hold election in these Wards which are regarded as bandit controlled territory as people were skeptical about possible attacks, which could provide an opportunity for massive rigging. However, the day after the election a tripartite agreement was reached between the security personnel, INEC officials, and party agents to convey voters from the affected wards to the Local Government Headquarters so that people from these 4 wards will be able to vote. An agreement was reached after the political parties in contest rejected the option of scoring zero votes for all their candidates from these wards.

After the tripartite agreement has been reached and the first set of people has been transported from these 4 wards to the local government headquarters, suddenly a new Electoral Officer (EO), with heavy escort of Mobile Police, arrived at the scene and ordered election officials and voters to go back to their wards for election process to commence. This new Electoral Officer directed all election observers to vacate the area and under his directives, all election materials were packed into a waiting Van outside. It was at this point that party agents and people around rebelled against the orders of the new Electoral Officer, but it took the intervention of members of youth groups, acting as vigilantes, to decisively check the orders of the new Electoral Officer by manning strategic positions around the local government headquarter and prevented any election material being taken outside the area.





The First Batch of Voters from the 4 Wards in Birnin Magaji Local Government Conveyed to the LGA Headquarters for Elections Which Did Not Hold

Thus, the actions of the youth vigilante groups aided by the support of the opposition party agents, some media reporters, and INEC local staff resulted into an agreement signed by INEC officials, security personnel and all parties' agents indicating that elections cannot hold in those affected wards due to the insecurity challenges.

Deployment of Security agents

Reports from our election observers indicated early and effective deployment of security personnel, including the Army, to the polling units across the State. Military deployment was a distinctive feature of the security coverage of the 2023 elections in Zamfara State. The presence of the Army certainly contributed to the speedy, orderly and peaceful proceedings particularly in areas that have been known as hotspots for political intimidation and thuggery in the State. Thus, there were very few serious incidents, such as the one at Kaura Namoda, in Kaura Namoda Local Government Area, where in the midst of inter-party rancor two people were shot and both of them lost his life instantly. However, despite the presence of Army personnel at the polling units, acts of vote buying were rampant across the State. Our observers reported cases where security personnel, particularly the Police, connived with party agents of the ruling party to perpetrate acts of vote buying. Reports indicated that the Military and the DSS maintained high standard of professionalism at the polling units.





THE COLLATION OF RESULTS

In view of the general security concerns in the State, the 2023 Gubernatorial Election witnessed heavy security presence during and after the elections. There was adequate security personnel at the INEC State Headquarters during the collation and declaration of results. The Military and Police barricaded areas leading to the collation center. Our election observers reported deployment of number of troops that were station in and around the the collation center.



Immediately after the elections, results from the ward levels were transmuted to the INEC local government headquarters for collation, and declaration of winners by the Returning Officers. These collation and declaration processes went on very well without unnecessary delays or violence. The people permitted to be in the collation halls included party agents, accredited media houses and journalists, accredited observers and heads of security agencies attached to the center. The returning officers at the local governments were responsible for the computation and declaration of results for the State House of Assembly seats as well as forwarding the result of the Governorship to the State's Collation Center. As usual, the Returning Officers were academics from the tertiary institutions in the State.

Voters showed an unprecedented sense of ownership by tracking their votes to the local government collation centers, and majority of them stayed around the collation centers throughout the night, especially in areas where collation process extended through the night, until the results were declared in their presence. This unprecedented action of the citizens also produced unprecedented result in the history of elections in Zamfara State. The results indicated complete wipe-out of the existing political dynasty in Zamfara State. It was remarkable that all the Principal Officers of the Zamfara State House of Assembly lost their seats.



Anxious Voters Waiting Around the Vicinity of the INEC's Headquarters Through the Night



Delay, Dilemma and Dialogue: A Gusau incidence brief

In Gusau Local Government Collation Center, our observers reported smooth trickling in of results from wards and winners being announced without much fuss. Collation couldn't be completed until the following day due to late submission of results from Tudun Wada Ward, which is the largest in the Local Government Area.

When collation resumed ad around 11AM the following day, there began heated debate and argument surrounding the correct interpretation of the Electoral Act which seriously affected proceedings causing unnecessary delay. The arguments got so heated that the security personnel had to walk out one of the party's representative. Eventually tempers cooled down and the collation resumed in a friendly atmosphere.



**The Atmosphere in Gusau Local Government's Collation Center
after Tempers have Cooled Dawn**



Rigging Under Duress: *Gaffe in Maradun, the Incumbent's Governor's Hometown.*

The incident in Maradun, as reported by our election observers, seems to suggest some clumsy plan of attempted election rigging in the incumbent Governor's home local government. During the collation process the opposition parties objected to non-compliance with the collation procedure, which was not transparent. As a result of the strong objection from the opposition parties the collation process had to be stopped. The security agencies at the collation center thereafter directed that collation be continued and concluded at the State INEC headquarters. The election officials set out to Gusau about 10 AM; a distance of about 2 hours drive in order to continue with the exercise.

When the election officials, members of the security agencies, and party representatives arrived at the State INEC headquarters, the Returning officer went missing for about 15 hours. Meanwhile, the Returning Officers from the remaining 13 local government were duly returning results and declaring winners. News began to spread that the Returning Officer of Maradun Local Government was kidnapped to the State Government House at the instance of the Governor. In the midst of charged atmosphere in the State Capital, the Returning Officer suddenly showed up at the State collation center at around 11pm on the 20th of March, and at this time, Maradun Local Government's result was the only one outstanding at the time.

When the RO of Maradun Local Government took the stage it was discovered that there was discrepancies between his figures and the results uploaded to IRev Portal. Eventually the election officials decided to use the figures from the IRev Portal when the figures from the RO could not add up. After more than 4 hours of proceedings the collation of result from Maradun Local Government was concluded at around 3.15 AM on the 21st March 2023. In his opening remarks, during the declaration of the result, the Returning Officer narrated how they were kidnapped and taken to the Government House with the intention of forcing them to alter the election result.



The Scene at the Maradun Local Government Collation Center Before the Relocation of Collation to INEC State's Headquarters

Violence and Deaths: *Kaura Namoda's Incidence*

In Kaura Namoda town, Kaura Namoda Local Government Area, about 50km away from the capital, a serious inter-party skirmishes between supporters of the two main contending parties, the APC and the PDP resulted in the death of two (2) people at the local government collation center. Our observers reported that collation was going on smoothly when the incumbent Senator from the Zamfara North Senatorial zone, accompanied by his loyalists and armed thugs, marched into the collation center with the possible intention of disrupting collation process when it was clear that his anointed candidate for the State Assembly seat was losing. They overwhelmed the Police but in their attempt to gain access into the collation hall violent skirmishes outside the collation center led to the death of two people. However, electoral materials inside the hall were not tampered with as reinforcements were brought in and the Senator's entourage were overpowered and chased out of the venue. We have no evidence that the death of the two people in Kaura Namoda has been appropriately investigated by the relevant authorities.



Non Elections in 4 Wards of Birnin Magaji Local Government

In Birnin Magaji Local Government Area, elections were not held in 4 of the 10 wards of the Local Government Area due to security concerns. This has created concerns and agitation from the losers of the elections in the Local Government, arguing that the results were not legitimate as many voters in the Local Government Area were disenfranchised due to the failure of the electoral body to hold election in these 4 wards. This issue is central in the substance of the legal challenge filed by the candidate/party that lost the election.

Cancellation of Election Results

Our election observers reported cancellation of results in several polling units across the State arising from a number of reasons, which included, destruction of electoral materials as a result of violence, over-voting, and ballot box snatching. The Table below provides details of cancellation of results across the State.

Local Government	Wards/Units Cancelled	Reason for cancellation
Anka	4 wards, 8 Polling Units	Over voting
Bakura	4 Wards, 8 Polling Units	Violence and Over voting
Birni Magaji	4 Wards	Insecurity
Bukkuyum	1 Ward, 4 Polling Units	Ballot box snatching
Bungudu	3 Wards, 7 Polling Units	Violence and Over voting
Gummi	8 wards, 20 Polling Units	Over voting
Gusau	7 Wards, 33 Polling Units	Violence/Destruction of Materials
Kaura Namoda	5 Wards, 14 Polling Units	Violence/Destruction of Materials
Maradun	NIL	NIL
Talata Mafara	2 Wards, 2 Polling Units	Over voting
Tsafe	3 Wards, 5 Polling Units	Over voting





DECLARATION OF WINNERS

On the 18th of March, 2023, Zamfara State was among the 31 States of the Federal Republic Nigeria where elections were held for state governors - concurrent with elections to the State House of Assembly. On this day Zamfara State's INEC headquarters braced itself up for results' collation and declaration of winners based on the results brought in from the local government collation centers. The Mahmood Yakubu Conference Hall was filled with Journalists from media houses, political party agents, election observers and security personnel. For about three days the INEC's headquarters was the center of attention in the State.

On the evening of the election day, things were relatively calm when the news of the attempts by the Senator from Zamfara Central to invade the collation center at Kaura Namoda was foiled by armed military personnel. This event suddenly changed the atmosphere in the INEC's collation center as well as the mood of voters across the State. By mid-night of the second day (19th March), results for the governorship election from 11 out of the 14 local government areas have been declared. The PDP candidate, Dauda Lawal Dare was leading with 325,238 votes and the incumbent had 251,006 votes. The 3 remaining local governments whose results were being awaited are Kaura Namoda, Shinkafi and Maradun local governments. The waiting period created political tension that has never been experienced in the history of elections in the State.



The incumbent party, the APC, was not only facing decisive defeat but the entire members of the "political dynasty" that held the political nerves of the State were at the verge of being wiped out. Thus, tension was running very high in the APC camp while apprehension and restlessness was running high in the PDP camp. In the interim, the result from Birnin Magaji local government was vehemently objected to by the APC in view of the fact that elections were not held in 4 wards. In the view of the APC, the results from the Birnin Magaji Local Government should be declared inconclusive and not be taken in and declared by the Returning Officer.

Between 8.00 and 10.30 PM of the 20th of March, the results from Kaura Namoda and Shinkafi local governments were declared leaving only Maradun local government outstanding. Meanwhile, hours before the Kaura Namoda and Shinkafi results were collated and announced at the INEC headquarters, the Returning Officer of Maradun Local Government has gone missing. It was while the INEC officials and party agents together with security personnel, the media and observers were on unsolicited recess that the Returning Officer of Maradun Local Government appeared into the Collation Hall in the INEC headquarters at about 11.00 PM. The result from Maradun local government showed the ruling party, the APC polling 24,855 as against the PDP that polled 12,261 votes. In the early hours of 21st March 2023 the Returning Officer, Prof. Kashim Shehu declared Dauda Lawal Dare of the PDP as the duly elected governor of Zamfara State having polled the highest votes and satisfied all relevant provisions of the Electoral Act



Prof. Kashim Shehu During the Declaration of the Winner of Governorship Election



In the governorship election the voter turnout was 692,460 out of 1,926,460 registered voters in the State. This represent 35.9%, which is perhaps poor or below average, but yet, the figure and turnout rate was far higher than that of the 2019 Gubernatorial Elections which was largely characterized by voter apathy. Given our general assessment of the 2023 Gubernatorial Elections in the State, it is very difficult to believe that the percentage rate of the voter turnout represent the complete picture of voter participation in the elections. The facts on the ground would seem to suggest that the voter turnout was likely above 85% of the actual registered voters that were available in the State during the election period. Normally the registered figure of voters would include the indigenes of the State who reside in other parts of Nigeria and do not usually come back to the State to vote.

The State House of Assembly Election Results

Following the pattern of the Governorship election, the results of the State House of Assembly elections produced new political shift in the State. The opposition party, the PDP produced a remarkable upset by defeating all the principal officers of the State Assembly and ended up clinching 15 out of a total of 24 seats of the state legislature, with most winners being first time contestants.

Below is the table showing the winning candidates/parties in the 24 constituencies of the State House of Assembly.

Name of Winning Candidate	Constituency	Party
Rilwanu Marafa	Anka	PDP
Ibrahim Tudu	Bakura	APC
Yakubu Almaj	Bungudu East	PDP
Bello Bashir	Bungudu West	PDP
Nura Dahiru	Birnin Magaji	APC
Bashir Abubakar	Bukkuyum North	PDP
Hamisu Faru	Bukkuyum South	PDP
Liman Garba	Gusau East	PDP
Ibrahim Wambai	Gusau West	PDP
Aliyu Adamu	Gummi East	PDP
Aliyu Bashir	Gummi West	PDP
Mukhtar Nasir	Kaura Namoda North	PDP
Aminu Ibrahim	Kaura Namoda South	APC
Faruk Musa	Maradun I	APC
Maharazu Salisu	Maradun II	PDP
Nasiru Abdullahi	Maru North	PDP
Mikailu Kabir	Maru South	PDP
Usman Mahmud	Shinkafi	APC
Shamsuddeen Basko	Talata Mafara North	APC
Aliyu Kagara	Talata Mafara South	APC
Bello Muhammad	Tsafe East	PDP
Ahmed Amiru	Tsafe West	PDP
Halliru Abdullahi	Zurmi East	PDP
Ismail Bilyamin	Zurmi West	PDP



Inconclusive Results

Some of the election results were declared inconclusive by the respective Returning Officers. The inconclusive elections were those of Gusau/Tsafe Federal Constituency, Gummi/Bukkuyum Federal Constituency and Zamfara Central Senatorial Constituency. The results from these constituencies were declared inconclusive due to numerous cancellations of votes from polling units resulting from violence, over voting, ballot box snatching, and destruction of election materials. In accordance with the relevant provision of the Electoral Act 2022, re-run of elections was re-scheduled to the 16th of April, 2023.

Remarkably for these re-run elections, INEC reconfigured the relevant electronic devices and were distributed in good time for the elections. Our election observers monitored the elections in all the three constituencies. The re-run elections went on smoothly with no violence or challenges with BVAS devices, The results were collated and announced on the 17th April 2023. All the seats were won by the candidates of the opposition party, the PDP.



Post Election Reactions

Following the announcement of the candidate of the opposition party, the PDP, as the duly Governor-Elect in the early hours of 21st March 2023, there was unexpected public reaction in the capital city, Gusau. Between 6.00 and 10.00 AM an angry mob attacked, vandalized and looted the governorship and the presidential campaign headquarters of the ruling party, the APC. Similarly, an influential campaign office of the APC at Tudun Wada ward, Gusau Local Government, and a residential building of an APC stalwart were attacked and vandalized. These acts of vandalism were more or less an expression of rejection and anger against the ruling party in the State. To forestall breakdown of law and order the State Government imposed curfew from 8.00 PM to 6.00 AM. Mercifully, things quickly come back to normal and the Governor-Elect went on Television to give his acceptance speech in the evening.



Pic 1

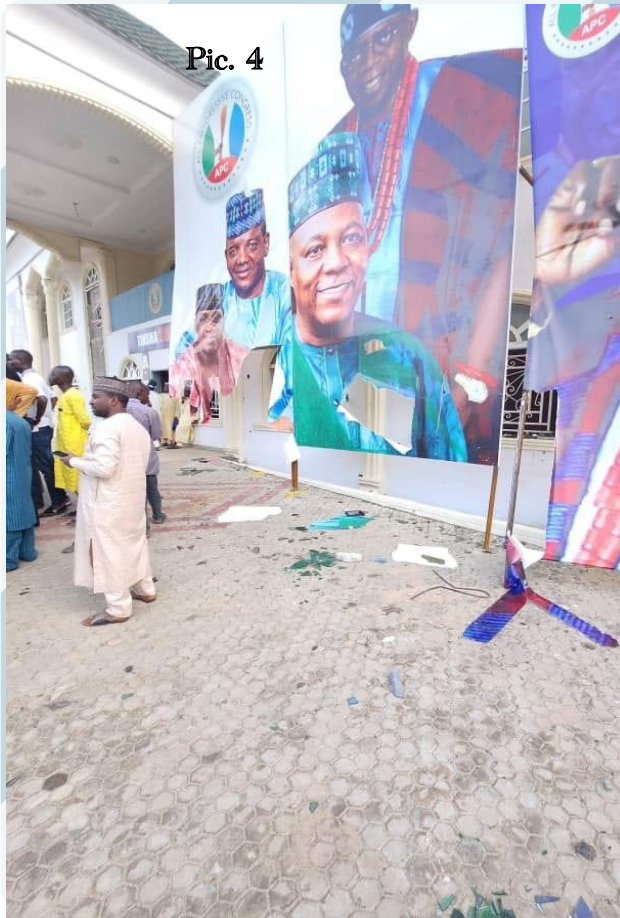


Pic. 2



Pic. 3





Pic. 1: Vandalized APC Campaign Office at Tudun Wada Ward, Gusau Local Government

Pic. 2: Vandalized and Looted APC Governorship Campaign Headquarters in Gusau

Pic. 3: The Director-General of the Governorship Campaign Committee, Senator Kabiru Marafa, and Party Members Examining the APC Vandalized Campaign Headquarters.

Pic. 4: Vandalized APC Presidential Campaign Headquarters in Gusau



CONCLUSION

In concluding this *Report on the Observation of the 2023 Gubernatorial Election in Zamfara State* by ARDP/ZamTraka, it is imperative to highlight the transformative strides made in this electoral cycle, largely influenced by the MacArthur Foundation supported activities on anti-corruption and promotion of social accountability in the State. In this conclusion part of the report it is important to briefly outline the key factors that contributed to the enhanced transparency and credibility of the electoral process in Zamfara State.

A standout feature of the 2023 election was the unparalleled involvement of youth groups in promoting social accountability. These groups played a crucial role in monitoring and overseeing the electoral processes, particularly in the counting and collation of votes. Their vigilance and commitment to democratic principles were pivotal in ensuring that the electoral activities were conducted with integrity and transparency. The youth's proactive stance served as a deterrent to potential malpractices and was instrumental in instilling a sense of trust and fairness in the electoral process. This engagement not only signifies a shift in the political consciousness of the youth but also reflects a growing trend towards more participatory democracy in Nigeria.

The employment of technological innovations, namely the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) and the Integrated Voter Electronic Result Portal (IVeR), was a significant milestone in the evolution of Nigeria's electoral systems. The BVAS, by providing biometric verification of voters, ensured a more accurate and fraud-resistant process of voter authentication. This advancement was crucial in curbing instances of voter impersonation and other fraudulent activities that have marred past elections.

The IVeR Portal, on the other hand, revolutionized the process of results management. By enabling the swift uploading and dissemination of results directly from polling units, it facilitated greater transparency and accountability in the results collation process. This real-time tracking system allowed for immediate corroboration and verification of results figures, significantly reducing the likelihood of result manipulation and rigging that have historically plagued the electoral process in Zamfara State.

The successful implementation of these technological tools, combined with the active engagement of youth, not only enhanced the efficiency and credibility of the election but also restored public confidence in the electoral process. This synergy represents a crucial step forward in addressing the longstanding challenges of electoral governance in Nigeria.



The report by ARDP/ZamTraka thus serves as a comprehensive documentation of the progress made in electoral practices in Zamfara State. It stands as a testament to the potential of combining technological innovation with civic participation in fostering more transparent, fair, and credible elections. The lessons learned and the successes achieved in this election can serve as a blueprint for other states in Nigeria, paving the way for a stronger, more resilient democratic process.

In summary, the 2023 Gubernatorial Election in Zamfara State, as observed and reported by ARDP/ZamTraka, marks a significant departure from past practices. It reflects a growing maturity in Nigeria's electoral processes, showcasing the pivotal role of youth engagement and technological advancements in shaping the future of democratic governance. The successes of this election hold great promise for the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria, ensuring that the will of the people is expressed and respected in the most transparent and credible manner possible.



FEEDBACK

From the reports compiled by our election observers, the following are the aggregated major feedbacks directed to the electoral body:

INEC

1. Provision of adequate explanatory notes on the Electoral Act in order to clear ambiguities as regards to contexts of its provisions.

The lack of adequate explanatory notes has created ambiguities on certain sections of the Electoral Act that caused unnecessary impasse and heated debates during the collation of results at both the Local Government and State collation centers. It also put great pressure on the electoral officials and thus gave room for subjective decisions on sensitive issues. Thus, the need for adequate explanatory notes with a view to eliminating ambiguities and avoid potential conflicting interpretations.



2. There should be appropriate and more inclusive guidelines or framework for recruiting election officials and other INEC staff befitting of a truly independent electoral body that would elicit public confidence

Many respondents to our the election observers suggested that the selection process for Resident Electoral Commissioners (RECs) and the Returning Officers (ROs) be made more transparent. Many people complained that a good number of ROs lack adequate grasp of INEC's guidelines and thus raised concerns on their competence and experience to handle the election tasks involved. Also, there are allegations of political bias on the part of the RECs from aggrieved stakeholders specifically caused by the lack of an framework for their selections.

3. Adequate configuration of election machines and training of Ad hoc staff should be prioritized in order to boost capacity and competence.

In view of numerous cases where elections were delayed unnecessarily due to the lack of sound knowledge on how the BVAS machine works pointed to the need for the electoral body to prioritize adequate training of ad hoc staff on the operation of electoral devices and general Information Technology (IT) procedures.

4. INEC should promote transparency and accountability in campaign finances as well as punishing electoral offenders

Respondents observed how vote buying was rife and both parties are culpable in perpetrating this electoral offence, and thus strongly suggested that INEC should make it mandatory for parties and candidates to operate adequately monitored campaign expenses accounts for elections. All campaign expenditure be declared and accounted periodically during the elections season. In addition, sanctions which can lead to disqualification of non-compliance and defaulting party or candidate be promulgated. Furthermore, there should also be a robust framework for tracking, reporting and sanctioning electoral offenders.

5. Adequate monitoring of provisions to aid persons with disability in exercising their civic right should me prioritized to avoid disenfranchisement.

Some respondents noted that a budgetary allocation of N269.5m was made by INEC to cater for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) during the election but no visible infrastructural provisions were seen in Zamfara State during the 2023 Elections. This should be investigated, and for future elections INEC should ensure that adequate tools/aids and structural support are provided at the polling units to ensure PWDs are not disenfranchised.

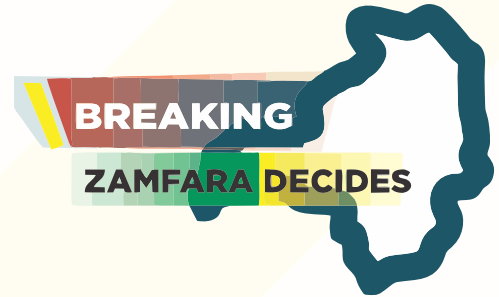


Charts and Infographics



Gubernatorial Result Update

Results as at 3:15am, 21st March, 2023



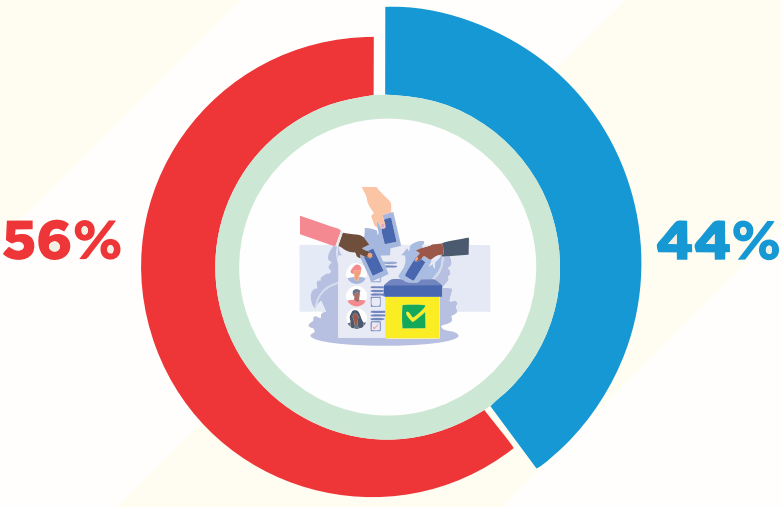
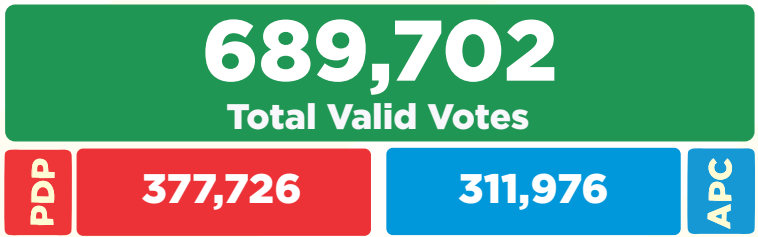
14
LGAs

PDP

10
LGAs Won

APC

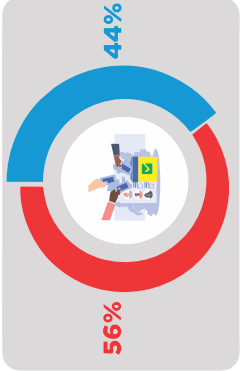
04
LGAs Won



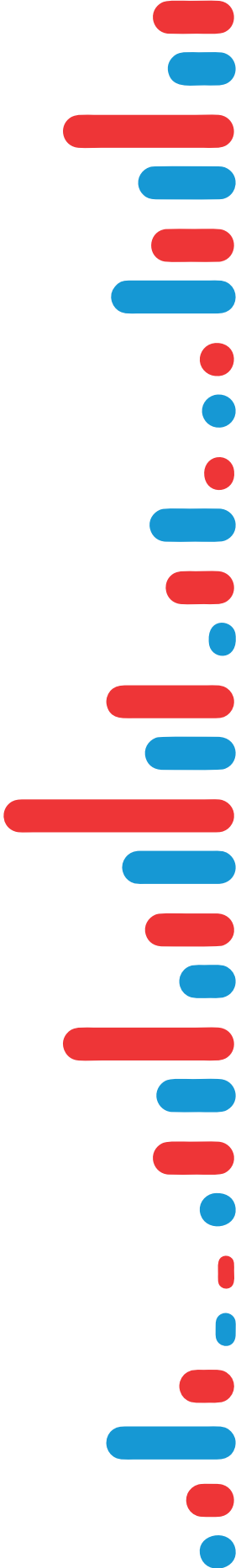
BREAKING
ZAMFARA DECIDES

Zamfara Gubernatorial Election Trend Sheet

689,702 Total Valid Votes		14 Total LGAs	
377,726	311,976	PDP 10 LGAs Won	APC 04 LGAs Won
Election Status		Conclusive	



● APC
● PDP



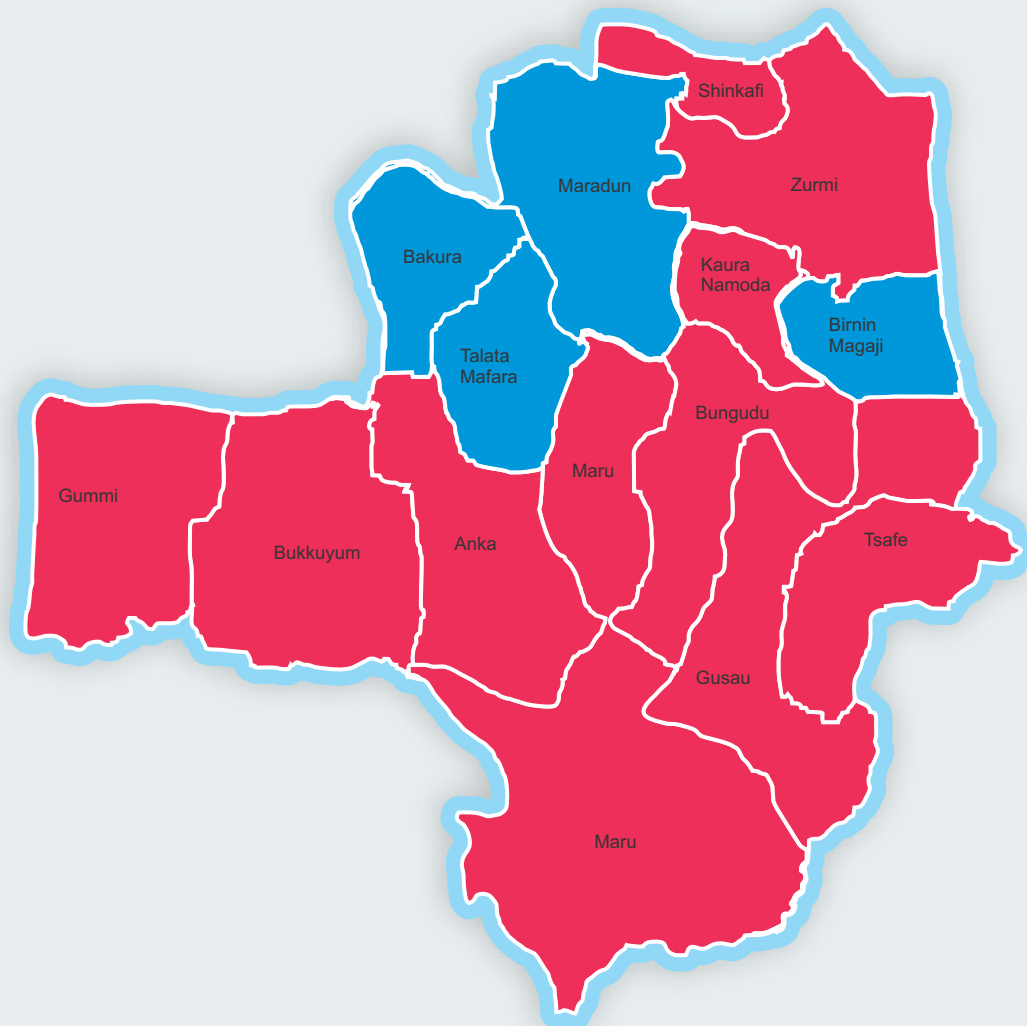
Anka Bakura B/Magaji Bukyumu Bungudu Gummi Gusau Kaura Maru Maradun Shinkafi T/Mafara Tsafe Zurmi




MAP INDICATING CONTROL OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA BY PARTIES

**Local Governments
won by the APC**

**Local Governments
won by the PDP**



SEATS WON BY THE PARTIES IN THE STATE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY



Seats won by the ruling APC



Seats won by the PDP



