

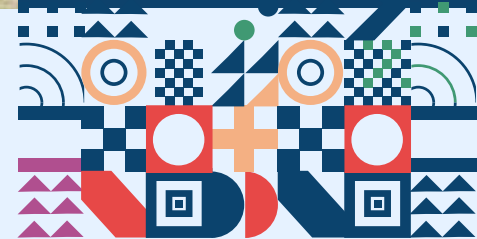


# Enhancing Election Security: A Multi-Stakeholders' Approach

*...lessons from the Edo and Ondo States 2024 governorship elections.*



Abridged Version



## **ABOUT THE NIGERIA ELECTION**

## **VIOLENCE EDUCATION AND**

## **RESOLUTION PROJECT (NEVER).**

Nigeria Election Violence Education and Resolution (NEVER) is a citizen-led electoral violence prevention intervention that aims to establish a robust, multi-stakeholder electoral security framework that will track, document, and mitigate electoral violence before, during, and after elections—ultimately, establishing an early warning system and publishing disaggregated data to aid stakeholders' mitigation strategy planning. KDI, with support from the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), implemented the NEVER Project during the 2024 Edo and Ondo State off-cycle governorship election. This initiative established an Election Security Early Warning System (ESEWS) across all 18 local government areas (LGAs) in Edo and Ondo States. Over nine months, KDI has actively monitored and analysed the pre-election environment, deploying 45 long-term security monitors each in the states to identify and document early warning signs of potential electoral violence.

The deployed LTMs monitored the electoral and political landscape for eight (8) weeks based on the indicators to feed the established ESEWS; these indicators include:

- Assessment of the pre-election general environment, such as unusual movement or presence of security agencies and tension in the build-up to the election.
- Nature and Intensity of Voter Education on Electoral Offence.
- The dominance of political parties and the nature of their campaigning.
- Electoral Malfeasance and Interference: Abuse of administrative and state resources, suppression, and vote buying.
- Electoral Violence: Physical attacks, victims, perpetrators, and types.
- Early warning signals: incitement, recruitment of political thugs, militia and gangs, the proliferation of small arms, and growing activities of armed groups.

Utilising globally accepted indicators tested in over 11 countries through the IFES/EVER methodology, KDI has worked to provide data-driven insights to election stakeholders, including INEC, political parties, security agencies, and civil society organisations. Our pre-election Security Risk Assessment (ESRA) findings have been instrumental in identifying electoral risk factors, triggers of violence, and areas requiring targeted mitigation strategies. This proactive approach aims to foster a peaceful electoral process and strengthen public confidence in democratic institutions.



## Introduction

The 2024 Edo and Ondo off-cycle governorship elections were conducted within Nigeria's evolving electoral landscape, presenting both progress and persistent challenges in the country's democratic process. These elections provided critical insights into electoral integrity, security, transparency, and fairness, offering a comparative analysis of past elections while benchmarking against international best practices. This report presents a comprehensive assessment of key electoral challenges, focusing on election security, vote-buying, climate-resilient elections, and the impact of the extended pre-election period. The findings provide actionable recommendations to strengthen Nigeria's electoral processes and build a resilient democratic system.

*Elections are not just about ballots; they are about safety. A secure electoral process is a credible one.*

In Edo and Ondo States, the project played a pivotal role in supplying electoral security data to critical actors, most notably through the Election Security Early-Warning System (ESEWS). This system,

which was implemented with a robust methodology, provided timely insights on potential flashpoints, trends in pre-election violence, and electoral risk indicators.

In Ondo State, the data generated from ESEWS was instrumental in shaping the advocacy strategy of the Peace Mediation Working Committee, a body tasked with fostering a non-violent electoral process. By providing regular factsheets and data briefings, KDI ensured that electoral security discussions were anchored on empirical evidence rather than speculation. This strategic dissemination of data allowed the committee to preemptively address threats, engage relevant security agencies, and create pressure on political actors to uphold the principles of peaceful elections.

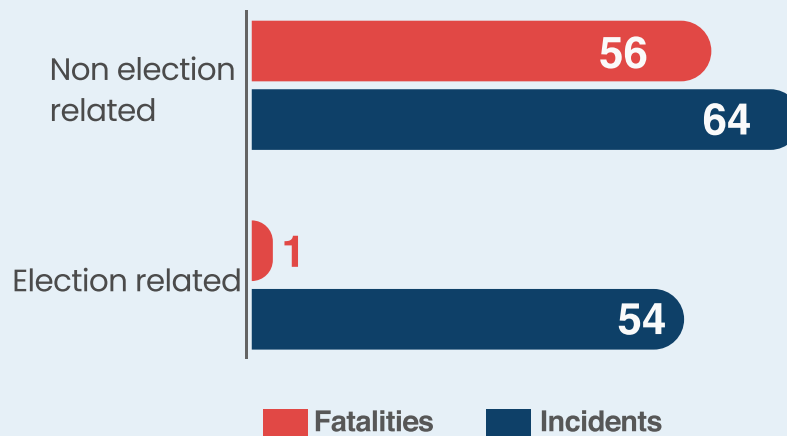
The impact of these efforts was further reinforced through the Ondo State Peace and Security Summit, an event that served as a high-level platform for direct engagement between political candidates, election management bodies, and security agencies. The summit was particularly significant as it brought together candidates from all political parties, including the incumbent Governor of Ondo State, who was seeking re-election under the All Progressives Congress (APC). The candidates collectively pledged to a peaceful election process, an action that set a positive tone for election day and played a role in de-escalating pre-existing tensions.

In Edo State, the project's emphasis on electoral violence prevention was similarly impactful. By ensuring that key stakeholders—including civil society organisations, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), and security agencies—had access to real-time intelligence on security threats, KDI facilitated a more coordinated response to emerging challenges. This proactive approach helped in minimising instances of violence and contributed to the relative peace observed during the election period.

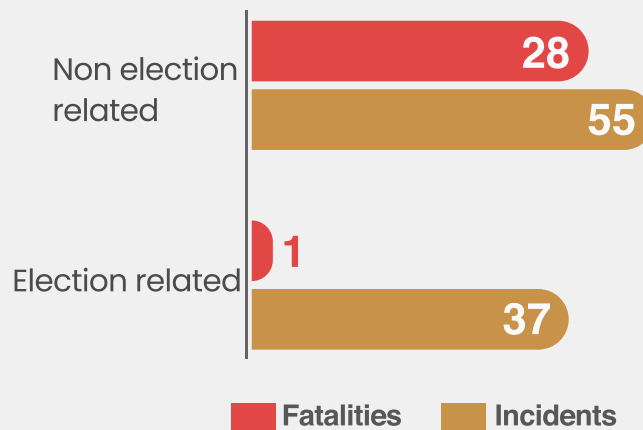
## Number of Electoral and Non-electoral Violent Incidents Tracked, Verified and Documented between Jan. 1 to Dec. 31, 2024 in Edo and Ondo States



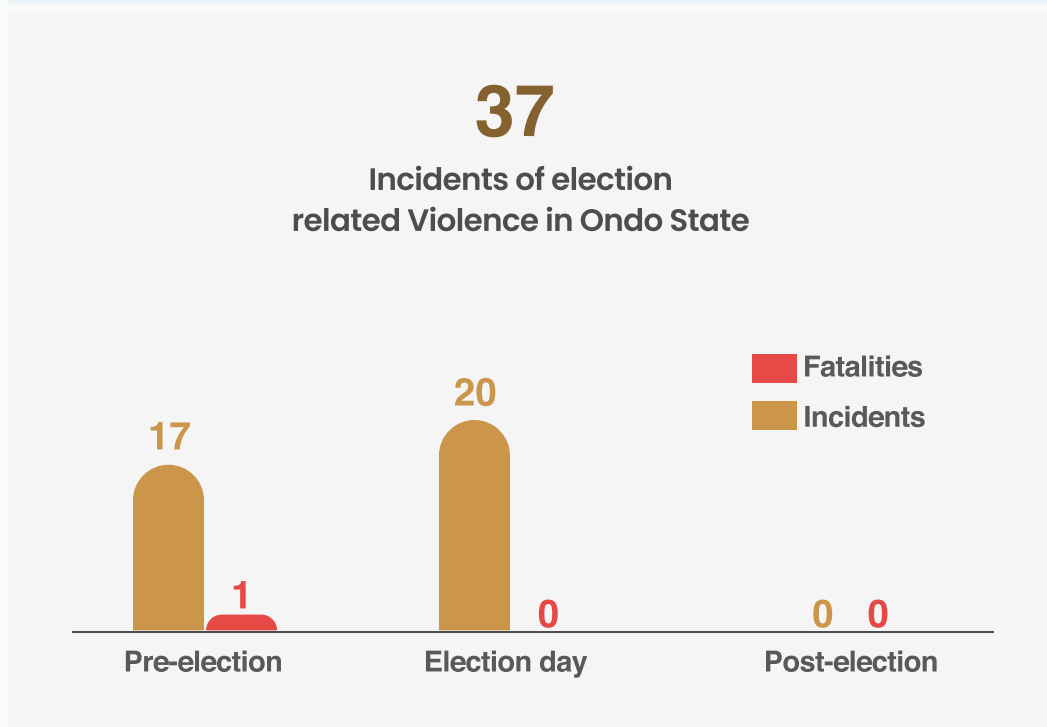
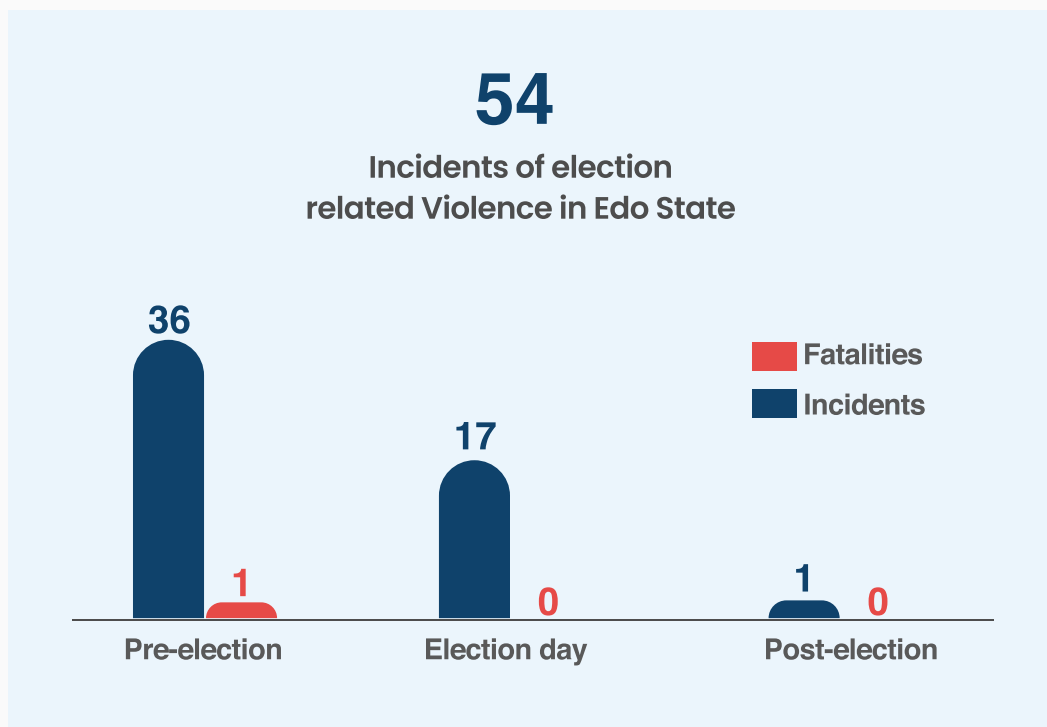
### Category of violence in Edo State



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## Key Findings

The findings provide actionable recommendations to strengthen Nigeria's electoral processes and build a resilient democratic system.

- 1. Election Security and Violence Mitigation:** The report establishes a direct correlation between proactive security deployment and reduced electoral violence. Locations with well-deployed security forces witnessed fewer violent incidents, demonstrating the importance of early risk assessments and strategic security presence. However, gaps in inter-agency coordination, response time, and election-specific security training remain pressing concerns.
- 2. Vote-Buying Persists Despite Awareness Campaigns:** Despite extensive voter education initiatives, vote-buying remained a major challenge across both elections. Data from KDI's Early Warning Systems (EWS) revealed no significant correlation between anti-vote-buying campaigns and a reduction in voter inducement. This suggests that awareness efforts alone are insufficient and must be reinforced by stronger legal enforcement, financial intelligence monitoring, and systemic deterrents.
- 3. Climate-Resilient and Environmentally Conscious Elections:** Environmental factors, including weather events, flooding, and difficult terrains, disrupted electoral logistics. INEC encountered challenges in deploying election materials, highlighting the need for climate-adaptive election planning. The report emphasises transitioning to climate-resilient logistics.
- 4. The Extended Pre-Election Period Fuels Electoral Violence:** Section 29(1) of the Electoral Act 2022 mandates at least 180 days for political parties to submit candidate lists and allows for all litigation options to be exhausted, significantly extending the pre-election period. This was a 120-day extension from

the “*at least 60 days*” specified by the Electoral Act 2010 (as amended). Equally, this act has increased the public campaign period also to 150 days. This prolonged timeline of pre-election and public campaigning has exacerbated intra-party conflicts and heightened pre-election violence, as observed in the 2022 off-cycle elections (Ekiti, Osun), the 2023 general elections, and the 2023 Imo, Kogi, and Bayelsa elections. A legislative review of this provision is crucial to mitigating pre-election instability.

**5. Comparative Analysis with International Best Practices:** A comparative assessment of the Edo and Ondo elections against global electoral norms revealed mixed outcomes. Despite improvements in election-day logistics, transparency, and security professionalism, systemic deficiencies—such as result manipulation, logistical inefficiencies, and weak enforcement of electoral laws—persist in undermining electoral credibility.

- **Edo 2024 Election:** Moderate but flawed integrity; transparency was enhanced through timely upload on the IReV platform, but vote-buying, result management, and logistical inefficiencies undermined the process.
- **Ondo 2024 Election:** Moderate integrity; improved logistics and observer access enhanced the credibility of the election; however, vote-buying and the lack of inclusivity in the election persisted as significant setbacks.



## Key Recommendations

### 1. **Enhancing Election Security**

- Early and proactive security deployment to identified hotspots based on real-time risk assessments.
- Strengthening the Inter-Agency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES) for better coordination.
- Use of surveillance technology for real-time incident tracking.
- Strict accountability mechanisms and improved welfare for security personnel on election duty to prevent compromise and collusion.

### 2. **Strengthening Anti-Vote-Buying Mechanisms**

- Full enforcement of Sections 121 and 127 of the Electoral Act 2022, ensuring speedy prosecution of vote-buyers.
- Establishing the National Electoral Offense Commission and Tribunal through the Act of Parliament and setting it up for full operations across all elections.
- Community-driven anti-vote-buying initiatives and anonymous whistleblower platforms to expose electoral corruption.

### 3. **Implementing Environmentally Conscious Elections**

- Transitioning to recyclable election materials to reduce electoral waste.
- Conducting pre-election environmental risk mapping to mitigate climate-related disruptions and develop climate-adaptive election logistics with emergency response teams.

### 4. **Managing the Extended Pre-Election Period**

- Strengthening intra-party conflict resolution mechanisms to mitigate pre- and post-primary disputes.
- Legislative review of Section 94 of the Electoral Act 2022 to consider reducing the public electoral campaigning to 90-

120 days.

#### 5. **Strengthening Stakeholder Collaboration for Electoral Integrity**

- Enhanced multi-stakeholder engagement involving INEC, security agencies, CSOs, and political parties for coordinated election planning.
- Greater transparency in election result collation to prevent misinformation and post-election conflicts.
- Institutionalising post-election audits to restore public confidence in the electoral process.

### Conclusion

The 2024 Edo and Ondo NEVER Report underscores the urgent need for electoral reforms to enhance election security, combat vote-buying, implement climate-adaptive electoral logistics, and address pre-election violence. While incremental improvements were observed, these elections fell short of democratic excellence. To align with international best practices, Nigeria must prioritise stricter legal enforcement, technological improvements, and institutional collaboration to build a resilient and transparent electoral system. The findings and recommendations in this report serve as a call to action for INEC, security agencies, political parties, policymakers, and civil society organisations to address systemic electoral challenges and strengthen Nigeria's democracy ahead of future elections.





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## About Kimpact

Kimpact Development Initiative (KDI) is an independent non-governmental organisation that advances good governance, democratic rights, public policy, and public engagement. We do this by building informed and active citizens through capacity development, advancing public policies, data-driven advocacy, and reforms that create a more supportive environment for citizen-led development.

## Our Mission

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To inspire citizen-led democratic development that is anchored on the principles of participation, data-driven advocacy, strong democratic institutions, and public policies





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