IMPROVEMENTS IN ELECTION RESULT MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIA:

THE ROLE OF LAW, ADMINISTRATION AND TECHNOLOGY

Professor Mahmood Yakubu
Chairman. Independent National
Electoral Commission (INEC)

Keynote Address on the Occasion of the Release of the Yiaga Africa Report on the Election Result Analysis Dashboard [ERAD] held at Transcorp Hilton Hotel, Abuja, on Friday 9th September 2022

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Introduction

I want to thank Yiaga Africa for inviting me to give the Keynote Address on this occasion of the release of its report on the Election Result Analysis Dashboard (ERAD). This is the first of its kind in Nigeria and Yiaga Africa and Channels Television have once more confirmed that they are leading organizations in the spheres of election and public information. The coming together of the two in this novel project demonstrates their innovativeness, ingenuity and commitment to the public interest and social responsibility. Your creativity has taken what was an averagely visited web portal established by the Commission, into the living rooms of millions of Nigerians in a matter of weeks. The visibility that ERAD has given to the INEC Result Viewing (IReV) portal has been momentous and it is deeply appreciated by the Commission. I hope that you will sustain the Dashboard and the Commission remains ready to work with you to improve on it. Watching Seun Okinbaloye, Samson Itodo, Cynthia Mbamalu, Ezenwa Nwagwu, Hussaini Abdu and other presenters of the ERAD during the Ekiti and Osun Governorship elections indicated the great things that the Commission could achieve working with important stakeholders like you.

Apart from voting, results management is easily the most critical aspect of election administration. Indeed, for most politicians, it is perhaps more important than voting. The reason for this is not farfetched. While voting is an open and public activity, results management is usually run by a few election officials, mostly outside the glare of the public. Consequently, politicians, and indeed citizens, are often apprehensive that results could be simulated and may not reflect the votes cast. This feeling is deepened by past experiences in our system where actually massive doctoring and falsification of election results have occurred. Accordingly, it could be said that an election is as successful as its results management.

Over the years, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has realized that efficient and transparent result management is at the heart of public trust, peaceful elections and the growth and consolidation of our democracy. The Commission has been resolute about this and invested enormous time, thinking and resources to improving the results management system. Working with other agencies and organizations, the Commission has strived to use legal enactments to improve the handling of results, invested in technology and introduced several transparency-enhancement procedures. It is therefore germane to say that tenacity, technology and transparency (the three Ts) have been at the heart of INEC's steady improvement of results management.

INEC has for past three electoral cycles been very resolute in pushing for improved election management, especially leveraging technology. Introduction of the Smart Card Reader (SCR) and its use in recording accreditation data was a major turning point. However, when its deployment became mired in unnecessary legal controversy, the Commission continued to push for legal amendments to secure its use. I say that the controversy was unnecessary because there was a clear misunderstanding of the role of the SCR in the process at the time. The SCR was introduced to do several things namely, to verify that the Permanent Voters Card (PVC) provided by the voter during voting was genuine, to authenticate that the holder of the card was the legitimate owner and finally to ensure that only voters who were accredited to vote actually voted. These things were pursuant to Section 49 of the Electoral Act 2010 (as amended), which in precis provides that a voter wishing to

vote approaches the Presiding Officer at the Polling Unit with his/her voter's card. If the Presiding Officer is satisfied that the voter is the same person that is on the Register of Voters, a ballot paper will be issued to the person to vote. The essence of the SCR was therefore not to supersede or replace the Register of Voters, as some lawyers convinced a court to believe. Instead, it was to assist the Presiding Officer to be "satisfied" that the card being presented is a legitimate card for voting, and that the voter is actually the person in the register, both of which are required by the law. In spite of the initial hiccup, the Commission continued to push for both the use of technology for accreditation and the electronic transmission of results and accreditation data. Thus, when the country was engaged in a fierce debate last year over the inclusion of electronic transmission of election results in the Electoral Act, the Commission issued a major position paper outlining the legal and technical issues involved and strongly recommended the adoption of electronic transmission of results. The Commission was convinced that the application of technology to both accreditation and results management would improve transparency and trust in the electoral process.

The breakthrough came with the new Electoral Act 2022, which empowered the Commission to adopt electronic means for both accreditation and results management. Indeed, the persistence of the Commission on these issues, particularly in the management of results are now well-expressed in extant legal framework, administrative procedures and technological innovations introduced in recent times by the Commission.

Table 1: Legal, Administrative and Technological Basis for Improved Results Management

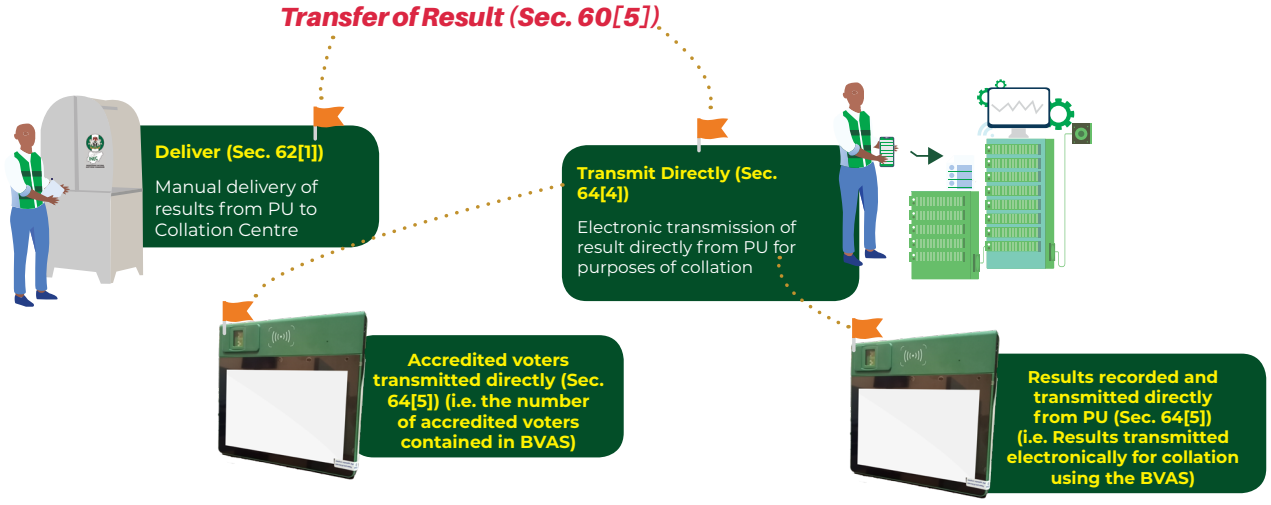
Legal	Administrative	Technology
• Electronic transmission of results and accreditation data. • Use of transmitted election data for collation • Establishment of Elections Results Database • Power of the Commission to review results	• Security printing of Result Sheets • Customization of Result Sheets • Collation Support and Results Verification System (CSRVS) • Public/Media access to Collation Centres • Margin of Lead Principle • Open counting of votes • Encouraging voters to vote and stay back to watch counting at Polling Units	• Smart Card Reader (SCR) which records the number of accredited voters. • Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) which records number of accredited votes, stores an image of the Polling Unit Result Sheet (EC8A) and transmits same for collation. • INEC Result Viewing (IReV) portal • Operations Management Information System (OMIS), which is a database of election information including results.

Legal improvements

The Electoral Act 2022 makes very progressive provisions in support of the Commission's longstanding quest to carefully increase the use of technology in election management. Not only does the Act empower the Commission to use the SCR or any other electronic device for accreditation of voters, but it also provides for the electronic transmission of results and accreditation data. Four cardinal provisions of the Act have contributed to improved results management. First is the provision for the electronic transmission of results and accreditation data. Section 64 of the Act provides that a collation officer can only collate a result delivered to him/her if the number of accredited voters and the votes scored are consisted with the numbers "recorded and transmitted directly from polling units". And where a dispute arises during collation, the data transmitted directly from the polling units should be used to resolve it. Secondly, the Act provides for the use of electronically transmitted accreditation data for purposes of collation. Prior to the Act, INEC transmitted results only for its records. Thirdly, Section 62 (2) of the Act provides for the Commission to "compile, maintain and update, on a continuous basis, a register of election results to be known as the National Electronic Register of Election Results" (NERER).

Box 1: Diagram of Transfer of Results

The Electoral Act 2022 uses the term "Transfer" in relation to election results to refer to



Finally, Section 65 of the Electoral Act, based on the recommendation of the Commission, for the first time empowers the Commission to review results. According to the Section, "the Commission shall have the power within seven days to review the declaration and return where the Commission determines that the said declaration and return was not made voluntarily or was made contrary to the provisions of the law, regulations and guidelines, and manual for the election".

Box 2: Diagram of Transfer of Results

Sec. 64 (4) A collation officer or returning officer at an election shall collate and announce the result of an election, subject to his or her verification and confirmation that –

a. Number of accredited voters stated on the collated result are correct and consistent with the number of accredited voters recorded and transmitted directly from polling units under Section 47(2).

b. The votes stated on the collated result are correct and consistent with the votes or results recorded and transmitted directly from polling units under section 60(4) of this Act.

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(5) subject to subsection (1), a collation officer or returning officer shall use the number of accredited voters recorded and transmitted directly from polling units under Section 47(2) of this Act and the votes or results recorded and transmitted directly from polling units under section 60(4) of this Act to collate and announce the result of an election if a collated result at this or lower level of collation is not correct.

(6) where during collation of results, there is a dispute regarding a collated result or the result of an election from any polling unit, the collation officer or returning officer shall use the following to determine the correctness of the disputed result –

a. The original of the disputed collated result for each polling unit where the election is disputed;

b. The smart card reader or other technology device used for the accreditation of voters in each polling unit where the election is disputed for the purpose of obtaining accreditation data directly from the smart card reader or technology device;

c. Data of accreditation recorded and transmitted directly from each polling unit where the election is disputed as prescribed under Section 47(2) of this Act; and

d. The votes and result of the election recorded and transmitted directly from each polling unit where the election is disputed, as prescribed under section 60(4) of this Act.

Administrative procedures

Based on its powers under the law to administer elections, INEC has used several administrative procedures to strengthen results management and increase the integrity of declaration and return of winners. One of such measures is the security printing of result sheets. Extant legal framework empowers INEC to design the forms for recording results. These result sheets are produced for all levels of election starting from the Polling Units (Form EC8A), Registration Area/Ward collation (Form EC8B), Local Government collation (Form EC8C) and State/National level collation (Form EC8D). In addition, there is the result sheet for returning the winners for all the constituencies (Form EC8E). Special security features are embedded in the forms to prevent their easy cloning. Another measure is the customization of result sheets for various elections and levels of result management and constituencies. For instance, result sheets could be customized for specific elections and for specific Registration Areas.

In addition, the Commission in 2020 introduced a special copy of each result sheet for the Electoral Operation and Logistics Department of the Commission. Unlike in the past where the Commission is left with no copy of the result in the event of the original copy being destroyed during collation, it now has a dedicated copy for Electoral Operations, which is collected right from the Polling Units. Furthermore, the Commission has been granting open access to its collation centres to accredited observers and the media. This is to make the process as transparent as possible. Several television channels now air result collation live during elections. Also, as far back as the 2011 General Election, the Commission introduced the principle that voters should vote and stay back to observe the counting and recording of the results at the Polling Units. Initially, this did not go down well with many politicians and security agencies, who feared that it could lead to violence. However, the Commission insisted. This has remained the practice and doing so has increased public trust in the outcome of elections.

Finally, for several years now the Commission has been deploying its Collation Support and Results Verification System (CSRVS) for major elections. This arose out of the observation that human errors in the collation of results often affected public perception of elections negatively. Prior to the CSRVS, Collation and Returning Officers had to dutifully enter every result and subsequently add the rows and columns to arrive as the final results. Sometimes, this could entail very many rows and columns. In the process, errors often occurred in the summation of figures. The CSRVS involves assigning INEC staff with laptops and Excel sheets to support the Collation and Returning Officers with their entries and additions. This has not only tremendously enhanced the accuracy but has also drastically cut down the time of collation.

Technological innovations

Since 2011, the Commission has adopted a policy of measured application of technology to election management. Several principles have informed this policy notably suitability, simplicity, cost effectiveness, timeliness, efficiency, security, knowledge transfer and, above all, transparency. In that period, we developed and applied technology to several areas of managing the electoral process. Table 2 below provides a summary of 22 innovations in the last one decade (2011-2021) categorised into 10 broad areas.

Table 2: Application of technology by INEC			
Area	Technology	Explanation	Date introduced
Registration and identification of voters	Biometric registration	Use of biometric technology in identifying voters. Initially only fingerprints were used, but in 2021 facial recognition was introduced.	2011 and 2021
	Computer-based registration of voters	Direct Data Capture Machines (DDCM) is a laptop computer-based registration equipment introduced in 2007, but fully deployed in 2011. It was replaced in 2021 by a tablet-type device, the INEC Voter Enrolment Device (IVED).	2007, 2011 and 2021
	Permanent Voters' Card (PVC) with chip	A chip-based, machine-readable voters card introduced in 2015 which made it possible to use an electronic device to positively identify a voter using fingerprints.	2015
	Online pre-registration of voters (2021).	A dedicated portal to enable registrants and other voters with issues concerning their registration to commence the process online and complete in person at a registration centre.	2021
Accreditation of voters during elections	Smart Card Reader (SCR)	An electronic device that reads the PVC and the fingerprint of voters to authenticate them before voting	2015
	Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS)	BVAS was introduced in 2021 to replace the SCR. It is capable of not only reading fingerprints, but also facial recognition. It is also much faster than the SCR. This has vastly increased the positive identification of voters during accreditation.	2021
Results management	INEC Results Viewing Portal	This is a dedicated portal for the public to view images of polling unit results as soon as they are ready. Once a person registered and is verified, he/she can view polling unit results by logging in to the results viewing portal. This has increased transparency in the process	2021
	Uploading of results in real time using the BVAS	The BVAS doubles as an accreditation device and a photographic device to capture the picture of results and upload to the IReV.	2021
	Collation Support and Results Verification System (CSRVS)	CSRVS provides support to Collation and Returning Officers during the compilation and announcement of results. Using carefully prepared Excel sheets and files, CSRVS helps to confirm figures from manual collation and speed up the process of results management.	2011

Management of candidates, political party agents, election observers and the media	Online portals for candidates, observers and political party agents	Dedicated portals for management of candidates, media, observers and party agents. This was informed by the COVID-19 pandemic, but they have also increased the efficiency of managing these activities.	2020
Election-day supervision and monitoring	Situation Room	The INEC Situation Room at Headquarters was introduced in 2011. From the Situation Room, the Commission can monitor and supervise elections in real time using technology. In 2020, the Commission introduced the Virtual Situation Room, which also enables the public to join the INEC Situation Room virtually. State level Situation Rooms also exist.	2011
	Election Monitoring and Support Centre	Election Monitoring and Support Centre (EMSC) uses computer applications and dashboards to monitor and support election day activities.	2015
	Compliance and Threat Data Acquisition and Sharing System	Compliance and Threat Data Acquisition and Sharing System uses real time electronic data gathering to monitor and solve challenges during elections.	2019
Security and safety	Security Alert and Notification System	INEC Security Alert and Notification System (INEC SANS) uses an Android application and web dashboard to monitor and respond to physical threats to INEC activities and facilities.	2021
	Basic Security in Election Duty	Basic Security in Election Duty (BaSED) is an electronic security training and certification module for election duty staff.	2015
	Election Risk Management Tool	Election Risk Management Tool (ERMT) is a specialized tool for tracking election risks and managing them.	2015
Public information and voter education	Citizen's engagement and voter education	There are several INEC social media platforms as well as the INEC Citizens Contact Centre which uses technology to receive and respond to public requests for information.	2015 - 2019
Knowledge production and Institutional Memory	Election Violence Mitigation and Advocacy Tool	Election Violence Mitigation and Advocacy Tool (EVMAT) is an electronic data gathering tool used by the Electoral Institute for research on election violence.	2015
	TEI Virtual Library	Fully equipped digital library at the Electoral Institute to support research and institutional memory	2012

	Operations Management Information System (OMIS)	Operations Management Information System (OMIS) is a database of election information, including election staff data, election results and other election management information.	2012
Election Logistics	Logistics Management System	Logistics Management System uses an Android application and web dashboard to track election materials from procurement to delivery.	2021
Election staff Recruitment	INEC Portal for Recruitment of Election Staff	INEC Portal for Recruitment of Election Staff is an online election staff recruitment and deployment system. It also has an Android application to provide multiple access to potential election staff.	2019

Perhaps the most critical technological tools introduced by the Commission in recent times are the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) and the INEC Result Viewing (IReV) portal. While the former is a device, the latter is a web portal. But they have worked together to strengthen results collation and tremendously increased public confidence in the quality of elections is Nigeria. BVAS is used for two principal purposes. First, is to identify and accredit voters using two biometric modes: fingerprint and facial recognition. The bimodal biometric system ensures a second layer of identification of a voter, which has drastically reduced the number of false rejections experienced with the fingerprint only accreditation.

The second use of the BVAS is for capturing and uploading the image of the Polling Unit result form (Form EC8A), to the IReV portal. The image is simultaneously made available to the public for viewing via the portal. The same image is also available on the BVAS to enable Collation Officers to confirm and verify that the physical Form EC8A delivered by the Presiding Officer from the Polling Unit is the correct one.

IReV was first introduced in the Nasarawa Central State Constituency bye-election in Nasarawa State, held on 8th August 2020. The reasoning behind the introduction of the portal was twofold. The first was to address a longstanding issue that observers and Nigerians have raised since the return to civil rule in 1999 regarding the absence of polling unit level results. It was an irony that even though elections take place at Polling Units, the Commission could not provide results disaggregated by Polling Units. The problem was not necessarily that those results were doctored, as many critics think. Rather, it was more of the format for providing the results considering the number of Polling Units involved. Beyond that, the Nigerians expected the data to be in an editable format to enable them to conduct their own audit of the final results. The challenge was the cost of entering the data in real time at all Polling Units, some of them extremely remote and under tense conditions. The fear was that wrong entries would be rampant, leading to increased tension and heated contestation of election outcomes.

From 2011, the Commission tried a few approaches to harvesting Polling Unit results. One method was to have Polling Unit election officials enter a summary of the result as a phone text message and send to the backend for aggregation. That pilot could not lead to any useful solution, particularly with growing number of political parties, the likelihood of human errors and the limited capacity to send large amounts of data via phone text messages. A second pilot entailed giving staff at Polling Units handheld scanners

to scan the results and return them for extraction. Again, in the prevailing conditions of Polling Units and level of development of technology, only very few results were scanned. Moreover, most of the scanners never returned.

The second reasoning behind the IReV was to make results from Polling Units readily available to the public as a means of increasing transparency and trust in the process. Recall that in 2015, the Commission introduced the display of results on cardboards and plain sheets for each Polling Unit. Sometime in 2018, the process was systematised with the introduction of Form EC60E, which is a poster containing a summary of Polling Unit results. It was displayed at Polling Units for the public to see and take pictures if they so wished. IReV took the concept behind the EC60E to a higher level by making the results available to more members of the public, who can access them even from outside the country. Users only need to register for access, supply a valid email address, which is validated, create their login details and thereafter have free access to the results on the portal.

Starting with the Nasarawa Central State Constituency bye election, the IReV has been deployed in 105 elections, involving 16,694,461 registered voters for five governorship, six Senatorial District, seven Federal Constituency, 18 State Constituency, six FCT Chairmanship and 62 FCT Councillorship elections (see Table 4 below for the full list of the elections). In these elections, 33,275 Form EC8As were expected to be uploaded to the IReV for viewing. A total of 32,985 results were successfully uploaded, giving an upload success rate of 99.13%. This is a remarkable achievement considering that the constituencies are spread across the country covered different types of elections in different terrains, some of them quite remote. They cover both urban and rural locations, creeks to mountains and even areas affected by insecurity and insurgency. Images of Polling Unit results were successfully transferred to the IReV portal in real-time from Oworonsoki in Kosofe LGA of Lagos State, Ariara market in Aba North LGA of Abia State, to far-flung locations such as Dugge in Rijau LGA of Niger State, Mahin in Ilaje LGA of Ondo State, Kwalkwalawa in Bakura LGA of Zamfara, Dumadumin Tola in Kafin Hausa LGA of Jigawa State, Foropa in Southern Ijaw LGA of Bayelsa State, Iguobazuwa in Ovia South West LGA of Edo State, Biriyel in Bayo LGA of Borno State, Bundot in Dass LGA of Bauchi State and Okwelle in Onuimo LGA of Imo State. What this successful transmission of results demonstrates is that the concern about the capacity of the Commission to transmit results from all over the country may well be unfounded.

In fact, independent observers have confirmed the high performance of the IReV. According to the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) Election Analysis Centre, "the INEC Result Viewing Portal (IReV) was in full operation for the uploading of results in most of the polling units. At about 10:00pm, 99.7% of the results were available on the IReV. This level of compliance is commendable and needs to be encouraged for future elections".[1]This was corroborated by Yiaga Africa, which runs the Election Result Analysis Dashboard (ERAD) with Channels television. In a report to the Commission, the ERAD team stated that "in Ekiti, at 6pm on election day, 67% of polling unit level results were already uploaded on the IReV. At 10:52pm,100% of the results were on the IReV portal. Similarly, in Osun, 60% of results were uploaded on the IReV portal at 6pm on election day. By 11pm, 98% of the results were on the portal".[2]

[1]https://cddwestafrica.org/post-election-statement-on-the-july-16-2022-osun-state-governorshipelection/.

[2]YIAGA Africa "Yiaga Africa Election Result Analysis Dashboard (ERAD) Report on Ekiti and Osun 2022 Electronic Transmission of Election Results", Abuja, mimeo., September 2022.

Table 4: Elections conducted with IReV				
S/No.	Election	No. of Polling Units	No. of PUs Uploaded	% Uploaded
Governorship				
1	Osun State	3763	3763	100.00
2	Ekiti State	2445	2445	100.00
3	Anambra	5720	5719	99.98
4	Ondo State	3009	3009	100.00
5	Edo State	2627	2618	99.66
Senatorial District				
6	Lagos East	2002	1971	98.45
7	Plateau South	712	712	100.00
8	Imo North	692	692	100.00
9	Cross River North	535	535	100.00
10	Bayelsa West	396	396	100.00
11	Bayelsa Central	788	788	100.00
Federal Constituency				
12	Akure North/Akure South	408	408	100.00
13	Ogoja Yala	297	297	100.00
14	Jos North/Bassa	619	619	100.00
15	Lere	249	249	100.00
16	Gwaram	248	248	100.00
17	Aba North/Aba South	609	609	100.00
18	Magama/Rijau	307	307	100.00
State Constituency				
19	Ekiti East I	47	47	100.00
20	Ngor Okpala	148	148	100.00
21	Pankshin South	62	62	100.00
22	Akpabuyo	129	129	100.00
23	Isoko South I	84	84	100.00
24	Sabon Gari	173	173	100.00
25	Isoko North	145	144	99.31
26	Kafin Hausa	118	118	100.00
27	Dass	79	79	100.00
28	Bakura	114	75	65.79
29	Kosafe II	350	346	98.86
30	Obudu	107	78	72.90
31	Bayo	59	59	100.00

32	Nganzai	85	85	100.00
33	Ibaji	148	145	97.97
34	Bakori	344	186	54.07
35	Isi-Uzo	118	118	100.00
36	Nasarawa Central	44	44	100.00
FCT Area Council				
37	Rimba/Ebagi Ward bye-election 2021	6	6	100.00
38	6 Area Council Chairmen 2022	2,822	2,822	100.00
39	62 Councillorship seats 2022	2,822	2,798	99.14

A total of 128,994 accounts have been opened by IReV users since it was launched two years ago August 2020. However, interest in the portal has grown tremendously with the Ekiti and Osun Governorship elections. Prior to the Ekiti Governorship election, there were 75,793 users of the portal. During the election, 16,567 new accounts were created, representing a 22% increase. During the Osun Governorship election, an additional 36,635 users registered. Thus, between the two elections, a space of one month, the number of users increased by more than 70% over what it was before the Ekiti Governorship election. In fact, during the two elections, an average of 40,000 users were accessing the portal daily. These figures indicate that the public has become more confident in the process that the portal provides a true reflection of occurrence at the Polling Units. This interest may also be an indication that the public believes that INEC is getting the result management part of the process right.

Box 3: Information on IReV

Number of elections conducted with IReV	105
Total Expected Result Uploads (No. of Polling Units)	33, 275
Uploaded Results	32,985 (99.13%)
No. of Results not uploaded	290 (0.87%)
Completion rate for Ekiti Governorship election	100%
Completion Rate for Osun Governorship election	100%
User Registration	
Total number of registered users	128,994
a)Users before Ekiti Governorship election	75,793
b)User registration during Ekiti Governorship election	16,567
c)Users after Ekiti Governorship election	92,360
d)User registration Osun Governorship election	36,635
Average access during Ekiti & Osun Governorship elections	40,000

Indeed, using the law, administrative measures and technology, the Commission has drastically tackled major problems in result management in Nigerian elections. Among the top ten of such problems are falsification of scores at Polling Units, falsification of number of accredited voters, collation of false results, mutilation of results and computational errors, swapping of result sheets, forging result sheets, snatching and destruction of result sheets, obtaining declaration and return involuntarily, making declaration and return while result collation is still in progress and poor recordkeeping. Table 5 shows how the Commission is dealing with these challenges.

Table 5: Ten top problems of election result management

	Problem	Solution
1.	Falsification of scores at Polling Units	Power of the Commission to review results provided in Section 65 of the Electoral Act 2022.
2.	Falsification of number accredited voters Polling Units	BVAS transmitted figures of accredited voters constitute a prerequisite for collation of any result from the Polling Unit level.
3.	Collation of false results	The image of the result in both the BVAS and the IReV represent the single source of truth for Polling Unit results.
4.	Mutilation of Result Sheets and computational errors	Improved training and strict conditions for use of replacement result sheets has reduced mutilation. Also, the deployment of CSRVS has reduced computational errors by Collation and Returning Officers
5.	Swapping of Polling Unit Result Sheets	The image of the result in both the BVAS and IReV are used to determine the legitimacy of a Polling Unit result.
6.	Forging of Result Sheets	INEC's power to review results will address this problem.
7.	Snatching and Destruction of Result Sheets	Reconstruction of destroyed result sheets from lower-level results and images held on IReV is now part of result management.
8.	Obtaining declaration and return involuntarily	The power of INEC to review results is now provided in the Electoral Act
9.	Making returns while collation is still in progress	Results can be reviewed using the images transmitted directly from Polling Units to IReV and those on the BVAS.
10.	Poor recordkeeping	Establishment of the National Electronic Register of Election Results" (NERER) addresses this problem.

Challenges

Still, there are challenges – both technical and administrative. Some users would have experienced difficulties accessing the portal and downloading the results during the Ekiti and Osun Governorship elections. It was a network challenge arising essentially from the sheer numbers of users trying to register accounts and access the portal at the same time. We had planned our bandwidth and access parameters based on the numbers that created account prior to these elections. Our scaling parameters did not expect

a 70% increase within a month, as I have already indicated. However, our engineers quickly responded and brought the situation largely under control. We expect that with the popularity of IReV and spinoffs like ERAD, many more users would seek to access the portal during the General Election. We are working to ensure that they enjoy as seamless experience with IReV as possible.

Another technical concern for us is the repeated attempts to break through our cyber security system for the portal. Our engineers reported several cyberattacks on the portal during the Ekiti and Osun Governorship elections, some of them from as far as Asia. I am glad to note that all of them failed. However, while we are confident in the security solutions that we have deployed for IReV and all our web presence, we must remain vigilant and continue to strengthen our defences. We have tasked our engineers to do everything possible to fully protect the IReV and all our web resources.

Other challenges are administrative in nature and we are addressing them. For example, we found that some of the low-quality upload that occurred in the field, which some of the observers have also noted, were due to the unavailability or substitution of Presiding Officers that were trained prior to the elections. We shall administratively deal with this challenge and ensure that only adequately trained Presiding Officers are deployed for elections. Also, more hand-on training may be required to ensure that all those involved throughout the value chain of the IReV are fully ready for what is bound to be a major outing during the 2023 General Election.

Conclusion

It is clear that armed with an improved electoral act, administrative procedures and requisite technology, the Commission has increased the transparency and confidence of the public in its election result management processes. I can confidently say that the days of wanton manipulation of elections results are over. Yet, the Commission is not resting on its oars, knowing that it must remain several steps ahead of those who seek to undermine the system. The importance of IReV to transparency of result management is obvious. I call on all stakeholders to support the Commission to continue to work to improve IReV and the entire result management system towards the 2023 General Election, which will be far more extensive that what we have done so far.

I commend Yiaga Africa and Channels television for taking this bold step. But I hope that you know that this is only the beginning. However, be assured that the Commission will remain your partner all the way.

We also encourage other organisations to partner with INEC on this or other aspects of the electoral process and to assure you of our willingness to collaborate towards making our electoral process what we all aspire to make it – participatory, secure, transparent, credible and verifiable.

I thank you for your attention and God bless.

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