



Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO)

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PRE-ELECTION ENVIRONMENT OBSERVATION STATEMENT FOR THE MONTH OF SEPTEMBER

Introduction

The Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO), as part of its comprehensive observation of the December 7, 2020 presidential and parliamentary elections of Ghana, deployed sixty-five (65) Long-Term Observers (LTOs) across the country from September 1, 2020. The observers were deployed to sixty-five purposively selected constituencies (*list of constituencies attached as an appendix*) which include a mix of constituencies in areas that are considered as stronghold, swing/competitive, and hot-spot as well as some constituencies along border communities in the country. Since their deployment, the observers have been monitoring the general electoral and political environment including the activities of key election stakeholders such as the Electoral Commission, the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE), political parties, the security agencies, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and religious and traditional leaders. CODEO is pleased to share its first report from its observations on the pre-election environment for the month of September, 2020.

Summary of Findings:

- The level of civic/voter education activities were observed to be generally low across the various constituencies observed.
- A similarly low visibility of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) interventions in support of the up-coming elections, particularly peace promotion activities was also observed.
- Some disregard for COVID-19 health and safety protocols was observed at some political party activities.
- The National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP), are the most visible political parties in the constituencies observed as far as political and campaigning and related activities are concerned.
- The Exhibition of the Provisional Voter Register by the Electoral Commission witnessed some challenges particularly with regards to missing names from some registers at some Exhibition Centers.

Main Findings

Civic/Voter Education Platforms/Modes, Actors and Targeted Audience

Observer reports indicated that civic and voter education activities were quite low in the observed constituencies. The NCCE and the EC have so far been leading some civic and voter education activities in the constituencies observed, followed by political parties and religious bodies. Very few civic/voter education and other election-related activities (such as peace promotion) by CSOs were noted in the observed constituencies.

Campaigning Activities by Political Parties

Political and campaigning activities, mainly by the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP), have been in earnest in the observed constituencies. There was however, little visibility of campaigning activities by other political parties. At campaign activities, the main policy issues that were raised or discussed particularly by the NPP and the NDC were education, unemployment and the economy.

While observers' reports indicated a generally peaceful electoral environment, there were a few incidents of use of abusive or inflammatory language, destruction or removal of party/candidate paraphernalia, and election-related violence. For instance, in the Bekwai Constituency in the Ashanti Region, there was an alleged physical attack on the communication officers of one Lawyer Akwasi Amofa, an aspiring independent parliamentary candidate for the constituency. The incident occurred on September 22, 2020 at a local radio station (Dess FM) after a political talk show. The reports indicated that while the said communication officers were waiting for their vehicle, a group of armed men surrounded them with cutlasses and knives. The intervention of some people believed to be body guards of the communication officers brought the situation under control. Similarly, on September 24, 2020, the NPP Constituency Chairman of the Jomoro Constituency in the Western Region alleged that he had been attacked by a group of NDC youth as he drove through the Ehoaka community. He allegedly lodged a complaint at the Half Assini police station. There were also reports of destruction to campaign posters. For example, at Half Assini, Bonyere, Tikobo and Old Edobo in the Jomoro Constituency in the Western region, it was observed that some posters of the NPP and NDC parliamentary candidates had been torn/defaced, and in some cases, some posters had been placed on others.

Adherence to COVID-19 Health and Safety Protocols

While COVID-19 health and safety protocols were observed at some campaign activities, the protocols were not adhered to in other instances. For instance, at Tikobo No. 1 in the Jomoro constituency in the Western region, some party supporters of the NPP did not wear nose masks neither did they observe social distancing during a health walk through the principal streets of the town. Similar observations were noted during some meetings organized by two other political parties – the Ghana Union Movement (GUM) and the NDC in the same constituency.

Abuse of Incumbency

There were a few reports about the use of official public, state-supported or state-organized events for political campaigning. These included the use of public (state or local) vehicles for campaigning activities. For instance, on September 2, 2020, an official vehicle of the Juaboso District Assembly was used to convey some political party supporters on a campaign tour.

Provisional Voter Register Exhibition Exercise

CODEO LTOs also observed the nation-wide exhibition of the Provisional Voter Register which was carried out by the EC from September 18-27, 2020. CODEO Observers visited exhibition centers on six out of the ten days of the exercise during which they observed a total of 389 exhibition centers across the 65 constituencies under observation. Generally, the exercise recorded a low turn-out with majority (77%) of observed centers recording a daily attendance of less than 50 persons. On the last day of the exercise, while CODEO noted that 65% of 65 exhibition centers observed in the day recorded turn-out of 50% or more, the remaining 35% recorded turn-out of

fewer than 50%. While some centers recorded very impressive turn-out figures, others recorded very low turn-out. For instance, while the Bewadze D/A Primary School Exhibition Center in the Gomoa West Constituency in the Central Region recorded turn-out of nearly 99% at the end of the 10 days of the exercise, the Atomic Hill Demo School Exhibition Center in the Dome Kwabenya Constituency in the Greater Accra recorded a turn-out of 20% for the entire exercise.

The exhibition exercise was generally peaceful but marked by some challenges in relation to missing names from the provisional voter register at some centers observed. While some exhibition centers had a few missing names from the provisional voter register displayed, others had considerable numbers of names missing from the register. Such centers included: the Temporal Booth Exhibition Center at Moyiri in the Jirapa Constituency in the Upper West region where only 68 out of the total 253 expected names on the Provisional Register appeared; the Piiyiri No. 2 Exhibition Center also in Jirapa where about 400 names were missing; the Riyadul Quran exhibition center in the Tamale North Constituency where about 200 names were missing from the voter register; the Gbingbani L/A Primary School Exhibition Center at the Yunyoo Constituency where only 24 of the 564 registered population appeared on the register and lastly the Klikor STS in Ketu South Constituency in the Volta Region where about 24 names were missing from the register.

Observation of the Extended Biometric Voter Registration Exercise¹

On Thursday October 1, 2020 CODEO Long-Term Observers monitored the voter registration exercise conducted by the Electoral Commission at its district offices across the country. Observers noted the presence of party agents from the NPP and the NDC at most centers observed, while a few centers had in addition agents from other political parties such as the Convention Peoples' Party (CPP), The People's National Convention (PNC) and the Progressive People's Party (PPP). The exercise was generally smooth and calm with few reported incidents of chaos and acts of violence. For example, in Assin North Constituency in the Central Region, violence broke out between agents of the NPP and NDC over alleged registration of suspected under-aged persons and accusations over the abuse of the 'challenge procedure'. This led to the dismissal of a party agent from the center by the Registration Officer. The registration process was halted for some minutes and subsequently resumed following the intervention of the security personnel present. Similar incidents were recorded at a few other registration centers. There were few reported challenges with the performance of Biometric Verification Devices. The exercise was generally well patronized with hundreds of people thronging many of the centers. Many centers registered between 100 and 200 people, or beyond while others registered less than 100. At the close of the registration exercise on October 1, 2020, majority of the centers observed by CODEO had people in queues (in many cases between 50-200 people) who could not get registered. District EC officials however provided numbers to those who could not get registered at the end of the day and asked them to come the following day to register. On Friday, October 2, 2020, many district EC offices re-opened registration and observers indicated that at nearly all the observed districts offices, people who presented themselves for registration were able to do so.

¹This exercise has been captured in the September pre-election observation report although it took place on October 1 and 2, 2020.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

- CODEO condemns all reported acts of violence which took place during the period of observation. The Coalition reiterates its call on the security agencies to take appropriate action against all perpetrators of violence. CODEO reminds the Inspector-General of Police (IGP) of the need to share updates with the public on the progress of all cases of election-related violence as failure to ensure people are punished for their crimes will further erode public confidence and encourage impunity.
- The Coalition cautions all stakeholders to be mindful of all the necessary COVID-19 health and safety protocols to help minimize the potential spread of the virus.
- CODEO entreats CSOs and all election related stakeholders to intensify their election support activities across the country, particularly in the area of violence monitoring and peace promotion, and educating the citizenry on their civic rights, duties and responsibilities to compliment the work of the NCCE and the EC.
- CODEO urges the EC and NCCE not to limit their civic/voter education to the traditional media, particularly radio, but also take advantage of community meeting platforms, street announcement and other forms/modes of educating the public. These must however be done with the necessary arrangements for ensuring the observation of COVID-19 health and safety protocols.
- CODEO entreats the EC to take all necessary steps to rectify the identified challenges with the provisional voter register so that all registered voters are able to exercise their right to vote. While the Coalition acknowledges the public explanations provided by the EC regarding the challenges identified with the provisional voter register, the Coalition believes there are still gaps in stakeholder engagement and communication. The Coalition therefore entreats the EC to enhance stakeholder engagement, not just around the voter register but on the entire electoral process to help mobilize public support and promote transparency and inclusion towards achieving a free, fair and credible electoral process.
- The Coalition also entreats the EC to make the updated provisional voter register available to political parties as early as possible to allow for the cross-checking of figures in the bid to promote trust and further ensure that all identified challenges have been rectified before the voter register is certified. The EC is also entreated to provide clear information on results of the Adjudication Review Committee's work.

CODEO assures the public that it will continue to observe the pre-election environment and duly share its findings with the public on a monthly basis. CODEO's long-term observation is made possible with the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

**APENDIX:
LIST OF CONSTITUENCIES FOR CODEO LONG-TERM OBSERVATION**

S/N	Region	Constituency	34	Central	Cape Coast South
1.	Ashanti	Nsuta Kwamang	35.	Central	Assin North
2.	Ashanti	New Edubiase	36.	Central	Awutu Senya East
3.	Ashanti	Suame	37	Central	Effutu
4.	Ashanti	Sekyere Afram Plains	38	Central	Agona East
5.	Ashanti	Ahafo Ano South East	39	Central	Gomoa West
6.	Ashanti	Asawase	40	Eastern	Abuakwa North
7.	Ashanti	Bekwai	41	Eastern	Nkawkaw
8.	Ashanti	Manso Edubia	42	Eastern	Akwatia
9.	Ashanti	Offinso North	43	Eastern	New Juaben South
10.	Ashanti	Subin	44	Eastern	Asuogyaman
11.	Ahafo	Asunafo South	45	Eastern	Upper Manya Krobo
12.	Bono East	Techiman South	46	Eastern	Fanteakwa North
13.	Bono East	Pru West	47	Greater Accra	Weija/Gbawe
14.	Bono	Jaman North	48	Greater Accra	Dome/Kwabanya
15.	Bono	Sunyani West	49	Greater Accra	Ningo/Prampram
16.	Bono	Banda	50	Greater Accra	Odododiodio
17.	Bono	Dormaa West	51	Greater Accra	Ledzokuku
18.	Northern	Tamale Central	52	Greater Accra	Ayawaso East
19.	Northern	Savelugu	53	Greater Accra	Ablekuma South
20.	Northern	Karaga	54	Greater Accra	Ayawaso West Wuogon
21.	Northern	Tamale North	55	Volta	Adaklu
22.	Savannah	Salaga North	56	Volta	Ketu South
23.	North East	Walewale	57	Volta	Akatsi South
24.	North East	Yunyoo	58	Volta	South Dayi
25.	Upper East	Bongo	59	Volta	South Tongu
26.	Upper East	Builsa North	60	Oti	Buem
27.	Upper East	Builsa South	61	Oti	Nkwanta North
28.	Upper East	Zebilla (Bawku West)	62	Western	Jomoro
29.	Upper West	Sissala West	63	Western	Sekondi
30.	Upper West	Jirapa	64	Western	Ellembele
31.	Upper West	Wa East	65	Western	Essikadu-Ketan
32.	Western North	Bibiani-Anhwiaso Bekwai			
33.	Western North	Juabeso			