

**GHANA CENTER FOR DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT (CDD-GHANA)
COALITION OF DOMESTIC ELECTION OBSERVERS (CODEO)**

ELECTION 2004: CDD/CODEO PRE-ELECTION ENVIRONMENT REPORT

PERIOD: SEPTEMBER 2004

Introduction

The Ghana Center for Democratic Development and the Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO) are pleased to present the second in the series of a number of planned public releases of our election 2004 monitoring and observation exercise. This report covers political activities from 50 selected constituencies. The monitoring period was the entire month of September, 2004.

The project, undertaken with the support of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation (FNF), and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), trained and deployed fifty (50) monitors in selected constituencies in the country to monitor pre-election political activities. The exercise will continue till the day of the elections when we expect to deploy about 7000 people to observe the conduct of the polls.

Criteria for the Selection of Constituencies being monitored

In selecting constituencies/areas, the following issues were taken into consideration:

- Regional representation.
- Constituencies that were keenly and competitively contested in the 2000 elections and those likely to be keenly contested in the December 2004 polls.
- Constituencies in which incumbent MPs suffered defeated in the primaries or had been barred from the 2004 contest by their respective parties.
- Constituencies which are traditional strongholds of particular political tradition(s)
- Constituencies which are inaccessible because of poor roads, conflict situations, etc.
- Constituencies in which independent candidates are contesting in the elections.
- Newly created constituencies.
- Constituencies in the border towns in Ghana where there is likelihood of allegations of and complaints against voter registration and voting by foreigners.
- Constituencies which are prone to violent conflict.

Going by these criteria, the following constituencies were selected: Koforidua, Agona East, Takoradi, Asokwa East (Oforikrom), Ablekuma North, Ndowli West, Sunyani East, Tamale Central, Ho West, Navrongo Central, Dadekotokpon, Ashaiman, Tarkwa-Nsuaem, Ellembele, Amenfi West, Komenda-Edina-Eguafo-Abirem, Twifo Atee-Morkwa, Mfantseman East, Gomoah West, Abokobi-Madina, Klottey-Korle, Odododiodio, Ayawaso Central, Akan, Krachi East, Buem, Ketu North, Suhum, Akropong, Akwatia, Ofoasi/Ayerebi, Lower Manya, Odotobiri, Ahafo Ano North, Ejura-Sekyedumasi, Obuasi, Kwadaso/Manhyia, Jaman North, Berekum, Wenchi East, Techiman North, Asutifi South, Tamale Central, Kumbungu, Sawla/Kalba, Bawku Central, Bolgatanga Central, Bawku West, Pusiga and Lawra/Nandom.

Scope of pre-election monitoring

The pre-election monitoring covers activities and events leading up to Election 2004 including:

- Concluding phases of the registration exercise; photo-taking & mop-up election registration.
- Voter education.
- Party Congresses/Rallies
- Party Primaries

- Activities of principal political actors, party officials and activists
- Political Demonstrations
- Internal party developments
- Complaints lodged by parties
- Atmosphere in constituencies/nation
- Activities of important political/electoral agencies such as NCCE, EC, NMC
- Abuse of incumbency

Findings from the Field (September 2004)

- ***Voter Registration:***

The effectiveness of the photo taking/mop up exercise of the voter registration was undermined by low patronage reflecting inadequate information and public education. Our monitors observed a paucity of information (especially in the newly created constituencies) on vital issues such as the location of the voter registration mop-up exercise, causing some people to lose the opportunity to complete their registration.

Supply of registration materials was adequate. No centre complained of shortages, unlike the first phase of the registration process where shortage of registration materials had been a key inhibiting factor.

Nonetheless, some opposition parties, particularly the NDC in the Ketu North constituency, and their supporters have expressed suspicion that the government manipulated the registration exercise to disenfranchise people in constituencies known to be opposition party strongholds. Monitors could not ascertain the veracity of such claims and it remains unclear how the government could have manipulated the EC to the advantage or disadvantage of a particular political party.

- ***Party Primaries:***

September saw a high rate of party primary activities within the NDC and NPP. Only few of the primaries in the constituencies monitored had been organized by the smaller opposition parties. Our monitors noted PNC-held primaries in Bolgatanga, Navrongo Central and Bole Bamboi and CPP-held primaries in Daboase, Effia Kwesimintsim and Ahanta West constituencies.

The primaries were generally peaceful, though they generated considerable intra-party conflict, especially in the NPP. Common complaints included partiality and bias on the part of some party executives in favour of candidates as well as collusion between party executives and candidates. There were persistent allegations of camping of delegates, improper inducement and vote buying and provision of treats by some contestants to the detriment of their competitors. Monitors also noted charges of vote rigging and imposition of candidates from on high. In one constituency – Garu – there was a demonstration by NPP followers against the alleged imposition of a parliamentary candidate. And in Wa Central constituency, the NPP national executive was accused of having endorsed the Deputy Minister for Agriculture as the party's parliamentary candidate to the chagrin of the regional leadership of the party. These allegations underscore continuing deficits in internal democracy of the political parties, despite clear constitutional obligations.

Other constituencies where the NPP primaries resulted in intra-party conflict include: Ledzokuku where the incumbent MP was defeated by one vote; Offinso South where one of the two contestants was disqualified at the primary; Yendi where the former Minister of the Interior was declared the party's parliamentary candidate; and Wenchi East where supporters of the defeated incumbent MP organised a news conference and urged him to contest the seat as an independent candidate.

One positive development in most of the primaries held in September was the presence of representatives from other political parties. For instance, representatives of the NPP and CPP were present when the NDC held a primary in the Takoradi constituency on the 11th of September. The

NPP constituency chairman is reported to have suggested that executives of all the political parties in the region should meet once every month to explore ways of promoting peace and understanding in the constituency.

- ***Party Rallies/Public Gatherings***

Political party rallies in September were generally peaceful. However, other aspects of inter- and intra-party competition have not been so peaceful. A number of incidents in the constituencies monitored indicate rising tension and corresponding increase in the potential for political violence. Such incidents include vandalization of banners and posters of opposing parties and candidates (presumably by political opponents). The NPP and NDC appear to be the main culprits. The so-called NDC and NPP “Keep-Fit Clubs” established ostensibly to promote solidarity among party supporters appear to have introduced some element of militarism and potential for violence between rival groups, as reported in the Ayawaso East constituency.

- ***Political Party Development***

September also saw a sharp increase in political party activities, with the NDC and NPP emerging as the most active parties. Reported activities included raising party flags, distribution of party paraphernalia (t-shirts, flags, buttons), high profile meetings to present party candidates and other meetings at which rival parties and candidates were subjected to verbal attacks.

- ***Gender Issues***

Participation of women in political life in general and electoral politics in particular, continues to be weak, notwithstanding increasing advocacy campaigns by gender advocacy groups such as the Center for Sustainable Development Initiatives (CENSUDI) to encourage more females to participate in electoral politics.

- ***Problems with incumbency***

The President and the Vice-President made official visits to some constituencies in September. Reports from our monitors indicate that it was sometimes very difficult to distinguish between an official visit and a political party campaign. Party paraphernalia were sometimes visible and speeches sometimes had elements of partisan campaigning. Failure to clarify the line between official/state visits and partisan campaign visits by incumbent officials appears to create the potential to grossly abuse incumbency.

- ***Civic Education***

The NCCE was active in civic/voter education in September in some of the constituencies covered. Some civil society bodies, traditional rulers, NGOs and state institutions, including the Ghana Education Service, the District Assemblies and Information Services Department were also active in civic education.

- ***Recommendations:***

The election timetable must be substantially improved to ensure smooth administration. The Electoral Commission must properly and timely schedule key activities such as voter registration, inspection of voters register etc. The Center and the Coalition would want to repeat its recommendation for the EC to introduce the system of “open registration” to enable year-round voter registration. Such a system would reduce the costs, inconvenience and controversies associated with the

current system.

The conflicts that emerged in the primaries and characterize intra and inter-party political competition in Ghana reflect continuing political intolerance as well as weaknesses in internal party democracy – which are causes for concern in a young democracy.

These problems highlight the need for effective civic education to inculcate tolerance and political civility. We also recommend that political parties streamline the rules governing the primaries and strive to strengthen transparency and fairness in ways consistent with constitutional provisions enjoining them to be internally democratic.

The reports and allegations of corrupt practices that characterised many of the primaries must be thoroughly investigated and sorted out by the affected political parties. The EC and NCCE could also conduct their own investigations to inform their future civic and voter education programs. The line between official/state visits and partisan campaign visits by incumbent officials must be clarified to prevent its over-exploitation for electoral advantage and associated rancour.

Civic and voter education must be strengthened to promote tolerance of intra- and inter-party opposition and to discourage voters and delegates from taking bribes from candidates and or allowing bribes to influence their electoral choices.

Conclusion

The Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana) and the Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO) will continue monitoring pre-election political activities and will bring you another report for the month of October. We will like to reiterate the importance of Pre-Election Monitoring by noting that free, fair and transparent elections are the hallmarks of a functioning democracy. An election fraught with violence and allegations of corruption, however, may constitute a serious threat to political stability, democratic stability, and international support. And where the circumstances leading up to the elections are questionable, they cast a shadow on the entire process and undermine the legitimacy of its outcomes.

Pre-election monitoring activities are deemed essential therefore for maintaining the integrity of the electoral process and to ensure democratic outcomes. Effective monitoring helps to:

- 1) Deter fraud, as the risk of public exposure for corrupt campaigning can have serious negative consequences to the party (ies) or candidate(s) in question;
- 2) Enhance transparency;
- 3) Enhance acceptance of the outcome for both winners and losers; and, perhaps the greatest benefit,
- 4) Increase public confidence in the democratic process and enhance citizen involvement in public affairs, which is partly reflected in high voter turnout.
- 5) Establish the legitimacy of the government that eventually takes office and enables it direct development initiatives for the country with confidence.
- 6) Encourage international recognition, which is a key factor in determining eligibility for international aid and enhances prospects for attracting foreign aid.

The Center and the Coalition commend the political parties and the general public for keeping the pre-election environment in September relatively peaceful. We have full confidence in the ability of political parties and the

good people of Ghana to ensure yet another peaceful election in December 2004. However, we need to continue to canvass civility, tolerance and peace in all the activities leading to the polls.