

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

ELECTION 2004: CDD/CODEO PRE-ELECTION ENVIRONMENT REPORT

PERIOD: OCTOBER 2004

Introduction

The Ghana Center for Democratic Development and the Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO) are pleased to present the third report of on pre-election developments and the general political environment ahead of the December 2004 election. This report covers election-related developments and activities occurring in 50 constituencies during the month of October 2004.

The CDD/CODEO 2004 election project is funded by the Friedrich Naumann Foundation (FNF) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Scope of the pre-election monitoring project

The project monitors important events leading up to Election 2004 including:

- The 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 and protests
- Internal party developments
- Complaints lodged by parties
- The general political atmosphere in constituencies and the nation
- Activities of important political/electoral agencies such as the NCCE, EC, NMC
- Abuse of incumbency

Names of the Constituencies being monitored?

Constituencies covered in this report include: Koforidua, Agona East, Takoradi, Asokwa East (Oforikrom), Ablekuma North, Nadowli West, Sunyani East, Tamale Central, Ho West, Navrongo Central, Dadekotokpon, Ashaiman, Tarkwa-Nsuaem, Ellembele, Amenfi West, Komenda-Edina-Eguafo-Abirem, Twifo Atii-Morkwa, Mfantiman East, Gomoah West, Abokobi-Madina, Klotey-Korle, Ododiodio, 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.

Findings for October 2004 monitoring

Voter Registration

The Electoral Commission (EC) displayed the provisional voters register nationwide to create the opportunity for registered voters to cross check their names, photographs and other details in the register and rectify all anomalies. Turnout for the exercise was low in most of the constituencies covered. Our monitors however contend that voter apathy and inadequate public education as well as lapses on the part of EC were the main causes of the low turnout. Notable anomalies on the register included: *wrong spelling of names, wrong ages and dates of birth, picture swapping and omission.*

Logistical issues: Polling stations in some of the constituencies covered, notably the Ayawaso Central, Krachi East and West, Ejisu-Juabeng and Bawku West, experienced shortage of amendment forms.

Allegations of disenfranchisement: Allegations of disenfranchisement of voters by the EC were made in Alajo in the Ayawaso Central Constituency. Some residents reported to our monitors that the EC had deliberately dropped their names from the register to disenfranchise them. However, these accusations were not supported by credible evidence and we are unable to say whether such problems were widespread.

Party primaries

Activities of the two major political parties, the NDC and NPP, continued to dominate the political scene in Ghana. Many primaries were held in October, with the NDC and NPP dominating in terms of numbers. Instances of vote buying and camping of delegates were observed in some of the primaries. There were allegations of vote buying in the form of “camping of delegates in hotels “in the NPP primaries in Akwatia constituency.

The primaries were generally peaceful. However, intra-party conflicts were rife in the primaries of the NPP and NDC in some of the constituencies covered. In some of those constituencies, aspirants who lost the primaries chose to run as independent candidates. This turn of events, often reflecting the uncompromising stance of some politicians and their supporters, tended to generate intra-party disputes. The primaries of the smaller opposition parties, the CPP and PNC, were often devoid of the allegations of vote buying and delegate camping.

Party rallies and gatherings

October saw a rise in the number of political party rallies and meetings to introduce aspiring parliamentary candidates to the electorate. The various parties held rallies and other public gatherings to formally launch their election campaigns and inaugurate their “youth” and “women’s” wings. For example, the NPP launched its national campaign in Accra; and the NDC, PNC and CPP organized rallies to canvass support for their respective presidential and parliamentary candidates. The flag bearers of the NDC and CPP took their turn to deliver public lectures at the Great Hall of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology as part of a series of lectures organized by the university for all the presidential aspirants. A number of independent candidates also launched their campaigns in October with mini rallies and meetings. Most of these meetings and rallies were peaceful.

House-to-house campaigning was intensified as a major strategy of the NPP and NDC for canvassing support in some of the constituencies monitored such as Ablekuma North and Okai-koi North.

Mixing official visits with party activities

The President and the Vice-President visited some districts of the country in the month of October. The President undertook official visits to the Ashanti, Eastern and the Volta regions, addressing durbars of chiefs and citizens. He also undertook a “duty tour” of some communities in the Greater Accra region where he met chiefs, elders and the people. The Vice-President also visited parts of the Central and Brong-Ahafo regions. On nearly every visit, they introduced their party’s parliamentary candidates, solicited the support of voters and made partisan political speeches, although most of the visits were designated as “official.” Although our monitors observed no party colors on the official podium, many of the party supporters were bedecked in party colors and paraphernalia.

Inter-party conflicts

Political party rallies held in the month of October were generally peaceful. However, a number of incidents in a few of the monitored constituencies highlight rising political tension and conflict, particularly between the NPP and NDC. Two separate incidents of violence were reported in the first week of the month in which supporters of the NDC and NPP attacked each other in the Pusiga-Pulmokon constituency. A number of people sustained injuries and were sent to hospital after a report was made to the Police. NDC and NPP supporters also clashed in the Yendi Constituency on 8th October during an NDC rally. A lot of people were reportedly injured and properties belonging to both parties destroyed.

Incidents of party supporters defacing and tearing down the posters of their opponents generated tension and conflicts between the NPP and NDC in Ahafo-Ano and Buem constituencies. According to our monitors, only the timely intervention and counseling by the NCCE District Director on the need for mutual tolerance helped to avert violence in Ahafo Ano.

Intra-party conflicts

Our monitors reported increasing in-fighting and rising tension within the two main political parties, the NPP and the NDC. Okai Koi North is cited among the constituencies in which the NPP experienced intense internal conflict. Apparently, there is serious misunderstanding among the party executives, the aspiring MP and the incumbent MP in that constituency. Violent confrontation almost erupted at a press conference convened by the constituency executives and attended by the incumbent MP. Navrongo Central and Bole Bamboi are among the constituencies wracked by intra-party conflicts in the NPP camp.

The NDC was also reported to have experienced internal conflicts in the Wenchi East and Agona East constituencies. An attempt by party executives to impose a parliamentary candidate on the constituency caused divisions in the ranks of the party in Wenchi East. A planned meeting to introduce that candidate to party members was met with stiff opposition and ended abruptly. The candidate selection process in the Agona East constituency also caused considerable tension within the rank and file of the NDC. Tension within the NDC in that constituency abated only after the Agona Swedru High Court ruled on the nationality of the main challenger and paved the way for the incumbent MP to be re-elected to represent the party in parliamentary elections.

Political party development

The various political parties especially the NDC and the NPP appeared to be putting mechanisms in place to resolve the various intra-party conflicts which characterized their respective primaries. That notwithstanding, the phenomenon of defeated candidates going independent assumed prominence in this year's election. Some of the constituencies where defeated candidates are vying as independent candidates include Agona West, Bawku Central, Ho Central, Navrongo Central, Offinso South, New Juaben North and Obuasi.

Gender issues

Participation of women in electoral politics in Ghana remains weak. Women are scarcely actively involved in discussions even though they are sometimes in the majority at party rallies and meetings. However, our monitor in the Builsa Constituency reports of women in that constituency proudly displaying posters in their bars and market stalls to show solidarity with female parliamentary candidates.

Civic education

The NCCE was active in most of the constituencies covered. The Commission organized seminars and radio discussions to educate the public on the forthcoming elections. The Commission also organized forums for political parties and the security agencies in some constituencies to canvass peaceful election in December.

Others

The month of October witnessed the filing of nominations by parliamentary and presidential candidates with the Electoral Commission. The activity was very peaceful nationwide. Our monitor for the Bole/Bamboi constituency reports that the CPP

Parliamentary candidate was disqualified on the grounds that his name was not on the voters register.

Recommendations

- The EC, the NCCE, political parties and all stakeholders in the democratization project must proactively engage all stages of the voter registration process (from registration, photo-taking, and verification of registration). To reduce the level of citizen apathy and indifference observed in the exhibition of the provisional voters register, the EC, NCCE, parties, the media and other civic educators must impress on the Ghanaian electorate to take all stages of Ghana's rather prolonged voter registration process seriously.
- To ensure conformity with the letter and spirit of the 1992 Constitution and democratic principles, political parties should review their ground rules and procedures for selecting/electing parliamentary candidates and making other crucial decisions internal to the party. It is worth noting that many of the bitter intra-party conflicts were generated by perceived unfair manipulation of procedure by and favoritism on the part of party executives around the primaries. Together with the NCCE and other civic educators, the parties should also inculcate in their members and supporters democratic and civic virtues such as tolerance and mutual accommodation, especially since the rejection of the outcomes of primaries by losing contestants and their supporters was not always grounded in objectivity nor reflected respect for the 'will of the majority.'
- Allegations of "vote buying" have featured prominently in this year's primaries. We are unable to determine whether this reflects increased incidence or increased reporting. However, it highlights prevalence of worrying levels political corruption that could corrode the democratic process. We call on political parties to make every effort to discourage vote buying and other corrupt practices in their primaries. The EC, CHRAJ and other official anti-corruption bodies must investigate these allegations thoroughly and impose appropriate sanctions to deter such practices.
- The Center and the Coalition would like to re-emphasize the need to clarify the line between official/state visits and partisan campaign visits by incumbent officials to prevent undue exploitation of such events for electoral advantage and associated rancor. This is an issue worth discussing by the Inter-Party Advisory Committee and other stakeholders.
- The October reports indicate rising inter party tensions and conflicts, especially between the NPP and NDC. This is not unusual in an election season. But it is important that it does not get out of hand. We urge the political parties, especially the NPP and NDC, to educate their members to eschew practices such as hooting at and defacing opponents' posters, to forestall violent conflict. We also call on the Police to maintain vigilance over these "hot spots," as the polling day approaches, and take all the precautions necessary for the prevention and control of violence in the days ahead of the elections, the election-day itself, and immediately after the elections.

- Finally, the Center and CODEO would like to join the call on political parties, their supporters, and indeed all Ghanaians to uphold the peace and ensure a violence-free December 2004 parliamentary and presidential polls.