

**GHANA CENTER FOR DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT (CDD-GHANA)**

**MONITORING THE ODODODIODIO BYE-ELECTION**

**PRESS STATEMENT ON THE PRE-ELECTION ENVIRONMENT**

**PERIOD: AUGUST 6<sup>TH</sup> – 20<sup>TH</sup> 2005**

***Introduction***

The Ghana Center for Democratic Development is pleased to present its maiden report on general political environment in the Odododiodio Constituency ahead of the August 30<sup>th</sup> bye-election. The report covers the general political environment and election-related developments in the constituency from 6<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> August 2005.

Four persons with experience in pre-election and election monitoring were deployed to the constituency to monitor the following activities and developments:

- Voter education.
- Party rallies
- Activities of principal political actors, party officials and activists
- Political demonstrations and protests
- Internal party developments
- The general political atmosphere in constituency
- Activities of important political/electoral agencies such as the NCCE and EC
- Possible abuse of incumbency

**Main findings**

***General Observation***

Activities of the two major political parties, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and New Patriotic Party (NPP), dominated the political scene during the period under review. The monitors reported that party flags and candidate posters of these two parties could be seen all over the constituency. The CPP posters were also on display in the constituency, but not as much as that for the NDC and NPP.

***Voter Education***

Some of the constituents told the monitors that they did not know that they had to use their voters' identification cards during the elections. Some even indicated that they thought the Electoral Commission was to issue them with new ID cards before the polling day. This observation underscores the continued need for voter and civic education in our electoral process.

***Party Rallies***

The NDC, NPP and CPP organized campaign rallies in the constituency to canvass votes for their respective candidates. Our monitors reported that all rallies were heavily attended, each recording an average attendance of 600 people. According to our monitors, most speakers at these rallies focused on marketing their candidate. The rallies were generally peaceful. There was minimal use of abusive language, which is very crucial for our democratic development.

### ***Violent incidents***

NPP supporters in Bukom allegedly assaulted NDC supporters with hot water and pepper during the latter group's procession in the streets of that neighborhood following their rally at Bombay Street in the same vicinity. The apparent provocation for NPP supporters was that NDC supporters going on the procession had chosen a street that runs close to the residence of the NPP candidate. NPP supporters saw this as an intentional act of provocation and, in response attacked the NDC supporters. The monitors saw and interviewed three of the persons injured in that attack. The NDC organized a press conference at their Odododiodio constituency office to formally protest the assault on their supporters and presented some of the victims.

Violence was narrowly averted at the Timber Market among a group of CPP supporters arguing over which of the candidates was likely to win the vacant seat on August 30<sup>th</sup>. The monitors saw people wielding cutlasses and gearing up to hack anybody who countered their opinion on who would win the election.

It must be noted here that these acts of violence do not augur well for Ghana's young democracy. We cannot afford to nurture our democracy with violence as one of the building blocks. It obviously has the potential to create more divisions and tensions and can undermine the commendable successes chalked so far.

### ***Incidence of Abuse of Incumbency***

The monitors saw streetlights being mounted at Abollah. It is not immediately clear whether the streetlight project was a mere coincidence or a deliberate attempt to canvass support, but interviews with some of the people in the area indicated that the project started the very day the NPP was going to hold a rally

### **Recommendations**

- The reported incidence of violent confrontations continues to highlight the limited understanding of multiparty competition in a democracy. Political parties should take it upon themselves to inculcate in their members and supporters democratic and civic virtues such as tolerance and mutual accommodation. The EC, NCCE and other civic educators should also take responsibility for ensuring that citizens clearly understand issues of multiparty competition in democratic development.
- Civic education appears to be very limited in the run up to the bye-election on August 30<sup>th</sup>. The Center would like to appeal particularly to the EC and the NCCE to take up the challenge and create awareness on the basic requirements during the polls.
- Finally, the Center would like to call on political parties, their supporters, and indeed all people in the Odododiodio constituency to uphold peace and ensure violence-free polls on August 30<sup>th</sup> 2005.

Signed by

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23<sup>rd</sup> August 2005