



Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO)

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CODEO PRELIMINARY FINDINGS ON OBSERVATION OF THE DECEMBER 27, 2018

REFERENDUM

Introduction

On Thursday, December 27, 2018, the Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO) deployed fifty (50) observers to various districts and constituencies in selected regions within which the referendum on the proposed creation of additional regions was taking place. CODEO observers visited an average of four (4) polling stations within their assigned districts in the course of the polling exercise. Observers spent between an hour and two hours at each polling station visited. Overall, the referendum took place in a calm and peaceful electoral environment. However, a number of electoral anomalies were recorded by CODEO Observers during the observation exercise. These anomalies raise serious questions about the integrity and credibility of the polling process in the observed polling stations.

Summary of Findings

Below are key findings from CODEO's observation:

- The atmosphere of voting was generally calm across all polling stations observed. Many polling stations had stationed uniformed security personnel, though a few did not have.
- Voting opened on time for many polling stations, and slightly later at other polling stations (particularly in parts of the Western and Brong Ahafo regions) due to the late arrival of voting materials). For polling stations where there were delays, voting started between 7:15AM and 9:00AM.
- CODEO observers came across some accredited observers and agents representing various interests, such as NO campaigners and YES campaigners at some polling stations visited.
- Most polling stations observed attained more than the required turn-out threshold of 50% of total valid votes cast. However, turn-out figures at some polling stations were unusually high – in some cases as high as 99% – raising serious questions about the integrity of the process.

Below are some of the polling stations where such high turn-out figures were observed at the end of voting:

Name of Polling Station	District/Constituency	Region	Turn-out Rate
SDA Primary School, Jasikan	Jasikan	Volta	99.7%
CMB Shed 'A', Asawinso	Sefwi Wiawso	Western	99.3%
Adankpa Palace, Adankpa	Krachi West	Volta	99.3%
PPAG Office	Techiman South	Brong Ahafo	98%
Naseiya Prim Sch, Salaga	East Gonja	Northern	97%

CODEO also noted similar patterns of extremely high voter turn-out figures from the official constituency collated results, including up to 98.5% voter turn-out at some constituencies. These include Salaga South, (96%), Nkoranza North (97%), Jasikan (97%), and Krachi West (98.5%). A lot more constituencies had turn-out figures of more than 90%.

- For most of the day, CODEO observers reported the smooth functioning of Biometric Verification Devices (BVD), with very few instances of reported malfunctioning of the BVDs.
- However, CODEO observers documented wide disparities and unusually high numbers of manual verification across various polling stations observed. At some polling stations where counting of ballots and results declaration were observed by CODEO, the number of voters who were manually verified were found to be more than the number of voters who went through biometric verification. Per electoral regulations by the Electoral Commission (EC), manual verification is typically a back-up plan for instances where there are challenges with biometric verification of voters and/or mal-function of the devices. Given that observers generally reported smooth performance of the BVDs and the fact that all polling stations were equipped with back-up BVD machines, it is still not clear to CODEO why unusually high numbers of voters were manually verified instead of biometric verification.

Below are some examples of polling stations where such high numbers of manual verification were observed:

Name of Polling Station	Region	Total Valid Votes Cast	Total of Manual Verification	Percentage of Voters Manually-Verified
R/C JHS, Dambai, Krachi East	Volta	710	415	58%
PPAG Office, Techiman, Techiman South	Brong Ahafo	439	241	55%
SDA Prim School, Jasikan	Volta	311	163	52%
CMB Shed 'A', Asawinso, Sefwi Wiawso	Western	703	364	52%

Naseiya Primary, Salaga, East Gonja	Northern	433	208	48%
SDA Primary, Nkonya Nchumuru, Biakoye	Volta	437	202	46%
Ampoma L/A JHS, Kintampo South	Brong Ahafo	277	153	36%

At other polling stations, however, the percentage of voters manually-verified ranged from as low as 0% to 5%.

Other Matters

- CODEO has taken notice of a number of videos circulating on social media platforms showing possible infractions of the electoral rules of the country. Although CODEO is unable to verify the location of the alleged infractions or the authenticity of the videos, CODEO strongly urges the EC and the Police Service to take an interest in these videos and conduct their own investigations to protect the integrity of the process.
- CODEO has also taken note of the concerns raised by the Ghana Journalist Association (GJA) on restrictions placed by the security forces during the referendum exercise. This was reportedly done to protect journalists from threats of harm from indigenes. It is imperative that the GJA, the security agencies and all elections stakeholders revisit these issues following the conclusion of the exercise to ensure that constitutional rights are protected in the future to promote more transparent, peaceful and credible elections.

Recommendations:

- CODEO is calling on the Electoral Commission (EC) to urgently look into the extremely high incidence of manual verification at the various polling stations where such developments took place, and the extremely high voter turn-out figures in some polling stations. This investigation must be done swiftly and the outcomes communicated to the public to promote electoral transparency and integrity.
- CODEO is also calling on the EC and the Inspector General of Police (IGP) to ensure that any person—including electoral officials – found to have violated the electoral laws face the full rigors of the law. Until individuals are held criminally accountable for their actions, it will be difficult to deter the rampant violations of electoral laws which risk undermining Ghana’s hard worn democratic stability.

Signed:



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Dated: Friday, December 28, 2018