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PRELIMINARY REPORT ON GHANA'S DECEMBER 7, 2020 PRESIDENTIAL AND GENERAL ELECTIONS

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Tuesday, December 8, 2020

Accra, Ghana

Introduction

On Monday, December 07, 2020, the Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO), which consists of 42 professional, faith-based organizations and civil society groups, deployed a total of 4,400 trained, accredited, independent, and non-partisan Rapid Response Observers (RROs) to all the 275 constituencies spread across the 16 regions of Ghana. Of this number, 1,502 were assigned to Parallel Vote Tabulation (PVT) polling stations, and the remaining 2,898 to non-PVT polling stations all located in the 275 constituencies in the 16 regions of Ghana. CODEO observers are Ghanaians from every walk of life who volunteered their time to help ensure that every registered voter freely casts their ballot on election-day and ensured that Ghana's people had independent, non-partisan information on the conduct of these elections. The PVT and non-PVT polling stations were carefully selected to ensure national representation.

This Preliminary Statement highlights CODEO's election observation findings relating to the conduct of the presidential and parliamentary elections. It is an update on some of the information already made available to the public in the "Situational" and "Close of Polls" statements released on Monday, December 7, 2020. This Preliminary Statement is based on reports CODEO received on set-up and opening of polls, voting and counting of ballots from all **1,502** PVT Observers (i.e., **100%**) from every region and constituency as of midnight on Monday, December 7, 2020, verified and updated as at mid-day on Tuesday, December 8, 2020.

Summary of Observation Findings

Preliminary analysis of CODEO PVT observer reports show that the December 7, 2020, presidential and parliamentary elections were generally conducted according to Ghana's electoral laws and procedures. While there were some challenges, these challenges were isolated and did not undermine the process's overall credibility.

Arrival at Polling Stations

- Upon arrival, CODEO Observers (**87.2%**) met election officials present at their assigned polling stations. However, in **12.8%** of polling stations, CODEO Observers did not see elections officials when they arrived. It is worthy to note that by rule, CODEO observers are expected to arrive at their polling stations by 6:00 AM. Therefore, not seeing election officials upon arrival does not connote lateness on the part of election officials.

- In **99.9%** of polling stations, electoral officials respected CODEO observers' status as the Electoral Commission (EC)'s accredited election observers and permitted them to observe the polls.

Set-up for Polls

- By 7:15 AM, over half of the polling stations (**65.7%**) had opened. Another **28.8%** opened between 7:16 and 8:00AM, adding up to **94.5%** opening by 8:00AM.
- Most of the polling stations (**72.5%**) had the required number of election officials (6). Another **18.6%** had 5 officials, **5.9%** had 4 officials, and **2.3%** had 1 to 3 officials.
- In terms of gender, 87.3% of presiding officers were males, and 12.7% were females.
- The set-up of most polling stations ensured that persons with mobility challenges (i.e., the disabled and the elderly) could easily access them (**94.5%**), and that all voters could cast their ballots in secret (**91.8%**).
- At the time of set-up, CODEO Observers reported seeing polling agents of the two main political parties present in almost all polling stations (NPP, **99.6%**; NDC, **99.1%**). In **50%** of the polling stations, none of the agents of the other parties and independent candidates were present.
- According to CODEO observers, **1%** of polling stations had 3 biometric verification devices. In **84%**, there were 2 biometric devices, **14%** had one device, and **1%** had none at the time of set-up. However, all polling stations subsequently had biometric verification devices.
- CODEO Observers' reports showed that **92.6%** of the polling stations had the sensitive materials available (i.e., the ballot box, ballot papers, indelible ink, voting screen, validating stamp, ink pad, endorsing ink, and tactile ballot papers), while **6%** of the polling stations were missing tactile ballot papers. However, CODEO notes that not all polling stations are required to have tactile ballot papers if there are no visually impaired registered voters.
- According to observers, in **99.6%** of the polling stations, ballot booklets were serialized numerically.
- The presidential and parliamentary ballot boxes were shown to be empty, sealed, and placed in public view before the commencement of voting in **99.6%** of polling stations.
- CODEO observers reported seeing stationed, roaming, or roaming and stationed security personnel at **85.2%** of polling stations. Only **14.8%** of polling stations were reported to be without security personnel.
- The Police topped the list of security officials deployed for the election (**53.5%**), followed by uniformed personnel from other security services (**21.8%**), the Ghana Armed Forces (5.4%), and National Security (**2.6%**).
- CODEO observers' reports showed that security personnel were unarmed in **69.9%** of polling stations. Nearly a quarter of the polling stations (**23.3%**) had armed security personnel.
- CODEO observers found COVID-19 safety materials available at most polling stations (i.e., thermometer gun, **95%**; soap & water, **94%**; hand sanitizer, **93%**; and scanner wipes, **78%**). Less than **1%** of polling stations lacked these protocols.

Voting

- At **92.3%** of polling stations, no unauthorized persons were allowed to be present during voting.
- CODEO observers in all polling stations (**100%**) reported that election officials validated (i.e., stamped) ballot papers before they were issued to voters.
- In almost all polling stations (**96.3%**), voters' fingers were marked with indelible ink.
- The biometric verification machines worked perfectly in **89.7%** of polling stations. However, the devices failed to function correctly at some point in **10.3%** of polling stations.
- No significant incidents of harassment and intimidation of voters or polling officials were recorded at **97.7%** of polling stations during the voting process, except a few isolated cases in some of the observed polling stations.
- In most polling stations (**95.5%**), the elderly, pregnant women, nursing mothers, and persons with disabilities were given priority to vote before others.
- Social distancing and handwashing were strictly enforced in **74.3%** and **92.7%**, respectively, of the polling stations. However, in the remaining observed polling stations these were not strictly enforced.
- At **45.2%** of polling stations, a few (1 to 5), some (6 to 15), or many (16 or more) voters did not wear face masks. CODEO observers in **54.8%** of polling stations, however, reported that voters wore face masks. Indeed, election officials in **16.3%** of polling stations turned away a few (1 to 5), some (6 to 15), or many (16 or more) voters who were not wearing face masks.
- At **98.3%** of polling stations, election officials did not permit any individual to vote without going through either biometric, facial, or manual verification.
- Election officials in most polling stations (**92.7%**) never denied any voter needing assistance to vote the right to have a person of his/her own choice.
- In the vast majority of polling stations (**90.3%**), no eligible voter with a valid voter identity card but whose name was not in the voter register was denied his/her voting right. Indeed, election officials at **5.1%** polling stations permitted a few (1 to 5), some (6 to 15), or many (16 or more) who had valid voter cards but could not find their names in the voters' register to cast their ballots.
- Election officials in some polling stations (**6.6%**) permitted a few (1 to 5), some (6 to 15), or many (16 or more) voters whose names were on the Exceptional or Absentee Voters' lists to cast their ballots.
- In **96.7%** of polling stations, CODEO observers reported that election officials never allowed anybody without a valid voter identity card and whose name was also not on the voter list to vote.
- Overall, **47.1%** of CODEO observers described problems that may have occurred during the voting process as minor, **and 0.5% described them as major issues**. In comparison, **52.4%** did not witness any problem at their assigned polling stations.

Counting

- In **98.5%** of polling stations, CODEO observers did not witness any harassment or intimidation of polling officials, party/candidate agents, or observers during the counting of ballots.
- Election officials neither permitted unauthorized individuals into the inner perimeter nor cordoned the area during the counting of ballots (**94.9%**) nor prevented any party agent from observing the ballot count (**98.5%**).
- In **91.8%** of the polling stations, no political party agent requested a recount of the presidential ballot. However, party/candidate agents in **8.1%** of polling stations asked for a recount of the presidential vote.
- The presiding officers in **99%** of polling stations also endorsed the presidential result declaration forms.
- Furthermore, political party agents and presiding officers in **76.6%** and **99.0%** of polling stations, respectively, signed the parliamentary results declaration forms.
- In **98.1%** of polling stations, presiding officers gave copies of the signed results sheets to party/candidate agents.
- In most polling stations (**83.2%**), election officials posted the presidential election results announced at visible places for the public to see.

From the foregoing, CODEO confidently confirms that the EC's arrangements put in place by the EC from setup to counting of ballots at polling stations were generally adequate and credible.

Selected PVT Projections

As of midnight of December 7, 2020, CODEO had received results from **all PVT** nationally representative random sample of polling stations (i.e., 1,502) located in every region and constituency of the country. Thus, CODEO's data stabilized, making it possible to have out PVT estimates for the presidential election. CODEO will release its PVT estimates only after the Electoral Commission (EC) completes its constitutional duty by announcing the official results for the presidential.

Meanwhile, from our PVT estimates, CODEO projects that voter turnout and rejected ballot rates will be approximately **80%** and **2%**, respectively.

Reported Incidents/Fact-checking of Misinformation

As of 10:30 AM, CODEO 4,000 observers reported a total of 254 cases of incidents during the opening, voting, and counting stages of the polling process throughout the country. These incidents were verified to be accurate by CODEO National Information Center (NIC) and Fact-Checkers. Incidents of harassment and intimidation of polling officials and voters were the most common (45 cases), followed by violations of COVID-19 safety protocols (41 cases), violence (26 cases), unauthorized persons in polling stations (24 cases), and biometric verification devices not functioning correctly (21 cases). See Figure 1.

Figure 1

| Types of incidents | No. of cases |
|--|--------------|
| Intimidation or harassment | 45 |
| Violation of COVID-19 health and safety protocols | 41 |
| Violence | 26 |
| Unauthorized persons at the polling station | 24 |
| Biometric verification device not functioning properly | 21 |
| Voting or counting suspended | 17 |
| Polling station did not open or opened very late | 10 |
| Polling station ran out of materials | 8 |
| Violations of voting or counting procedures | 7 |
| Destruction or stealing of election materials | 4 |
| Eligible voters not permitted to vote | 4 |
| Vote buying/bribery | 5 |
| Ineligible persons allowed to vote | 2 |
| Ballot box stuffing | 1 |
| Over-voting | 6 |
| Polling station closed before 5:00 pm | 1 |
| Other incidents | 28 |
| Total | 254 |

Selected Cases of Critical Incidents

- Update on Asutifi South Constituency Violent Incident and Arrest of CODEO Observer**
 CODEO has an update from last evening’s reported incident at the Open Space Cocoa Shed Polling Station at Nkasem in the Asutifi South Constituency in the Ahafo region where a ballot box was set ablaze. CODEO has confirmed that three of the ballot papers were burnt and subsequently declared as rejected ballots, and the rest counted, and results announced. The EC Polling Officials, the respective Party Agents, and the CODEO Observer at the polling station who were arrested and sent to the Goaso Regional Police Command were released on bail late in the night. They were asked to report to the Police Station this morning at 10:00 AM.
- Violence/Gunshot**
 The 2020 elections have witnessed isolated violent cases in some polling stations. For example, there were gunshots at the Modark Hotel and the Constituency Collation Center, both at the Odododiodio Constituency in the Greater Accra region. The shooting incidents left three people dead, and Honorable Edwin Nii Lante Vanderpuye, the incumbent MP, is reported to have been arrested together with some of his supporters. They were granted bail early this morning.
- Attempted Ballot Box Snatching**
 As reported in yesterday’s CODEO’s Close of Poll Statement, a young man tried to snatch a ballot box at the Obrachire Polling Station in the Awutu Senya West Constituency in the Central region, but he was accosted and beaten up by voters around. The police rescued him and sent him to the Swedru Government Hospital for treatment.

- **Destruction of Property**

At the Fomena Constituency in the Ashanti Region, some unidentified youth invaded and set the EC's District Office ablaze in the early hours of Tuesday, December 8, 2020. The youth attempted to enter the Collation Center but were prevented by the security personnel on duty. They turned their attention to the EC District Office and set it on fire. The Fire Service was called in and was able to douse the fire.

- **Ballot box stuffing (update)**

As reported in CODEO's Close of Poll Statement, voting was suspended at Asawase Constituency in the Ashanti Region for about 30 minutes. A voter was arrested for trying to sneak some ballot papers into the ballot box. He was whisked away to the police station by the police, and voting resumed afterwards.

- At the **Manso Adubia Constituency in the Ashanti Region**, the party agents of the incumbent confronted the returning officer for refusing a recount request. The incident generated a heated argument between party agents and the returning officer. The Police Commander intervened and requested that the returning officer listens to the party agents' complaints. The returning officer again refused the plea and the military had to be called in to intervene.

- **Collation Center Challenges**

CODEO observers reported party agents' refusal to sign collation sheets for a variety of reasons, including denial of a recount and discrepancies between total valid votes, and verified voters on the polling station results sheet in constituencies such as Jomoro in the Western Region, Dormaa West in Bono Region, Zabzugu in Northern region, Assin and Upper Denkyira East in the Central Region, and Fomena in the Ashanti Region,

- **Violation of COVID -19 Protocols**

In Nandom and Lambussie Constituencies in the Upper West region, Observers reported complete violations of COVID-19 protocols, such as handwashing at the collation center, wearing of nose masks.

CODEO deems it important to make it known to the public that its observers reported that most of these cases were quickly resolved by election officials and key election stakeholders, such as the security services at polling stations, and thereby did not affect the polling process in any significant manner.

Commendation and Acknowledgement

CODEO commends the Electoral Commission for work done so far, particularly in the COVID-19 pandemic circumstances that the December 7, 2020 elections were organized. Equally, CODEO recognizes the security agencies' role, particularly the Election Security Task Force (ESTF), for their professionalism and diligence in securing the polls. We urge them to continue to remain professional and protect the counting and tabulation process and provide security to officials and citizens. CODEO further expresses gratitude to the Institute of Public Relations (IPR) for donating GHS 100,000 worth of face masks to CODEO for distribution in high need communities and underprivileged registered voters who may not be able to afford masks to exercise their franchise in a safe environment.

CODEO appreciates various international observer groups who support Ghana's electoral and democratic process, particularly those who visited CODEO National Information Center (NIC). We commend the National Peace Council, the Media, the political parties, voters, and citizens for their overall respective complementary roles during this exercise.

Finally, CODEO acknowledges the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and financial support from STAR-Ghana, with funding from UKAID and European Union that made it possible for it to undertake the December 7, 2020 election observation exercise.

Conclusion

CODEO continues to observe the post-election counting of votes and results collation processes with the deployment of observers to all the 275 constituency collation centers as well as at the National Results Collation Center (NRCC) in Accra.

In addition, CODEO has received data from **all 275** constituencies that voted on Monday, December 7, 2020, completed the analysis, and has its PVT estimates for the presidential election results ready. In keeping with our protocols, CODEO will release its PVT estimates for the presidential election results following the official announcement by the EC in order to provide independent verification of the accuracy of the latter. Thus, CODEO PVT serves as a powerful tool that ensures that the presidential results announced by the EC reflect the ballots cast at polling stations.

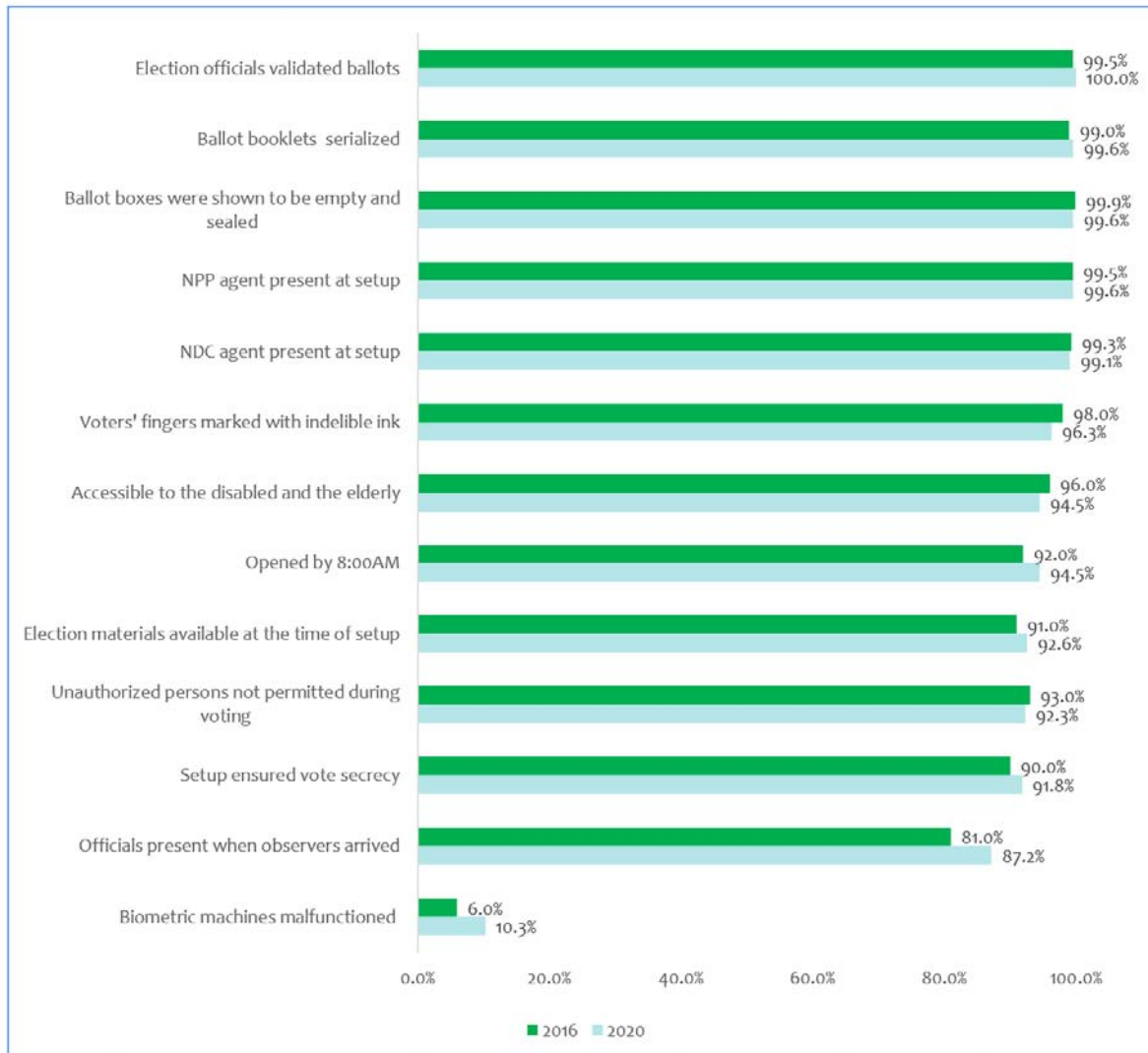
CODEO commends Ghanaians for the impressive turnout during the elections and their overall comportment during 48 hours. We urge all Ghanaians to remain calm and allow the Electoral Commission to undertake its lawful duties, collate results, and declare winners of the presidential and parliamentary elections. Accordingly, CODEO condemns attempts by political parties rushing to declare results before the EC's official announcement. We urge all political parties and citizens to be law-abiding and remain calm as we wait on the EC to complete its work and declare the official results.

We equally remind all citizens to follow COVID-19 pandemic safety measures, including wearing nose masks and handwashing. CODEO expresses sincere gratitude to the 1000s of volunteers who dedicated their time to ensure that Ghana once again went through this democratic exercise of electing new leaders to govern the country in the next four years.

SIGNED:

Shiekh Arimiyawo Shaibu
Acting Chair of CODEO
(For and on Behalf of the Advisory Board)
CODEO Secretariat, Tuesday, December 8, 2020

Appendix: Chart comparing 2016 and 2020 CODEO election observation findings



Source: 2016 and 2020 CODEO PVT data. Percentages are based on the 1,500 and 1,502 PVT polling stations in 2016 and 2020, respectively.