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SECOND REPORT ON GHANA'S 2024 LIMITED BIOMETRIC VOTER REGISTRATION EXERCISE

CONTACT

Mr. Albert Arhin

CODEO National Coordinator

Phone: +233 (0) 24 474 6791 / (0) 20 822 1068

Secretariat: +233 (0) 244 350 266/ 0277 744 777

Email: info@codeoghana.org

Website: www.codeoghana.org

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Introduction

The Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO) is pleased to share its second report on the 2024 limited Biometric Voter Registration (BVR) Exercise conducted by the Electoral Commission (EC) of Ghana. This second report contains observation findings on the registration exercise from May 7 - 27 2024.

During this reporting period, CODEO received 1,517 reports from observers in 343 registration centers across 146 districts in Ghana's 16 regions. The report covers CODEO's observation of the "arrival" and "set-up", "registration" and "closing" stages of the Biometric Voter Registration exercise.

CODEO deployed a total of 195 trained, independent, and non-partisan observers comprising 25 regional coordinators, 84 stationary observers and 86 mobile observers. The stationed observers operated from the EC's district offices while mobile observers worked in registration centers in the difficult-to-access areas selected by the EC.

The key highlights of CODEO’s observation findings on the 2024 voter registration exercise are set out below:

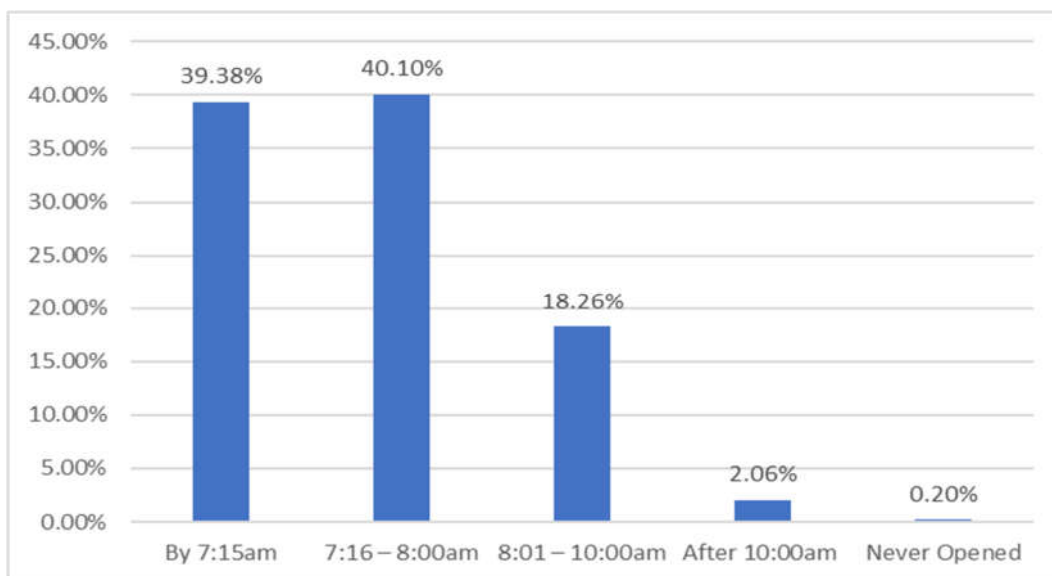
Summary of Main Findings

CODEO’s second report shows significant improvement in the network challenges, device malfunctioning and other factors that delayed and, in some cases, led to the suspension of registration in the first week of the exercise. However, observed incidents of violence and altercations that caused disruptions and temporary suspension of the registration process in some registration centers continued throughout the exercise. Again, CODEO’s observation findings indicate the prevalence of unauthorized persons at registration centers in many regions.

Commencement of voter registration

The EC set the time for the start of the registration exercise at 07:00 AM with an expectation that its registration teams would arrive at the registration centers by 06:30 AM. According to the EC, before 07:00 AM the registration teams must set-up the registration center, complete administrative tasks and display directional signs at the appropriate places to aid easy identification of the registration centers.

Figure 1: Commencement of voter registration



- By 7:15 AM, only (39%) of registration centers across the country had opened. An additional 40% opened between 7:16 and 8:00 AM. Some 18% of the registration centers opened between 8:01 AM to 10:00 AM. However, 2% of the registration centers opened after 10:00 AM and a few (less than 1%) never opened as originally planned. The first day of the registration exercise recorded the highest incidents of late opening due to network

challenges, delayed distribution of activation codes and a few reported incidents of power outages in some registration centers across the country. These challenges were acknowledged by the Electoral Commission of Ghana in their press statements issued in the first two days of the exercise.

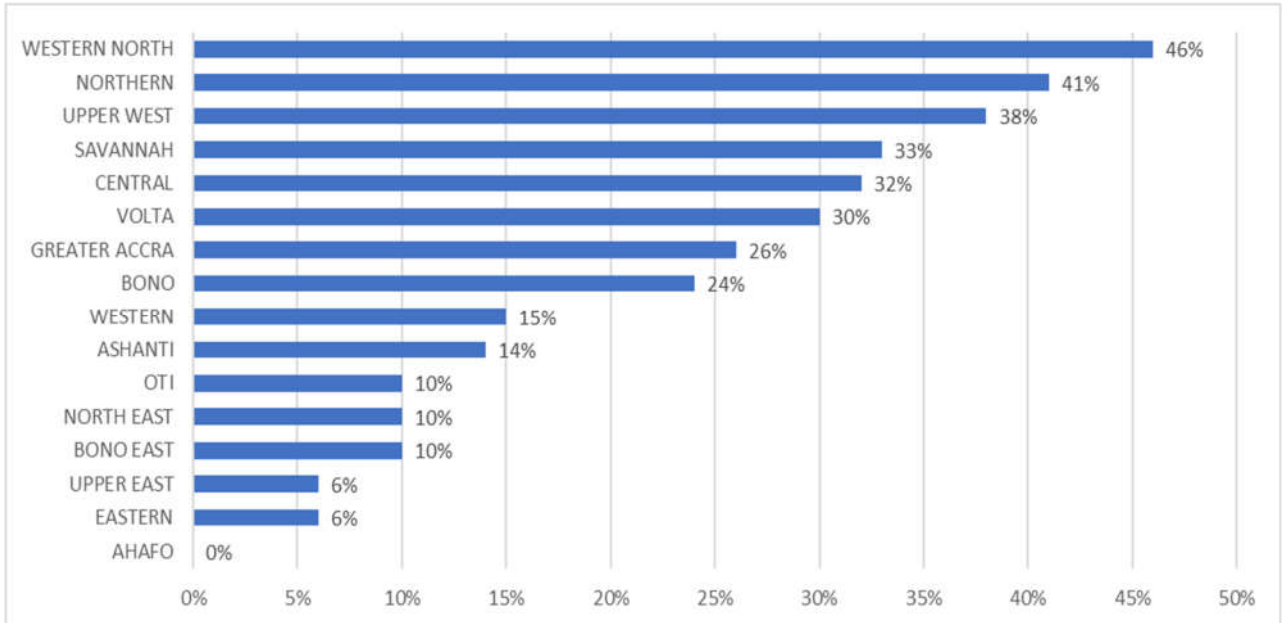
- According to CODEO's observation, all the registration centers had laptops with webcam and backdrops for photo taking, printers, fingerprint scanners, laminates and ink cartridges. However, we observed that there was no indelible ink at 22% of the registration centers.
- The set-up of most registration centers (90%) ensured that persons with mobility challenges (i.e., the disabled, the sick and the elderly) could easily access them. However, 10% of the registration centers did not meet the EC's accessibility criteria, which encourages setting up centers at low-level and wheelchair-accessible areas while avoiding sighting centers across gutters and verandas. Registration centers in the Greater Accra Region recorded the highest number of centers that did not meet the accessibility criteria.
- About 1 in 4 (25%) of the EC's registration officers were females while almost 3 in 4 (75%) were males.
- CODEO observers reported that 5% of registration centers included persons with disabilities as members of the registration team.
- At the time of set-up, CODEO Observers saw agents of the two main political parties present in almost all registration centers (NPP, 99.7%; NDC, 99.9%). In 88% of the centers, there were no agents representing the other political parties.
- CODEO observers reported seeing uniformed security personnel at 91% of the registration centers. Only 9% of centers were reported to be without security personnel.

Voter Registration Process

- Biometric Registration Kits functioned well in about 89% of registration centers observed while in 11% of centers, the kits failed to function at some point in the course of registration.
- At registration centers where the registration kits malfunctioned, they were either fixed (72%) or replaced (12%) but at 16% of the centers, the devices could not be fixed/replaced.
- The malfunctioning of the BVR kits led to the suspension of the registration process in 9% of centers observed.
- Some registrants including persons living with disabilities, and the elderly required assistance to register during the nationwide registration exercise. At 68% of the registration centers, no one required assistance to go through the registration process. CODEO observed a "few" (that is, 1 to 5 people) at the registration centers were assisted to register at 24% of the registration centers across the country. At 4% of the registration centers, CODEO recorded instances where "some" (6 to 15 people) were assisted to register and at 3% of the registration centers, more than 16 people were assisted to register.
- CODEO found that at 21% of registration centers observed, there was the presence of unauthorized individuals. These individuals, not officially sanctioned by the EC or

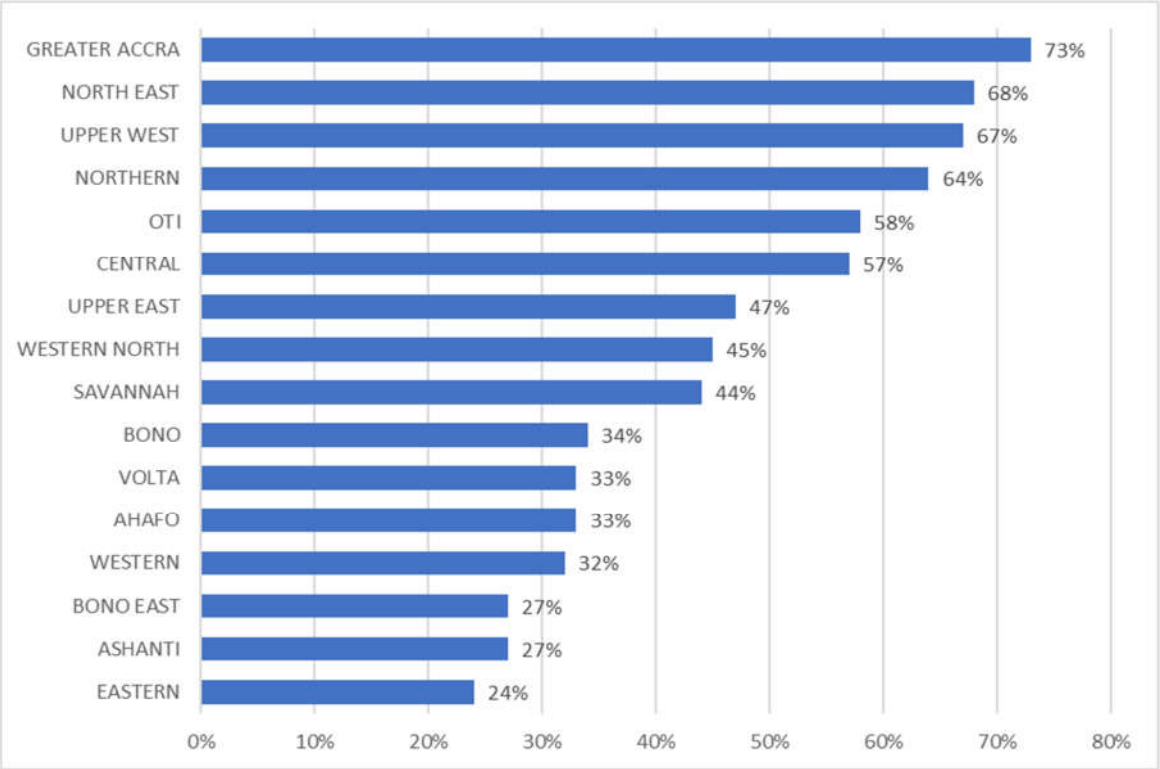
affiliated with the registration process were observed within the vicinity of the registration centers. The chart below shows the regional disaggregation of the presence of unauthorized persons at some point during the nationwide registration exercise.

Figure 2: Presence of unauthorized persons at registrations centers| by region



- According to CODEO’s observation, at 93% of registration centers observed, the EC officials prioritized the elderly, pregnant women, nursing mothers, and persons with disabilities, allowing them to register ahead of others. However, in 7% of centers observed, no such prioritization was observed.
- CODEO observation findings established that at 43% of registration centers observed, some individuals stationed themselves around the registration centers looking out to guarantee for applicants who did not have the required registration documents. The Greater Accra, North East, Upper West and Northern regions recorded the highest percentages of such phenomenon while the Eastern Region recorded the least of such cases.

Figure 3: Presence of stationed guarantors at registration centers| by regions

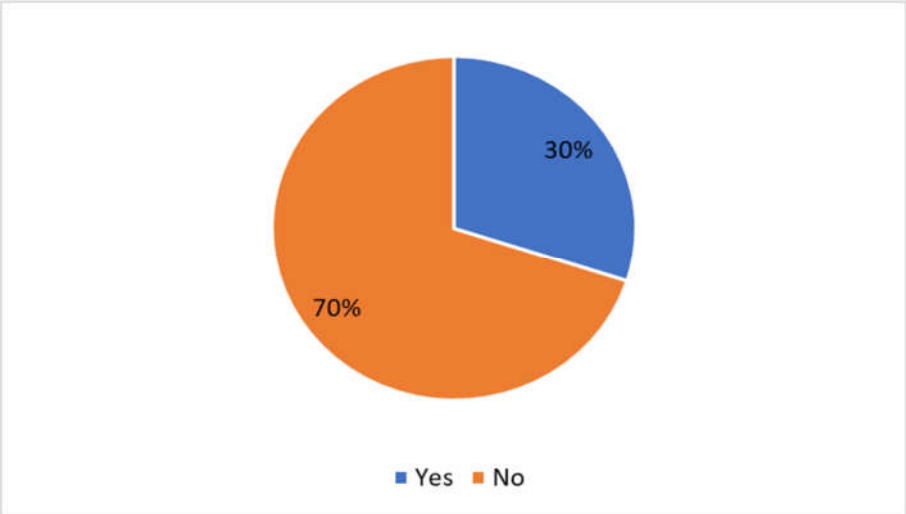


- CODEO recorded no instances of registration materials running out during the registration process.

Closing

- During the registration exercise, 30% of the registration centers observed had people who were in the queue at 6:00 PM when the registration exercise was closing for the day.

Figure 4: Persons in queue as at 6PM when registration was closing



- However, by 7:00 PM, almost all of the registration centers observed had ended the registration process and closed except for a few centers including Durbar Grounds Wenchi on Tuesday, May 7; Oak Street, Teshie, near Ledzokuku Municipal Assembly on Saturday, May 11; D/A JHS, Grumesa on Tuesday, May 14; Essikado-Ketan Sub Metro Office, Esikado on Saturday, May 18; Essikado-Ketan Sub Metro Office, Sikado on Wednesday, May 22; and Kwabenya-Atomic MA 5 Basic School Library on Monday, May 27, where the registration process closed after 7:00 PM

Reported Incidents

CODEO observed a total of 391 incidents of which 234 were followed up and verified. These incidents cut across the opening, set-up and registration process and they occurred in multiple registration centers throughout the country from May 7 to May 27. The incidents that were verified to be accurate by CODEO's Data Center include: the late opening of registration centers, registration centers not opened, registration exercise suspended, non-functioning registration kits, chaos at some registration centers, change in the movement plan for registration in difficult to access areas, change in location of registration centers, among others.

Highlights of Selected Critical Incidents

CODEO's first report on the voter registration exercise identified several incidents that either directly affected the conduct of the registration or threatened the integrity of the registration exercise.

- No opening of registration centers due to unavailability of registration materials at D/A Primary, Kobourkrom in Dormaa East District, Bono Region.
- Some applicants not permitted to register at Kramokrom Primary School in Sefwi Akontombra.
- Police personnel stationed at the Old Court registration center in Yunyoo/Nasuan District, North East Region drove away some applicants because they appeared to be minors.
- Double registration at Market Square Wuruwuru registration center at Kramokrom in Sefwi Akontombra District, Western North Region.
- Physical confrontations between political party members at a registration center in Ledzokuku Municipal Assembly, Greater Accra Region.
- Violent attacks on a school teacher and student applicants by heavily built men at Presby Primary School in Benkasa B in Berekum West, Bono East Region.
- Intimidation of registration officials by a constituency chairman at the first floor of the Tema Highway building, Lebanon Ashaiman, opposite Lebanon International School and Mosque, Greater Accra Region.

- Late opening of registration centers in the following districts; Dormaa East, Nkwanta South, Assin Foso, Berekum West, Kwahu Afram Plains, Brim Central, Kumbugu, Sefwi Akontombra, Nkwanta North, Berekum West, Nkoranza South Municipal, among others.

The critical incident reports that CODEO verified for the second and third weeks of the registration exercise broadly reflected incident patterns from the first week of the registration except for a few incidents of changes in the registration center location. Below are a few highlights of critical incidents CODEO recorded in weeks 2 and 3 of the voter registration exercise:

- Political party agents and affiliates interfere in the registration process at Market Square Aboabo in Adansi Asokwa District in the Ashanti Region. CODEO established that an NPP chairman present at the center alleged that two (2) applicants were not Ghanaians and attempted to block them from registering. In response, an NDC party agent confronted the NPP chairman, and it led to an altercation between the two people, halting the registration process for about an hour. The police were called in to settle the disagreement, after which the NPP chairman completed a challenge form. The applicants were allowed to register. Again, at the Brigade Hill Top Cactus Street Nungua, Greater Accra, a CODEO observer witnessed a dispute between NPP and NDC party officials over the age of one applicant at a registration center. Police and party officers intervened to resolve the situation amicably and prevented further escalation, though registrants were left feeling frightened.
- Similar incidents of political party agents and affiliates interfering in the registration process were reported in the following areas: Yunyoo Old Court registration center, Yunyoo-Nasuan District, North East Region (05/16/2024); Drobong Presby Primary School near the borehole Ejura Sekyedumase District, Ashanti Region (05/19/2024); D/A JHS Anansu registration center, Atwima Mponua District, Ashanti Region (05/20/2024); Old Ghana Water Company building, off Kpalbe Kushini road, Kpalbe, North East Gonja District, Savannah Region (05/25/2024); Behind the Dormaa West Assembly, Nkrankwanta, Dormaa West District, Bono Region (05/27/2024); the District Assembly Block 2, Daffiama-Bussie-Issa District, Upper West Region (05/27/2024).
- A registration officer in Ejura Sekyedumase in the Ashanti Region failed to apply indelible ink on two applicants after registration. After being prompted, the official applied the ink, however, they subsequently ignored the use of indelible ink on other applicants.
- EC's registration teams, in concert with political party agents, made on-the-spot decisions to change the locations of registration centers in some districts: On May 14, 2024, the CODEO observer in Lawra District (Upper West Region) reported that due to a lack of electricity supply, the original designated registration center, Baapare Primary School was moved to the Community Health Center. A similar incident happened on May 15, 2024 in Saboba, Northern Region, where our observer noted a change in the registration center because of network issues. The registration exercise was originally supposed to take place in Old Zegbile but was moved to New Zegbile.

Conclusion

CODEO would like to draw several conclusions based on observation findings within this reporting period.

This second report reflects an improvement of the EC's performance and behavior of political party affiliates during the first week of the registration exercise. Notwithstanding, repetitions of interference by non-officials and agents must be addressed and serious punitive consequences spelt out clearly by the EC before we go into the general elections.

The observation findings indicate an improvement in the arrival and commencement of registration by the EC officials in the second and third weeks of the registration exercise. Additionally, the network-related challenges and BVR kits malfunctioning and breakdowns reduced substantially, after the initial hurdles in the early days of the exercise. However, the sudden changes in EC's movement plans for the registration in some hard-to-reach areas affected CODEO's observation of the exercise in some of these areas. In a few instances, the registration centers were changed to new locations due to the lack of electricity at the original centers.

There were quite a number of instances where affiliates of the NPP and NDC at the registration centers disregard due process for resolving grievances or addressing inconveniences. Instead of political party agents and representatives using laid-down processes such as the challenge procedure and irregularity forms, they resort to any actions they deem fit. Such unlawful actions by the party agents and representatives unnecessarily affect the smooth running of the registration processes. It is also imperative that the political parties ensure that their agents at the registration centers are trained adequately in the rules and procedures governing the conduct of registration exercises in Ghana. Besides, political party agents must view their role as complementary to the voter registration exercise.

The visibility of the police and their timely intervention in volatile situations at the registration centers reduce disruptions and provide a serene atmosphere for the registration of applicants. CODEO's observation findings cite instances where police officers present at the registration centers settled differences between affiliates of political parties and restored calm and order. Beyond ensuring order at the registration centers, the police must show more interest in arresting and prosecuting election offenders to discourage other people from engaging in similar acts in future registration exercises. The arrest and prosecution of election offenders must be done in a transparent and timely manner.

CODEO would like to reiterate the need for the EC and all election stakeholders to increase public awareness and promote transparency about the work of the district registration review committees to promote public confidence in the process.

CODEO, in the coming weeks, will issue its final report on the voter registration exercise and share detailed recommendations to improve future organization of voter registration in Ghana.

Signed:

Albert Kofi Arhin

CODEO National Coordinator

June 3, 2024

About CODEO

CODEO is an independent and non-partisan network of civil society groups, faith-based organizations and professional bodies which observe Ghanaian elections. It was established in 2000 under the auspices of the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana) to mobilize citizens of Ghana to participate in the electoral process actively and to complement the efforts of Ghana's Electoral Commission in ensuring transparent, free, fair and peaceful elections. The Coalition of 42-member organizations has grown to become the largest and most credible domestic election observer body in Ghana which mobilizes citizens and groups to participate in Ghana's electoral processes.