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PRESS STATEMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CODEO calls on election stakeholders to intensify civic and voter education, stop vote-buying abuse of incumbency, and maintain peaceful and issue-based campaigns ahead of the December 7 elections

2nd CODEO Pre-election Observation Statement

Introduction

CODEO is pleased to share this second report from its observation of the pre-election environment ahead of Ghana's December 7, 2024, presidential and parliamentary elections. This report covers October 26–November 8, 2024, which is part of CODEO's comprehensive observation of the upcoming elections. The findings presented here are based on weekly observation reports filed by 97 CODEO Long-Term Observers (LTOs) from 97 constituencies across all regions of the country. A total of 193 weekly reports filed by these observers during the reporting period were analyzed for this report.

Summary of Findings

- Improvement in voter education efforts by the Electoral Commission of Ghana.
- Dominance of the political campaign scene by the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC).
- Marked differences in the campaign issues by the NPP and the NDC.
- A generally peaceful political climate in the observed constituencies.
- Instances of incumbency abuse, including using state resources such as public vehicles and government-owned equipment for campaign purposes.

Main Findings

Civic and Voter Education Activities

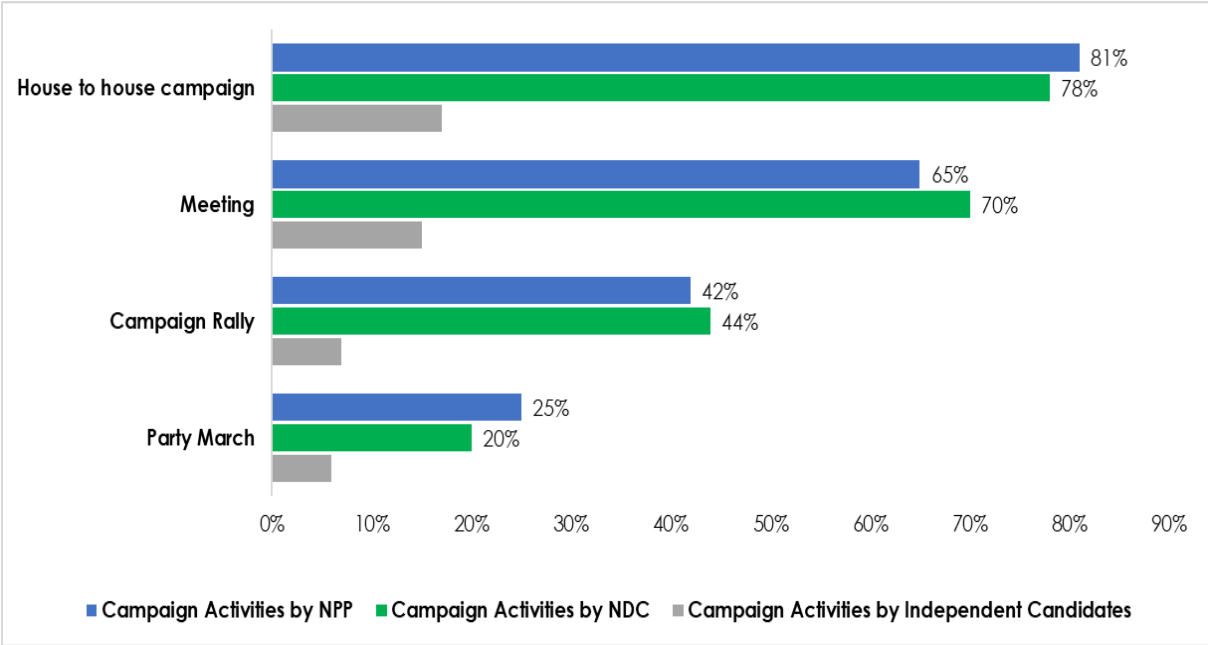
There has been an improvement in the levels of voter education activities by the Electoral Commission in the constituencies observed. From 12% in our maiden report, 26% of weekly reports filed during the period by CODEO observers indicated voter education activities implemented by the EC in the constituencies observed. Observers also noted civic and voter education during community meetings. The most frequently

used medium for civic and voter education activities were posters (noted in 57% of observer reports during the reporting period compared to 41% in the maiden report), community radio (noted in 50% of observer reports compared to 42% in the previous); and regular radio (50% compared to 39%), followed by street announcements (from 27% to 40% of the observer reports) and peace rallies (from 25% to 32%).

Political Campaigns at the Constituency Level

The NDC and the NPP remain the most active political parties regarding campaign activities. During this reporting period, the NPP conducted more house-to-house campaigns than the NDC (by 3%). On the other hand, the NDC was observed to have organized more meetings and party marches as part of their campaign activities than the NPP, as shown in Figure 1 below.

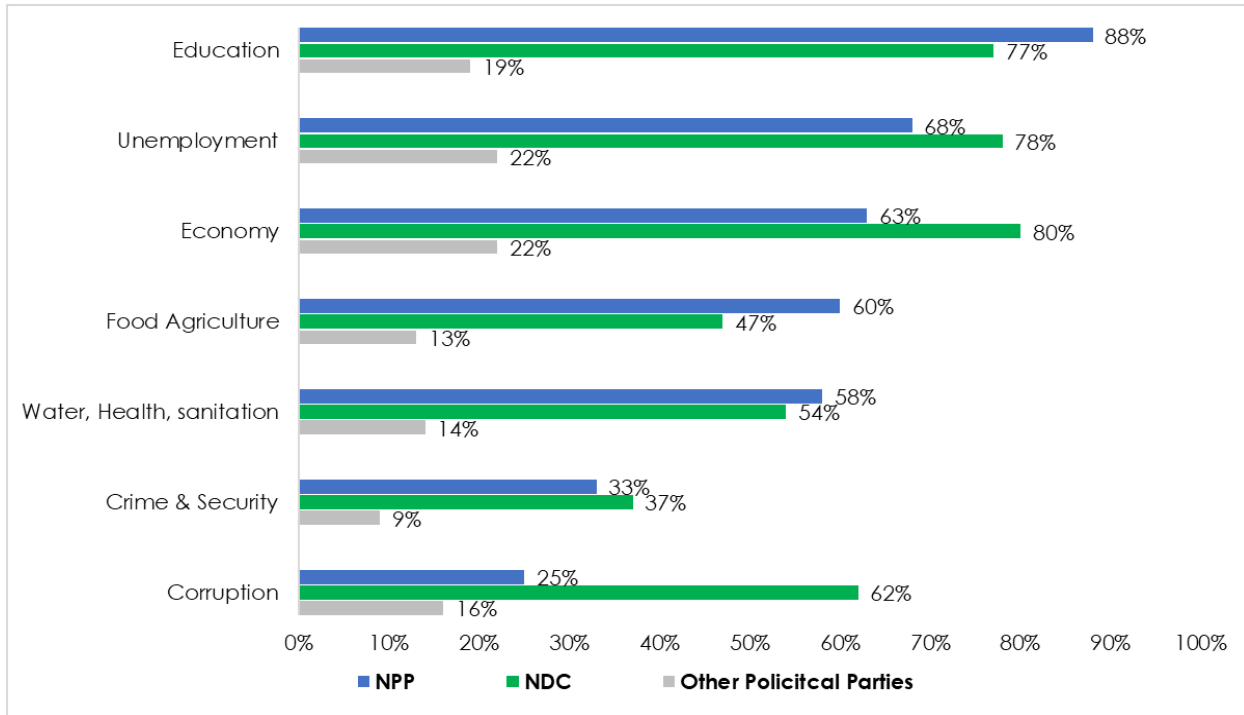
Figure 1: Campaign activities observed during the reporting period



Regarding the focus of campaign messages, observer reports showed that the NDC and NPP campaigns focused mainly on education, unemployment, the economy, corruption, food and agriculture, water, health and sanitation, crime, and security. The campaign messages of the NPP focused mainly on education (according to 88% of observer reports as compared to 77% in the case of the NDC), food and agriculture (60% against 47% for the NDC), and water, health, and sanitation (noted by 58% of reports compared to 54% for the NDC). On the other hand, the campaign messages of the NDC focused more on the economy (as noted in 80% of observer reports compared to 63% in the case of the NPP), unemployment (78% compared to 77% for the NPP), and corruption (62% of reports compared to 25% for the NPP).

There was limited campaign engagement by other political parties and independent candidates. The main issues addressed by the other political parties were unemployment, corruption, and education.

Figure 2: Focus of political parties' campaign messages: Policy issues



Observers reported that the NPP, NDC, and some independent candidates provided treats such as food and drinks to event attendees during campaign activities. A total of 16% of observer reports cited the NPP for giving treats such as food and drink to event attendees, while 12% of the reports indicated similar practices by the NDC. About 2% of observer reports cited independent candidates for providing treats.

About 30% of observer reports noted instances where attendees to campaign events were provided with free transportation. The NPP was cited in 53% of such reports, followed by the NDC. However, in the instances where observers reported such cases, the NPP was involved in 52% of them, while the NDC was cited in 40%. Independent candidates and other political parties were cited for such practices in 6% and 2% of reports, respectively.

Observers also noted instances of vote-buying, with 10% of reports received within the period indicating so. This involved people being given money or valuables to influence their vote. These incidents were observed in some Ashanti, Savannah, and Western constituencies.

Abuse of Incumbency

Observers noted instances of potential abuse of incumbency by incumbent candidates or appointees of the government. About 11% of observer reports noted the use of public (state or local) vehicles for campaigning on behalf of an incumbent candidate. For instance, in the Tatale-Sanguli constituency in the Northern Region, the NPP Parliamentary candidates' flyers were used to brand the government-led District Road Improvement Program (DRIP), which saw the distribution of earth-moving equipment to MMDAs for road improvement. The campaign flyers of the Tatale Sanguli Member of Parliament and parliamentary candidate for the constituency, were seen on the DRIP Program equipment (bulldozer), being used to maintain and expand roads in the Sagban community.

Election Security

The political atmosphere remains generally peaceful across the 97 constituencies observed by CODEO LTOs. No incidence of violence, intimidation, or harassment specifically targeting women was noted.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings presented in this second pre-election report indicate an overall peaceful campaign environment across the 97 observed constituencies, with political activities remaining largely issue-focused. CODEO is, however, concerned about the limited voter education despite some marginal improvement. CODEO continues to urge all election stakeholders, including the Electoral Commission, the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE), media, and civil society organizations, to intensify civic and voter education efforts nationwide. CODEO also urges all political parties and their supporters to continue with peaceful and issue-based campaigning. CODEO calls on all stakeholders to intensify efforts, including public education, to maintain the generally peaceful political environment during the December 7 polls. Finally, CODEO wants to use this opportunity to call on all stakeholders, especially law enforcement agencies, to enforce laws that prohibit vote buying and abuse of incumbency, which contributes to uneven playing grounds for all presidential and parliamentary candidates ahead of the election.

Follow link for the list of constituencies: <https://codeoghana.org/2024/11/codeo-list-of-constituencies-for-2024-lto/>

End

Signed:

Albert Kofi Arhin

CODEO National Coordinator

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.