



December 17, 2024

Statement on the release of Yiaga Africa Preliminary Report of the 2024 Ghana General Election

1. Introduction

On December 7, 2024, Ghana conducted its ninth presidential and parliamentary elections since returning to multiparty democracy in 1992. A total of 18.7 million registered voters were expected to vote across 40,648 polling stations in 276 constituencies spanning the country's 16 regions. Fifteen political parties presented candidates for the presidential and parliamentary elections however for the presidential election, there were 12 presidential candidates (11 male and 1 female) of which for of them were independent candidates. Meanwhile, 801 parliamentary candidates contested seats in 276 constituencies. Of these figure, 119 female candidates, representing 14.9% of parliamentary candidates, and 682 male candidates, representing 85.1% of parliamentary candidates.

2. The 2024 Ghana Election Study and Observation Mission

Following accreditation by the Electoral Commission of Ghana (EC), Yiaga Africa deployed an Election Study and Observation Mission (ESOM) from 3rd - 10th December 2024 to understudy the electoral governance architecture in Ghana, with a specific interest in the election results management system. The mission also studied the role of electoral technology in the Ghana 2024 general elections and observed the trends and patterns of citizens' participation. Yiaga Africa undertook the mission as part of its Transforming Electoral Governance in Africa initiative (TEGA) project to enable democratic societies and institutions to reimagine electoral governance through evidence-based learning, documentation and advocacy.

The mission observed the pre-election, election day and post-election processes and environment, including desk reviews, expert briefings, stakeholder meetings, press conferences and key informant interviews. Prior to the election, Yiaga Africa observed the pre-election environment and engaged with stakeholders especially the electoral commission, political parties and domestic election observer groups. On election day, Yiaga Africa deployed three teams to Greater Accra, Central and Volta regions to observe the election. The teams visited polling stations to observe the voter

verification, voting and counting processes. The delegation also observed collation of results and interacted with domestic election observer groups.

The 12-person delegation led by Dr. Aisha Abdullahi (former, African Union Commissioner of Political Affairs), includes;

1. Senator Sharafadeen Abiodun Alli, Chairman, Nigerian Senate Committee on INEC and Electoral Matters, National Assembly
2. Hon. Prince Adebayo Balogun, Chairman, Nigerian House of Representatives Committee on Electoral Matters, National Assembly
3. Barr. Afam Osigwe SAN, President, Nigerian Bar Association
4. Bonolo Magkale, Center for Human Rights, University of Pretoria, South Africa
5. Mr. Majeed Bakare - Premium Times Newspaper
6. Ijeoma Osamor – Broadcaster and TV anchor, African Independent Television (AIT)
7. Samson Itodo, Executive Director, Yiaga Africa
8. Olusegun Ogundare, African Head, Operations and Research
9. Ibrahim Farouk, Africa Program Coordinator
10. Gifty Quarshie – Program Assistant

Ghana Election Study and Observation Mission Preliminary Report

The preliminary report presents **16** key findings across the **5** thematic pillars of the Election Study and Observation Mission, namely election administration, election results management, voting rights and accessibility, electoral technology and artificial intelligence and issue-based politics. The reports identifies **13** good practices from Ghana's electoral process worthy of adoption in other contexts, and concludes with **11** actionable recommendations for strengthening electoral integrity in Africa.

Some of the Key findings include;

1. **Transparency and responsiveness in election administration builds citizens' trust:** Public trust in Ghana's Electoral Commission was low before the election due to concerns over allegation of partisan appointments, weak stakeholder engagement, voter register inaccuracies, and ballot paper issues. Despite this, the Commission demonstrated resilience by addressing stakeholder concerns, particularly from political parties.

Proactive measures, including cleaning the voter register, issuing copies to political parties, involving party representatives in ballot printing, and destroying faulty ballots, reduced suspicion, enhanced transparency, and restored public confidence in the electoral process.

2. **Affixing seals on ballot boxes protects the credibility of the voting process:** Political party agents in Ghana affix their serially numbered and color-

coded seals on ballot boxes after the Electoral Commission's seal, ensuring the boxes remain secure and unopened, thereby safeguarding the voting process.

3. **Inclusive voter verification processes reduce voter disenfranchisement:** Ghana's electoral guidelines allow manual verification for voters without ID cards, provided their names appear on the register. The Biometric Verification Device (BVD) records all verified voters, ensuring transparency. During verification, the devices scan a QR code on the voter register to call up the voter data, enabling individuals to vote even without their voter cards.
4. **Format of ballot papers improves voting choices and reduces invalidated votes:** Ballot papers include candidates' names, photographs, symbols, and party colors, providing clarity and enabling voters to make informed choices, thus reducing invalid votes.
5. **Verification of transmitted results by party agents strengthens election integrity:** The national collation of presidential results includes a verification process that enhances transparency and accountability. Regional results are sent via fax to the national collation center, printed, and allotted **20 minutes** for party agents to verify and raise objections where discrepancies arise. This process builds trust in the final results.
6. **Limited electronic transmission of results could impact public confidence:** Electronic transmission of results is restricted to regional presidential results sent via fax to the national collation center using **16 fax machines**. Polling station results ("pink sheets") are not accessible online, which limits transparency. Adopting technology and **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** to upload results online in real-time would improve public confidence and serve as a backup in cases of disputes or destroyed pink sheets during collation.
7. **Systematic Parallel Tallying of results by political parties deescalates tension:** Major political parties' parallel result tallying enhances oversight, rigor, and trust in the process. The ability to track real-time trends reduces tension and increases acceptance of results. The concession speech by the NPP candidate, informed by parallel tallying, highlights its role in ensuring peaceful outcomes.
8. **Special voting and proxy voting protects citizens' rights to vote:** Ghana promotes inclusiveness by accommodating election officials, security personnel, and media through special voting. Held on December 2 and 6, 2024, special voting saw 131,478 participants with an 83% turnout, ensuring those in critical roles are not disenfranchised.

Additionally, proxy voting allows registered voters unable to vote due to illness, disability, work, education, or overseas residence to appoint a proxy. A total of 2,141 voters were approved for proxy voting. Applications must be submitted 42 days before the election to ensure participation.

9. **Prisoners' voting improves electoral inclusiveness:** In 2010, Ghana's Supreme Court issued a landmark ruling affirming the right of remand and convicted prisoners to vote. To implement this decision, the court directed the Electoral Commission (EC) to draft a constitutional instrument (CI) establishing the legal framework for including prisoners on the voters' register for the 2024 general elections. This effort reflects Ghana's commitment to inclusiveness and the principle that no citizen should be denied the right to vote on the basis of incarceration.
10. **Political literacy influenced electoral politics and voting choices:** Ghanaian voters demonstrated high political literacy and sophistication in electing candidates. The 2024 campaigns were less acrimonious compared to 2020, focusing on issue-based policies addressing Ghana's economic challenges and governance.

Campaigns focused on direct voter mobilization through door-to-door outreach, social media, SMS, and phone calls, reducing reliance on street rallies and contributing to a more orderly campaign period.

Good election practices in Ghana

1. The culture of respect for democratic institutions by different stakeholders strengthens democracy and promotes active citizenship
2. Including agents of party and independent candidates in ballot printing to monitor the production deepens confidence in the electoral process. Uniquely to this cycle, the electoral commission opened up the ballot printing process to the media, in an effort to enhance transparency in the process
3. Allowing political party agents to affix party-labeled seals with distinct colors and serial numbers on ballot boxes enhances security and builds trust in the electoral process.
4. The verification of results by party agents at the national collation center strengthens openness of the collation process and it facilitates active stakeholder participation
5. Ensuring that voters without a verification ID can still vote, provided their names appear on the voter register, helps reduce voter disenfranchisement.
6. Voice prompts such as "Rejected" or "Verified" on the Biometric Verification Device (BVD) allow voters and party agents to monitor the voter verification process.

7. Special voting, proxy voting and prisoners voting protects voting rights and enables increased citizens participation in elections
8. Independent candidacy promotes political inclusion by promoting greater representation of suppressed and marginalized voices. It also increases electoral choices, providing voters with alternatives.
9. The combination of the name, photographs and symbols the ballot paper ensures clarity and it assists voters in making informed choices.
10. The provision of tissue boxes in voting cubicles reduced smears on ballot papers.
11. The absence of movement restrictions on election day allows citizens to vote freely without hindrances. It also enables small-scale businesses to operate, ensuring economic activities continue without a total shutdown.
12. Systematic, professional and data-driven parallel tallying of results by political parties ensures oversight and promotes acceptability of electoral outcomes
13. Regular press statements and briefings by the Electoral Commission and Ghana Police Service build public confidence and mitigate misinformation and fake news.

Recommendations

African election management bodies

1. Election management Bodies (EMBs) should review the format of ballot papers used in elections to include photographs and names of candidates to improve the quality of electoral preferences.
2. Commit to greater transparency through proactive disclosure of election information, including integrating political party representatives, civil society, and media in election procurement processes.
3. Leverage technology and adopt the ethical use of artificial intelligence to enhance the integrity of voter register, voter authentication, election results collation processes.

Political parties and candidates

4. Political stakeholders should demonstrate a firm commitment to democracy and nation-building by upholding national values such as patriotism, integrity and public interest in electoral politics.

National parliaments

5. Amend the necessary electoral legal frameworks to introduce prisoners' voting and special voting for eligible voters performing essential election duties (e.g., security personnel, electoral staff, observers, journalists), ensuring their constitutional right to vote is upheld.

6. Establish a standing mechanism to routinely review elections in an open, consensus-driven manner upon completion, ensuring that actionable recommendations for reforms are identified and implemented.

Signed

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