



Elections Watch Committee (EWC) 2022 Pre-Elections Observation (PREO)

ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN UPDATE – #3 (28th March 2022)

The Elections Watch Committee is a partnership of 3 organizations with different expertise and background – Peace Ambassadors-The Gambia (PAG), ACTIVISTA and the National Youth Parliament (NYP) – collaborating to observe the electoral processes in The Gambia. The EWC’s observation of the 2022 National Assembly elections will build on the EWC’s observation of the 2021 Presidential election processes such as the Voter Registration, the display of provisional list of voters, the candidate nomination, the campaign period and the 2021 presidential election day. Ahead of the 9th April National Assembly elections, the EWC has observed the candidate nomination process and is now observing the campaign period.

Summary

The Elections Watch Committee (EWC) has trained and deployed a total of 71 long-term observers to observe the pre-election processes within the Gambia for the 2022 National Assembly elections. This update contains observation findings covering the Independent Electoral Commission’s (IEC) official campaign period from 17th - 26th March 2022. It contains findings from the observation of the campaigns conducted by political parties and independent candidates within the different constituencies during this period. The update also reflects observers’ reports on the IEC preparedness, the conduct of civic education and voter information campaigns, COVID-19 prevention measures, as well as recommendations. The EWC will continue to observe and will submit a final campaign update at the close of the process.

Overall, Elections Watch Observers’ reports from the first half of the official campaign period indicate that campaign activities have begun in almost all constituencies and have been generally peaceful with isolated instances of violence. Observers reported witnessing and hearing about violations of the code of campaign ethics by political parties and independent candidates such as instances of voter card buying, use of government vehicles and distribution of gifts or money to voters during campaign. The EWC observers further noted election preparations by the IEC as well as voter sensitization activities ongoing in some parts of the country by NCCE and CSO’s.

Methodology

The Elections Watch Committee (EWC) deployed a total of 71 long-term observers to observe the pre-election processes within the Gambia for the 2022 National Assembly elections. These include 14 Nomination Observers (comprising 3 regional coordinators & 11 observers) and 60 Campaign observers (comprising 7 regional coordinators – each for a region and 53 constituency observers, one representing each constituency), to monitor the conduct of the National Assembly candidate nomination and campaign processes in their respective regions



and constituencies. All Elections Watch observers were carefully selected, thoroughly trained and accredited by the IEC.

All Elections Watch observers were instructed to observe campaign activities and rallies of political parties and independent candidates in their respective areas covering the total of 53 constituencies within The Gambia. Observers were trained to observe campaign activities and send in reports on three designated days during the campaign period, 15th March, 26th March and 7th April, 2022 as well as Critical Incidents whenever they occur. For this reporting period, every observer sent in their observation report using a comprehensive observer checklist via coded text message using their mobile phones to the Elections Watch National Information Center (EWC-NIC).

REGIONAL COORDINATORS AND CONSTITUENCY OBSERVERS’ DEPLOYMENT BREAKDOWN:

Region	# of Constituencies	# of EWC Nomination Observers	# of EWC Regional Coordinators	# of EWC Constituency Observers
Banjul	3	2	1	3
Kanifing	7	2	1	7
West Coast Region	13	2	1*	13
North Bank Region	7	2	1	7
Lower River Region	6	2	1	6
Central River Region	11	2	1*	11
Upper River Region	6	2	1*	6
TOTAL	53	14	7	53

*Regional coordinator also served as a nomination observer

Findings

The Elections Watch Committee's National Assembly campaign update provides comprehensive information on reports from Elections Watch observers deployed across the country during the first half of the official campaign period from 17th to 26th March, 2022. This update also includes findings from the conduct of civic and voter education on the elections, the IEC preparedness as well as COVID-19 prevention measures. These findings are based on the 53 reports received from the EWC’s observer reports from the 53 EWC’s Constituency Observers.

Political Party Campaigns

For the first half of the official campaign period, the EWC observers reported that political parties and independent candidates nationwide have launched their campaigns. In 52 of 53 constituencies, observers reported witnessing or hearing of at least one campaign event/rally being conducted by candidates from parties such as NPP, UDP as well as independent candidates and other parties. Observers also reported seeing the postings of flyers by parties and independent candidates.



In its previous report on the period prior to the start of the campaign period, EWC highlighted violations of the Code of Campaign Ethics by political parties and candidates. During the first half of the campaign period, EWC observers again reported Code of Conduct violations including instances of buying of voters cards, use of government vehicles for campaign as well as distribution of money or gift items to voters during campaigns. In 5 of 53 constituencies, observers reported witnessing or hearing instances of buying of voters' cards. Also, in 7 of 53 constituencies, observers reported witnessing the distribution of money or gifts to voters. In 6 of 53 constituencies, observers reported witnessing the use of government vehicles while in an additional 2 constituencies, observers reported hearing of the use of government vehicles for campaigning.

IEC Preparations and Civic Education/Voter Information

The EWC commends electoral partners and the IEC for the level of election preparations and voter sensitization messaging being conducted ahead of the 9th April National Assembly elections. Observers reported witnessing or hearing that the IEC had begun preparations for the 9th April National Assembly election in their area in half of the total constituencies. Also, in 35 of 53 constituencies observers reported the conduct of civic education and voter information campaigns being conducted by the IEC, NCCE, CSOs and others including campaigns directed at women, youth and persons with disabilities..

COVID-19 Prevention:

Elections Watch observers during the first half of the campaign period reported low levels of sensitization on COVID-19, with 38 of 53 constituency observers reporting that they had not heard or been exposed to any COVID-19 sensitization messages. Nevertheless, in 30 of 53 constituencies, observers reported that parties and candidates sometimes adhered to COVID-19 safety protocols at campaign events mainly through the use of facemasks.

Electoral Violence and Security

Generally, the first half of the campaign has been peaceful as reported by EWC observers. Observers noted the low presence of security forces during campaign events/rallies, which were reported in only 17 of 53 constituencies. However, only in 2 constituencies, observers reported hearing of the use of hate speech or inflammatory language during campaign rallies and on social media. EWC observers reported three instances of violent actions. For example, in one instance, an EWC observer reported hearing of a group of women obstructing a campaign convoy of candidate and current member of parliament, Hon. Amul Nyssi at Foni Kansala in the Brikama Administrative Area. In another, an observer reported witnessing a violent conflict ensuing between supporters of NPP and UDP party members which led to injuries of citizens while in the final instance, the EWC observer heard of a violent clash between supporters of NRP and an independent candidate in the Dankunku Namina.

Outside of these instances, the Elections Watch Committee notes that the first half of the campaign period has been generally peaceful. The Elections Watch Committee commends the



citizens and political actors of The Gambia for their continuing commitment to a peaceful election process.

Recommendations

The Elections Watch Committee hereby recommends the following:

- The IEC and the IPC should closely monitor the actions of political parties to ensure they are in compliance with the Code of Conduct and Code on Election Campaign Ethics. Further, the IEC should employ stringent measures against political parties and independent candidates directly found violating any provision of the Code of Code of Conduct as well as the Code of Campaign ethics.
- The Elections Watch Committee reminds political parties to refrain from all forms of vote buying.
- The EWC will also work with the IPC and relevant authorities to provide details of parties and candidates reported to be involved with instances of vote buying as well as other violations of the code of conduct for proper investigation and redress.
- Political parties and their supporters should refrain from the use of hate speech and inflammatory language during their campaigns. Parties and their supporters should also refrain from any violent reaction and call for peaceful participation in the elections.
- Political parties and their supporters should adhere to COVID-19 prevention measures by wearing facemasks, ensuring physical distancing, washing hands, and use of sanitizers.
- IEC, NCCE, and CSOs should double civic education and voter information efforts to reach voters in all parts of the country during the campaign period.
- Security forces should ensure they have sufficient presence particularly in hotspot areas as the elections approach and properly investigate instances of electoral violence as well as provide equal protection to all candidates and supporters.

The Elections Watch Committee encourages all citizens to continue to peacefully engage during the campaign.. The Elections Watch Committee also reminds voters to bring their voter card and cast their vote on 9th April at the polling station where they voted during the 2021 Presidential elections.

About the EWC Elections Observation

The Elections Watch Committee is a partnership of 3 organizations and other network members with different expertise and background collaborating to observe elections in The Gambia. The Elections Watch Committee includes the Peace Ambassadors-The Gambia (PAG), ACTIVISTA and the National Youth Parliament (NYP). This Committee is the decision-making body on all matters relating to the 2021 Elections Watch Project. PAG serves as the Secretariat of the



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