

ELECTIONS WATCH

THE GAMBIA

Elections Watch Committee (EWC) 2023 Pre-Elections Observation (PREO)

Local Government Elections (Councilor) 2023

NOMINATION UPDATE – #1 (31st March 2023)

The Election Watch Committee (EWC) is a partnership of 7 organizations with different expertise and background – Peace Ambassadors-The Gambia (PAG), ACTIVISTA, National Youth Parliament (NYP), Think Young Women (TYW), Beakanyang, Peace Hub – The Gambia (PHTG), and The Gambia Federation of the Disabled (GFD) – collaborating to observe the electoral processes in The Gambia. The EWC’s observation of the 2023 Local Government elections will build on the EWC’s observation of the 2021 Presidential election, including the Voter Registration process, the display of a provisional list of voters, the candidate nomination and campaign period, the 2021 presidential election day and as well the 2022 National Assembly elections. Ahead of the April 15 Local Government elections, the EWC has observed the candidate nomination process and will observe the campaign period.

Summary

The Elections Watch Committee (EWC) has trained and deployed a total of fourteen (14) long-term observers, i.e. 2 observers in each administrative region to observe the nomination process within The Gambia. The nomination period ran from 14th March - 27th March 2023 as indicated by the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC). This update contains observation findings from the candidate nomination process covering the period of the nomination exercise. The update also contains information as reported by observers on the IEC preparedness, the conduct of aspiring candidates as well as recommendations. The EWC will continue to observe the campaign period and will submit a final campaign update at the close of the process.

Overall, Election Watch Observers’ reports indicate the nomination process conducted at the IEC’s seven regional offices went smoothly in most instances and most candidates were able to successfully navigate the nomination process.

Methodology

The Election Watch Committee deployed fourteen (14) nomination observers i.e. two (2) observers for each region observing on alternating days to monitor the conduct of the local

government councilor candidate nomination in their respective regions. All Election Watch observers were carefully selected and thoroughly trained, and accredited by the IEC.

All Elections Watch observers were instructed to observe the nomination activities within The Gambia. Observers were trained to observe nomination activities and send in reports on each observation day during the observation period, 14th March - 27th March 2023 as well as critical incidents whenever they occur. For this reporting period, every observer sent in their observation report using a comprehensive checklist via coded text message using their mobile phones to the Election Watch Committee National Information Center (EWC-NIC).

The EWC also trained two (2) data entry clerks that were stationed at the EWC National Information Center in Kanifing to collect checklist reports from observers on the reporting days as well as critical incidents from all observers through the nomination process.

NOMINATION OBSERVATION OF THE COUNCILOR ELECTIONS FINDINGS

These findings are based on the 81 reports received from the EWC's nomination observers.

Nominations:

The IEC conducted the candidate nomination process from Tuesday, March 14 through Monday, March 27 in each of its seven regional offices. Political parties were assigned specific days on which their candidates were to submit their nomination packages. On Wednesday, March 29, the IEC released a list of 367 candidates that have been cleared to contest the April 15 local government councilor polls. However, Only 4 of 81 EWC observers reported candidates being rejected, and in all cases, they received rejection forms.

Based on the IEC's list of candidates, the highest number of candidates are in Brikama and Janjanbureh Administrative Area with 93 and 74 candidates running in each region, respectively. The UDP has fielded the largest number of candidates at 102 followed by the NPP at 99 candidates. As well, 68 independent candidates are running in these elections. The EWC notes a low number of female candidates running in these elections as only 16% of candidates are women.

BREAKDOWN OF CANDIDATE NOMINATIONS AS RELEASED BY THE IEC

STATISTICS ON THE NOMINATED CANDIDATES AS PER PARTY FOR THE COUNCILLORSHIP ELECTIONS 2023

ADMIN. AREA	APP	APRC	GDC	GFA	GMC	NPP	NRP	PAP	PDOIS	PPP	UDP	IND.	TOTAL	FEMALE
BANJUL	0	0	1	0	0	9	0	0	2	1	9	0	22	4
KANIFING	0	5	0	0	0	14	0	1	6	1	19	25	71	13
BRIKAMA	0	12	7	1	0	16	0	0	5	0	21	31	93	20
KEREWAN	0	0	9	0	0	16	0	0	2	0	14	3	44	7
MANSAKONKO	0	0	3	0	0	12	0	0	0	0	11	2	28	4
JANJANBUREH	1	0	11	0	0	18	4	1	7	5	20	7	74	8
BASSE	0	0	5	0	1	14	0	0	5	2	8	0	35	2
TOTAL	1	17	36	1	1	99	4	2	27	9	102	68	367	58

Political Party	# of Approved Candidates
All People's Party (APP)	1
Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction (APRC)	17
Gambia Democratic Congress (GDC)	36
Gambia For All (GFA)	1
Gambia Moral Congress (GMC)	1
Independent	68
National People's Party (NPP)	99
National Reconciliation Party (NRP)	4
People's Democratic Organization for Independence and Socialism (PDOIS)	27
People's Progressive Party (PPP)	9
United Democratic Party (UDP)	102
Grand Total	367

Elections Watch Committee (EWC) Observers deployed to the 7 regional offices submitted 81 reports over the 14-day candidate nomination period. 69 of the 80 reports indicated that the regional offices had opened by 10:00 am. 11 of 80 Elections Watch Committee Observers' reports indicated that the offices opened after 10:00 am. In the remaining instances, the regional offices were not open to accepting nominations as no aspirants from the political parties assigned to that day had previously collected the nomination form. Security agents were present at the regional offices on nearly all days of the nomination process (81 of 81 EWC observer reports).

Elections Watch Committee Observers were asked to observe whether aspirants submitted a complete nomination package and whether the IEC followed procedures in either accepting or rejecting their nominations. However, in many instances, the IEC confirmed receipt of the nomination package and later called the candidate to return to collect their acceptance of the nomination. Due to this, Elections Watch Committee Observers were not able to fully observe how the IEC reviewed these packages or if candidates were asked to make corrections to their nomination packages. EWC observers noted that no objections were made to candidate

nominations in 77 out of 81 reports. Observers reported a low number of rejected candidates which indicates that mistakes within the nomination paperwork were not a significant barrier to candidacy in this process.

Observers reported that in 47 instances, candidates were not given a copy of the ‘Acceptance of Nomination Form’.

The candidate nomination process was generally peaceful with no major instances of violence and disruption except in one instance in Mansakonko where an NPP candidate was rejected by the IEC for not being a registered voter. However, the party was given an opportunity to replace the candidate.

Elections Watch Committee Observers noted in 54 out of 81 reports that regional offices closed the nomination process on time (by 4:00 pm), with 25 reports indicating that the process closed before 4:00 pm. Observers noted 2 instances where the candidate nomination process closed after 4:30 pm.

REPORTING AND COMMUNICATION PLAN FOR THE CAMPAIGN OBSERVATION EFFORTS

EWC observers will observe and report on campaign processes such as political rallies, campaign marches, demonstrations, debates, the use of the media, flyers, posters, billboards, and community outreach events. They will also watch out for campaign violence within their assigned areas such as the propagation of hate speeches and divisive messages, intimidation, and harassment targeted at electoral actors and other groups. Observers will further report on civic and voters’ education activities as well as the IEC preparatory activities for Election Day at the regional and constituency levels.

For the Pre-Election Period (Candidate Nomination and Campaign), EWC will issue two public and video updates to communicate its observation findings. These updates will be in the form of a report or brief that will either be posted on the social media platform or shared directly in emails to various stakeholders to communicate the EWC’s findings.

This initial update covering the EWC Campaign Deployment Strategy and Candidate Nomination Observation will be followed by two additional updates. One will be issued on Friday, 7th April that will include the EWC's first Campaign Update. A second and final update will be issued on Friday, 14th April.

The final update will also communicate the EWC Deployment Strategy for the Election Day Observation. All EWC Campaign reports will be based on the direct observations from EWC’s 14 long-term observers located in the seven (7) administrative regions of the country.

In addition to the two Campaign Updates, EWC will immediately share with the appropriate authorities any verified critical incident reports or any other relevant information so that actions would immediately be taken to address the issue(s).

To communicate its observation findings, the EWC will hold two press briefings/conferences on the two updates which will also be shared with the IEC, members of the media, and major electoral stakeholders. Throughout the campaign period, there will also be regular posts of EWC activities on its social media page and official website for the public to access.

ANNEX A:

NOMINATION OBSERVERS DEPLOYMENT BREAKDOWN

The EWC had a total of fourteen (14) persons on the standby observer team to monitor the nomination of candidates, with two (2) persons in each region. One (1) stationary observer station was at each regional IEC nomination center.

REGION	NO. OF REGIONAL OBSERVERS
Banjul	2
Kanifing	2
West Coast Region	2
North Bank Region	2
Lower River Region	2
Central River Region	2
Upper River Region	2
TOTAL	14

CONTACT INFORMATION-EWC's SECRETARIAT:

Yankuba Manjang, Coordinator – 3914415 / 7175382

Momodou Juju Jallow, Program Manager – 3438623 / 6429925

Sabel Betts, Communication Officer – 2552662

Website: www.peaceambassadors.gm

Facebook: Elections Watch Committee 220

Twitter- Electionwatch22