



PEACE AMBASSADORS - THE GAMBIA

THE ELECTION WATCH

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PAG HOSTS THIRD MONTHLY
SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS AHEAD OF
VOTER REGISTRATION EXERCISE

PAG HOLDS STAKEHOLDERS'
DIALOGUE ON OBSERVATION
FINDINGS OF POLITICAL PARTY
CONGRESSES

PEACE AMBASSADORS INITIATES
RADIO SHOWS AHEAD OF
ELECTIONS

PEACE AMBASSADORS
DEPLOYS 59 OBSERVERS
ACROSS 7 ADMINISTRATIVE
REGIONS



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Foreword by the Executive Secretary, Yankuba Manjang



Picture: The Executive Secretary of PAG, Mr. Yankuba Manjang.

Hello readers and welcome to the second edition of The Election Watch Newsletter. This publication is part of a series which we are periodically publishing as part of our broader Election Watch Project.

Peace Ambassadors - The Gambia (PAG) is an international youth organization operating in The Gambia since 2001. The organization has functioning chapters in all the administrative regions of The Gambia and in Senegal and Guinea Bissau. PAG has received funding from the National Democratic Institute (NDI) to execute a systematic monitoring and observation of the electoral process of the country's Presidential Election scheduled on the 4th December 2021. This initiative is unique and remarkable for numerous reasons.

Unlike what traditionally obtains in The Gambia, - observers monitoring the Election Day only - The Election Watch Project goes further to observe the entire electoral process with due diligence and a high degree of professionalism.

We have recruited and trained observers who are guided by ethics and standards in bringing the much-needed strength to the country's growing democracy through the promotion of peaceful, free and credible elections in the country.

The stakeholders' dialogue on the findings of the political party congresses was a lucid manifestation of the successes the observations have registered, and it has given us insights on ways and how to strengthen party democracy.

This edition of the newsletter also promises to be a fascinating one and I enjoin you all to read the stories and get up to speed with our Election Watch Project and other important matters of this highly anticipated elections.

Finally, I wish to thank my Communications Team for putting together - once again - such a magnificent work.

Best regards.

Letter from the Editor-In-Chief, Mbaye Mballow



Picture: Editor-In-Chief of The Election Watch and Communication Officer of PAG, Mr. Mbaye Mballow.

The launch of the maiden edition of The Election Watch Newsletter was a huge success. The stories were captivating, and they interest our target audiences. I wish to appreciate the numerous compliments we received from our stakeholders and the public at large for the compliments they have poured on the newsletter and the team behind it.

Building on that momentum, I welcome you to the second edition of the bulletin. In this edition, we continue shedding light on the activities of The Election Watch Project and the successes we have achieved thus far.

A lot of teamwork, dedication and commitment have been put into these publications and I am glad our efforts are bearing fruits.

In this edition, you will find out about the stakeholders' dialogue on the observation findings of the political party congresses. The summary report of the observation and the situational analyses were both presented at the convergence. Highlights of this day are part of this edition's stories.

PAG has initiated a bi-monthly radio show dubbed The Election Watch with the main objective of informing and educating the public, especially the youths on their civic and political rights. We have – in this edition – a story on this as it unfolds per show.

The proceedings on the trainings and deployment of PAG's election observers nationwide form a major highlight of this edition. As election nears, we are fully prepared and on high alert for a step-by-step monitoring of the remaining engagements ahead of the December 4 election.

Finally, we sounded the views of the public about their impressions and concerns on the electoral process. Be assured you will find the vox pop both interesting and resourceful.

Without much ado, I wish you happy reading as we look forward to issuing the third edition!

EDITORIAL

THE ELECTION AND THE MEDIA



The media are essential to democracy, and a democratic election is impossible without media. Peace Ambassadors – The Gambia (PAG) believes that a free and fair election is not only about the freedom to vote and the knowledge of how to cast a vote, but also about a participatory process where voters engage in public debate and have adequate information about parties, policies, candidates and the election process itself in order to make informed choices.

Furthermore, media acts as a crucial watchdog to democratic elections, safeguarding the transparency of the process. Indeed, a democratic election with no media freedom, or stifled media freedom, would be a contradiction.

To fulfill their roles, the media should maintain a high level of professionalism, accuracy and impartiality in their coverage.

Journalists also have a broader responsibility to place words and events into a clear and accurate context. They have an ethical responsibility not only to be timely but

also accurate in doing so. There are pragmatic reasons for this, as well as principled ones. Journalists should not be inconsiderate with facts. They should pay attention to details and fact check information before disseminating for public consumption.

One measure of quality election reporting is impartiality. Accurate reporting is a precondition to impartiality; however, it is not sufficient alone. One-sided reporting that conveys the position of a favoured party or candidate without reporting alternative positions is biased election coverage.

Journalists should consider themselves as stakeholders in strengthening electoral democracy by not only reporting as it happened but more importantly, playing their part without prejudice.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that journalists are as entitled as anyone else to political beliefs and loyalties, however any work-related affiliation to politics will compromise a journalist's credibility.

Dear journalists, the ball is in your court!

PAG HOLDS STAKEHOLDERS' DIALOGUE ON OBSERVATION FINDINGS OF POLITICAL PARTY CONGRESSES



Officials of PAG and NDI at the meeting

Peace Ambassadors - The Gambia (PAG), on Thursday 15th April 2021, held a stakeholders' Dialogue on the Observation Findings of the Political Party Congresses.

The monthly meeting, which was chaired by Momodou Juju Jallow, PAG Program Manager. The event was attended by representatives from the civil society organizations, political parties, the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), youth groups, persons with disability, and the media.

With funding from the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the purpose of the meeting was for Peace Ambassadors to present its summary report of the observation of the party congresses and discuss the political climate ahead of the Voters Registration exercise, with particular focus on the activities of the political parties, constitutional reforms, COVID-19 preventive measures, IEC engagements, the Electoral Bill, voter registration and citizen mobilization.

Delivering his opening remarks, PAG President Mr. Bubacarr Sambou, explained the importance of the political party congress observations - the first of its kind to be carried out by a civil society organization in The Gambia.

Following his opening remarks, NDI Resident Program Director, Mr. Raymond Esebagbon, spoke on the importance of such observations, noting that elections are important tools in strengthening a country's democracy.

Therefore, he said, it is important to engage all stakeholders in the dialogue, especially IEC, in order to discuss means of coming up with free, fair, transparent and peaceful elections this year.

He said the event will provide the platform for participants to discuss and come up with recommendations that will support a smooth election process.

Mr. Yankuba Manjang, the Executive Secretary of PAG, presented a summary of the observation report at the event, highlighting the main issues that were covered during the observations.

“These issues include how many political parties were observed, what findings in relation to their congresses did we come up with, as well as the recommendations put up by PAG to these political parties,” he said.

PAG President, Mr. Sambou, also presented the Situational Analysis on the political situation and issues relating to the elections. These updates included the voter registration process; the Electoral Reform Bill; constitutional reform process; political party congresses and citizen participation in the elections.

The event ended with a vote of thanks delivered by Awa Colley, PAG's Program Officer, who thanked NDI-The Gambia for funding this great initiative. She added that PAG looks forward to similar engagements with the various stakeholders and thanked the participants for attending the event.

NDI PROVIDES TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO PAG

The National Democratic Institute (NDI), on the 9th April 2021, held a preliminary session at its office to discuss the observation findings on political party congresses and provided guides for the dialogue.

The one-hour meeting accorded PAG the opportunity to discuss voter registration observation strategic documents, such as the deployment plan (number of observers in each center), mainstreaming gender in the deployment plan and the recruitment process for the voter registration.

PEACE AMBASSADORS INITIATES RADIO SHOWS AHEAD OF ELECTIONS



Executive Secretary Manjang and Program Officer Njie at Taranga FM

Peace Ambassadors-The Gambia (PAG) has initiated a bi-monthly Radio show dubbed The Election Watch with the main objective to inform and educate the public, especially the youths on their civic and political rights.

Aired in the first and last week of every month, the show mainly focuses on matters that are election related, ranging from voter registration, campaign as well as the election itself.

The radio series, aired on Taranga FM, address issues around the Electoral Bill, Electoral Legal Framework for the voter registration, the voting process, and the need for a peaceful, free and fair election process.

Facilitated in English and local languages, the shows are also aimed at sensitizing voters in their quest to make informed choices.

PAG First Radio Program:

On 21st April 2021, Peace Ambassadors-The Gambia held the first edition of the show. The topic of the program was on the “Introduction of Peace Ambassadors, NDI-The Gambia and the Election Watch Project”.

The radio program serves as a medium for PAG to send out voter education messages and popularize The Elections Watch Project. The panelists were Mr. Yankuba Manjang, PAG Executive Secretary and Miss. Ya Sally Njie, Program Officer for National Democratic Institute (NDI).

Moderated by Mr. Modou Lamin Joof, the discussion was initially done in English and then translated in major local languages to ensure inclusion of community members and boost engagement.

The discussion revolved around the following:

- The work of Peace Ambassadors-The Gambia and NDI-The Gambia
- The objectives of the election watch project radio series
- The voter registration and its importance in the exercise of one's franchise

The show provided a platform for both panelists to introduce their institutions' projects and programmes and further comment on questions and other issues the moderator and audience have raised.

PAG Second Radio Program:

On the 28 th April 2021, Peace Ambassadors-The Gambia (PAG) held the second edition of The Election Watch Show with focus on the legal framework of the electoral cycle and the procedures for the voter registration.

The radio talk show, aired on Taranga FM, was attended by Miss. Ndegen Jobe, Deputy Speaker, National Youth Parliament and Mr. Momodou Juju Jallow, Program manager, PAG.

The program started with an introduction of the topic of discussion which centered on the required documents for the voter registration. With funding from NDI-The Gambia, the program was aimed at creating awareness on matters relating to the upcoming voter registration.



Program Manager Jallow and Deputy Speaker Jobe at Taranga FM

PAG HOSTS THIRD MONTHLY SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS AHEAD OF VOTER REGISTRATION EXERCISE

Peace Ambassadors - The Gambia (PAG) in partnership with the National Democratic Institute-The Gambia (NDI) has expanded its election observation efforts from E-Day observation to systemic long-term observation covering the entire electoral cycle.

In alignment with these efforts, PAG hosted its third Monthly Situational Analysis of the 2021 Elections in The Gambia on 20th May 2021 at the Paradise Suites Hotel.

The monthly situational analysis meeting on elections, chaired by PAG Program Manager, Mr. Momodou Juju Jallow, was attended by representatives from the civil society organizations, political parties, youth, persons with disability and media.

In his opening statement, Mr. Juju Jallow said the purpose of the event was to engage all their participants to get their suggestions and recommendations on their monthly report on the voter registration process and the Election Bill.

While thanking the participants, he called on all to be vigilant as the process was drawing closer. He also advised all and sundry to act responsibly in the quest for a peaceful voter registration and elections ahead.

Ms. Barwudu Johnson, a Consultant hired by NDI to assist PAG on its Election Watch Project, expressed her gratitude for being chosen to work with PAG on this project and looked forward to the commencement of the voter registration exercise. She added that the process was important in enabling the participation of citizens in the political process.

The event brought together CSOs, political parties as well as the media to discuss a range

of burning issues on the political horizon ahead of the upcoming voter registration exercise and the 2021 Presidential Election.

The Situational Analysis of the month was presented by Mr. Bubacarr Sambou, PAG President. Among the issues discussed included gender analysis of the pre-election environment, implications of COVID-19 on the electoral process, the electoral reform process, the Elections Bill 2021 and the voter registration process.

PAG's monthly situation analysis on the electoral and political processes provides a platform for regularly sharing of information and exchanging ideas among electoral stakeholders.

It is important that CSOs have the capacity to engage electoral stakeholders and be able to hold political leaders to account. PAG is closely working with the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) Election Watch Committee to observe the process as well as giving them the opportunity to express themselves in relation to the entire electoral cycle.

PEACE AMBASSADORS TRAINS 14 TRAINERS ON VOTER REGISTRATION OBSERVATION

Peace Ambassadors - The Gambia (PAG) has trained 14 trainers ahead of the voter registration observation exercise which is scheduled to commence on 29th May 2021.

The trainees included PAG Staff, PAG National Executive Committee and members of the Election Watch Committee such as Beakanyang, National Youth Parliament, Gambia Participates and Activista-The Gambia.

The training sessions, which were held at the National Democratic Institute (NDI) Conference



Participants at the Training

Hall, from the 21st – 22nd May 2021, were facilitated and conducted by a seasoned Liberian Election Observer, Ms. Barwudu Johnson, who serves as a consultant at NDI.

The training was aimed at equipping the trainers with skills and knowledge on critical and sophisticated mechanisms which included the use of software such as the Apollo Mobile Application for data management, owing to the fact that PAG is observing Voter Registration for the first time in its history.

Miss. Ya Sally Njie, Program Manager, NDI, said: “The training is meant to enhance free, fair and transparent electoral process; enhance credibility; enhance data collection and research; ensure accountability and citizens’ participation; and provide relevant, accurate and timely data to Electoral stakeholders.”

Part of the discussion was centered on the purpose of voter education. It was discussed that the purposes of voter registration were to determine eligible voters’ population and thereby contributing to avoiding fraud and malpractices. The number of eligible voters, category of eligible voters and proofs of eligibility were equally points

critically looked at.

The second phase of the training was centered on a look at the Observer Checklist and the Critical Incident Form required for use during the voter registration exercise. It was noted that the reporting system was going to be done electronically using the observer's own Mobile Phones via a sophisticated software dubbed “Apollo”.



Participants at the Training



PAG CONDUCTS STEP DOWN TRAININGS FOR OBSERVERS AND REGIONAL COORDINATORS



Observers posed for a picture

After the Training of Trainers, Peace Ambassadors – The Gambia (PAG) conducted a step-down training for observers and regional coordinators.

These trainings were facilitated by the trainers who were deployed in the four PAG Election Watch Project clusters of the country to train 53 observers and 6 regional coordinators identified from the various administrative regions of The Gambia.

These trainings were simultaneously held in four different clusters within two days. The clusters were Kanifing and Banjul, Cluster One (1); West Coast Region, Cluster Two (2); North Bank Region and Lower River Region, Cluster Three (3); and Central River Region and Upper River Region, Cluster Four (4).

The trainings were supervised by the NDI team and facilitated by the PAG Secretariat in all the venues where the trainings were held.

The trainees were introduced to the methodologies and systems through which they will report the voter registration period

in the different phases. During the training, the observers were told that they will be reporting using a checklist and through an online system called Apollo, using a coded text message via their own mobile phones.

In all the trainings conducted, the observers and regional coordinators were informed that they are only sent to observe, and they must not under any circumstance interfere with the voter registration process.

They were also trained on how to use the Critical Incident Form if at any point they should come across any unusual happenings that have the potential of undermining the credibility of the registration process.

A set of rules and guidelines from the IEC, deployment plans as well as a pledge was also explained to both the regional coordinators and observers to ensure a smooth working environment among all the parties involved.

The PAG Non-Partisan Pledge, which is a commitment to carry out duty with due diligence, was signed by the observers and regional coordinators.

PEACE AMBASSADORS DEPLOYS 59 OBSERVERS ACROSS 7 ADMINISTRATIVE REGIONS



Gumaneh at the PAG Situation Room

Peace Ambassadors – The Gambia (PAG), beginning 29 May 2021, has deployed 59 trained observers across the seven (7) administrative regions of the country, including 6 regional coordinators – one per region- with Banjul and Kanifing combined having one coordinator.

The 53 constituencies each have an observer to monitor the voter registration process. All the 53 constituency observers were deployed as Stationary Observers for a total of nine (9) assigned days throughout the registration period from 29th May to 11th July 2021.

All the six (6) Regional Coordinators were deployed to observe daily, throughout the registration period within their assigned regions where they are mobile. They observed the general environment of the registration process and reported Critical Incidents as they occurred.

On each observation day, every observer sent in four observation reports based on a

comprehensive checklist via coded text message using their mobile phones to the PAG's reporting database.

These 53 constituency observers have been assigned based on the IEC 2021 Movement Plan and according to the availability of IEC officials at registration centers within the constituencies. Overall, 39% of the PAG observers were women.

A National Information Center was also established through which The Election Watch team receives, analyses and reports on observers' findings as they are reported.



PAG officials at the Situation Room

PAG BRIEFS PRESS ON ITS VOTER REGISTRATION OBSERVATIONS



PAG officials with journalists posed for a group picture after the conference

First Phase Observation

Peace Ambassadors - The Gambia (PAG) has held two press conferences in June to brief the journalists on the information its observer teams have garnered. The first Press Conference was held on the 5th June 2021, after the first phase of its observation exercise.

PAG conducted a non-partisan citizen observation effort for the 2021 voter registration process to make the process more inclusive, transparent and accountable by enhancing participation, providing independent information on the quality of the process, and deterring potential problems.

After the successful completion of its observation of the First Phase of the Voter Registration (VR) process, PAG presented a report of its findings and recommendations with electoral stakeholders.

Among participants included members from the civil society organization, political parties and the media.

The event was held at the National Information Center, Peace Ambassadors - The Gambia (PAG) Secretariat. Mr. Yankuba Manjang, Executive Secretary, PAG presented the observation findings.

Second Phase Observation

Peace Ambassadors - The Gambia (PAG) in the second phase of the observation, deployed the same methodology as in the first phase of the observation exercise. The second phase was conducted between 15th June and 19th June 2021. Following successful completion of its observation of the second phase of the voter registration process, PAG convened a second news conference to report its findings and recommendations with electoral stakeholders.

Among the participants were members from the civil society organization, political parties and the media.

The event was held at the National Information Center, Peace Ambassadors - The Gambia (PAG) Secretariat. The report was read by Bubacarr Sambou, President, PAG.

ECOWAS Calls for Peaceful, Free and Fair Presidential and Legislative Elections



Officials of ECOWAS and IEC at the Election House in Kanifing

The ECOWAS Parliamentary Chairman on Political Affairs, Peace, Security and African Peer Review Mechanism, Sen. Edwin Melvin Snowe, Jr., has called on the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) to deliver peaceful, free and fair Presidential and Legislative Elections.

He made this remark during an official visit to The Gambia for an assessment of the country's political and security situations ahead of the December 4, 2021 presidential election.

Chairman Snowe, on Wednesday 30th June, met with the Chairman and Members of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) to receive updates on the processes leading to the upcoming Presidential and Legislative elections. The entourage met other stakeholders including the government and civil society organizations.

Accompanied by the Secretary-General of the ECOWAS Parliament, Mr. John Azumah (Ghana), Sen. Snowe, in his meeting with the electoral body expressed confidence that the commission will deliver a free, fair, and transparent election and

admonished the Commissioners to always maintain their neutrality.

He emphasized the need to build public confidence in the electoral process by working with the media and civil society organizations to ensure transparency in all of its activities including its budget and expenditure, training of election staff, security, and safety of election materials, as well as adherence to COVID-19 protocols.

The ECOWAS head of delegation disclosed that the ECOWAS Parliament will remain continuously engaged with the Commission and call on all stakeholders to be law-abiding as the process unfolds. For his part, the Chairman of the Independent Electoral Commission, Mr. Alieu Momarr Njai, thanked the ECOWAS Parliament Delegation for the courtesy visit and assured them of the Commission's commitment and preparedness to deliver a credible election, adding that election is an integral part of the democratic process.

PAG LAUNCHES THE ELECTION WATCH NEWSLETTER



Peace Ambassadors – The Gambia (PAG) has launched the maiden edition of its Election Watch Newsletter in April. The publication forms part of the Election Watch Project which seeks to systematically observe the country's upcoming elections.

Published quarterly both in print and digital, the bulletins target PAG's Election Watch Project partners, stakeholders of the electoral process and the electorate at large.

The Editor-In-Chief of the newsletter, Mr. Mbaye Mballow, said gathering and disseminating the right information to the right audience promotes credible, free and fair electoral process.

“Our targets have and will continue to be the potential electorate and stakeholders with the aim of raising awareness, educating them on their fundamental human rights relating to elections and their crucial role in the advocacy and promotion of peace throughout the exercise of their rights,” said Mr. Mballow, who doubles as the Communications Officer of PAG.

With the unflinching support from the secretariat staff particularly the ES, I wish to reiterate our commitment for continued publication of such timely and relevant information needed for positive engagements and change in the promotion of peace at all times.

The Executive Secretary of PAG, Mr. Yankuba Manjang, welcomed the launch of the newsletter, commending the Editorial Team for chronicling the engagements of the Election Watch Project.

“Now more than, the need for information sharing and awareness raising cannot be overstated. The newsletter seeks to also raise awareness of the electorate to enable them make informed choices,” Mr. Manjang added.

He finally expressed gratitude to the National Development Institute (NDI) for their partnership, saying the newsletter will add great value to PAG's communications and public relations.

Meet The PAG Team



Yankuba Manjang
Executive Secretary



Momodou Juju Jallow
Program Manager



Fatoumatta A. Cham
Admin. and Finance
Officer



Mbaye Mballow
Communication Officer



Awa Colley
Program Officer



Lagamy Gumaneh
Social Media
Coordinator & Content
Developer



Fatou Ceesay
A + Coordinator



Yankuba Bojang
Logistics Officer



Awa Saidy Khan
Program Assistant



ABOUT PAG

Peace Ambassadors-The Gambia (PAG) is a voluntary non-profit peace education and advocacy organization operating in The Gambia, Senegal and Guinea Bissau since its inception in 2001. Peace Education and Conflict Resolution has ever served as the basis of the organization's existence, however, we incorporate other core issues such as youth empowerment, civic education and Election Monitoring and Observation. These core fundamental issues are made possible through capacity building and awareness creation. Peace Ambassadors - The Gambia has therefore since 2006 monitored every election held in The Gambia from Presidential, Parliamentary and Local Government Elections as well as some by-elections. The organization also conducts voter education to ensure the public is educated on the conduct of the elections in all aspects. This is the organization's commitment to ensure peace and stability in the country.

Motto

Give Peace A Chance

Mission

To work with young people, communities and other development partners to achieve and sustain peace, stability and development in The Gambia and beyond.

Vision

A society where peace, stability and sustainable development prevail.



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