



WEST AFRICA ELECTION OBSERVERS NETWORK (WAEON) NEWSLETTER

Volume 5, Issue 1
(January-March 2020)

Introduction

WAEON's Newsletter provides news and information on activities undertaken by the Secretariat and Network members in their respective countries. The Newsletter further provides updates on elections and governance issues occurring in West Africa. This edition is the first for 2020 and covers developments from January to March.

Message from the Secretariat

The Secretariat wishes all WAEON members, partners and stakeholders to stay safe in this trying moment of the COVID-19 global pandemic. All are encouraged to abide by the World Health Organization (WHO) protocols and their respective in-country government directives on combating the pandemic. Stay safe from COVID-19!!!

WAEON Member Organizations' Activities

Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO), Ghana

The Electoral Commission of Ghana (EC) announced early last year that it would be compiling a new voter register ahead of the general elections due to take place on December 7, 2020. Following contentions and debates from political parties and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) over the EC's announcement, and a seeming lack of stakeholder consensus on the matter, CODEO has been very vocal about the need for the Commission to hold consultative sessions with the Inter-Party Advisory Committee (IPAC), and other key electoral stakeholders to discuss and forge consensus on the way forward. Read [CODEO's statement](#).

Concertation Nationale de la Société du Togo (CNSC-Togo), Togo

Strategic Plan Development Workshop

From January 9 to 11, 2020, CNSC-Togo held a workshop aimed at assisting its development of a 5-year organizational strategic plan (2020-2024). The plan takes into account the national context, opportunities and threats, forces and weaknesses of the network and its engagement with the communities, in order to provide effective responses relating to its thematic areas. To read more, click [here](#).

Citizen Mission to Accompany the Electoral Process (MCAPE 2020)

The MCAPE 2020 was held on January 20 – 21, 2020 in Tchamba, Togo. This event sought to strengthen the participation of Togolese civil society in the management of public affairs, more specifically, the observation of the electoral process.

The partners of this event were the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) and the National Democratic Institute (NDI). During the MCAPE, 40 supervisors, 46 TFSA monitors, and 478 observers (74 mobiles and 404 poles) were trained from February 7 – 14, 2020.

Cancellation of the accreditation of the CNSC -Togo by the CENI on February 18, 2018

The Commission Électorale Nationale Indépendante (CENI), the independent

electoral body in Togo revoked CNSC-Togo's accreditation 72 hours before the election. CNSC-Togo was therefore, not allowed to observe the 2020 Togolese Presidential Election. WAEON issued a statement in solidarity with CNSC-Togo expressing its displeasure with the decision to revoke CNSC-Togo's accreditation.

Conflict prevention and Human Rights protection initiatives during elections

As part of its contribution to conflict prevention and the strengthening of the rule of law before, during and after the February 2020 presidential elections, Human Rights Documentation and Training Centre (HRDTC) with the financial support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) organised a forum on "Conflict prevention and Human Rights protection initiatives during elections".

This action aimed to promote collaboration between civil society actors involved in the electoral process with a view to contributing to a transparent, credible and peaceful presidential election in Togo.

The project also seeks to develop communities through effective involvement of citizens in communal

actions and initiatives. They also plan on the continuation of the project to support and revitalize CNCS-Togo and its member organizations. The general objective is to strengthen the level of commitment and the culture of effectiveness within CNCS-Togo and its member organizations.

There is an ongoing civic and political training of traditional leaders and training on local government management.

National Election Watch (NEW), Sierra Leone

Ahead of the Re-run Paramount Chieftaincy Election in Kpeje West, that took place on Saturday, January 25, 2020. Search for Common Ground with support from USAID under its project “Sierra Leone Elections Dialogue Series” organized a one-day community engagement meeting in Bunumbu, Kpeje West Chiefdom on January 23, 2020 in a bid to mitigate violence during the election.

Representatives were drawn from the two ruling houses (Mustapha and Kangajue ruling house), Chiefdom speaker, regent chief, youth, PWDs, Office of National Security, National Electoral Commission and Sierra Leone Police. The National Election Watch (NEW) team was there to talk

about what the elections entail, the role of NEW and the need for peaceful election in Kpeje West.



NEW Team present at the Sierra Leone Elections Dialogue Series

The elections took place on January 27, 2020. NEW observed that, the election was conducted peacefully, there was impressive female participation as Tribal Authorities (TAs) and adequate security presence. The re-run was as a result of the cancellation of the November 29, 2019 Paramount Chief Run-Off election due to violence. After the eruption of violence and the ballot boxes were taken to the police station, both candidates agreed for the election to be cancelled and a re-run conducted. The State House instructed for the conduct of the re-run PC election in a letter dated December 23, 2019. Acting on the letter, the Ministry of Local Governance and Rural Development and the National Electoral Commission held a meeting on the January 6, 2020 and agreed that a

Stakeholders meeting be held in Bunumbu to map out the way forward for a peaceful conduct of the re-run election. On the January 13, 2020, the Stakeholders meeting was held in Bunumbu where a communique spelling out major staking points in the maintenance of peace before, during and after the elections; the commitment to accept the outcome of the results and respect for the winning candidate as Paramount Chief of the chieftdom was signed by the candidates witnessed by the Acting Chief Electoral Commissioner, Senior Permanent Secretary and the AIG East.

NEW observed the PC election in line with its mandate to determine the extent to which the provisions of the 2009 Chieftaincy Act and the 2004 Local Government Act were complied with.

Search for Common Ground (SFCG) with funding from USAID supported NEW to deploy five stationed observers and three roving oversight team. NEW observed the entire process, including stakeholder's engagement, opening, polling, closing and counting, tallying and the announcement of results. The tallying and announcement of results was done at the Bunumbu town field after counting.



The NEW Team observing the Re-run Paramount Chieftaincy Election in Bunumbu, Kpeje West Chieftdom

Elections and Governance News

Guinea: Second Postponement of Referendum and General elections

President Alpha Conde of The Republic of Guinea announced another postponement of the General Elections and Constitutional Referendum. According to the government, the postponement and reason for the constitution is to codify gender equality and ban female genital mutilation in the country. However, protesters and citizens fear that the real motive of the constant postponement of the elections is to reset the presidential term limits to allow President Code a third term. Read more [here](#) and [here](#).

Nevertheless, on Saturday, March, 22 2020, despite the outbreak and fear surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, Guinea held a constitutional referendum. Opposition protesters boycotted the elections all over the country leading to clashes between them and police, leaving 10 people killed. Full details [here](#) and [here](#).

Observer group, Le Regard du Peuple (RdP) stated that in majority of the places where voting took place without violence, the voting process was followed peacefully and people with disabilities were assisted in accordance with the law.

However, there were many anomalies during the electoral process related to technical unpreparedness such as poor communication, sensitization and information sharing. Double voting, damaged ballot boxes and early counting of votes were also reported. RdP recommended among others that the justice system should carry swift and independent investigation into the abuses committed, and to punish the perpetrators and sponsors who would be found culpable in accordance with the law.

Ghana - Compiling a new Voters Register

The Electoral Commission of Ghana decided that they will compile a new voters' register in anticipation for the December 2020 general elections. Many stakeholders question the need for a new voters' register right after the local level elections took place on December 17, 2019. After a series of stakeholder meetings and much public debates, the Commission has decided to go ahead with the compilation of a new voters register although this will be delayed by the outbreak of COVID-19.

Togo - Presidential Elections

On February 22, 2020, the Republic of Togo held its Presidential Election and on February 23, 2020 the proclamation of the results were announced with 3.6 million exercising their franchise. Although the results were disputed, Mr. Aboudou Assouma, President of the Constitutional Court, stated that the proclamation of results were final, and called for the closure of all electoral operations. He indicated that incumbent President Faure Gnassingbé was re-elected president. Election results:

Faure Gnassingbé – 71%

Kodjo Agbéyomé – 19.46 %

Jean-Pierre Fabre – 4.68 %

Tchaboure Gogué - 2.40%

Wolou Komi - 1.20 %

Kouessan Georges – 0.80 %

Tchassona Traoré – 0.68%

According to the [ECOWAS Preliminary Declaration](#) on the election, there were no major incidents during the election process. ECOWAS deployed 100 election observers to all five regions in Togo. The ECOWAS observers reported that the electoral process took place as planned, polling stations were opened and closed at their scheduled times, electoral materials were generally available and all political parties on the ballots were present at polling stations and were allowed to observe. After the declaration of the winner, ECOWAS appealed to all contestant who contended during the elections to respect the results of the election.

Côte d'Ivoire – President Ouattara not contesting in upcoming Presidential Elections.

President Alassane Ouattara announced that he will not be running for a third term in the Ivorian presidential election due to take place on October 31, 2020. This comes as a shock to many because the Ivorian

constitution was recently modified to allow the possibility of a third term for the president.

Upcoming Elections

Benin is scheduled to hold communal and municipal elections on May 17, 2020.

Mali is scheduled to hold National Assembly elections in March 2020 after the initial elections were postponed from June 30, 2019.

Côte d'Ivoire will hold Presidential and National Assembly elections on October 31, 2020.

Burkina Faso has scheduled Presidential and National Assembly elections for November 2020.

Ghana will conduct Presidential and Parliamentary Elections on December 7, 2020.

Niger will hold Local, National and Presidential elections in November and December 2020.

Senegal postponed its Local Level elections from late 2019 to sometime in 2020.

Publications

1. WAEON Field Guide on observing technology-driven elections Find below links to the Field Guide:
[English Version](#)
[French version](#)
2. CDD-Ghana and WAEON Secretariat's Rhoda Osei-Afful shares [Lessons from South Africa's 2019 Elections](#) in an Election Policy Brief.
3. Josephine Appiah-Nyamekye Sanny shares findings from Afrobarometer survey in a dispatch titled: [Fear of political violence soars in Sierra Leone](#).
4. NDI launched an online interactive guide "[Raising Voices in Closing Spaces](#)," which is a manual designed to "empower citizen election observer groups to break through authoritarian efforts to block, muffle, and discredit credible election observation.

Editorial Team

Franklin Oduro (Ph.D)
Project Manager
Email: admin@waeon.org

Kojo Asante (Ph.D)
Technical Advisor
Email: k.asante@cddgh.org

Rhoda Osei-Afful
Project Officer
Email: r.acheampong@cddgh.org

Mawusi Yaw Dumenu
Coordinator
Email: info@waeon.org

Maame Efua Idan Atadja
Communications Strategist
Email: e.osam@cddgh.org

Theresa Andah
Program Assistant
Email: interntheresa@cddgh.org

For enquiries, please contact:

WAEON Secretariat:
Ghana Center for Democratic
Development (CDD-Ghana)
No. 95 Nortei Ababio Loop,
North Airport Residential Area, Accra
P.O. Box LG 404, Legon, Ghana
Tel.: (+233) 0302 784293-4 / 777214
/784293 -4
Fax: (+233) 0302 763028-9
Website: www.waeon.org
E-Mail: info@waeon.org

Note to WAEON Members

WAEON Network members are encouraged to submit news entries to the Secretariat for inclusion in the WAEON Newsletter. Kindly send us with your views, comments and suggestions on what could be done to improve the network. The next edition (April – June) will be released in July 2020. Please send your entries to: info@waeon.org