



# WEST AFRICA ELECTION OBSERVERS NETWORK (WAEON) NEWSLETTER

Volume 4, Issue 4  
(October-December 2019)

## 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 fourth for 2019 and covers developments from October to December.

## Secretariat Activities

### *Publication of WAEON Field Guide*

The secretariat published WAEON's Field Guide on observing technology-driven elections. This followed revision of the draft guide incorporating comments of participants at the conference on technology-driven elections held in May 2019 in Ghana.

Find below the links to the published version of the Field Guide:

[English Version](#)

[French version](#)

### *WAEON Participates in 2019 GNDEM Meeting*

WAEON Chair, Mr. James Lahai and Stephanie Wilson of CNSC-Togo represented WAEON at the Seventh Annual Implementation Meeting of the Declaration of Global Principles for Citizen Election Observation (Global Network of Domestic Election Monitors (GNDEM) Meeting) in Brussels, Belgium from November 5 – 6, 2019.

This year's meeting focused on challenges observers face - including closing political space in some parts of the world, ways to improve credible observation, and tactics for building effective global advocacy and

solidarity amongst GNDEM members. Read more find [here](#).

## WAEON Member Organizations' Activities

### Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO), Ghana

#### *CODEO Promotes Public Awareness About Ghana's 2019 Local Government Elections*

Ghana held a nation-wide local government election on Tuesday, December 17, 2019 to elect representatives into the various district, municipal and metropolitan assemblies throughout the country. Ahead of the elections, the Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO) trained and dispatched 260 Civic/Voter/Peace educators to carry out an intensive 6-week civic, voter and peace education activities across the country to promote public awareness and participation in the elections. CODEO also partnered with the state entity – the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) to enhance civic education in respect of the elections.



Picture 1: A CODEO Civic/Voter/Peace Educator and NCCE officer in the Oti Region engaging some community members on the upcoming elections and referendum



Picture 2: CODEO's Acting Co-Chair Sheikh Armyawo Shaibu giving his opening remarks at the Official Launch of CODEO Electoral Support for District Level Elections and National Referendum 2019

#### *CODEO's observation of the 2019 District Level Elections*

Towards election day on December 17, 2019, CODEO trained and deployed 800 stationary observers and 300 roaming observers nationwide to

observe the December 17, 2019 District Level Elections. CODEO also opened a National Information Center to coordinate its election-day operations including receiving and verifying observer data.

CODEO observed a generally successful election. It reported that most of the polling stations were opened and set up on time and were accessible to persons with disabilities (PWDs). CODEO also reported that standard electoral practice was adhered to except for 2.4% of the polling stations that were under observation. See [link](#) to the CODEO reports on the elections



Picture 1: Volunteers and CODEO staff in the National Information Center on Election Day 2019

## Convention de la Société Civile Ivoirienne (CSCI), Côte d'Ivoire

On October 1, 2019 the National Coordinator of the Ivorian Civil Society Convention (CSCI), Mr. Mahamadou Kouma, was received by the resident representative of the

Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in Côte d'Ivoire, Ambassador Babacar Carlos Mbaye. Accompanied by some members of his office, the National Coordinator presented the 2019 – 2025 strategic plan of CSCI to the resident representative of the sub-regional organization. It was also an opportunity for both parties to discuss prospects for deepening their relationships.

Mr. Mahamadou Kouma, co-hosted a panel as part of the national campaign for peace organized by the Sant' Shakir Community, which was held from October 4 to 6, 2019 in Abidjan Treichville. Under the theme: "Religion and Civil Society Peacebuilding", this high-level panel aimed to contribute to strengthening a culture of peace in Côte d'Ivoire.



Picture 2: Panel at the Religion and Civil Society; Peacebuilding Conference in Abidjan.

CSCI took part in a sub-regional seminar on gender-sensitive information and communication in Dakar. The President of the Thematic Commission for

Gender and Family of the (CSCI), Mrs. Koné Matiangue, represented CSCI at the seminar which was organized by the Panos Institute of Côte d'Ivoire from 11 to 13 December, 2019. This meeting titled: "Gender-Sensitive Information and Communication: Sharing and Promoting Best Practices for Capacity Building in West Africa" is part of "Women, Occupy the Media" project by the Panos Institute of Dakar.

### **Institution for Research and Democratic Development (IREDD), Liberia**

IREDD released an article on the postponement of the by-election electoral District 15 and Montserrado County. The article highlighted concerns about the postponement of the by-election in Liberia and cited it as a dangerous precedent for a country with a fragile democracy.

The by-election was held following the death of Representative, Adolf A. Lawrence of electoral district 15, Montserrado County and Senator Geraldine Doe-Sheriff of Montserrado County. The initial by-elections were scheduled on July 2, 2019 but were postponed due to lack of funding from the government of Liberia.

However, the by-election took place on July 29, 2019 and a re-run in few

polling places in District 15 were conducted on August 28, 2019 due to a complaint against the first election results filed by the opposition candidate, Miss Telia Urey.

### ***Upcoming Liberian Constitutional Referendum***

IREDD, a constituent member of the Electoral Coordinating Committee (ECC) is expected to conduct public consultation on ECC Propositions, the propositions contained in the official gazette for the pending referendum. The referendum seeks to amend and reduce the Presidential term and right to dual nationality in the country. A decision will take place at the end of 2020. As part of public consultation and awareness of the propositions, IREDD is also expected to appear on a Radio Talk Show during the month of January 2020.

### **National Election Watch (NEW), Sierra Leone**

National Election Watch (NEW) observed the by-elections of Falaba and Ward 146, Koinadugu District on October 26, 2019. The vacancies of these positions were due to the deaths of the Councilor of Ward 146 and the Chairperson of the Falaba District Council respectively.

NEW deployed 133 stationed observers, 14 roving supervisors, and an oversight team comprised of Strategic Management Committee (SMC) and Secretariat Staff who supported the stationed observers by responding to incidents.

NEW observed the entire process and noted that the process went well with the timely opening of polls. The voter turnout was relatively higher in Ward 146 with 67.61%, but low in Falaba District with 41.1%. However, NEW had a few concerns about the elections. It mentioned that the safety and security of observers were under threat. There were vehicles with covered number plates within polling precincts carrying young people. NEW stated that by-elections are now characterized by violence with the youth being ‘misused’.

NEW had a few recommendations The Office of National Security, Sierra Leone Police and other security agencies need to arrest and prosecute vehicles that had covered number plates which were found plying areas where the elections were conducted.

NEW further recommended that political parties and their supporters should respect the mandate of NEW as a recognized domestic election observer group in Sierra Leone.

Click [here](#) for more details.

### **Obsevatoire Citoyen des Élections et de la gouvernance (OCEG), Guinea**

The Secretariat would like to congratulate Dr. Dansa Kourouma, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Chair of WAEON on his new appointment as the President of the National Council of Civil Society Organizations of Guinea.



*Picture 3: Dr. Dansa Kourouma, new President of the National Council of Civil Society Organizations of Guinea*

### **Elections and Governance News**

#### **Ghana: District Level Election and 2019 Constitutional Referendum**

##### ***Cancellation of 2019 Constitutional Referendum***

On December 1, 2019 the President of Ghana, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo announced the indefinite cancellation of a national referendum which had been scheduled for December 17, 2019 to allow for further consultation with key stakeholder and the general public on issues pertaining

to the referendum. The referendum was taking place because of a proposed amendment to Article 55 Clause 3 of the Ghanaian constitution. This proposed amendment sought to obtain citizens approval for political parties to take part in district level elections.

The referendum was expected to be held simultaneously with the 2019 District Level Elections (DLE). Due to the cancellation of the referendum, it was only the DLE which took place on December 17, 2019 as scheduled.

### ***Ghana's 2019 District Level Elections***

The District Level Elections, which constituted the election of Assembly Members and Unit commit members at the local level took place on December 17, 2019 with about 57,030 candidates contesting.

Through general observations, voter turn-out was noted to be poor despite nationwide civic education and efforts made by the Electoral Commission of Ghana (EC), National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE), CODEO and other organizations. The EC is yet to publish the official voter turnout figure.

### **Liberia: Election Reform and Referendum**

Amidst the ongoing Electoral Reform Project in Liberia, the government of Liberia, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on October 8, 2019 published the official Gazette on the National Referendum for 2020.

The gazette was published in keeping with the law following a resolution by the National Parliament proposing the amendment of eight articles of the 1986 Constitution of Liberia. The resolution which was approved by President George M. Weah includes: 28, 45, 47, 48, 49, 50, & 83(a) and (c).

The National Referendum is expected to be conducted on September 30, 2020 in consonance with Article 91 of the organic law of the country that calls for the holding of a referendum by the Election Monitoring Body not sooner than one year after the action of the parliament.

Meanwhile, out of the eight prepositions for the upcoming referendum, only one proposal (Article 83(c)) from the Election Monitoring Committee (ECC) was considered.

Following a vigorous and country-wide consultation and engagement with stakeholders in line with the Electoral Reform Project, the ECC published and submitted to the Election Management Body (EMB) and the National Parliament eight

propositions for constitutional amendment and amendment of other election laws.

The ECC propositions included the following:

1. That there is a body outside of the National Elections Commission to be responsible for civic education in Liberia;
2. That civic education be included in the national curriculum for schools;
3. That Article 83 (a) of the 1986 Constitution be removed and a new timeline for election be prescribed in the New Elections Law;
4. That the government of Liberia and its international partners invest in the biometric voter registration process leveraging on the National Identification Registry currently ongoing across the country;
5. That the government of Liberia makes financial resources available ahead of time to enable the National Elections Commission prioritize early planning and procurement of election materials and logistics;

6. That the formulation of Political Party Act. be prioritized by the national legislature;

7. That Sections 5.1 and 5.2 of the Code of Conduct on political participation be repealed;

8. That Article 83 (c) be amended to allow the establishment of an independent electoral tribunal;

### **Upcoming Elections**

Guinea postponed their 2019 Presidential and National Assembly to February 16, 2020.

Togo will hold Presidential elections on February 22, 2020.

Mali will 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 in 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 also postponed their Local Level elections from late 2019 to sometime in 2020.

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### **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 (January – March) will be released in April 2020. Please send your entries to: [info@waeon.org](mailto:info@waeon.org)*