

FIRST REPORT

“REDUCING ABUSE OF INCUMBENCY AND ELECTORAL CORRUPTION IN GHANA’S ELECTION 2016”

INTRODUCTION

On June 1, 2016, the Coalition of Civil Society Organizations Monitoring Abuse of Incumbency and Electoral Corruption: the Ghana Integrity Initiative (GII), Ghana Centre for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana), Ghana Anti-Corruption Coalition (GACC) and Citizen’s Movement against Corruption (CMAc) deployed Observers to start the monitoring exercise. This monitoring exercise is a key activity under the project titled **“Promoting a More Level Political Playing Field: Reducing Abuse of Incumbency and Electoral Corruption in Ghana’s Election 2016”**. The project which spans the period April to December 31, 2016, is supported by STAR-Ghana.

The aim of this project is to monitor, expose and condemn the extent of, the occurrence and variety of abuse of incumbency and pre-election political corruption in Ghana as a way of contributing to creating a level playing field to ensure free and fair elections in the upcoming 2016 elections. Specifically, the project monitors and tracks the abuse of institutional resources, budget resources, and state media resources by the ruling party, sitting members of parliament, etc. as well as the incidences of electoral corruption such as vote buying by candidates and political parties contesting in the elections.

ABUSE OF INCUMBENCY AND POLITICAL CORRUPTION

The 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana makes it very clear that political participation and competition must be fair. That is why Article 55 of the Constitution guarantees a right to all citizens to join and participate in the activities of political parties. It goes further to insist on equal access to the use of state media resources for political parties and their presidential candidates. The Constitution provides these rules because in essence, a political party is a private association of individuals with political objectives that seek to capture public power and serve the public interest. When a member of a political party is therefore elected or appointed to a public office as President, Minister of State or Member of Parliament, that person becomes a public officer and is covered by Art. 284 (relating to the code of conduct for public officers). If that officer uses his/her office or public resources to benefit their particular party or themselves and gives their party or themselves an illegal advantage, they placed themselves in a conflict of interest situation and have abused incumbency. By abusing the resources available to public

officers and engaging in electoral corruption, incumbents and political actors jeopardize the vitality and legitimacy of the election processes and outcomes.

There are two types of actions that constitute “abuse of incumbency”: “coercive” and “corrupt” practices.

Coercive abuse of incumbency includes physically preventing candidates from advertising; blocking the use of metropolitan, municipal or district facilities for campaign events; denying opponents the right to engage citizens through the national media and securing votes through threats against voters.

Corrupt abuse includes using state resources to fund electoral campaign such as state-funded political advertising for incumbent parties or candidates, or using public employees as campaign staff and public transport facilities for electoral purposes. Corrupt abuse also comprises vote buying. **Vote buying** is the act of offering an inducement by a party, a candidate or a candidate’s agent with the clear intention of harvesting the recipient’s vote. It is a routine aspect of electoral corruption and may include but is not limited to the following manifestations:

- i. paying voters to vote in favour of or against a particular candidate or party;
- ii. ii. providing last minute infrastructure, construction materials, agricultural inputs and the provision of other services to communities aimed at securing votes and
- iii. iii. Offering voters money, food, clothes, household goods, medicine, short-term jobs and public contracts.

PROJECT SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

This project has two main parts. The **first part** involves the monitoring of abuse of incumbency in twenty (20) selected constituencies out of the total number of existing constituencies in the country. The selection methodology involved a combination of purposive and multi-stage sampling. The purposive aspect of the sampling identified six constituencies – Ablekuma South, Asawase, Awutu Senya West, Ellembele, Korle Klottey and Yapei Kusawgu as key areas for the Project. These six were selected based on factors such as historical trends of the constituency in relation to the Abuse of Incumbency and emerging issues within the constituency that increase the likelihood of abuse of incumbency.

The remaining 14 constituencies were selected via multi-stage sampling. The first stage of selection used the competitiveness logic. The assumption is that there is likely to be more abuse of incumbency in constituencies where the competition between the ruling party and the opposition is fiercest. The stronger the competition, the more likely the

political parties will employ every resource available to their advantage. The most competitive constituencies are those that have demonstrated an unsteady voting pattern, in other words swing constituencies. The second stage considers constituencies where incumbents (parliamentarians who are candidates) are contesting. To abuse incumbency, there must be an incumbent contesting in the elections. Thus, only constituencies with incumbents re-contesting were shortlisted for the next stage of selection. Finally, fourteen (14) constituencies were randomly selected by balloting at the end of the first and second selection stages.

The **second part** involved media monitoring of news stories, features, articles, editorials, space, and time in two state-owned daily newspapers (Daily Graphic and Ghanaian Times), two state-owned weekly newspapers (Mirror and Spectator), one state-owned television station (GTV) and one state-owned radio station (Uniiq FM). The media observation aims at **promoting fair and equal access to state media resources** for example in relation to time, space and prominence provided to contesting political parties. The media monitoring also took note of incidents of abuse of incumbency and electoral corruption reported nationwide.

As part of the project, twenty-five (25) Constituency/Media Observers were recruited and trained on the monitoring indicators and deployed to start observation. The Constituency Observers attended public and political functions in their respective constituencies, in particular, and the general environment, and captured instances of abuse of incumbency and electoral corruption using telephone cameras and recorders. The media observation entailed monitoring the selected state media platforms namely Daily Graphic, Times, Mirror and Spectator as well as GTV and Uniiq FM daily.

The Observers submitted weekly reports to the Coalition and these reports were verified, collated and analysed by the Steering Committee of the Coalition. A draft report was developed, reviewed and finalised by a Project Review Committee that was made up of distinguished members from outside the Coalition with expertise in governance, law, media and elections. The weekly reports were presented to all stakeholders through press events.

MAIN FINDINGS - JUNE, JULY AND AUGUST 2016

The Coalition hereby presents the findings of the first three months of monitoring (June, July and August 2016) in the selected constituencies and the media.

1. Electoral Corruption (Vote buying)

During the period, some incidences of vote buying were observed in the selected constituencies and other parts of the country. Specifically, offering money and medicine/pharmaceuticals products to voters and providing last minute infrastructure,

construction materials, agricultural inputs and other services to institutions and communities aimed at securing votes formed the majority of recorded incidences recorded.

i. Offering voters money, food and other items aimed at securing votes

On Sunday, 17th July 2016, at a political rally organised by the NDC in Jirapa to outdoor the parliamentary candidate, Hon. Dr. Francis Dakurah. (He distributed ten (10) new motor bikes to party officials) **BUT** he was also captured on camera distributing two Ghana Cedi bills to the crowd.



Hon. Dakurah distributing money to the crowd



The motorbikes distributed to the party officials

ii. Provision of medicine/pharmaceutical equipment to institutions and communities aimed at securing votes

On Wednesday, 27th July, 2016, the first Lady Lordina Mahama donated medical equipment and supplies to the Navrongo War Memorial Hospital as part of efforts to reduce mother to child transmission of HIV. The event took place at the forecourt of the hospital. In attendance was the Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection Nana Oye Lithur, the MP Hon. Mark Woyongo, the Upper East Regional Minister Hon. Albert Abongo and his deputy, the MCE Dr. Stanislaus Kadingni, the NDC National Women's organizer, Chiefs and Queen mothers as well as NDC party supporters. The MP, Hon. Mark Woyongo, used the function to campaign by highlighting the achievements of the NDC government and the promises he will fulfil if he is re- elected into office. The NDC Women's Organizer used the occasion to appeal to the people to vote for the President and the MP in the upcoming election. She said, "I know that when NDC is mentioned, it is Kasenas, and when Kasenas are mentioned, it is NDC". She also asked the queen mothers to advise the youth and their people to vote for the NDC. By using the platform to campaign for votes can only lead to one conclusion; that the items were donated with the

intention of securing votes for the incumbent party and candidate and that is vote buying¹.



The First Lady donating the medical supplies

iii. Providing services to communities during an election period aimed at securing votes



From August 8 -12, 2016, 8:00am-5:30pm each day, the Member of Parliament for the Ellembele Constituency and the Minister for Petroleum, Honourable Emmanuel Armah Kofi Buah made week long radio announcements and financially supported drivers with the payment required in Jomoro, Nzema East and Ellembele to secure drivers' licenses. He also helped those who needed to

upgrade their licenses. He hosted the registration exercise at the AYA Community Center. Many drivers secured their licenses while others were not able to, due to a shortage of the registration forms on Friday August 12, 2016.

Vote buying is the act of offering an inducement by a party, a candidate or a candidate's agent with the clear intention of harvesting the recipient's vote.

Drivers going through the registration exercise at Aya Community Center

¹ **Vote buying is the act of offering an inducement by a party, a candidate or a candidate's agent with the clear intention of harvesting the recipient's vote.**

Vote Selling

The Coalition did not only observe incidences of vote buying but also a variant that can be described as **“vote selling”**. For instance, Observations were made in certain communities in the Ho Municipality where citizens took to the streets with placards with inscription **“No electricity no vote”**. The protesters from Hodzo, Takla and Kpenoe warned they would not take part in the December polls if government fails to address their concerns.

Also on 16th July, 2016, residents of Abuontem in the Bosomtwe district of the Asante Region demanded the construction of their roads or they will not vote. Other communities where citizens engaged in vote selling are Sherigu, a community in Bolgatanga and Gbulung in the Northern Region.



Residents of Sherigu and its environs on a demonstration

2. Abuse of Incumbency

Although there were incidences of abuse of incumbency observed in the country, the Coalition did not observe any in the selected constituencies for the reporting period. The following are some notable observations made nation-wide:

- i. On August 16, 2016, during President John Mahama’s publicly announced four-day campaign tour of the Western Region, outboard motors and pans were distributed to fishermen in Sekondi. On 17th August, 2016, the Spokesperson of the NDC Campaign, Mrs. Joyce Bawa Mogtari indicated on Joy FM’s Super Morning Show that the distribution of outboard motors were part of an on-going government intervention. She stated that the items were purchased with state funds. **The Coalition officially considers this particular incident as unfortunate and a demonstration of the incumbent government engaging in acts that constitute abuse of incumbency.**



Pans for Distribution



Outboard Motors for Distribution

ii. The Coalition also observed an incident during this monitoring period, where the Vice Presidential Candidate of the NPP, Dr. Mahamadu Bawumia commissioned the construction of a mechanized borehole for the Amedzofe College of Education (AMECO) in the Ho-West District of the Volta Region. *This incident can be described as an act of “providing last minute infrastructure, construction, etc. and the provision of other services to communities aimed at securing votes”.*

4. Fair and Equal Access to State Media Resources

The coalition radio monitoring results for June, July and August 2016, show that NDC had the highest frequency of physical appearances with seventeen (17) appearances. The latter formed 31% of political party appearances on Unique FM. NPP had the next highest frequency of appearance with fifteen (15) appearances. This formed 28% of political party appearances on Unique FM. The rest of the political parties monitored had appearances ranging between 1% and 12% of the total number of appearances.

NPP had the highest number of three hundred and fifty- six (356) verbal radio mentions, forming 40% of all political parties mentioned on the station. NDC had three hundred and sixteen (316) mentions forming 35%. The rest of the parties enjoyed between 0.1% and 6% of mentions. NDC was covered the most, with sixty - three (63) stories or 32% of stories reported during the period, whilst NPP had sixty (60) stories or 31% of stories. The other parties shared between 0.5% to 9.2% of the remaining stories.

NDC had the most news coverage time of 3hrs: 37mins:52secs allotted to political parties; this was 38% of political party time allocated by Unique FM. This was followed closely by NPP with 37% of time. NDC had the highest actualities accompanying its news coverage or stories at nineteen (19) actualities forming 31% of the total. Next was NPP with eighteen (18) actualities being 30% of the total and PPP with nine (9) actualities being 15% of the actualities. In the main, with the exception of radio mentions, NDC followed by NPP and PPP in that order enjoyed the most access on Uniiq FM for each of the indicators measured.

The variations on percentage of appearances, mentions, stories and coverage time ranged between 1% to as much as 40% and in most cases was more than 5% indicating a significant access and opportunity difference between the various political parties. This underscores the fact that fair and equal access to the State Radio Resource was not achieved during the period on Unique FM. Since the news content on Uniiq FM is the same for all state regional FM stations, we can also extrapolate that fair and equal access for political parties was not achieved in general on state radio platforms during the period under review and therefore the information presented was biased.

With regard to GTV, the results showed that for the months of June, July and August 2016, NDC had the highest frequency of (76) seventy- six physical appearances forming 43% of political party appearances on GTV. NPP had a frequency of forty- six (46) appearances, forming 26% of the total. PPP had a frequency of appearance of thirty- two (32) forming 18% of the total. The remaining parties enjoyed between 1% and 6% of the total number of appearances on GTV.

Data collected on stories reported on GTV showed that NDC was covered in forty- five (45) stories which formed 47% of the total. Next was NPP which was covered in twenty- four (24) stories forming 25%. Next was PPP, which was covered in nine (9) stories forming 9%. The remaining parties enjoyed 1% to 8% of the total stories reported on GTV. With respect to verbal mentions on GTV, NDC had a total of one hundred and forty- five (145) mentions during the period forming 41% of the total. Next was NPP with eighty-four (84) mentions forming 24%, then was PPP with seventy-two (72) mentions forming 20%. The remaining parties enjoyed 1% to 6% of the total of political party or representative mentions.

In relation to coverage time on GTV, NDC enjoyed a total coverage time of 7hr: 39mins:56secs forming 49% of the total coverage time. NPP enjoyed a coverage time of 2hrs:58mins:21secs forming 18% of the total. PPP enjoyed a coverage time of 1hr: 45mins: 51secs forming 11% of the total coverage time. The rest of the parties including PNC, CPP, APC, NDP, UPP and IPP enjoyed between 1% and 10% of the coverage time. Once again, the variations relating to percentage of appearances, mentions, stories and coverage time were generally more than 5% between the various political parties and ranged from 1% to 49%. This indicates that fair and equal access to the State Television Resource was not achieved during the period under review.

The June – August Newspaper monitoring results show that relating to frequency of physical appearance in the four (4) state-owned newspapers being Graphic, Times, Spectator and Mirror, the NDC had the highest frequency of appearance of one hundred and fifty-five (155) appearances forming 39.34% of the total. NPP had a frequency of appearance of one hundred and nineteen (119) forming 30.20 % of the total, and CPP had a frequency of appearance of thirty-seven (37) representing 9.39 % of the total. The rest including PPP, PNC, APC, NDP, IPP, GCPP and CPP enjoyed between 0.25% and 10% of the appearances.

With regard to stories, NDC was featured in the highest number of stories at two hundred and forty-one (241) stories forming 34.52 % of the total. NPP was featured in two hundred and twenty-four (224) stories forming 32.09 % of the total. PPP was featured in seventy-four (74) stories forming 10.60 % each of the total. The rest of the parties enjoyed between 0.28% and 10 % of the stories.

In terms of newspaper mentions, NDC had the highest number of mentions at eight hundred and ninety-seven (897) mentions, representing 38.56% of the total number of mentions. NPP had eight hundred and fifty-three (853) mentions, forming 36.67%; PPP had 234 mentions, forming 10.06 % of the total. The other parties enjoyed between 0.25% and 6% of the total.

With regard to photo-enhanced stories, NDC had the highest number of photo-enhanced stories at 173 constituting 36.33 %. NPP had 99 photo-enhanced stories, forming 30.74 % of the total. CPP had 31 photo-enhanced stories, forming 9.62 % of the total. The rest received between 0.31% and 12% of the total of enhanced stories.

The assessment of the sizes and space allotted to headlines for political party stories showed that NDC recorded the highest headline space size of 5445.29 cm², constituting 38.96%. NPP had a headline size of 3505.66 cm² forming 25.08 % while PPP had a headline size of 2568.48 cm² forming 18.37 %. The rest received between 0.15% and 10% of the total. In relation to the total overall newspaper space allotted, NDC recorded the highest total space coverage of 57,398.77 cm² constituting 41.26%. NPP had 36,862.40 cm² forming 26.4 % of the total. PPP had 14,861.79 cm² forming 10.68% of the total. The rest of the parties monitored received between 0.02% and 9% of the total.

The standard area index, which measures a paper's coverage devoted to each political party, showed that the Ghanaian Times gave the NDC as much as 47.37 % of its political party coverage with the NPP receiving the second highest at 28.95% of coverage. The rest of the parties monitored received less than 8% each of the Ghanaian Times coverage. The Mirror was similarly found to have given NDC 45.38 % of its coverage, followed by NPP with 21.69 % of its coverage, and the CPP at 18.33 %. The Daily Graphic on the other hand was found to have provided NDC with 51.23 % of its coverage, followed by NPP with 45.7 %. All other parties covered received less than 1.3% each of Daily Graphic coverage. It is important to note that the Spectator appears to have stayed away from reporting political party activities during this period.

The variations on percentage of appearances, mentions, stories, picture-enhanced stories, headline size, standard area etc. were generally more than 5% between parties for most of these indicators and indicate that fair and equal access to state newspaper resources was not achieved during the period.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. There are still incidences of electoral corruption specifically, vote buying by political parties and candidates contesting in the 2016 general elections.

2. There is an increasing worrying development of “vote selling” where communities are demanding the provision of social amenities from especially the incumbent government before they will vote in the upcoming elections.
3. There are incidences of abuse of incumbency mainly by the incumbent government than sitting Members of Parliament
4. There is an enhanced knowledge and understanding of vote buying by citizens, who openly express an opinion on the subject when discussed on media platforms.
5. On the broad indicator of “Biasing Information”, the June to August findings show that information provided by state media outlets was generally biased. The NDC and NPP were both given more airtime and space in the print media than all the other political parties, although the NDC received relatively a high media presence than the NPP. It is imperative that media platforms not only:
 - (a) Develop Election and Political Party Coverage Policies to operationalize and give adequate expression to the constitutional obligation of providing “fair opportunities” and “equal access” for example in the nature of “same amount of time and space” to electoral competitors, but it is also critical that
 - (b) Such policies are monitored internally by state media platforms through developing mechanisms to do so and externally by regulators or civil society to ensure that the spirit and intent of the Constitution is upheld.
6. Ultimately “fair opportunity” and “equal access” policies must be enforced to ensure a level playing field for all parties concerned. There is clearly a lot more work to be done by state media outlets to align their operations with the constitutional obligations imposed on them. In relation to the latter task of alignment, it would be helpful to establish a platform that allows key stakeholders to jointly brainstorm and share ideas on how state media platforms could enhance their efforts to achieve these constitutional responsibilities.

Abuse of incumbency and electoral corruption erodes the legitimacy of government and political leadership. Politicians, candidates and the general public must therefore, take the matter seriously and speak up against it as it undermines free and fair competition for political power and amounts to an affront to our democracy. This report therefore draws the attention of the public to these abuses of incumbency and electoral corruption and calls on all stakeholders to put a stop to it.