

PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

The Second Report on Monitoring Abuse of Incumbency and Electoral Corruption in Ghana's Election 2016

Friends of the media, the **Coalition of Civil Society Organizations “Monitoring Abuse of Incumbency and Electoral Corruption in the 2016 Elections”** comprising Ghana Integrity Initiative (GII), Ghana Centre for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana), Ghana Anti-Corruption Coalition (GACC) and Citizen’s Movement against Corruption (CMaC) is happy to release its second report for your information and public discourse.

INTRODUCTION

Since June 1, 2016 the Coalition assisted by trained Observers have been monitoring abuse of incumbency and pre-election political corruption in the period leading to Ghana’s up-coming 2016 elections. This monitoring exercise is a key activity under a STAR-Ghana funded project titled **“Promoting a More Level Political Playing Field: Reducing Abuse of Incumbency and Electoral Corruption in Ghana’s Election 2016”**. The aim, 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.

The project has two main parts. The **first part** involves the monitoring of abuse of incumbency and vote-buying in twenty consistencies and the **second part** involves 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).

The Coalition, launched its first monitoring report covering the period June to August 2016 some few weeks ago. This second report, covers the period **September October and November 2016**.

MAIN FINDINGS

1. Abuse of Incumbency

Below are a few highlights from the monitoring over the period:

- a. **Abuse of public function and platform** - On September 5, 2016, the President His Excellency John Dramani Mahama accompanied by Ministers of State and other leading members of the NDC commissioned a newly built Community Senior High School (SHS) - (one of the 200 state funded community day school projects) in Agona Abodom, Agona West Municipal/Constituency. At the commissioning of the community school,



The State funded project covered with NDC Banner during the Commissioning

the President, the Regional Minister and other speakers used the occasion to promote the incumbent party as well as canvass for votes.

- b. Engagement of public officers in campaign activities during working hours by the incumbent party** - On Wednesday 19th October 2016 at 1:40pm in the Awutu Senya West constituency, the District Chief Executive (DCE), Hon. Sampson Abbey Armah was seen at an activity organized by the NDC incumbent Member of Parliament, Hon. Hannah Tetteh at the palace of the Papaase Chief, he was observed dressed in NDC party colours and campaigning for votes for the Member of Parliament.
- c. Use of public (state or local) vehicles free of charge or at discount rates for campaigning for or on behalf of incumbent party** - In the Yagaba Constituency of the Northern region, the DCE was spotted at the National Farmer's Day on November 4, 2016 in his official vehicle covered with stickers of the ruling NDC.

2. Electoral Corruption (Vote buying)

During the monitoring period, the Coalition c observed incidences of vote buying in the selected constituencies. Specifically, offering money and medical supplies etc to voters aimed at securing votes formed the majority of incidences recorded. Examples include:

- a.** Mr. Anthony Karbo of the NPP was observed distributing five Ghana cedis to voters during a house to house campaign exercise in Lawra
- b.** On Wednesday, October 5, 2016 in Bechem some individuals associated with Mrs. Hannah Bisiw were observed sharing money to voters during the voter transfer exercise
- c.** Dr. Bright Oppong, an independent Parliamentary candidate of Ahafo-Ano North on Friday, October 21, 2016 donated a Daewoo Saloon Car to the Moslem Council and promised to donate a pick-up when they vote for him.
- d.** Other vote buying activity monitored was the provision of medicine/pharmaceutical equipment to institutions and communities aimed at securing votes. For example,
- e.** On Monday October 24, 2016, the NDC youth organized free screening of Hepatitis B for people within Lamashegu, Dungu and surrounding communities at Lamashegu, opposite Japan Motors, Tamale.

3. Fair and Equal Access to State Media Resources

During the monitoring period September – November 2016, the monitors continued to observe disparities in the amount of airtime and print space allocated to the incumbent government as against the competitors. Information was biased in favour of the ruling party. Presented below are some illustrations of what was observed:

The monitoring report on Uniiq showed, NDC was covered in two hundred and thirty-five (235) radio stories forming 33% of the number of political stories aired (714 political stories) on this platform while NPP was covered in one hundred and ninety-three (193) stories which formed 27% of the total. Next was PPP which was covered in ninety-three (93) stories forming 13% of the 714 political stories. CPP was covered in sixty-two (62) stories forming 8.7% of the total. APC was covered in fifty (50)

stories which formed 7% of the total. NDP was covered in thirty-two (32) stories which formed 4.5% of the total. PNC was covered in twenty-three (23) stories which formed 3.2% of the total. GCPP was covered in thirteen (13) stories which formed 1.8% of the total. IPP was covered in six (6) stories which formed 0.8% of the total. UFP was covered in five (5) stories which formed 0.7% of the total. While DPP was also covered in two (2) stories forming 0.3% of the total.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Observations made during the period September to November evinced that the incumbent government and appointees continue to abuse incumbency and also some candidates contesting in the parliamentary elections from the NDC, NPP and independent candidates engaged in vote-buying. What is even more worrying is the emerging culture of voters demanding goodies before casting their votes. To that, one of the cardinal principles of our democracy – accountability is being sacrificed on the altar of the ‘highest bidder calls the political tune’.

The GII Coalition therefore recommends broadly that:

- a. political parties Act 2000 (Act 574) must be implemented fully especially the accountability provisions.
- b. a period for political campaigning be legislated and the conduct of candidates expressly prescribed to prevent incidences of abuse of incumbency and vote-buying
- c. the required legal instruments put in place to operationalize Article 55 (11), Article 55 (12) and Article 163 and to ensure “Fair Opportunity” through “Equal Access” to the state-owned media

The Coalition once again wants to emphasize that, abuse of incumbency and electoral corruption erodes the legitimacy of governments 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.

The detailed report will be published soon.