



Mid-day Situational Statement on the Conduct of the 2021 Presidential Election Saturday, December 4, 2021

Delivered at the Metzy Residence Hotel, Greater Banjul

On Saturday, December 4th, 2021, Gambia Participates, The Gambia Bar Association, University of The Gambia and the Transitional Justice Working Group deployed 463 trained stationary observers and 65 mobile observers across the **7 regions and 53 constituencies** of The Gambia to observe the voting process and share reports on the conduct of the election at the polling station level. The observers were deployed to observe election day processes including the set-up of polling stations, voting, counting and posting of results at the polling stations. As noted in our pre-election statement, this is the first presidential election to be conducted since the 2016 elections that ended the two-decade-long authoritarian regime. In addition, our pre-election observation revealed that the general political environment has been relatively calm with minimal incidence of violence.

Gambia Participates commends the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) for the early deployment of personnel and voting materials across the country which has led to the timely commencement of polls. Gambia Participates also commends the inclusivity of women in the deployment of security and polling officials. Gambia Participates is however concerned that some polling stations visited were not set up in locations to guarantee access to persons with disabilities (PWDs). We call on the IEC to ensure an inclusive process by making voting locations more accessible to PWDs as voting progresses. The IEC must also ensure unhindered access for every aspect of the process to election observers and the media in order to promote electoral transparency.

This mid-day situational analysis provides information on the commencement of polls, the presence of polling officials, election materials, security personnel, and party agents; and the availability of essential election materials. Gambia Participates is leveraging on the presence of its citizen observers in 463 polling stations to observe this election and will be providing accurate and timely information on the election process.

Preliminary Findings

These are preliminary findings as of 1:00 pm election day. At this time, Gambia Participates has received reports from 463 polling stations across the 53 constituencies. This report highlights the early deployment of election officials and materials and the commencement of votes across all of the polling stations observed. The following data will be updated as additional reports are received from our citizen observers at the polling stations.

1. **Arrival at polling stations:** As of 7:30 am, 98% of Gambia Participates observers reported that IEC officials had arrived at the polling station observed.
2. **Commencement of voting:** Observers reported that the voting process began before 8:00 am in 21% and by 8:30 am in 99% of polling stations.. 1% of polling stations visited opened after 8:30 am. The polling station at Plaza Cinema in Serekunda opened at 8:30am.

3. **Deploying of polling officials:** In those polling units where IEC officials and materials arrived, 84% of polling stations had four polling officials on average, of whom two were women.
4. **Presence of security personnel:** 100% of polling stations observed had security agents present, 54% of these were women.
5. **Availability of essential election materials:** Ballot drums were observed in 100% of the polling stations. Indelible ink was seen in 98% of polling stations observed, and polling booths/voting compartments were observed in 96% of polling stations. A voter roll was observed in 100% of polling stations, and duty certificates were observed in 89% of polling stations.
6. **Deployment of Party Agents:** Essa Mbye FAAL polling or party agents were seen at 43% of polling stations, GDC at 92% of polling stations, NPP at 98% of polling stations, NUP at 19% of polling stations, PDOIS at 70% of polling stations, and UDP at 100% of polling stations.
7. **Accessibility of polling stations:** 8% of polling stations observed were not set up in locations that are accessible to persons with disabilities.
8. **Electoral transparency:** Before the commencement of voting, the polling officials showed that the ballot drums were empty before being locked and sealed in 100% of polling stations. In 100% of polling stations, the presiding officer wrote down the number of security seals used on the ballot drums and allowed the party agents to write them down.
9. **Upholding the secrecy of the ballots:** in 98% of polling stations, the voting compartment was set up in a manner that allows voters to mark their ballots in secret. In 99% of polling stations observed, the ballot drums were well placed so that the voters can easily see the colour, photos and writing on the ballot drums.

Preliminary Recommendations

1. We call on the IEC to ensure strict compliance with the application of the election procedures in the result counting and collation process. Polling officials should avoid errors in the reporting of election results. Inconsistent results could destabilize the country given the sensitivity of elections.
2. As the voting process will soon come to an end, the IEC must ensure that the ballots tokens are counted openly and that all polling stations have the results forms posted at the polling stations for the public.
3. The IEC should remain vigilant and independent in the announcement of election results without external influence.
4. We urge the IEC to ensure the results collation centres are known and accessible to observers, media and party agents.
5. Security personnel should remain professional and non-partisan throughout the election

In conclusion, we commend the great citizens of The Gambia for their peaceful conduct during the voting process and plead that they remain patient and peaceful as the process continues and

through the counting process. We call on voters who are yet to vote to kindly go to their polling stations and exercise their franchise.

Gambia Participates will continue to observe the process and will release additional findings as appropriate through its social media platforms as the election progresses. On December 5th, Gambia Participates will issue a preliminary statement on the conduct of the elections. This statement will bring together our preliminary findings and conclusions on Election Day conduct. This statement will include assessing the closing, counting and announcement of results processes at the polling stations, such as the presence of party agents during the counting, whether candidate agents sign off or refuse to sign off on results, as well as the conduct of counting procedures.

Gambia Participates stationary observers will remain at their assigned polling stations the entire day to observe voting, counting, and the declaration of results.

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