

June 2020

**NPP 2020 PARLIAMENTARY PRIMARIES IN CONSTITUENCIES WITH INCUMBENT
NPP M.P.s: IDEG OBSERVATION REPORT**

**NPP Parliamentary
Primaries**



IDEG INSTITUTE FOR
DEMOCRATIC
GOVERNANCE

1. INTRODUCTION

The New Patriotic Party, NPP, held Parliamentary primary elections (primaries) on Saturday June 20, 2020. Prior to this, all prospective candidates had been vetted by the National Parliamentary Vetting Committee of the party. At the end of the vetting process 308 candidates were cleared to contest in 101 constituencies. Sixty-seven (67) were declared unopposed.

The primaries were to be conducted in strict compliance with COVID-19 health protocols. In this regard, it was decided that not more than 100 people should congregate at each voting center at a time. The party assured members of the party and the general public that alcohol-based hand sanitizers would be made available to delegates to sanitize their hands before casting their ballot and nose masks would be distributed to all delegates.

2. GUIDELINES FOR THE PRIMARIES

The following guidelines for the primaries were issued by the General Secretary, Mr. John Boadu.

1. The primaries shall be held on Electoral Area basis per the Electoral Commission's designation.
2. Voting shall be supervised by the Electoral Commission of Ghana assisted by the respective National Parliamentary Vetting Committees.
3. Delegates shall comprise all Polling Station Executives, all Constituency Executives, 5 members of the Constituency Council of Elders, 5 members of the Constituency Council of Patrons as well as any founding member of the Party from the Constituency who was a signatory to the registration document of the Party at the Electoral Commission.
4. The 5 members of the Constituency Council of Elders, the 5 members of the Constituency Council of Patrons, all members of the Constituency Executive Committee as well as the Party's Founding members who were signatories to the registration document of the Party at the Electoral Commission shall be accredited to vote at the Constituency Secretariat.
5. The Polling Station Executives and the Elected Area Coordinators shall be accredited to vote at the Electoral Area voting center.
6. The Constituency Album i.e. voters register which has been broken down into Electoral Area Album shall be used to identify all delegates who are eligible to vote in their respective Electoral Areas.
7. Delegates will be required to produce an NPP membership ID card or any recognized National ID to entitle them to vote.
8. Proxy voters shall be accredited delegates.
9. Voting starts at 7:00am and ends at 1:00pm.
10. Each voter shall thumbprint against preferred candidate.

3. IDEG OBSERVATION

The IDEG mounted a limited observation of the NPP primaries, focusing only on constituencies with sitting NPP M.P.s. IDEG carried out the observation in keeping with its practice of observing key electoral processes every election so as to contribute to peaceful and credible election and democratic consolidation in Ghana; to capture at close range the dynamics of internal party democracy in a key election process; and to ascertain the integrity of the process and the safety and health of delegates and officials as well as serve as documentation for learning the processes of the outcome of the primaries.

4. CONTEXT

The NPP Primaries were conducted amidst strong concerns among M.P.s that they could lose their place in Parliament in the 2020 Elections. The Department of Political Science, University of Ghana had, in a 2019 survey, predicted that up to 50% of all sitting M.P.s could lose their seats in the 2020 Elections. Again, leadership of Parliament had become concerned about the prospect of the House losing experienced legislators through their defeat in the 2020 Elections, particularly at the level of the primaries.

The possibility of the House losing experienced members through elections appeared to have compelled leadership of Parliament to consider ways of protecting M.P.s from electoral defeat. Two days to the NPP primaries, members of Parliament from the majority and minority sides, called for reforms in the constitution of political parties to stop the practice of holding primaries every four years. This would be tantamount to a perversion of democracy whereby sitting Members of Parliament were conspiring to shut the door to new entrants.

The risk of defeat for sitting M.P.s was not the only issue of concern to the party in the 2020 NPP Parliamentary primaries. There was some consternation among the party rank and file over the manner in which some perceived popular aspirants had been disqualified by the vetting committee. This raised suspicion that they had been disqualified in order to pave the way for high-ranking party members, mostly Ministers and Deputy Ministers, to contest unopposed. It is notable that the majority of the unopposed were either Ministers or Deputy Ministers. The rest were chief executives in state agencies. The very fact of 40% or 67 out of 168 candidates standing unopposed raised questions about the health of the party's internal democracy.

There was widespread suspicion therefore that some candidates had not attained their unopposed status in an entirely wholesome manner, and that power and wealth had played a key role in protecting them. Quite significantly, the party had since the 2012 elections vastly expanded the

electoral college in order to put the power of choice of leaders in the hands of members of the party. Declaring 40 percent of aspirants unopposed achieved the direct opposite effect.

The selection of leaders and representatives was by this, placed beyond the reach of the people (delegates). Some opposed aspirants and their supporters came away from the primaries with the perception that candidates favored by the authorities were allowed to go unopposed while others were left to struggle it out with the delegates. Some disqualified aspirants threatened to contest the December 7 Elections as unopposed candidates.

5. MONETIZATION

A major complaint of the Ghanaian public and people seeking Parliamentary careers has been the high cost of politics in Ghana. In a 2017 survey of Parliamentarians in Ghana, the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) found that it cost approximately \$87, 000 (U.S) or about GHC 500,000 to get elected to Parliament. Many Parliamentarians in Ghana however laughed this finding off as a gross underestimation of the real cost of politics. Today, many aspirants would put the figure at not less than GHC 1million or \$200,000, with only a small fraction of this cost counting as legitimate campaign expenditure.

The filing of nominations, for example, costs GHC 22,000 for sitting M.P.s and GHC 52,000 for non M.P.s. The difference is due entirely to the fact that all sitting M.P.s make fixed regular monthly contributions to the party's finances from their Parliamentary salaries. A substantial portion of the expenditure on primaries can, with hindsight, be put down to vote buying. Stories of M.P.s paying delegates as much as GHC 3500 per person while others paid GHC 1000 plus table-top refrigerators or deep freezers circulated in the media soon after the primaries.

In most cases, it was the strident effort, after the event by losing candidates, to retrieve their cash and material gifts that brought the vote buying into the public spaces.

6. CONTEST

In the end, 102000 delegates decided on the fate of 308 Parliamentary aspirants. 47 out of the 308 aspirants representing 15.3 percent were women. 12 of the women went unopposed while 35 of them had a fierce contest. Even with a huge number of aspirants declared unopposed, the NPP primaries promised to be a very keen contest with an average of 3 aspirants contesting in each constituency. In such a highly competitive contest, it is not unusual for aspirants to seek competitive advantage through financial and material inducement of delegates.

7. IDEG OBSERVATION DEPLOYMENT FOR NPP 2020 PARLIAMENTARY PRIMARIES

IDEG’s limited deployment of observers covered seven constituencies in two regions of Ghana. Observers were issued strict instructions to restrict observation to only one polling center from the opening of poll at 7:00am to its closing at 1:00pm. Each observer was required to follow through the entire chain of the voting process from the polling center all the way to the collation and declaration of results at the collation center. This allowed for detailed observation and protection from potential COVID-19 infection.

Essentially, this arrangement confined one observer to one polling center in an electoral area. The principal consideration underpinning the selection of regions, constituencies and electoral areas for observation was proximity to place of residence of IDEG observers and observers’ knowledge of the area of deployment. Observers were enjoined to scrupulously adhere to COVID-19 safety protocols, notably, wearing of nose masks, hand washing, hand sanitizers and social distancing.

Table 1: IDEG Observer Deployment Plan

ELECTORAL AREA	CONSTITUENCY	REGION	No. OF OBSERVERS
Antwere Gonna	Krowor	Greater Accra	1
Sea-Light	Tema East	Greater Accra	1
Amanfrom	Nkawkaw	Eastern	1
Atomic Energy	Dome-Kwabanya	Greater Accra	1
	Nsawam-Adoagyiri	Eastern	1
Sakumono	Tema West	Greater Accra	1
Man Momo	Adentan	Greater Accra	1

8. MAIN OBSERVATION FINDINGS

8.1. COVID-19 Protocols

Two (2) out of the seven (7) polling centers observed (i.e. 28.6%) appeared to have benefited from the pledge of the NPP General Secretary to provide them with face masks. The remaining 71.4% had not been supplied with the masks. Hand washing facilities and hand sanitizers were available at majority of the polling centers i.e. 6 out of 7 (85.7%). Four (4) out of seven (7) polling centers (57.1%) were observed to have ensured social distancing protocols.

In 3 out of 7 centers, social distancing was not observed but in majority of polling centers, i.e. 6 out of 7, the official directive of assembling not more than 100 persons at a time was adhered to. In 5 out of 7 polling centers observed (71.4%), there was a dedicated official to enforce adherence to COVID-19 protocols.

8.2. Commencement of Proceeding

In all 7 polling centers the delegates arrived on time, the EC staff also largely arrived on time i.e. 6 out of 7 or 85.7%. the equipment required for voting were ready but due to delays in setting up voting started on time only in 4 out of 7 polling centers or 57.1%.

8.3. Electoral Offences

Notwithstanding numerous reports of buying and selling of votes surrounding the primaries, actual breaches of regulations governing the primaries were not observed on voting day. Majority of observers reported that they saw no evidence of buying and selling of votes i.e. 6 out of 7 or 85.7% and the same percentage reported that no secret campaigning was observed at the polling centers. Observers did not notice any instances of a person attempting to influence delegates at the polling centers to vote for a particular contestant. All observers reported peaceful polling processes. No evidence was observed of persons engaging in incitement to violence and intimidation.

8.4. Stakeholders

Almost all candidates had their agents deployed at the polling centers. Security personnel and media houses were observed at all centers. However, no polling centers had other observers.

8.5. Voting Process

Six out of seven observers (85.7%) reported that queues of delegates in the process of casting their ballots were peaceful and orderly largely because of the presence of party officials ensuring the process was peaceful and orderly. Observers reported from 2 out of 7 voting centers (28.6%) that expectant and nursing mothers as well as people with disability were given special treatment to enable them to cast their vote. This low percentage suggests that not many delegates fell in these categories.

All observers reported that no persons jumped the queue to create any confusion at the polling centers, further adding evidence to the reports of a peaceful and orderly process.

8.6. Vote Counting and Declaration of Results

The vote counting and results declaration at the primaries turned out to be one of the high points of success. All 7 observers reported a vote counting process in which there was neither a request for recount or a single incidence of rejected ballots and no controversy over whether or not a ballot should be counted or rejected.

Analysis of observers' checklists further reveals that agents of all candidates accepted the results and signed the results declaration form without protest from supporters. No defeated candidates protested or declared an intention to challenge the results. One observer however reported a violent incident after the declaration of results (can we say more about this).

8.7. Collation and Declaration of Constituency Results

The end stage of the primaries is reached when results of all electoral areas are manually conveyed to the collation center, which is the party's constituency office to add up all polling station results and declare a winner for the primaries. At this stage the candidate through agents at the polling centers already have a clear idea of who has won or lost.

Issues of concern at this stage are whether ballots have been tampered with, on the way to the collation center, and whether the results declared at the collation centers reflect the results from all the polling centers in the constituency. Data from the 7 observed constituencies all affirmed that the transfer of ballot boxes from the polling to the collation centers was carried out under conditions of strict security and in 5 out of 7 of the centers observed (71.4%), the agents of the candidates followed the movement of the ballot boxes.

In all cases, the results declared were accepted by contestants without protest. However, only in 4 out of 7 constituencies i.e. 57.1% did defeated candidates concede defeat and pledge support to the winner, and loyalty to the party. While the collation and declaration process was peaceful, this was where the COVID-19 protocols were abused the most. People massed up with body contacts during the collation and declaration

8.8. Overall Assessment

Reports from the IDEG observation of the NPP Parliamentary primaries of June 20, 2020 indicated that on the day of voting:

- i. The primaries were on the whole free, fair, peaceful and transparent
- ii. The E.C staff in charge of the polls undertook their roles adequately
- iii. The security arrangement for the primaries was adequate
- iv. Coverage by the media was good.
- v. Apart from IDEG, no other CSO observer teams were encountered at the polling center

There was much evidence to conclude that:

- i. COVID-19 preventive protocols were not fully observed
- ii. The party did not supply the full complement of nose masks that delegates were promised
- iii. Social distancing protocols were blatantly ignored after results declaration
- iv. Media reports of the most outrageous forms of vote buying and selling were widespread.

8.9. Recommendations

- A. As we approach the peak of the campaign season and the actual election on December 7 2020, political parties, election candidates, and voters must avoid the near-total disregard for COVID-19 precautionary measures observed at the NPP primaries on June 20 2020. The spike in COVID-19 infections, particularly among politicians, should serve as a wake-up call to the EC, political parties, election candidates and voters to take COVID-19 safety precautions seriously.
- B. The NPP primaries should focus national attention on the fact that in the process of canvassing for votes among the populace or celebrating election victory, politicians and candidates should remember that wearing face masks and keeping the required social distance will save their lives and the lives of others.
- C. Vote buying and selling remains an offence under the Representation of the People Law, 1992 PNDC L284. Politicians and the electorate alike should desist from the flagrant violation of the law that was observed at the NPP primaries.
- D. Extending the franchise to all paid-up party members in the constituency would go a long way to improve inclusiveness and minimize the extensive vote buying and selling that has come to characterize party primaries and internal party elections in Ghana.
- E. Civil Society Organizations in Ghana should begin to pay increasing attention to Parliamentary primaries and internal party elections in Ghana with the objective of improving the integrity of this very important democratic process.

Acknowledgement

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