



**STAR
Ghana**
Strengthening Transparency,
Accountability and Responsiveness



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What works in CSO interventions in Ghana's Elections:

A STAR-Ghana Learning Document on Elections

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1.0 Introduction

The purpose of this comprehensive Learning Document on Elections in Ghana is to help civil society in Ghana and election stakeholders broadly reflect and absorb the lessons learnt from implementing programs and projects to support election credibility and peace. The Learning Document also responds to the Strengthening Transparency, Accountability and Responsiveness in Ghana (STAR-Ghana) mandate and role as a learning organization. Providing these learning resources to its Communities of Practice and Learning (CoPL) supports its overall objective of engendering strategic change process in civil society and active citizenship through reflection, lesson sharing and continuous learning.

The learning document is also strategic because credible and peaceful elections remain the bedrock of Ghanaian democratic stability. The competitive character of multiparty elections requires political conditions that enable that political competition to thrive in a progressive way. As Ghana celebrates its 7th successive credible and peaceful election since 1992, it is important for civil society practitioners, at the forefront of safeguarding Ghana's nascent democracy to continue to reflect, harvest the good lessons, learn from past challenges, identify the new challenges and engage in processes to improve its interventions in future electoral processes.

The Learning Document is set out as follow: first it identifies and discusses the key challenges noted by election stakeholders since the 2012 elections; second, it identifies the broad strategies that civil society actors have used to address the challenges identified in elections since 2012; third, it captures examples of what interventions have worked so far; fourth, it summaries the key lessons learnt from the implementation of the STAR-Ghana supported projects since 2012, fifth, it notes emerging issues and new opportunities for improving on future interventions and finally, it list a number of recommendations.

2.0 Key challenges in elections in Ghana since 2012

The elections value chain in Ghana begins with a voter registration exercise, which includes the re-demarcation of electoral constituencies, this is followed by the electoral campaign period, voting and counting, tallying of votes and declaration of results as well as election dispute adjudication. These processes are underpinned by the assumption that the electoral management body, the Electoral Commission of Ghana (EC) is properly set up to manage the election processes creditably and effectively. Thus in noting the key election issues that have concerned stakeholders since 2012, issues with the credibility and effectiveness of the Electoral Commission must be taken in to account. Other crosscutting issues around the inclusion of marginalized groups, election peace and security should also be noted. The plethora of issues raised about elections in Ghana since 2012 are captured in a table form in Appendix A. However, in this section a few lingering electoral concerns are highlighted. In addition, electoral issues raised in 2012 that were addressed in the 2016 elections are also highlighted.

2.1 The Credibility and Effectiveness of the Electoral Management Body

Since the establishment of the Electoral Commission of Ghana in 1993, questions have been raised about how the electoral commissioners are appointed. Currently under Article 43 and 70 of the 1992 Constitution, the President shall in consultation with the Council of State appoint the chairman, two deputy chairmen and four others to constitute the EC. Though, concerns about the appointment process persisted through the first two decades of the operation of the Constitution, there was no urgency attached to the matter until, the first chairperson of the Commission, Dr. Kwadwo Afari Djan retired. The departure of Dr. Afari Djan after 22 years left a large leadership gap at the Commission and prompted a number of stakeholders, including the Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO) and the Institute for Economic Affairs (IEA) together with the Chairmen of Political Parties, to call for broad consultation in the selection of his replacement. Though then President John Mahama insisted that the nomination and appointing processes involved wide consultations, generally stakeholders were dissatisfied with the level of engagement and continue to call for reforms in this area¹. The issues to do with the composition of the Commissioners was a subject matter for discussion by an Electoral Reform Committee set up by the EC to look at proposed reforms in 2015, in the aftermath of the Supreme Court decision in the 2012 presidential election dispute. The Committee recommended that the current arrangement be maintained with the proviso that the Council of State should broaden its consultation before advising the President. The proposal to subject the appointment process to parliamentary approval was rejected.

The larger-than-life legacy of Dr. Afari Djan also impacted decision making at the Commission. Over the last 25 years, the Commission's decision making has been dominated by the Chair of the Commission in spite of the constitutional arrangement that entrust decision making to the Commission as a collective. In essence, the Chairperson as *primus-inter-pares* tends to have a final say in most instances (similar to the role of a sole commissioner) or with the two Deputy Chairs. The four non-permanent members have less of an influence in decision making at the Commission. Other challenges have to do with the transparency and accountability of the EC over budgeting, expenditure and procurement. Ghana's elections cost per capita remains one of the most expensive in Africa. Last year the total budget for elections was about GHc 1.14 billion². The procurement process for the printing of voting materials was also mired in controversy in both 2012 and 2016 and recently the election expenditure have become a subject of petitions for the removal of the Chair and two Deputy Chairs

¹Stakeholder dissatisfaction with the current processes for appointing EC commissioners and call for reform was echoed during deliberations of the Electoral Reform Advocacy Group (ERMAG) which operates under the auspices of CODEO (see communiqué issued by ERMAG on August 9th 2017 at Koforidua, Eastern Region of Ghana).

² In response to a Daily Graphic story alleging that the EC had exceeded its budget for the 2016 election, the Commission issued a statement stating it had stayed within the GHc 1.139 Billion budgeted for the elections (see: <http://citifmonline.com/2017/01/25/we-didnt-exceed-election-budget-ec/>)

of the Commission. Generally, the concerns expressed by stakeholders persist and are yet to be systematically addressed.

2.2 Securing a Credible Voter Register

Securing an accurate register without the names of deceased, under-age or alien voters is rare. However, the presence of unqualified voters should be kept at a minimum. Since the return to multiparty democratic rule in Ghana the credibility of electoral roll has always been called to question. For example in 2008, the EC admitted that the electoral register was bloated. The fundamental challenge has to do with the lack of trust in the various proofs of identity. Political parties have always mistrusted government issued identity cards because of the possibility of forgery. In the run up to the 2016 elections for example some members of political parties went to court to challenge the use of the National Health Insurance Card as proof of Ghanaian identity. The Supreme Court ruled that the card could not be used for registration, as such the names of people who registered with the card had to be removed and those affected allowed to re-register. The challenge first started with establishing who a Ghanaian is and whether they are qualified to vote. In 2012, a biometric voter registration and verification system was introduced to reduce the incidence of double voting and ballot stuffing. However, the introduction of technology could not address the issues of minors and foreigners along the Ghana borders registering to vote. These underlying challenges are yet to be resolved as such the objective of securing a credible register remains unfulfilled.

2.3 Promoting Issue-Based Campaigning

The agenda of promoting more issue-based electioneering based on progressive manifestos of parties has been a priority for civil society election stakeholders over the years. Ghana's electoral campaigns have been characterized by politics of insults and dominated by personalities including the use of abusive language, personality attacks, smear campaigns, name-calling, stoking ethnic sentiments and generally divisive politics. This type of campaign is enabled by partisan media, partisan political communicators, and a negative political culture, which elevate the loudest and the most abusive political party supporters to cult status. Efforts over the years to name and shame offenders seem to have mitigated the frequency and effects of such anti-developmental behavior.

2.4 Election related Corruption

Elections in Ghana is increasingly being monetized and with it an increase in the incidence of corruption. Elections in Ghana are generally characterized by a patron-client relationship between those who want to put themselves up to contest for election and the voters. Election related corruption takes the form of abuse of incumbency and vote buying. Increasingly as elections have become competitive between the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and National Democratic Congress (NDC), incumbent political parties have found sophisticated ways to deploy state resources for elections through different forms of incumbency abuse and extensive distribution of cash and other items to voters in exchange

for votes. Since 2004, efforts by civil society to create awareness, track and call-out the offenders have also helped to constrain excessive abuse of incumbency. This is more the case in respect of access to state media resources.

2.5 Election Peace and Security

The duopoly of party politics in the Fourth Republican Constitution of Ghana has engendered a competitive multiparty system but one that is characterized by acrimony and sometimes latent violence perpetuated by party affiliated vigilante groups. Political vigilantism is not a new phenomenon as such; it was present under past constitutional orders. For example during the 1954 and 1956 elections, the Convention Peoples Party Troopers and the National Liberation Movement (NLM) Action Troopers clashed on several occasions with some leading to the death of party supporters. The phenomenon of party vigilantism has become a growing concern after every election as crimes perpetrated by incumbent party supporters against opposition supporters or vice versa go unpunished. The three electoral turnovers means that every time there is a change in government it leads to revenge attacks. The police appear unable to deal with the problem and though there have been several civil society interventions, the risk of violence in elections in Ghana remains a real possibility even if it remain latent.

2.6 Promoting Inclusion in the Election Process in Ghana

The effective participation and empowerment of marginalized and vulnerable groups in election processes in Ghana has been an important concern of election stakeholders since the early 2000s. Several efforts have been made by the EC itself to address these challenges particularly, those of persons with disability (visual, hearing and physical impairment). Stakeholders have also prioritized women and young people who suffer systemic marginalization in terms of contesting as aspirants and candidates. Generally, several interventions from civil society have been targeting these groups in programming. Notwithstanding these interventions, the concerns remain because of the few number of women who actually get to stand as aspirants or candidates and even fewer numbers who get elected. Currently, there are 35 women in the 275-member Parliament.

2.7 Improving Transparency in the Tallying and Declaration of Results

After the polls, the counting of ballots at the polling station has been progressively trouble free over the years. The incidence of ballot stealing, intimidation at polling stations and disruption has been low. However, the concerns around the collation of the results from the polling stations to the constituency collation centers and then to regional and national have become more controversial, more now that technology is increasingly being deployed. For example, in a 2016 national representative pre-election survey conducted by the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana), 46% of Ghanaian prospective voters stated they did not trust the EC to announce the correct results. The advantages and risk associated with technology was in full display on Election Day 2016 when efforts by the EC to display certified results in real

time on an electronic board as a way of demystifying the famous ‘Strong Room’ was botched. The strong room, which was just a room at the EC headquarters, was used to finalize the results for the presidential elections and was not open to the media and the public. Often partisans will come and allege manipulation of figures but because the process was not transparent it was difficult to verify claims and these caused several problems leading to prolonged tensions after the elections. The repeat of those challenges in 2016 mean there is still work to do in this area.

3.0 Civil society strategies/methods used to address challenges in Elections since 2012

Election observation is one of the commonest strategies adopted by CSOs to support the realisation of credible and peaceful elections. However, CSOs have expanded their list of strategies for intervening in elections over the last few years including the utilisation of media particularly social media. This section looks at the key strategies that CSOs using STAR-Ghana grants have adopted since 2012.

3.1 Observation and Monitoring

Election management bodies draw a distinction between election observation and monitoring. Citizens interested in policing elections are expected to observe and not monitor the electoral process. An observer may be able to draw the attention of a presiding officer to an irregularity that has occurred or is occurring at the polling station but will not be able to intervene to correct it. A monitor on the other hand who has a supervisory responsibility like an EC official can intervene to instruct the presiding officer at a polling station to address the irregularity. Over the years with the sophistication and expansion of citizen engagement with elections in Ghana, some of these divisions of labour have become blurred. For example, with the introduction of technology in election observation processes, observers can now use Short Messaging Service (SMS) technology or WhatsApp to send messages of irregularities instantly to a situation room or data processing center and the information will be relayed directly to EC officials who can address the problem on the spot. The same methods are used to track incidence of violence or intimidation, which are instantly communicated to the security agencies for immediate action. Observers normally prepare a checklist based on the rules that are expected to be followed and then observe to see if the rules are followed. It is on that basis that observers draw their conclusions on whether the process has been credible. Over the years, some domestic observation groups like CODEO and the Civic Forum Initiative (CFI) have become more systematic with the deployment of observers to the field in order to draw a more accurate picture of election performance and to help deter fraud. Since 2008, CODEO for example has employed statistical sampling methods to distribute its observers.

3.2 Education

A number of CSOs attribute key challenges with elections like high incidence of rejected ballots, violence, vote buying and receiving, and politics of insults as a function of a lack of civic and voter education. The strategy has been to develop various educational materials and resources including posters, videos, organize forums and durbars, illustrations, use radio platforms to educate people about why they should vote, how to vote and how to relate to other citizens during after campaigns. CSOs at local levels tend to focus on their immediate communities and target vulnerable groups like Persons with Disability, Youth and Woman or community leaders like chiefs. Others also work with religious groups to use their church services and Friday prayers in the Mosques as platforms to teach, preach and instruct congregations as to the proper thing to do during the campaign, on Election Day and after elections.

3.3 Empowerment

In 2016, Ghana was ranked 150th out of 185 countries by the Inter-Parliamentary Union on women's representation in Parliament. There are currently 35 female Members of Parliament in the 275-member Parliament of Ghana. This is an improvement on the 2012 figure of 29 female MPs. The very low ratio of women to men in Parliament is also reflected in the low numbers of parliamentary candidates. For example as many as 1,332 candidates competed in the 2016 elections but only 133 were women. This representation is at odds with the national population where 51.2% of Ghanaians are female. The empowerment of marginalized groups like women and girls but also PWDs, the poor and young people have informed some of the most common strategies used by CSOs to intervene in elections in Ghana. Empowerment programs take the form of mentoring, capacity building about the rules and strategies to campaign, raise funds, advocate and increase knowledge in the broad areas of governance. These have been done for those who aspire to stand for office as MPs, contest executive positions in their parties or even to mobilize citizens to observe elections in their constituency.

3.4 Mediation

Several of the strategies described above are often used to prevent conflict, promote the credibility and peacefulness of elections. Often, in spite of the interventions deployed by various election stakeholders, conflicts and potentially violent disagreements do occur. Some CSOs in communities with pre-existing protracted conflicts try to intervene in the elections to ensure that the pre-existing conflict is not exacerbated during elections. Mediation is thus used as a conflict resolution mechanism during the campaign period; Election Day and post elections at local and national levels. At local level, CSO have used non-partisan opinions leaders like chiefs and religious leaders working together with security agencies to serve as a mediation team to resolve conflicts between political parties or parties and security agencies. At national level, CSOs have used a group of eminent persons with the influence, clout and convening power to bring disputants together for mediation and resolution to any conflict.

3.5 Research, Analysis, Dissemination and Advocacy

Generally, most national level CSOs conduct a fair amount of research, largely desk research to inform and direct most of their activities, particularly as election interventions have become more sophisticated. However, some of the interventions primarily use systematic qualitative or quantitative data gathering, analysis and dissemination. Often, this strategy is used by think tanks seeking to advocate for electoral reform, tracking complex electoral corruption issues like abuse of incumbency or vote buying, or analysis manifestos.

3.6 Traditional and new media

The increasing importance of media cannot be understated. Since 2012, STAR-Ghana has increased its support to interventions directly led by media houses using media platforms or a collaboration between media and civil society. While the support to traditional media houses (radio and TV) have increased, support to new media has also increased. A number of grantees using social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter and YouTube to educate, inform, track and report on incidents using crowd sourced videos and pictures. Traditional media using radio and TV have also used these platforms to promote issue-based elections and promote fair access to media for all political parties.

4.0 CSO strategies that have worked in elections programming since 2012

The strategies/methods described above have their advantages and disadvantages and are capable of delivering successful outcomes. However, it is not enough to choose one strategy/method as such, it depends on how they are deployed, the capacity of those leading the intervention and context within which one is intervening. This section looks at the ingredients that make a successful project on elections amongst STAR-Ghana Grantees since 2012.

4.1 Comprehensive collaborative, multi-stakeholder network and coalition building interventions tends to be successful

Election related challenges tend to be multifaceted. It means that often it requires the collective action of different actors and institutions to address the problem. Some of the standout CSO interventions reflect these critical ingredients, particularly interventions seeking to prevent, mitigate and resolve election related conflict. This strategy works whether it involves high-level political actors, changing popular attitudes or local level conflict resolution. STAR-Ghana's Election Adjudication Call in 2013 exemplifies this strategy. The key message for most of the intervention was for citizens and political actors to respect the decision of the Supreme Court, after the opposition New Patriotic Party (NPP) challenge the verdict of the EC in declaring the NDC candidate John Mahama as President in the 2012 elections. Key CSO coalitions like the Coalition of Northern NGOs which included WANEP, Youth Alive, Northern Ghana Aid and the Center for Alternative Development, built strong networks in the north

including media, state agencies like the EC, NCCE, Ghana Police Service, traditional authority, religious organisations and the beneficiaries of the intervention, like members of political vigilante groups. The Institute of Democratic Governance (IDEG) and the Civic Forum Initiative (CFI) put together a similar effort.

There were additional strategies embedded in these efforts that led to its success. First, these larger CSOs worked with Community Based Organisations (CBOs), particularly Faith Based Organisations (FBOs), who used their churches and mosque to preach tolerance and peace. Second, the interventions used local or national opinion leaders to get messages across to communities and the population generally. Media platforms in the network amplified these messages in the various languages.

4.2 Targeted and Focused State and CSO collaboration works

Sometimes, election referees like the EC, Police or Judiciary needs a specific and focused intervention to improve their effectiveness during elections. In 2012 Penplusbytes collaborated with the National Security Task Force to track election violence incidents during the elections. They built a crowd-sourced online platform that allowed the police to be informed and respond in real time to incidents occurring at various places in the country on Election Day. Similar strategies were used in 2012 by the Ghana Federation of Disability Organisation (GFDO) to facilitate the participation of 323 voters with psychosocial disability (proven to be of sound mind) to vote for the first time. Working with the EC, three polling centers were set up at three major psychiatric hospitals (Accra, Ankaful and Pantang) to assist such voters. This was the first time this has happened in Ghana. In this respect, it is also important that these kinds of targeted interventions were carried by CSOs like the GFDO, experienced in the subject matter of the intervention.

4.3 Naming and Shaming Violators of Electoral Rules works

Naming and shaming political actors who breach electoral rules has proven to act as a restraint to such a behavior and helped to reduce the incidence of such violations. The Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA) project to promote decent language in the media has proven effective in reducing the use of abusive language and personality attacks by partisans during election campaigns in both 2012 and the 2016 elections. In 2012, weekly monitoring and naming and shaming led to a reduction in the use of intemperate language from twenty incidents to three. The Ghana Integrity Initiative (GII), the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana) and Ghana Anti-Corruption Coalition (GACC) project tracking abuse of incumbency also has this feature and proved to act as a restraint to political actors seeking to use state resources for their private political campaigns, including accessing media time from the state broadcaster, Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC).

4.4 Evidence-based Advocacy is most effective way of influencing policy and promoting issue-based electioneering

As noted earlier, research is used by a number of CSOs, particularly think tanks engaged in election reform advocacy but also generally trying to influence the policies of competing parties and government policy eventually. For example the Integrated Social Development Center (ISODEC) intervention to lobby political parties to adopt social programmes grounded in the Sustainable Development Goals in 2016 was successful because the proposals submitted were informed by research and were seen as credible by the parties. A similar effort was undertaken in 2012 by ISODEC to lobby parties to develop policies for the sustainable management of Ghana's natural resources. Another example is work done in 2012 by the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) and the National Catholic Secretariat (NCS) to facilitate the passage of the Presidential Transition Bill 2012. Similar strategies were adopted in the GII/CDD-Ghana/GACC abuse of incumbency work as well as a CDD-Ghana/CODEO project to track, document and report on the incidence of vote buying during the 2016 elections. The use of research methods makes it difficult for political actors to be dismissive of the output. In addition, where media provided non-partisan platforms for the discussion of issues it promoted issued-based platforms, examples include Citi Fm project to create platform for citizens to engage their parliamentary aspirants and Joy Fm's 'Ballot Box' project providing a platform for citizens and political actors to discuss key policy issues and manifesto proposals to address it.

4.5 Use of social media is becoming increasingly important and effective in election programming

Some of the most successful interventions since 2012 utilized social media extensively. The work of Penplusbytes in collaboration with the National Security Task Force has already been mentioned. A second intervention worth noting is the 2012 Blogging Ghana and GhanaDecides project targeting young people who are registering to vote for the first time. The introduction of the biometric registration and verification system into the electoral process in Ghana in 2012, it became important to educate different classes of potential voters on how the system works. Blogging Ghana and GhanaDecides used social media exclusively to reach out technology savvy youth registering for the first time to vote in elections. A key factor in the success of this intervention was the expertise and experience of the project managers. Blogging Ghana and GhanaDecides used the same strategy in the 2016 elections to give voices to marginalized groups like women, youth and persons with disability.

5.0 Lessons Learnt

Since 2012, when STAR-Ghana started issuing elections calls, many lessons have been learnt and informed the focus and management of subsequent calls. A number of these lessons are documented in project reports and other learning documents. This section highlights key lessons learnt from CSOs strategies to address challenges in elections in Ghana.

5.1 Collaboration is essential in tackling multifaceted election challenges

Collaboration in the CSO space has its own challenges including the 'free rider' problem in collective action efforts. Collaborations often require that different collaborators bring different skills and experience to help deliver the objectives. Often, this is more difficult to execute and weaken the effectiveness of collaborations and coalitions. Notwithstanding that reality, depending on the type and scale of intervention, collaborations that bring together opinion leaders, CBOs, media and citizens provide a strong platform for addressing election challenges. Also, collaborations that establish either vertical or horizontal linkages within CSOs tend to be strong. In the case of horizontal linkages it reinforces the neutrality of the interveners in a highly politically polarized election setting. In terms of vertical linkages, where national NGOs work with CSOs operating at lower levels, it allows for the channeling of local issues and evidence into strategic level decision making and vice versa. To overcome some of these collective action problems, coalition leaders must be strategic in the selection of partners to help ensure there are clear roles and responsibilities. Where, there is less flexibility in selecting partners because of the unique expertise that a particular group brings to the coalition, they must work hard to build trust to ensure a smooth implementation of activities to achieve their objectives.

5.2 The expertise and experience of CSOs implementing interventions are also important

Related to the first lesson learnt is the importance of expertise and experience. The more experience that CSOs bring to project implementation, the likelihood that the intervention will be successful. Experience ensures that the knowledge level required for election projects are high, and nuances of election issues at stake and how it plays out in a community are understood. If this experience is combined with capacity to deploy the appropriate tools for addressing the challenges, interventions tend to be successful. CSOs may not have the relevant expertise and/or experience but it can be sourced and deployed strategically for project implementation.

5.3 Familiarity with the communities for local interventions is important particularly in peace building and conflict resolution

In the context of election programming where the intervention is located in communities with pre-existing protracted conflicts, it is imperative that CSOs are conversant with the history, actors and practices of the community. Such interventions place significant burden on CSOs to engage with a number of difficult and sensitive issues. Knowing when and how to do what, becomes a matter of skill, knowledge and creativity to try new strategies to cause change. This does not mean that CSOs should not work with other CSOs who may not be

familiar with the community they are expected to work in but they may possess the intervention tools that are useful to the task.

5.4 Interventions in local communities, particularly hard-to-reach/remote communities and communities with protracted conflict, must involve CBOs and FBOs in program design and implementation

It flows from the lesson above that in the case of intervention related to communities with pre-existing protracted conflicts that CSOs must work with FBOs and CBOs at the early phase of the intervention design and through the implementation. FBOs and CBOs are likely to have the local history and knowledge, know the actors as well as the history of past interventions and why they think it did not work. In addition, FBOs have the convening power to bring factions together and do have some sway over local elites.

5.5 Evidence based advocacy is important for lobbying political parties to adopt CSO proposals for manifestos and essential for holding parties accountable for violating elections rules of the game

A review of CSO interventions under the STAR-Ghana election call since 2012 shows that the use of research methods to gather evidence to be used to influence decision making have proven to be an effective tool in two main ways. First, when these types of methods are used to back proposals for policy considerations during the manifesto preparation period it is quite effective. Political parties are more open to listening to proposals if they can appreciate the quality of the exercise. The second context involves tracking and documenting infractions of the electoral law during the campaign period. Often collecting evidence and sharing such information is always controversial for political parties contesting elections. The parties worry that any negative assessment of their campaign can affect their chances of winning that election. The best way to mitigate that reaction from parties is to ensure that the methodology is strong and systematic. This approach has been successful in tracking sensitive issues like abuse of incumbency, equal access to state media and vote buying, among others.

5.6 Focused and targeted interventions aimed at fixing specific election issues or assisting election management institutions to strengthen their capacity in a specific way are often effective

The electoral cycle is loaded with many tasks that have to be executed well to guarantee credible elections. Many elections stakeholders including the EMB, police, media and judiciary may not have all the requisite knowledge or experience in implementing various aspects of the electoral process. A good example is the recent efforts to embrace social media as an important source of information for state organizations. The interventions by CSOs with that type of skill set proved very effective because the objective was easier to articulate as

well as easier to measure. Also, it is easier to measure the impact of such interventions, as the beneficiary agency is able to apply the skills or knowledge instantly during an election to improve the process.

6.0 New Opportunities and Emerging Issues in Election Management in Ghana

Strengthening electoral system and deepening the process of delivering credible and peaceful elections are medium to long-term undertakings. However, it requires that actors like STAR-Ghana that funds initiatives in this area must be prepared to utilize the election issue spaces that emerge as an entry point for dealing with immediate challenges but also lay the foundation for further work or reform in the area. This section identifies some of the key election issue areas that should be considered by STAR-Ghana and other stakeholders in the medium term.

6.1 The upcoming 2019 local government elections

In 2019, it is expected that Ghana will elect their mayors for first time under the Fourth Republic. This is expected to happen because of the promise by the NPP and its candidate Nana Akufo Addo during the 2016 elections that when elected into office they will make the position of District/Municipal/Metropolitan Chief Executive electable. So far now President Akufo Addo has used all major public platforms like the State of the Nation addresses in both 2017 and 2018 as well as Meet the Press Series to reiterate his commitment to fulfill this promise. The likely impact of this reform agenda on governance and development in Ghana will be significant. Some of the benefits expected are the strengthening of accountability relationship between citizens and district assemblies; and increased participation of citizens in the affairs of government at the lower levels. There are however outstanding challenges that still need to be addressed. First, per the operation of Article 55(3) and 290 (1)(e) of the 1992 Constitution, making the elections partisan will require a referendum. At his 2018 State of the Nation Address, President Akufo Addo indicated that he would prefer a referendum on directly electing MMDCE be held around the same time as the local government elections. This certainly is likely to put a strain on the Electoral Commission and will require strong interventions to ensure the processes are peaceful and credible for the referendum and the elections to follow. A second challenge is that the constitutional body expected to undertake this assignment is the EC, yet its leadership is currently battling impeachment proceedings. This state of affairs makes the Commission vulnerable which may affect its ability to deliver credible elections. This area requires strong STAR-Ghana support, something similar to the special call put out around the election petition process in 2013. .

6.2 Restoring EC credibility after the election petition

The EC has had a very difficult period since the 2012 election petition case and the departure of Dr. Afari Djan, its founding Chairman. In 2012, CDD-Ghana Afrobarometer Survey found that 40% of Ghanaian adults 'did not trust the EC at

all or just a little'. The percentage increased sharply in 2014 to 59% after the Supreme Court adjudicated the presidential petition in 2013. In 2016, CDD-Ghana undertook two pre-election surveys ahead of the polls, the second pre-election survey showed a marked improvement in the mistrust ratings of the EC reducing to 45%. It is therefore troubling that following a largely successful election; the EC leadership and the EC are embattled. It is almost certain; CSO actors will have to step in to help restore confidence in the EC again in such a short period. These interventions will need the support of STAR-Ghana.

6.3 Ongoing discussion about implementation of ROPAL

In December 2017, the Human Rights Court ruled that the EC has 12 months to implement the Representation of the Peoples Amendment Act 2006 that will allow all Ghanaians living abroad to vote in elections in Ghana. A US-Based Ghanaian advocacy group, the Progressive Alliance Movement, brought the suit against the EC. The timeline proposed by the court places the implementation in 2019 when there are likely to be elections of MMDCEs, a referendum and the implementation of the ROPAA. This is all likely to happen under an embattled EC. There is a need for strong CSO intervention to ensure there is cross-party consensus on how to implement the Act.

6.4 The publication of polling station results

The EC promised in 2016 ahead of the elections that it would publish the polling station results of the 2016 elections. This was consistent with the 27 reforms proposals that EC had accepted to implement from 2015. A year has passed since the elections and the EC continues to hold on to the information. The full disclosure of the report will enhance transparency of results significantly and there must be an effort to encourage the EC to take this important first step.

6.5 Addressing the challenges with ICT in tallying and announcing results

The EC should use this quiet period to improve its ICT infrastructure to ensure that the delays experienced at the 2016 election and the tension it creates is avoided. Over the years, it appears the parties are becoming more aware of the need to collect their own results. These investments will increase in 2020 and will again disrupt the accounting process by the EC because they want announce their own figures. The EC, the parties and other stakeholders must seriously begin to dialogue to ensure that the announcement of results does not create unnecessary tension.

6.6 Electoral reforms: New date for elections, reforms of appointment process for EC and governance of EC

There a number of reform issues that remain outstanding and require a sustained intervention. First, in 2016, the Parliament of Ghana rejected the EC plans to move the election date a month earlier to November to ensure there is

enough time for a second elections and transition. Efforts should be made to support the resubmission of the plan. Second, in light of the ongoing challenges at the EC, election stakeholders should use their resources to impress on the EC to push ahead with key reforms in the internal governance of the office as well as the appointment process, which will require the calling of a referendum to amend the Constitution.

7.0 Conclusion

In 2016, Ghana held its 7th successful presidential and parliamentary elections since the return to multiparty democratic rule in 1993. Ghana's stable but highly competitive electoral democracy has earned it respect and admiration amongst international watchers of Ghana's political history, leading former President Obama to describe the country as a 'model for democracy' in Africa. STAR-Ghana through its pooled funding mechanism has contributed substantially to these outcomes. In spite of these accolades the country democratic experience remains a work in progress that requires continuous vigilance and nurturing to prevent reversals and stagnation. It is for this reason that this learning document on CSO interventions in election in Ghana under the STAR-Ghana election call programs for 2012 and 2016 is useful. As a lessons learnt document it shares insights in CSO election programming to guide future interventions. From the successful strategies identified, it will be useful for STAR-Ghana to continue to support collaborations both vertically and horizontally, better target interventions to deal with specific issues that can impact on the electoral space, continue to provide funding for strategic opportunities to tackle issues that can undermine electoral peace like the current challenges at the EC. Lastly, STAR-Ghana should support intermediate steps aimed at reforming the EC.

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STAR-Ghana, Election Value Chain Diagram.

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Appendix 1: Elections Issues Identified since the 2012 Elections across the Election Value Chain

Election Issue	2012 Elections	2016 Elections
The Credibility and Effectiveness of the EMB		
Composition of the EC (Permanent Commissioners vs. non-executive non-permanent commissioners)	Yes	Yes
Decision making structure of the EC (Dominance of the Commission Chair in decision making)	Yes	Yes
Transparency and accountability of the EC (Transparency over election budgeting, expenditure and procurement)	Yes	Yes
The integrity, competence and capacity of temporary poll workers	Yes	Yes
The sustainability of Election Financing in Ghana	Yes	Yes
Auditing of political parties expenditure		
The low levels and quality of civic and voter education	Yes	Yes
Voter Registration		
Proof of eligibility to register to vote	Yes	Yes
Registration of unqualified prospective voters (minors and foreigners- violations are pronounced in border areas)	Yes	Yes
Need for continuous voter registration	Yes	Yes
Preventing a bloated register	Yes	Yes
Re-demarcation of constituencies	Yes	No
Campaigns		
Low incidence of issue-based electioneering (quality of manifestos and campaign on issues)	Yes	Yes
Politics of insults and personalities (use of abusive	Yes	Yes

language, personality attacks, smear campaigns, name-calling and divisive politics)		
Election related corruption (abuse of incumbency and vote buying)	Yes	Yes
Election Security and Peace		
Political party vigilantes	Yes	Yes
Selective justice (selective application of policing powers in favour of incumbent party supporters)	Yes	Yes
Capacity of security agencies to police the election	Yes	Yes
Improving Early warning signaling and identifying hotspots	Yes	Yes
Policing the border communities to prevent voter registration fraud	Yes	Yes
Political Inclusion		
Inclusion of persons with disability in the electoral process including the use of tactile ballots on voting day	Yes	Yes
Inclusion and empowerment of women and youth	Yes	Yes
Voting and Counting		
Reducing rejected ballots		
Policing the ballot box		Yes
Punishing poll workers who violate electoral laws	Yes	Yes
Tallying and Results Declaration		
Demystifying the strong room		Yes
Low trust levels in the EC and the transmission of results process		Yes
Adjudication of Election Results Disputes		
Adjudication of election disputes		
Enforcement of electoral laws		Yes