What Works in Civil Society Organisation Interventions in Ghana's Elections:

A STAR-Ghana Learning Document on Elections

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this comprehensive Learning Document on Elections in Ghana is to help both civil society and election stakeholders broadly reflect and absorb the lessons learnt from implementing programs and projects to support election credibility and peace. The document also responds to the Strengthening Transparency, Accountability and Responsiveness in Ghana (STAR-Ghana) mandate and role as a learning organisation. 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 conditions that enables 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 document is set out as follows: It
- identifies and discusses the key challenges noted by election stakeholders since the 2012 elections;
- pinpoints the broad strategies that civil society actors have used to address the challenges identified in elections since 2012;
- captures examples of what interventions have worked so far;
- summarizes the key lessons learnt from the implementation of the STAR-Ghana supported projects since 2012;
- notes emerging issues and new opportunities for improving on future interventions and
- lists several recommendations.

2. Key Challenges in Elections Since 2012

The elections value chain in Ghana begins with a voter registration exercise, which includes the re-demarcation of electoral constituencies. That exercise is followed by the electoral campaign period, voting, counting, and tallying of votes, the 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, concerns about the credibility and effectiveness of the Electoral Commission must be considered. Other cross-cutting 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 is captured in table form in Appendix A. In this section a few lingering electoral concerns are highlighted. Additionally, electoral issues raised in 2012 that were addressed in the 2016 elections are also pointed out.

2.1. Credibility and Effectiveness of 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 Articles 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 throughout the first two decades 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 several 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. Although the then President, John Mahama, insisted that the nomination and appointing processes involved wide consultations, generally stakeholders were dissatisfied with the level of engagement and continued to call for reforms in this area[1]. 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 Chair has dominated decision making at the Commission despite the constitutional arrangement that entrusts decision making to the Commission as a collective. The Chairperson as primus-inter-pares tends to have a final say in most instances (like the role of a sole commissioner) or with the two Deputy Chairs. The four non-permanent members have had less of an influence in decision making at the Commission. Other challenges are 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. In 2016, the total budget for elections was about GHc 1.14 billion[2]. The procurement process for the

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[1]Stakeholder 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/)

printing of voting materials was also mired in controversy in both 2012 and 2016 and recently the election expenditure has become a subject of petitions for the removal of the Chair and two Deputy Chairs of the Commission. Generally, the concerns expressed by stakeholders persist and are yet to be systematically addressed.

2.2. Securing Credible Voter Register

Securing an accurate register in Ghana without the names of deceased, under-age or alien voters is rare. Obviously, the presence of unqualified voters ought to be at a minimum. Since the return to multiparty democratic rule in Ghana the credibility of the electoral roll has been called in to question at each election. For example, in 2008, the EC admitted that the electoral register was bloated. The fundamental challenge lies with the lack of trust in the various proofs of identity. Political parties have generally mistrusted government issued identity cards because of the possibility of forgery. In the run up to the 2016 elections for example, certain members of political parties challenged in court 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, thus the names of voters who registered with the card were removed and those affected allowed to re-register. The challenge first began with establishing who is a Ghanaian 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 has not addressed the issues of minors and foreigners along the Ghana borders registering to vote. These underlying challenges are yet to be resolved so the objective of securing a credible register remains unfulfilled.

2.3. Promoting Issued-Based Campaigning

The agenda to promote 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 tend to be dominated by personalities and characterized by the politics of insults, use of abusive language, personality attacks, smear campaigns, name-calling, stoking of ethnic sentiments and generally divisive tactics. This type of campaigning is enabled by partisan media, partisan political communicators, and a negative political culture, which elevates the loudest and most abusive political party supporters to cult status. Efforts over the years to name and shame offenders seems to have mitigated the frequency and effects of such anti-developmental behavior.

2.4. Election Related Corruption

Elections in Ghana are increasingly being monetized and with it has come an increase incorruption. Elections are generally characterized by a patron-client relationship between those wanting to contest for election and the voters. Election related corruption often takes the form of abuse of incumbency and

vote buying. Increasingly as elections have become more competitive between the two main parties, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC), sitting political parties have found sophisticated ways to deploy state resources into elections through different forms of incumbency abuse, including 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 helped to constrain excessive abuse by incumbents.   These efforts have extended to the abuse of 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 characterized by acrimony and sometimes latent violence perpetuated by party affiliated vigilante groups. Political vigilantism is not a new phenomenon; it was present under past constitutional rules. 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, sometimes resulting in the death of party supporters. The occurrences of party vigilantism have become of growing concern after every election as crimes perpetrated by incumbent party supporters against opposition supporters or vice versa have gone unpunished. These electoral turnovers mean that every time there is a change in government it leads to revenge attacks. The police appear to have been 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 albeit latent.

2.6. Promoting Inclusion in the Election Process

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. The EC has made several efforts itself to address these challenges particularly for 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. Several interventions from civil society have been targeted at these groups in programming. Notwithstanding these interventions, the concerns remain because of the few number of women who get to stand as aspirants or candidates and the even fewer numbers who get elected. Currently, there are 35 women in the 275-member Parliament.

2.7. Improving Transparency in Declaration of Results

Following polls, the counting of ballots at polling stations has been progressively trouble free over the years. The incidence of ballot stealing, intimidation and disruption has been low. However, the concerns around the collation of the results from the polling stations to the constituency centers and

then on to regional and national level have become more controversial, despite technology being increasingly deployed. For example, in a 2016 nationally representative pre-election survey conducted by the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana), 46% of prospective Ghanaian voters stated they did not trust the EC to announce the correct results. The advantages and risks associated with technology was in full evidence 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', failed. The Strong Room, which was a room at the EC headquarters, was used to finalize the results for the presidential elections and was not open to media or public. Often partisans would allege manipulation of figures but as the process was not transparent it was difficult to verify claims, which caused several problems leading to prolonged tensions after the elections. These challenges in 2016 mean there is still work to be done in improving transparency.

3. Civil Society Stratagems to Challenges in Elections Since 2012

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

3.1. Observation and Monitoring

Election management bodies draw a distinction between election observation and election monitoring. Citizens interested in policing elections are expected to observe and not monitor the electoral process. An observer may draw the attention of a presiding officer to an irregularity that has occurred or is occurring at the polling station but is not able to intervene to correct it. A monitor on the other hand who has supervisory responsibility such as 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, some of these role divisions 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 instantly send messages of irregularities to a situation room or data processing centre and the information relayed directly to EC officials who can address the problem on the spot. The same methods can be used to track incidences of violence or intimidation and instantly communicated to security agencies for immediate action. Observers tend to follow checklists based on the rules in order to note infractions. It is on this basis that observers conclude whether the process has been credible or not. Over the years, domestic observation groups like CODEO and the Civic Forum Initiative (CFI) for instance, have become more systematic with the deployment of observers to the field to draw a more accurate picture of election performance and to help

deter fraud. Since 2008, CODEO, as an example, has employed statistical sampling methods to distribute its observers over polling stations.

3.2. Education

Several CSOs attribute key challenges with elections such as high percentages of rejected ballots, violence, vote buying and receiving, and general politics of insults to a lack of civic and voter education. The strategy to address this has been to develop various educational materials and resources including posters, videos, illustrations, and to organize forums and durbars, or use radio platforms to educate citizens about the importance of voting, 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 (PWD), Youth and Women or community leaders like chiefs. Others also work with religious groups to use Sunday church services or Friday prayers s as platforms to teach and instruct congregations on conduct during campaigning, on Election Day and following 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 (MPs) in the 275-memberchamber. 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 women parliamentary candidates. For example, of the 1,332 candidates who competed in the 2016 elections, 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 such as women and girls, PWDs, the poor and young have informed some of the most common strategies used by CSOs to intervene in elections. Empowerment programs take the form of mentoring, capacity building in the rules and strategies of campaigning, raising funds, advocacy, and increased knowledge in the broad areas of governance. This mentoring has been carried out for those aspiring to stand for office as MPs, to 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 and promote the credibility and peacefulness of elections. Often, despite 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 tensions are not exacerbated during elections. Mediation is thus sometimes used as a conflict resolution mechanism during the campaign period, on Election Day and post elections at local and national levels. At local level, CSOs

have worked with non-partisan opinion leaders such as chiefs and religious leaders together with security agencies to serve as a mediation team to resolve conflicts between political parties or between parties and security agencies. At national level, CSOs have collaborated with groups of eminent persons with the influence and convening power to bring disputing sides 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. The CSO interventions primarily use systematic qualitative or quantitative data gathering, analysis and dissemination. Their research data and reports are often utilized by think tanks advocating for electoral reform, tracking complex electoral corruption issues such as abuse of incumbency or vote buying, or manifesto analyses.

3.6. Traditional and New Media

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

4. Effective CSO Strategies in Elections Programming Since 2012

The strategies/methods described above have their advantages and disadvantages and can deliver successful outcomes. However, it is not enough to promote one strategy or method particularly, as it depends on several factors, such as how it is deployed, the capacity of those leading the intervention and the context within which the intervention takes place. This section looks at the ingredients that make a successful project on elections amongst STAR-Ghana grant recipients since 2012.

4.1. Inclusive and Collaborative Interventions

Election related challenges tend to be multifaceted. It means that often it requires the collective action of different actors and institutions to address a problem. Some of the standout CSO interventions reflect these concerted

efforts, particularly interventions seeking to prevent, mitigate and resolve election related conflict. This strategy works whether it involves high-level political players, changing popular attitudes or local level conflict resolution. STAR-Ghana's Election Adjudication Call in 2013 exemplifies this strategy. The key message of the intervention was for citizens and political sides to respect the decision of the Supreme Court, after the opposition NPP challenged 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 West Africa Network of Peacebuilders (WANEP), Youth Alive, Northern Ghana Aid and the Center for Alternative Development, built strong networks in the North involving media, state agencies like the EC, NCCE, Ghana Police Service, traditional authorities, religious organisations and beneficiaries of the intervention, such as 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 or mosques 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 State and CSO Collaboration

Occasionally, election referees such as the EC, Police or Judiciary need specific and focused interventions 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 to respond in real time to incidents occurring in various parts of 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, polling centers were set up at three major psychiatric hospitals (Accra, Ankaful and Pantang) to assist such voters. This was the first time this had occurred in Ghana. In this instance, it was important that this kind of targeted interventions was carried out by a CSO like the GFDO, experienced in the subject matter of the intervention.

4.3. Naming and Shaming of Electoral Rules Violators

Naming and shaming political participants 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 the 2012 and 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 utilizes naming and shaming which has proved to act as a restraint to political actors seeking to use state resources for their private political campaigns, such as accessing media time from the state broadcaster, Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC).

4.4. Evidence-based Advocacy to Influence Electioneering

As noted earlier, research is used by several CSOs, particularly think tanks engaged in election reform advocacy but also generally trying to influence the policies of competing parties and government policy generally. 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 viewed 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 project as well as a CDD-Ghana/CODEO strategy to track, document and report on the incidences of vote buying during the 2016 elections. The use of verified research methods makes it difficult for political players to be dismissive of the output. In addition, where the media provided non-partisan platforms for the discussion of issues, it focused on issues. Examples included the Citi FM project to create a platform for citizens to engage their parliamentary aspirants, and Joy FM's 'Ballot Box' project providing a stage for citizens and politicians to discuss key policy issues and manifesto proposals to address them.

4.5. Social Media Use 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 registering to vote for the first time. The introduction of the biometric registration and verification system into the electoral process in Ghana in 2012 made it important to educate different classes of potential voters on the process. Blogging Ghana and GhanaDecides used social media exclusively to reach out to tech-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 again used this

strategy in the 2016 elections to give voices to marginalized groups like women, youth, and persons with disability.

5. Lessons Learnt

Since 2012, when STAR-Ghana began issuing elections calls, many lessons have been learnt that have 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 Necessary for Tackling Multifaceted Election Disputes

Collaboration in the CSO space has its own challenges including the 'free rider' problem in collective action efforts. Collaborations often require that different partners bring different skills and experience to help deliver the objectives. Occasionally this is not achieved which weakens the effectiveness of collaborations and coalitions. Notwithstanding, 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, coalitions 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 due to the unique expertise a 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. Expertise of CSOs Implementing Interventions Critical

Related to the first point above is the importance of expertise and experience. The more experience that CSOs bring to project implementation, the more likely that the intervention will be successful. Experience ensures that the knowledge level required for election projects is high, and the 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 always have the relevant expertise and/or experience but it can be sourced and deployed strategically for project implementation.

5.3   Knowledge of Communities Key for Local Interventions in Conflict Resolution

In the context of election programming where the intervention is in communities with pre-existing protracted conflicts, it is imperative that CSO are conversant with the history, participants and practices of the community. Such interventions place significant burden on CSOs to engage with several difficult and sensitive issues. Knowing when and how to do what, becomes a matter of skill, knowledge, and creativity to attempt new strategies to cause change. This does not imply that CSOs not work with other CSOs who do not have the familiarity of 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 Must Involve CBOs and FBOs

It flows from the lesson above that in the case of interventions related to communities with pre-existing protracted conflicts, particularly in hard-to-reach/remote areas, that CSOs must work with FBOs and CBOs at the early phase of the intervention design and throughout 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 may not have worked. In addition, FBOs have the convening power to bring factions together and do have some sway over local elites.

5.5.   Evidence-based Advocacy Critical to Adopting CSO Proposals

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, and more likely to be accountable 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. Collecting evidence and sharing such information is often controversial for political parties contesting elections. Political parties worry that any negative assessment of their campaign could affect their chances of winning elections. The best way to mitigate such reactions 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 Interventions to Underpin Capacity of Election Institutions

The electoral cycle is loaded with many tasks that must 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 organisations. The interventions by CSOs with that 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 can apply the skills or knowledge instantly during an election to improve the process.

6. New Opportunities and Emerging Issues in Election Management

Strengthening electoral systems and deepening the process of delivering credible and peaceful elections are medium to long-term undertakings. It requires that agencies like STAR-Ghana who fund 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, to 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 Upcoming 2019 Local Government Elections

In 2019, it is expected that Ghana will elect mayors for first time under the Fourth Republic. This is expected to happen due to the promise by the NPP candidate Nana Akufo Addo during the 2016 elections that if elected the position of District/Municipal/Metropolitan Chief Executive would be by electable mandate. So far, President Akufo Addo has used all major public platforms such as 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 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 grassroot levels. There are still outstanding issues that 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. In his 2018 State of the Nation Address, President Akufo Addo indicated that he would prefer a referendum on directly electing Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDCEs) be held at 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 makes the Commission vulnerable which may affect its ability to deliver credible elections. This situation requires strong STAR-Ghana support, something like the interventions it put out during the election petition process in 2013.

6.2 Restoring EC Credibility in Wake of 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 Chair. In 2012, a 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 of which showed a marked improvement in the mistrust ratings of the EC which had dropped to 45%. It is therefore troubling that following a largely successful election, the EC and its leadership are embattled. It is almost certain that CSO groups will have to play a part in restoring confidence in the EC once more. These interventions will need the support of STAR-Ghana.

6.3 Ongoing Discussion on Implementation of ROPAA

In December 2017, the Human Rights Division of the High Court ruled that the EC has 12 months to implement the Representation of the People Amendment Act 2006 (ROPAA), which will allow Ghanaians living abroad to vote in elections in Ghana. A US-based Ghanaian advocacy group, the Progressive Alliance Movement, sued the EC resulting in this ruling. The timeline proposed by the court places the implementation in 2019 when there are likely to be MMDCEs elections, a referendum and implementation of the ROPAA. This is all likely to happen under a beleaguered EC. There is a need for strong CSO intervention to ensure cross-party consensus on how to implement the Act.

6.4 Publication of Polling Station Results

The EC promised in 2016 ahead of the elections that it would publish the polling station results after the elections. This was consistent with the 27 reforms proposals the EC had accepted to implement from 2015. A year has passed since the elections and the EC continues to hold on to this 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 step.

6.5 Addressing Challenges with ICT in Election Results

The EC should use this period between elections to improve its ICT infrastructure to ensure that delays such as that experienced during the 2016 election and the tensions it created can be avoided. Over the years, it the political parties have taken to collecting their own results, due to mistrust of the EC. These investments by the parties are bound to increase in 2020 and will again disrupt the accounting process by the EC because the parties   are

inclined to push 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

There are several 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 if necessary for second elections and a transition period. Efforts should be made to support the resubmission of the plan.

➢ Second, considering the ongoing challenges at the EC, election stakeholders should use their resources to influence the EC to push ahead with key reforms in the internal governance of the office, including their appointments process, which will require the calling of a referendum to amend the Constitution.

7. Conclusion

In 2016, Ghana held its 7th successful presidential and parliamentary elections following the return to multiparty democratic rule in 1993. Ghana's stable but highly competitive electoral democracy has earned respect and admiration amongst international watchers of Ghana's political history, leading former US 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. Despite these accolades the country's 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 STAR-Ghana learning document on CSO interventions in 2012 and 2016 elections 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

➢ to better target interventions to deal with specific issues that can impact on the electoral space

➢ to continue to provide funding for strategic opportunities to tackle issues that can undermine electoral peace like the current challenges at the EC

➢ and finally, for STAR-Ghana to continue to support intermediate steps aimed at reforming the EC.

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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	Yes	Yes

personalities (use of abusive 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