

Electoralates' Perception on the Participation of Election Observers in Ghana's 2012 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections

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Abstract

Election observation is an important tool for improving the worth of elections and well-executed election observation is helpful in strengthening the democratisation process in a country. The study assessed electoralates' perception on the participation of election observers in Ghana's 2012 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections. Descriptive survey technique was used and study employed simple random sampling was employed to select respondents for the study. The sample size for the study was one thousand respondents and the research instruments used were questionnaire and structured interview. Findings show that the electoralates know election observers' role and impact they have during elections. From the study findings all the respondents (100%) strongly agree or agree to the fact that election observers' core duty is to check that elections are conducted in a country in compliance of both local and international standards governing the conduct of free, fair and credible election with the provision of adequate security personnel in the polling grounds with their role in maintaining order within the polling centres. The study concluded that there is an established and increasing electoralates' commendation for the positive participation of the impartial election observers in the 2012 presidential and parliamentary elections of Ghana and recommended that international community must support election observers efforts to improve the quality and credibility of elections observers through professional election observation and monitoring of both local and international observers group and local and international observers need to employing standardised methodology and technology capable of monitoring the whole electoral process.

Keywords: Election observers, credible election, legitimate authority, democracy, Ghana

1.0 Introduction

It is accepted globally that holding of transparent, accountable and credible elections is an essential foundation stone of the democratic process in any nation. Elections can be a means of promoting and consolidating democracy as well as improving good governance yet elections only do not amount to democracy. Periodic and valid elections are seen as a main constituent for enhancing the validity of a government and strengthening the social contract between people and their governments and election observation has turned out to be a widespread tendency along with development agencies and donor countries because a democratic setting assisted by vigorous involvement of the government, civil society and international organisations and donor countries in decision making is an enormous constituent for a sustainable socio-economic and political development.

The United Nations instituted a universal legal umbrella on human rights, which includes provisions applicable to the holding of democratic elections. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights establishes key democratic principles and the central role of 'genuine' elections in conferring legitimacy on the authority of government. These are set out in Article 21, which reads:

1. *Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.*
2. *Everyone has the right to equal access to public service in his country.*
3. *The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be held by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot or by the equivalent free voting procedures.*

Electoral rights were further developed in The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) adopted in 1966. Article 25 reads:

Every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity [...] without unreasonable restrictions:

- a) *to take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives;*
- b) *to vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors;*
- c) *to have access, on general terms of equality, to public service in his country.*

Article 25 of the ICCPR enshrines the right to suffrage. The requirement to hold 'genuine periodic elections' establishes the concept of an election cycle, and therefore the continuous right to participate in the conduct of public affairs.

International law recognises that the conduct of elections requires an effective legal framework which protects fundamental rights and freedoms. The African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance adopted in 2007 and which entered into force on the 15th February, 2012 and the Durban Declaration on the Principles Governing Democratic Elections in Africa AHG/Decl.1 (XXXVIII), 2002 are instructive to all African countries. The Durban Declaration underscores that democratic elections are the foundation of power of any representative government.

As such, periodic elections comprise a key aspect of the democratisation process and are therefore an element for good governance, the rule of law, the maintenance and promotion of peace, security, stability and development. The declaration further sets out principles under which democratic elections should be organised, including democratic constitutions in compliance with helpful legal instruments; a system of separation of powers that ensures in particular, the independence of the judiciary; the holding of elections at regular intervals by impartial, all-inclusive competent accountable electoral institutions staffed by well-trained personnel and equipped with adequate logistics.

Democracy demands universal adult suffrage; recurring, free, competitive, and fair elections; more than one serious political party; and alternative sources of information Larry & Morlino, (2005). This can only be accomplished through a long term process of political development. Democracy development supporters agreed that effective and impartial election observation in countries where the election is viewed to be of noteworthy magnitude to the development of the state's democratic advancement or when the election is alleged to be in jeopardy by would-be forces of rigging.

Worldwide, Western Democracies have supported the democratic advancement of countries around the globe. With the tradition of election observation, in countless examples, the global community has been able to legitimise the electoral process by articulating findings from election observing and giving out their report findings and drawing conclusion to the entire international community. Election observation is planned to make certain that the elections meet a free and fair standard and that it correctly reflects the will of the populace. International and domestic observers are fetching progressively more widespread and well-liked democracy progress proposal that continues to acquire further media interest presently. Election observation supports a set of development policy initiatives considered to assist good governance and democratic institutions in states practicing democracy.

In view of the fact that election-related violence can in turn destabilise democracy by eroding citizens' confidence in the democratic process, electoral-support providers have commenced to build peaceful, credible, and sustainable elections a main concern. A broad consent is promising around the initiative that, in order to avert violence, elections must be seen as a process fairly than an affair. In other words, an election cannot be seen as an end in itself, but be obliged to be ingredient of a well-built and longer-term process of democratisation.

The integrity of elections has had a tumultuous history in Africa. Beginning with funding elections, electoral discrepancies and fraud have been prevalent. While some, such as Osabu-Kle (2000) have attributed these phenomena to the lack of culturally compatible forms of democracy others, such as Chebal & Daloz, (1999) have recommended that this simply reflects a trend toward the in formalisation of politics. In spite of the cause, the concept of free and fair has gained significant importance as the validity of elections in Africa has come to rest on the free and fair criterion.

Despite the fact that some African countries have not made stable progress in terms of holding periodic elections which is free, fair and credible other African countries like Ghana, south Africa, Cape Verde and more recently Niger offer principal course for free, fair, and credible elections in West Africa. On the whole, these election processes underscore the linkage involving the worth of elections and peace, stability, and the sustainability of democratic institutions. Furthermore, in each one of these countries, the local framework and initiatives have armoured the emergence and consolidation of successful electoral processes.

In Ghana, the ballot box has not only become the preferred tool for selecting political leaders, elections are also acknowledged as the only acceptable way to access power. Ghana's sixth presidential election since 1992 was a remarkable example of democracy at work in West Africa sub region and entire African continent. Election observers both local and foreign have participated actively by supporting the endeavour to maintain peace and stability while advocating, as well, for the sound socio-economic development of the country.

The Government of Ghana and the Electoral Commission of Ghana invited election observers from local to global level to come and witness the for the sixth time in a row, on 7 December 2012 to choose a president and 275 parliamentarians. Some of the notable international election observer groups that participated in Ghana's 2012 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections include The Commonwealth Observer Group, African Union Election Observation Missions, and ECOWAS Observation Mission (EOM), Electoral Institute for Sustainable

Democracy in Africa (EISA) and diplomatic missions represented in Ghana whereas some respected local observer groups were The Coalition for Domestic Election Observers (CODEO), The West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), The Christian Council of Ghana Election Observation and Election Monitoring and SAVE-Ghana,

With a turnout of nearly 80 percent, incumbent President John Dramani Mahama of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) won with 50.7 percent of the vote against main challenger Nana Akufo-Addo of the National People's Party (NPP), who garnered 47.74 percent. Credible domestic and international observation groups that participated in the Ghana's 2012 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections said that while there were some challenges related to the use of a new biometric voter register, the overall conduct of the election met national, regional and international standards.

1.1 Statement of Problem

An election conducted according to international and domestic standards is an expression of the majority will. With no a free and fair election, this process is compromised. In countries that have faced electoral problems or are transitioning, right conducted election monitoring and observation missions can, in theory, ensure that the popular will is respected and reflected in choosing a government. Election observation can perform a range of goals including confidence-building, conflict prevention, reporting, verifying, and legitimising elections (Anglin 1998). International election observers are now present at more than four out of every five elections in the developing world (Hyde 2010). The identification of whether or not an election has been organised according to a free and fair standard has become an election observers' main objective.

In a general sense, it can be believed that free and fair electoral practices are those that meet the most fundamental needs of a country's electoral code and regulations. More purposely, these are electoral practices that function to fulfil the demand of democratic indicators as well as help in the all-purpose competence of building of a nation's political system

There is a rich literature on election observers, but the immense majority of this is based on how to improve election observing whereas some literature focus on evaluations of election monitoring projects to reducing election violence, measuring the merits of election observation, dangers of renewed conflict or instability after elections but less research has been conducted on the impact and electorates' perception on the works of election observers. Therefore, this study aims to assess electorates' perception on the participation of election observers in Ghana's 2012 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections to help fill the research gap on election observing.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study was to assess electorates' perception on the participation of election observers in Ghana's 2012 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections. The specific objectives of the study were the following:

1. To examine electorates' knowledge on the role of election observers in Ghana's 2012 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections.
2. To determine the electorates' perception on election observers' impact on Ghana's 2012 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections.
3. To assess electorates' view on the need for investment in election observing projects

1.4 Research Questions

The general research question for the study was how electorates perceive the participation of election observers in Ghana's 2012 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections.

Specific questions were the following:

1. What is electorates' knowledge on the role of election observers in Ghana's 2012 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections?
2. What is the electorates' perception on election observers' impact on Ghana's 2012 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections?
3. What is electorates' view on the need for investment in election observing projects?

1.5 Significance of Study

This study sought to elaborate on the prospects of holding peaceful and credible elections and the pivotal role played by election observers both local and international groups in strengthening electoral processes. The study will add to the growing body of knowledge on electoral observing and administration and promote democratic consolidation with the management and policy oriented domains committed to the improvement of the quality of African elections for sustainable democracy and political stability in Africa. The study is also useful not only for generating further researches, but also offers a comprehensive package of conclusions and action-oriented recommendations for strengthening the conduct of elections and electoral-assistance regimes.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Concept Election Observation?

The meaning of election observers in this study implies the methodical, systematic, all-inclusive and precise gathering of information with reference to the laws, processes and bodies connected to the conduct of elections and other factors relating to the general electoral atmosphere; the unbiased, independent and professional analysis of such information; and the drawing of conclusions about the character of electoral processes based on the maximum principles for accuracy of information and impartiality of analysis (National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, 2005). According to Electoral Commission of Ghana, election observation involves the two main activities: to gather facts about the election and to interpret the facts so gathered from the purposes of determining whether or not, on the whole, the election went well.

Again, according to Chipfunde (2002) election observation involves “stationing of independent missions, officials or individuals representing international or local organizations for a specified time in a country which is in the process of organising a national election with a mandate to closely observe and pronounce on the entire process and outcome”.

Election observation is a helpful means for enhancing and improving the value of elections. Observers facilitate to build public assurance confidence in the openness of electoral processes. Election observation is a very important action with the objective to uphold democracy, human rights and the rule of law globally. International election observation has become an important mechanism for ensuring election integrity in countries undergoing a transition to democracy or in post-conflict societies. International observation today enjoys near-universal acceptance, and can help raise voter confidence and evaluate the legitimacy of an electoral process (International IDEA, 1999). International observation has also become a learning opportunity for national electoral administrators and election participants. It promotes bilateral exchanges of knowledge and information on electoral practices, sometimes leading to lasting cooperative relations (International IDEA, 1999).

Election Observation can help uphold, endorse and safeguard the civil and political rights of participants in elections and it contributes to supporting democratic institutions. Election observations scope is limited as it was centred on gauging whether or not an election was conducted in a free and fair manner (Abbink, 2000). It can guide to the correction and improvement of mistakes or bad practices, yet at the same time as an election process is still under way. It can discourage and deter manoeuvring and fraud, or exhibit such challenges if they do transpire.

When election observer groups issue cheering and encouraging reports, it builds confidence and trust in the democratic process and facilitates the legitimacy of the governments that emerge from elections. Election observations by domestic groups promote, enhance and encourage civic participation in the political process of a country. Following elections, reports and recommendations by observer groups can lead to amendments and improvements in national law and practice. Electoral observation and monitoring are “designed to boost confidence in the fairness of the electoral process, to help deter fraud in the balloting and counting procedures, and to report to the country’s citizens and the international community on the overall integrity of the elections. In addition, if requested and if appropriate, observers can mediate disputes between competing political groups in an effort to reduce tensions before, during and after elections” (Bjornland, et al, 1992).

Election observation takes on sensitive significance in post-conflict states, in which groups that have been contesting on the combat zone may harbour great reservations of the political system and the election process. In such cases, election observation makes an imperative role to peace-building, in view of the fact that building faith and confidence in elections can assist support national reconciliation and vibrant democratic practices (Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, 2004). Observation and monitoring become third-party mechanism of ensuring that elections serve as effective mechanism of conflict resolution, and for constructing more acceptable, effective and legitimate governmental structures, (Garber & Bjourlund 1993).

In essence, electoral observation takes on the role of “a popular ‘seal of quality’ to legitimize new governments” (Freedman, 1995). Election observation constitute a source of psychological support for those involved in the election, they can uncover rigging, inform the public about the fairness of the election process, and mediate in cases of disputes which may have a perennial character (Mair, 1997). Long-term Observation allows for better exposure to the context in which the electoral process unfolds, and therefore presumably more informed judgment about the conduct of an election.

Election observation done by the United Nations or other intergovernmental organisations can be particularly helpful when domestic observer organizations do not have sufficient strength or resources to organize effective monitoring efforts, or when the impartiality of domestic observers is in question, as may often be the case in post-conflict countries or new democracies. However, international observers are typically less knowledgeable

about the country they are observing, and a few may bring their own biases to the observation. In extraordinary circumstances international observers or supervisors in post-conflict countries may even be given the authority to certify or invalidate election results. Generally, however, observers have no power to interfere in the election process, but may only observe, assess and report (Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, 2004).

According to the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, there are lots of practical issues to think about before deciding whether and how to observe an election:

- Does the election law make provision for observers? Will they be allowed into polling stations and counting centres?
- Do observers have clear rights under the law to receive copies of official documents and election result protocols, and to collect other information?
- Will the election management body or another authority provide accreditation?
- Are sufficient personnel available for the observation? Do they have the necessary expertise, or can they be trained in time?
- Is enough funding available to complete the observation?
- Is the security situation sufficiently stable to ensure the safety of observers?

At the conclusion of the election observation process, observer groups should give a report conveying their findings and assessments of the election process. It is principally essential to measure whether an election was held in accordance with domestic law and with international standards for democratic elections. Observation reports should also highlight any weaknesses in the election process and should provide recommendations for improvement report (Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, 2004).

According to the Electoral Commission of Ghana, depending on its scope, elections observations in practical terms consists in trying to find answers to a myriad of questions relating to various aspects of the organizations, management and conduct of the election:

- The legal and institutional framework
- The condition of the general electoral environment
- The integrity of the electoral preparations, including voter registration and voter education.
- The degree of political competitiveness.
- The inclusiveness of the electoral system and the extent of citizen participation
- The extent of human right violations and election-related violence.
- The extent to which rights violations and election access to parties and candidates.
- The conducts of the main players: do they act in a mature and responsible manner.
- The posture of security personnel in providing general and election security.
- The integrity of the conduct of the poll, including voting, the count, collation, and declaration of result.
- The resolution of electoral disputes.

2.2 Composition and functions of an observation mission

According to the Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (2004), *“once a decision has been taken to observe an election and clear objectives for the mission have been set, appropriate personnel must be recruited to ensure mission goals are met. For comprehensive observation, this means assembling a team that includes experts in election administration, law, political affairs, human rights include women’s rights, media, statistics and logistics. In post-conflict countries, it may be necessary for the observation mission to have one or more security experts. Additional experts might be needed to deal with specific issues or problems such as minority groups, dispute resolution or electronic voting”*.

It is a high-quality practice for observation missions to comprise a gender expert who can focus absolutely on how election procedures will have an effect on women’s participation. In broad-spectrum, however, gender issues should be mainstreamed into the work of the observation mission; all members of the mission should partake in assessing how elections affect both men and women. Observer groups, and predominantly national groups, should include equal numbers of women and men. All observers should be gender-sensitive and should receive some basic training on how election procedures can affect men and women differently (Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, 2004).

The composition of the main election observer group may differ to some extent, depending on whether the observation is being organised by a global organisation, a non-partisan domestic group, or a political party. Observation by any of these types of groups can be helpful in building confidence. However, observers from the United Nations or other international organisations will often be perceived as more impartial than domestic groups. Political party observers will be perceived as the least impartial and objective observers. International observation groups more often than not keep themselves separate from domestic groups in order to preserve their

image of impartiality, since the credibility of their assessment and conclusions will depend to a large extent on whether they are perceived as neutral and impartial.

At the same time, however, there are rewards to a certain level of cooperation between international and domestic observer groups, and the very presence of international observers can, in itself, be seen as supportive of the domestic observation process. Ideally, an observation mission should start its work months before election day, reviewing the legal framework, monitoring voter registration and candidate registration, evaluating the work of election management bodies, assessing the political campaign, and following media coverage of the election. It should observe developments around the country, not just in the capital city (Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, 2004).

On Election Day, the long-term observation team should be supplemented by a great number of short-term observers whose assignment is to follow up on developments at polling stations and monitor the vote count. In the best cases, observation missions will be able to arrange full-time coverage of every polling station. Domestic observer groups are generally better able than international observers to organise such large missions. When it is not probable to cover all or most of the polling stations, a representative sample should be observed, including urban and rural polling stations in all parts of the country; the larger the sample, the more accurate the results, provided the sample is truly representative. Observation of a number of hundred representative polling stations can produce an excellent statistical sample.

Polling station observers should be trained on what to look for and asked to fill out standard forms or checklists that can be used to assess national trends. Some domestic observer groups have had success organizing parallel vote tabulations, sometimes called “quick counts”, on election night. This is a process through which observers report actual polling station results to a central point, where they are tabulated; the process, if properly organized, can provide a valuable means of checking whether officially announced results accurately reflect what happened at the polling stations (Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, 2004).

2.3 Brief Political History of Ghana

Ghana in 1957 became the first Sub Sahara nation in colonial Africa to get independence. It is located in the coast of West Africa, boarded by the gulf of guinea with Togo and the Ivory Coast. It has an estimated surface area of 92000 square miles making it a bit bigger than its former colonial master Britain. Ghana has a population of 25,199,609 million people according to the latest estimate of July 2013. Ten years after gaining independence, Ghana encountered a series of domestic political and governance difficulties that endangered to disrupt the fruits and progress of internal self governance. In 1964 for instance, a constitutional amendment abolished multi-party politics and made Ghana a de-jure one party state. The effect of this move was the restriction of fundamental rights and freedoms especially the right to form political parties and to contest political offices. Following the rising upheavals, the first military coup was staged in 1966 that resulted in the overthrow of President Kwame Nkrumah (African Union Elections Observation Mission Report: Ghana 2012).

In 1969 Ghana adopted a fresh constitution that transferred power to the civilian government under the leadership of Dr. Kofi Busia. This progress was short-lived as another coup by the military ended the civilian administration in 1972. There was another short-lived civilian government after the 1979 “revolution” led by Flight Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings. In December 1981, Flight Lieutenant Rawlings staged a second coup which ended the civilian government led by elected Dr. Hilla Limann and ruled the country until 1992. Following the reintroduction of multi-party democracy in Ghana in 1992, President Rawlings was elected as civilian president and was re-elected in 1996 under the leadership of the National Democratic Congress (NDC), and ruled until 2000 but was barred from contesting again due to constitutional term limit (African Union Elections Observation Mission Report: Ghana 2012).

Ghana encountered another successful transfer of power from one political party to another following the triumph of President John Agyekum Kufuor in the 2000 presidential elections and his re-election in 2004 under the leadership of the New Patriotic Party (NPP). The 2008 election demonstrated Ghana’s maturity and stable democracy in Africa. The election was fiercely contested by the NPP candidate, Nana Akufo Addo, and the NDC candidate, John Atta Mills. Six other presidential candidates also contested the election. In the first round presidential elections, none of the candidates won the constitutional requirement of 50% +1 necessitating a second round. The opposition candidate, John Atta Mills won with 50.23% of the valid votes cast (Electoral Commission of Ghana).

The successful transition of power, despite the narrow election margin, further enhanced Ghana’s democratic credentials in the African continent. In 2012, John Atta Mills died in office and was succeeded by his

deputy John Mahama, who was his Vice President and running mate in 2008 elections (African Union Elections Observation Mission Report: Ghana 2012). The smooth political transition after the death of President Mills to his vice president John Dramani Mahama and the country's compliance with constitutional and institutional arrangements was regarded as another case of peaceful transition in a fragile West African region (African Union Elections Observation Mission Report: Ghana 2012).

The 2012 presidential and parliamentary elections made a critical and crucial stride in democracy consolidation and promotion in Ghana. The stakes in the 2012 election were significantly high owing to growing popular demands for better living standards; the creation of national mechanisms for fair distribution of oil revenues and the stiff competition between the NDC and NPP. The elections afforded Ghanaians an occasion to assess the strength of their democracy and to confirm that the country is gradually developing a culture of political transition.

2.4 Constitutional and Legal Provisions for 2012 Elections

As a state, we have since the coming into force of the 1992 Constitution selected the path of democratic governance. The President, who is the head of the executive, and members of Parliament are elected at regular intervals every four years. The principle of universal adult suffrage has firmly been established giving every individual who is 18 years and above the right to vote. Ghana has been demarcated into 10 regions, which are further divided into 275 constituencies prior to the Ghana's 2012 presidential and parliamentary elections considering the population density in the country. The breakdown of 275 constituencies in Ghana is 275 are: Ashanti Region – 47 seats, Brong Ahafo Region - 29 seats, Central Region - 23 seats, Eastern Region - 33 seats, Greater Accra Region - 34 seats, Northern Region - 31 seats, Upper East Region - 15 seats, Upper West Region - 11 seats, Volta Region - 26 seats and Western Region - 26 seats (Electoral Commission of Ghana, 2012).

The 1992 Constitution provides that Ghana shall not be a one-party state and this allows multi political parties as well as independent candidates to contest elections. The Constitution elaborately provides for the right of each eligible individual to be registered. It has also made adequate provision for the conduct of elections

Article 42 states *“Every citizen of Ghana of eighteen years of age or above and of sound mind has the right to vote and is entitled to be registered as a voter for the purposes of public elections and referenda.”* Further, Article 296 states that *“Where in this Constitution or in any other law discretionary power is vested in any person or authority - (a) that discretionary power shall be deemed to imply a duty to be fair and candid; (b) the exercise of the discretionary power shall not be arbitrary, capricious or biased wither by resentment, prejudice or personal dislike and shall be in accordance with due process of law; and (c) where the person or authority is not a judge or other judicial officer, there shall be published by constitutional instrument or statutory instrument, regulations that are not inconsistent with the provisions of this Constitution or that other law to govern the exercise of the discretionary power”* Clearly the selection of some Ghanaians living and working abroad to be registered for the purpose of Public election and referenda which was legitimized by the then PNDC law 284(8) (a military Decree) that imposes limitation on the right to vote. That law has effectively been repealed by the Representation of the People Act 669 (ROPA) which became law in 2006. The law also gave true meaning and breath to the spirit of Article 42 of the 1992 constitution

Articles 45 to 56 of the 1992 Constitution provides for the functions and powers of the Electoral Commission as well as the organisation of political parties. From these constitutional provisions, it is clear that the duties imposed on the Electoral Commission are onerous and inevitably, conflicts and or disputes may arise in the course of the performance of these functions. The 1992 Constitution, under article 125, gives the Judiciary the mandate to administer justice. The judiciary, as an independent state institution, is vested with judicial power.

The 2012 presidential and parliamentary elections took place completely different context than previous elections before. New laws to govern the registration of voters and the conduct of the presidential and parliamentary elections were promulgated as (Public Elections (Registration of Voters) Regulations CI 72 governed the registration process, while Public Elections Regulations CI 75, which replaced all other regulations, governed the conduct of the elections) the Electoral Commission (EC) of Ghana introduced biometric registration and verification of voters. The introduction of the biometric registration and verification of voters meant that the bio-data of voters such as name, photograph, and fingerprints were captured electronically into the electoral register using computers, digital cameras, and scanners. On voting day, the identity of voters had to be verified using the same technologies, to prevent electoral fraud such as multiple registrations and voting.

The Public Elections Regulation, 2012 (CI 75), which replaced regulations previously governing elections in Ghana, required all voters to go through a biometric verification process before voting, increased the period for transfer of the rights - of voters to vote in constituencies other than those in which they registered originally (as a result of relocation to new areas of residence) from twenty-one to forty-two days, and simplified the proof of

eligibility by removing the requirement in the earlier CI 15 that a potential voter “make a declaration in the prescribed form that he has not already voted anywhere at the election” (CI 15 was the regulation replaced by CI 72).

In anticipation of technological failure, CI 75 provided for the adjournment of the poll in the event of equipment breakdown and allowed the adjournment to hold for a maximum of seven days if the situation made the continuation of the poll on the following day impracticable. Finally, the new law required the EC to publish the names of proposed presiding officers at its district offices at least ten days before an election, providing an opportunity for registered political parties or voters who wished to contest their appointment to do so. Among the most significant achievements of the biometric registration was the detection by the EC of persons who had engaged in multiple registrations (representative of the EC, 2012).

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Research Design

In the study, the descriptive survey technique was used. Descriptive research is a comprehensive research approach and it can incorporate quantitative data such as the application of empirical information, or can illustrate qualitative data. Descriptive research requires gathering data that will describe an event and presenting the information in an organised, and regularly visual, manner.

3.2 Study Population

The component population of the study comprised all individuals who are 18 years and above and are qualified electorates residing in the following 5 constituencies out of the 275 constituencies in Ghana: Asawase and Mampong constituencies in Ashanti Region, Sunyani East Constituency in Brong Ahafo Region, Cape Coast and Twifo-Atii Morkwaa constituencies in the central Region. These constituencies were selected because of their proximity to the researcher.

3.3 Sample Size

The sample size for the study was one thousand respondents. Two hundred respondents each for a particular constituency selected for the study.

3.4 Sampling Procedure

This study employed simple random under probability sampling procedure in selecting respondents for interview and responding to the questionnaire. In this study, respondents were selected based on their readiness and capability to answer to the questionnaire.

3.5 Research Instrument

Questionnaire and structured interview and were the research instruments used to collect the data from the electorates. The questionnaire was used in order to get a standard form of answers or responses. The questionnaire used the Likert scale which is balanced on both sides of a neutral option, creating a less biased measurement. This is a very useful question type when you want to get an overall measurement of electorates' perception and collect specific data on the objectives of the study. The use of structured interview helped the researcher to mould the questions he asked the respondent in order to get the information they need for this project and observation was made to confirm the answers the respondents gave.

4.0 Results and Discussion

4.1.1 The Gender Distribution of Respondents

The gender distribution of respondents is shown in (Table 1). From the table, 62.1 of respondents are males while about 37.9% are females.

4.1.2 Age Distribution of the Respondents

The age distribution of the respondents is approximately equally divided between the youth and adult population. To some extent over half (59%) of respondents are between ages 18 and 41 with 18.5% percent of the respondents are in the age cohorts of 42 and 49; 14% of the respondents are with 50 and 57 and 8.5% of the respondents are 58 years and above. Age-wise, the sample is reasonably representative of the Ghanaian electorates.

4.1.3 Educational Background of Respondents

The educational background of respondents is shown in Table 3. Educational attainment of respondents ranged from ‘no school’ to those with tertiary education, though the sample is skewed (43.8%) in favour of those with secondary education. If voters are educated and knowledgeable, then it is logical to presume that respondents are well-informed about the activities of election observer groups.

4.1.4 Electorates' Knowledge on Election Observers' Role in Ghana's 2012 Elections

In line with the objective of the study, the researcher tried to find electorates' knowledge on the role of election observers in Ghana's 2012 presidential and parliamentary elections. The election observers' roles assessment of compliance with country' legal framework, peaceful election environment, awareness of citizen's rights, equitable media coverage, compliance of international standard, election transparency, women participation in election and country's election Administration.

From table 4 above, 483(48.3%) of the respondents strongly agree that election observer groups do the assessment of legal framework of a country dealing with election process, 305 (30.5%) respondents agree while 103 (10.3%) respondents disagree and 109 (10.9) strongly disagree. A sound legal framework will provide for impartial and professional electoral administration, and fairly and equally define the rights and authorities of participants in the electoral process (ICCPR, Article 25 (b)). Majority of the respondents 600 (60%) strongly agree that election observers do assess a country's peaceful election environment during their observation mission 390 (39%) respondents agree while 4 (0.4%) respondents strongly disagree and 6(0.6) respondents disagree.

An additional role that election observers' play is assessing citizens' rights particularly citizens' legal role in political participation of their country. Election Observers do assess the level of voters' awareness and whether voters' right to choose freely and in secrecy is guaranteed, upheld and protected. Generally view held by the respondents is that 92.9% either agree or strongly agree that election observers do assess citizens' rights particularly citizens' legal role in political participation of their country while 6.1% of the respondents either agree or disagree.

From the position of election observer groups checking that all the political parties partaking in Presidential and parliamentary elections do have equitable media coverage through the state media and from the table, 978 (97.8%) respondents indicated that they either strongly agree or agree whereas 22 (2.2%) respondents strongly disagree that election observers do play this role. This result shows that the almost all the respondents vividly know that election observers monitor the state media in terms of providing access and coverage to participating political parties in presidential and parliamentary elections.

According to table, all (100%) the respondents strongly agree or agree to the fact that election observers' core duty is to check that elections are conducted in a country in compliance of both local and international standards governing the conduct of free, fair and credible election with the provision of adequate security personnel in the polling grounds with their role in maintaining order within the polling centres. A peaceful election environment facilitates a free, fair and credible election, and tranquil conditions in and around voting sites lessens problems that could compromise voter confidence, integrity of records, turnout or election results.

It was obvious that overwhelming majority of the respondents 971 (97.1%) strongly agree to the affirmation election observers fundamentally check that elections are conducted in a transparent manner to make elections free, fair and credible while 29 (2.9%) respondents agree to this very crucial and essential role. Election observers check the layouts of the polling stations are adequate to guarantee vote secrecy and the open voting enhanced transparency in the process, sufficiency of election materials and adequate safeguard for the aged and physically challenged voters to exercise their voting rights

According to table 4, 165(16.5%) of the respondents strongly disagree that election observers check women participation in presidential and parliamentary elections and 195 (19.5) disagree that election observer group do check women participation. Three hundred (30%) respondents agree and 340 (34%) strongly agree that one of the missions of election observers is to check the participation of women in national politics. Women continue to be marginalised in political and elective positions in Ghana. In spite of noteworthy improvement that the Ghana has made as a vibrant democracy in Africa, the level of women participation in politics still trail that of men. Finally, 659 (65.9%) respondents strongly agree that election observers work to establish whether the results of the elections were a true reflection of the democratic will of the people of Ghana and 341(34.1%) respondents agree. This study support a study conducted by Freeman (1995) who stated that in essence, electoral observation takes on the role of "a popular 'seal of quality' to legitimise new governments" (Freedman, 1995)

4.1.5 Electorates' Perception on Election Observers' Impact on 2012 Elections

The researcher asked the respondents to point out their perception on election observers' impact on 2012 presidential and parliamentary elections and their responses are available in table 5 below:

Table 5 indicates that 394 (39.4%) of the respondents strongly agree that election observer groups have impact on election through the prevention of intimidation particularly at constituencies perceive to be strongholds for specific political parties both the incumbent and opposition Parties, 295 (29.5%) respondents agree whereas 105 (10.5%) respondents strongly disagree and 206 (20.6%) disagree.

Majority of the respondents 620 (62%) strongly agree or agree that effective election observers help to decrease electoral violence at most polling stations and collation centres 380 (38%) of the respondents do strongly disagree or agree that election observers presence decrease electoral violence during elections.

A further impact that electoral observers have on general elections is that they do promote electoral integrity. By and large, view held by the respondents is that 836 (83.6.) % either strongly agree or strongly agree and 164 (16.4) respondents strongly disagree or disagree. Electoral integrity requires an atmosphere free of fear, intimidation or manipulation on election day.

On the acceptance of results among the electorates and contesting political parties, 209 (20.9%) respondents strongly disagree that the presence of election observer's impact on the acceptance of election results among contesting parties and their supporters and 300 (30%) respondents disagree. Three hundred and eighty (38%) respondents agree and 111 (11.1) respondents strongly disagree.

Three hundred eighty (38%) respondents strongly agree that the presence of election observers prevent electoral fraud, 305 (30.5) respondents agree, 210 (21) respondents disagree and 209 (20.9%) strongly disagree. Another impact that election observers have on elections is the confidence building among the entire citizens of the country. Four hundred (40%) respondents agree to this fact, 342(34.2%) strongly agree, 170 (17%) respondents disagree while 88 (8.8%) strongly disagree.

The presence of election observer impacts on the legitimising elections in country and this claim 350 (35%) respondents strongly agree, 250(25%) agree, 295 (29.5) disagree and 105 (10.5%) strongly disagree with the claim. This finding confirms what Garber & Bjourlund (1993) said election observation and monitoring become third-party mechanism of ensuring that elections serve as effective mechanism of conflict resolution, and for constructing more acceptable, effective and legitimate governmental structures.

Finally, 533(53.3) respondents strongly agree that election observers impacts on a country's electoral reforms through their recommendations and conclusions they draw after a conduct of elections. With this, 301(30.1%) agree, 101 (10.1%) respondents disagree and 65(6.5%) strongly disagree.

4.1.6 Electorates' View on the Need for Investment in Election Observing Projects

Table 7 below shows the respondents' view on the need for investment in election observing projects in Ghana and across the world to help in the promotion and consolidation of democracy.

From table 6, almost all the respondents 95.5 (95.5%) said "Yes" there is the need for donor countries and international organisations to help support and finance election observing projects to assist in conducting violence free, credible, free and fair elections that truly reflect the will of the people and create confidence among the populace to use the ballot box as a peaceful transfer of political power and result in political stability. Forty five (4.5%) respondents said "No".

5. Conclusion

From the findings of the study, it can be concluded that there is an established and increasing electorates' commendation for the positive participation of the impartial election observers both local and international towards the 2012 presidential and parliamentary elections of Ghana. Genuine democratic elections are an expression of sovereignty, which belongs to the citizens of a state, the free expression of whose will offers the foundation for the power and legitimacy of government. The rights of people to vote and to be voted at periodic, genuine democratic elections are globally recognised human rights.

Future research should investigate the challenges that election observers experience during the election day.

6 Recommendations

1. International community must support election observers' efforts to improve the quality and credibility of elections observers through professional election observation and monitoring of both local and international observers group.
2. Election observers both local and international need to employing standardised methodology and technology capable of monitoring the whole electoral process, from the announcement of an election, the actual vote, the resolution of complaints and the legitimate winners take office.
3. All election observers should have standardised formats for all final reports to help ensure their reports are better used by the national election body and other actors to support national electoral bodies.
4. There must be cooperation among local observer groups and international observers to ensure effective follow up and implementation of the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation.
5. Election observers must be impartial, objective and should seek to influencing electoral legislation and formulate other recommendations to guarantee that democratic values and standards are achieved

6. A high-quality communications network is indispensable to retrieve information from observers scattered across the country, and to convey the information to the public in a judicious, appropriate and timely approach.

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Table 1: Gender of Respondents

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Male	621	62.1
Female	379	37.9
Total	1000	100

Source: Field Survey, 2013

Table 2: Age of Respondents

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
18-25	140	14
26-33	240	24
34-41	210	21
42-49	185	18.5
50-57	140	14
58 and above	85	8.5
Total	1000	100

Source: Field Survey, 2013

Table 3: Educational Level of Respondents

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
No education	52	5.2
Basic	201	20.1
Secondary	438	43.8
Tertiary	309	30.9
Total	1000	100

Source: Field Survey, 2013

Table 4: Electorates' Knowledge on Election Observers' Role

Factors	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Ass'mt of Legal Framework	109	10.9	103	10.3	305	30.5	483	48.3
Peaceful Election Environment	4	0.4	6	0.6	390	39	600	60
Citizens' Rights	13	1.3	8	0.8	300	30	679	62.9
Equitable Media Coverage	12	1.2	10	1	180	18	798	79.8
Compliance of Election Std.	-	-	-	-	98	9.8	902	90.2
Transparent Election	-	-	-	-	29	2.9	971	97.1
Women Participation	165	16.5	195	19.5	300	30	340	34
True Reflection of Results	-	-	-	-	341	34.1	659	65.9

Source: Field Survey, 2013

Table 5: Electorates' Perception on Election Observers' Impact

Factors	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Prevention of Intimidation	105	10.5	206	20.6	295	29.5	394	39.4
Decrease of Electoral Violence	130	13	250	25	300	30	320	32
Electoral Integrity	65	6.5	99	9.9	360	36	476	47.6
Acceptance of Results	209	20.9	300	30	380	38	111	11.1
Prevention of Electoral Fraud	105	10.5	210	21	305	30.5	380	38
Confidence Building	88	8.8	170	17	400	40	342	34.2
Legitimising elections	105	10.5	295	29.5	250	25	350	35
Electoral Reforms	65	6.5	101	10.1	301	30.1	533	53.3

Source: Field Survey, 2013

Table 6: Respondents' View on Election Observing Project Investment

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	955	95.5
No	45	4.5
Total	80	100

Source: Field survey, 2013

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