

# Report on the 2013 Legislative and Municipal Elections in Cameroon

Focal Integrity Team Cameroon

(FITCAM)

[www.fitcameroon.org](http://www.fitcameroon.org)



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## Pre-election preparation

The legal framework governing elections in Cameroon is based on the Electoral Code founded on Law N0.2012/017 of 21 December 2012 to amend and supplement some provisions of law N0.2012/001 of 19 April 2012 relating to the Electoral Code.

The participation of the Focal Integrity Team in the observation of the 2013 Municipal and Legislative Elections in Cameroon was based on its accreditation from the Cameroon Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization (MINATD), and also from the National Anti-Corruption Commission's (CONAC) Civil Society Coalition for the fight against corruption, whereby FITCAM was commissioned to carry out the following activities:

- Distribute flyers on the Code of Conduct for Elections from the National Anti-Corruption Commission (CONAC)
- Observe the event of the elections of September 23<sup>rd</sup> 2013 for possible signs of fraud and practices of corruption that could undermine and transparency, objectivity and credibility of the electoral process.

The areas of work covered by FITCAM for the elections as per MINATD's accreditation include 4 regions - the Center, the North West, the South West and Littoral. But for the purposes of activities that were to be conducted under the mandate of the National Anti-Corruption Commission (CONAC) more specifically, FITCAM provides a report on the activities it carried out during the elections in the South West Region in general and the divisions of Kupemanenguba, Libialem and Mamfe in particular, following instructions from CONAC.

This report therefore highlights such activities as conducted by FITCAM in the South West Region alone, and not the other regions where it also conducted similar elections observatory activities.

## Distribution of Flyers



As of Thursday September 26<sup>th</sup>, 2013 FITCAM deployed a team of 5 to Kupemanenguba, Libialem and Mamfe and distributed more than 1500 copies of the Code of Good Conduct for elections designed by CONAC.

The reaction from the citizens and potential electors were those of satisfaction with respect to CONAC's consciousness of the abuse of the rules governing electoral campaigns and elections in general by potential candidates for the 2013 Municipal and Legislative Elections in these areas. Some of the key aspects and reminders in the code that received much enthusiasm was the aspect of citizen's being reminded to inform CONAC should they find any government or administrative vehicle being used by political parties and their candidates during their campaigns, and also to report any act of bribery by party candidates to buy over votes from electors prior to the elections.

The document reinforced confidence and reminded citizens that a third party is watching the exercise and actions of candidates of the various competing political parties closely and is ready to take action on any one who defraud the process or act against the laws in force.

The distribution of these flyers did not go without resistance and mixed feelings from other ordinary citizens whom our team encountered during the distribution. In Tombel one ELECAM official attempted to restrain our team from sharing the flyers to electors as he thought we were out to influence or sway voters from voting the for the ruling party CPDM in the Kupemaneguba area. Aside from these, citizens and communities leaders were very impressed and elated with the action taken by CONAC to sensitize the population on the code of good conduct for those competing for seats and public offices during the election.

## Field Observation of the Elections



During our observation of the election in the South West Region in general, our team made the following key findings:

1. The use of CA or government administrative vehicles during the election and campaign by party candidates of the various political parties was absent from our sight.

2. During the transportation of ballot boxes ELECAM allowed some of the transportation of the boxes to be carried out using private vehicles such as motor taxi
3. Ballot boxes and voters cards for the different political party candidates were sufficient
4. Although there was evidence of traces of double registration, the biometric system was quick in eliminating and picking out such double registrations. We saw evidence of over 2000 names that were traced and removed under double registration from the Regional Delegation for ELECAM in Buea
5. There was a traceable lack of consistency in the application of the Electoral Code during the conduct of the polls contrary to Section 101 of the Electoral Code, which states **that any voter whose name is duly registered in the electoral register shall be entitled to vote.**
6. Some polling stations will not allow a voter to vote unless he/she presents his/her national identity card or a photocopy of it plus the voter registration card. Not all polling stations dip the small index finger of the voter plus the thumb after the voter had cast his/her vote even though others did.
7. In some polling stations, especially in Banga Bakundu in Meme, ELECAM officials were still giving on the spot training to their staff while the election was going on. This had the potential of raising fear and doubt amongst the voters as to whether a different or new instruction was being given on the elections ground.
8. A number of polling stations were set up at Police Post of Stations in the South West
9. The forces of law and order maintained their neutrality during the entire process of the elections and never influence the vote or create a roar at the polls.
10. On the day of Vote in Bangem, the Divisional Delegate for Education, the SDO, the Mayor and the Chief of ELECAM were influencing voters to vote for CPDM
11. We also noted that political parties such as PAP and NADP were not effectively present in almost 70% of the polling stations as we meet with or saw none of their representatives in the commission. Notable were the representatives of SDF and CPDM.
12. Presidents or heads of the polling stations also failed to respect the rules of the elections or code as provided in Section 56 of the Electoral Code, which states that where one or more representatives of candidates, list of candidates or political parties is/are absent at the opening of the poll, the Chairperson of the local polling commission must, by decision recorded in the report, fill up such vacancies in the commission by appointing electors whose names feature in the electoral register of the polling station and who can read and write English or French.

13. As regards security, we noticed that the DO of Muyuka (Balong) allowed trade union groups to act as security post men at the raid check point instead of police officers; something which has the potential to cause violent during the election in that area in the event that somebody decided to force their way with their car through this checkpoint.
14. Most of the voters in Libialem and Mamfe area who are students of the university could not vote in such areas because they registered in Buea, and by the time they went on holidays their voters cards were not ready. A huge pile of such cards could be seen at polling stations in Buea; these potential voters where therefore technically handicapped from exercising their voter rights as a result.
15. In polling station where we were able to observe the counts we realized that counting was done in a transparent and participatory manner with the voters joining along during the counting to ensure accuracy.
16. Finally observer teams accredited by MINATD were refused by some polling chairpersons from observing the electoral process and voting in their area even though they had their legally approved badges on. This occurred in Buea.

## **Conclusion**

**Our conclusion is that though the electoral process was demonstrative of the exercise and practice of democracy, the administration of the election process by ELECAM team in rural Cameroon in the South West undermined the idea of credibility and fairness of the election process, even if that was the original intent. It is therefore important for ELECAM to secure and ensure consistency from all its actors and partners in the application of the provision of the Electoral Code during the Conduct of Elections at the Polls to avoid a sense of undue influence in the process in the view of the voters.**

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