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# VOTERS' REGISTRATION NEWS

ELECTORAL COMMISSION OF GHANA



SPECIAL EDITION SEPTEMBER, 1995.

## NEW PERSPECTIVES

**T**he new and thoroughly reviewed process of registering voters in Ghana starts on Friday 15th September, and runs over two weeks through Saturday, 30th September, 1995. 20,000 local registration centres will be open each day from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. The new registration process will give voters a fresh opportunity to select their rulers and put government further into the hands of the people. It incorporates new procedures that are aimed at correcting the flaws of the earlier register that was roundly criticised as bloated with duplicated and unqualified registrations.

The Constitution of Ghana provides that every Ghanaian citizen of 18 years or older, of sound mind, and who is not prohibited by any law in force from registering as a voter, may do so. All eligible citizens should go in person to register to vote at the registration centre set up at the polling station nearest their home.

### Why participate 100%

Because not to do so simply gives away one's say to others who may not share the same views about desired leaders and government issues. So everyone should know when to register -- from the 15th to 30th of September, 1995, between 7 a.m. and 6 p.m. daily -- as well as the location of the nearest local registration centres, which will be widely posted.

Making registration centres accessible and close to home, making the process quick and easy, and giving everyone a uniquely numbered ID card are some of the ingredients of obtaining total participation.

#### Voters' Responsibilities include:

- \* Registering if a Ghanaian citizen of 18 years or older,
- \* Getting other qualified citizens to register.
- \* Protecting the integrity of the all new register by checking it personally during the exhibition period.
- \* Reporting irregularities of aliens, unqualified registrations or double registrations to the Registration Centre;

#### Votes Registration Steps

The process of registering is indeed simple and quick, involving only:

- \* Telling the registration officer the following seven personal facts -- name, hometown, house number, address, age, sex, father's name and mother's name;
- \* Making a thumbprint on the registration form;
- \* Having one's photo taken if so directed, otherwise thumbprinting the ID card;
- \* Receiving an individually numbered, laminated photo or thumb print voter ID card that should be kept safe and not given to anyone else;
- \* Taking good care of the Voter ID card for voting at elections

Register to Vote!  
Your Vote is Your Franchise

#### Why Register Again?

As a citizen of good standing, it is necessary to have your name on the list of qualified voters for the country. Since the old voter list is not trustworthy, it has been scrapped, and only the new register to be compiled from the 15th to 30th of September, 1995, will be used in future elections and referenda.

Consequently, whether or not previously registered, everybody must register ANEW. And the good news is that those who have turned 18 since the last registration now qualify to be registered for the first time in their lives. This is a golden opportunity for them.

#### Innovations

During recent elections, the Electoral Commission had to live with electoral registers that were bloated with duplicate names, haphazard order of names, of deceased persons or aliens.

Impersonation and the use of absentee voters' names were some of the problems reported after the 1992 Presidential and Parliamentary elections, even though the allegations were never proved. All these gave rise to suspicion and the loss of confidence in the elec-

toral rolls and the Electoral Commission.

Today, the Electoral Commission is rectifying past problems by compiling an all-new electronically scanned, computerized Voters' Register, and providing everyone that registers a photo or thumbprint voter identity card. The Commission is also reorganising its entire programme by retraining its permanent staff, assiduously training 60,000 temporary registration workers along with 80,000 party agents, for the first time, so they may all know the same procedures; and by inviting public interest organizations to help promote wide citizen understanding of and participation in the process.

This new programme has been generously sponsored by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Danish International Development Association (DANIDA), and the British government.

The first edition of the "VOTER REGISTRATION NEWS" explains the new registration process which is the cornerstone of Ghana's new, transparent electoral system which is the centerpiece of a viable democracy.

## CAN YOU TRUST IT?

The initiative of providing a voters' identity card (photo or thumbprint) to every citizen who registers to vote this year, is one indication of the Electoral Commission's current overhaul of the entire Ghanaian electoral system.

Other improvements include giving every voter a unique registration number that cannot be duplicated; electronically scanning registrations to eliminate over 90% of human error which tends to be extensive; electronically scanning each entry not only according to number, but by personal particulars which backs up duplication detection; internal training of permanent staff; external training of temporary registration and election workers; public education; and improved operations and reporting procedures.

The first step in overhauling the process is to establish a viable new voters' register that can be trusted. To guarantee its trustworthiness, the Electoral Commission has established a registration programme with the following hallmarks:

- \* An intensive programme of training for 60,000 registration officials (3 per registration centre);
- \* Co-training 80,000 (4 per registration centre) multi-party agents who are to observe, alert officials about any irregularities, and certify the conduct of the entire registration process by co-signing registration officials' daily reports;
- \* Each registration centre accounts daily, sealing the registration forms in full view; and officials' reports are verified and countersigned by party agents;
- \* Invalidating the old register and using only the new list;
- \* A photo or thumbprint voter card is issued to each registered voter with a unique, individual number that is matched only on the voter register and cannot be

## ELECTORAL COMMISSION'S MANDATE

Article 45 (d) of the Constitution charges Ghana's Electoral Commission not only with the responsibility of running free and fair elections, but with educating the society at large about its voting responsibilities. The Constitution charges the Commission inter alia, "...to educate the people on the electoral process and its purposes."

The Commission is therefore concerned with implementing registration, voting, vote counting, and final tally reporting procedures that are both efficient and totally transparent, thereby generating public confidence in the Ghanaian electoral process and encouraging one-hundred percent participation of all eligible voters.

This implies that from start to finish, all eligible voters must exercise their democratic franchise without any fear, intimidation or coercion, and they must be satisfied that their names will be properly registered and their votes properly recorded and reported.

For the past two years, the Electoral Commission has been planning and developing an all new, reliable voter registration system with a uniquely numbered voter ID card for everyone who registers, as well as revised polling station operations, joint election officers and political party agents training, and transparent vote counting and reporting procedures.

There are four key things that all Ghanaian voters should know about the new election process: (1) The new register can be trusted; (2) since everyone wants free and fair elections, they should participate in the new process 100%, starting with registration from September 15th - 30th; (3) a strong Ghana depends upon full citizen participation in choosing the leaders that the majority wants; and (4) it's quick and simple to register.

duplicated;

- \* Each type of voter ID card-- both thumbprint and photo card-- is equally valid, as both thumbprints and photos are legal identifiers;
- \* In addition to the unique registration number; registrants' personal particulars can be cross-checked to verify any challenged registration -- by name, address, home town, sex, age, father's name, and mother's name;
- \* Any challenged registration will be adjudicated by an administrative panel, and if not resolved, can be referred to the High Court for final decision;
- \* House-to-house enumeration has been

## REGISTRATION MANDATE 1995

All eyes in Ghana, and in many portions of the world, are going to be on the 1996 elections. This calls for a well informed and participating electorate.

You will see registration posters and banners all over the country as registration approaches. Be sure to save and post the poster on Voter Registration Steps which forms the centerpiece of this news sheet. Stickers, Street Banners, Speakers Back Drops [Banners], comic books and other information materials will be produced, as well as radio and TV public service announcements, and everybody who registers will be given a voter ID card.

Musical theme and graphic arts contests have been held. Television and Radio talk shows with Commission speakers have been arranged; and newspaper adverts, spots, features, commentaries, cartoons and news stories will appear during the registration campaign.

The Constitution of Ghana and relevant electoral laws will be widely discussed on radio and TV and in newspapers, along with registration information in English and six other local languages.

In every democratic environment, the voter is the most important person in holding the government accountable, and that can only be done through the ballot box, hence the need to register!

## WHAT IS A VOTERS' REGISTER?

A voters' register is simply a compilation of the names of all qualified citizens who have expressed their intention of voting by placing their names on the official list of eligible voters. The completed new, 1995 voter registration list will be computerized and will contain each registered voter's name, hometown, residence address, age, sex, and a unique number that appears only on the list and the individual voter's identity card. The ID card is an innovation this time.

#### Purpose of Registering to Vote a Whole Year Before Elections

Registration in advance of voting enables elections authorities to prepare the required number of polling stations, ballots, and other materials, as well as train the appropriate number of election workers and party agents to properly oversee orderly, transparent elections that are free and fair. It also enables citizens to challenge any questionable registrations, and the authorities to make the necessary enquiries to authenticate the list in advance of actual elections.

#### Responsibilities to the Register

The Electoral Commission is responsible for preparing the voters register in Ghana, for training workers to compile it properly and party agents to monitor the process, as well as election workers to implement elections and public information programmes. But YOU are responsible for making sure your name is correctly entered on the voters register and for exercising your civic duty to vote and elect national and local leaders of popular choice.

#### Exhibition Period

After the provisional, computerized lists are compiled, they will be placed on display for seven days at the local registration centres where citizens were registered so voters may come to inspect and verify their names and personal particulars on the list.

The registration centres are also the same locations as polling centres so that voters will vote where they registered. There may be some exceptions to this due to realignments when a count of registered voters at each centre becomes known, but any changes will be publicized in an advance.

It would be very useful for each voter to take friends and family members and neighbours who registered at the same centre to make sure they finalize formalities at the same time.

#### Another Important Use for the Registration List

After the Exhibition period, a final, official list will be compiled, and copies will be provided to all officially registered political parties for their reference purposes.

replaced with registration at polling centres near where voters live-- such registration eliminates block registrations and duplications;

- \* Voters can and should verify their particulars at an exhibition of the provisional voters list next year. Errors should be reported so they can be corrected well before the general elections later in 1996; and
  - \* Registered Political parties will receive copies of the final voters registers, so there can be no question about transparency of the election process in Ghana.
- YOU CAN TRUST IT. REGISTER NOW. BE EMPOWERED TO VOTE.**

# CITIZENS CORNER

## QUESTIONS PEOPLE ASK

### WILL MY VOTE BE SECRET IF I REGISTER?

Yes, According to Article 49 of the Constitution of Ghana, all public elections must be conducted by secret ballot, and the Electoral Commission sets its procedures to guarantee this; you can be assured of a secret vote when you register now.

But remember that although your vote is secret, you register in public. This is in order to guarantee transparency of the elections process. Personal information that identifies you separately from any other possible voter is entered on your registration form and that is available to the public for scrutiny, verification, and challenge, if appropriate. This guarantees the integrity of the register.

### CAN YOU REGISTER MORE THAN ONCE?

No, you cannot register more than once under any circumstance. The new registration process has special features, one of which is that a different registration number is given each registrant. This number is never repeated and the computer which keeps the list rejects any number that appears more than once.

Also, the Electoral Commission is recording seven other personal particulars for each voter on the registration form that can be cross checked and verified if a challenge to any registration occurs. These particulars include: name, age, sex, house number, home town, father's name, and mother's name.

Duplicate registration numbers are impossible as they are serially printed on each form and matching card, and it would be impossible for any two people to have all the same seven personal particulars. Anyone trying to register twice would be detected upon cross checking.

### CAN I ASSIST SOMEONE WHO CANNOT READ AND WRITE TO FILL IN A REGISTRATION FORM?

No. That is not needed for registration, though it is for voting. Only trained officials fill in the registration forms based on the verbal information each registrant provides, so nobody's help is needed. Of course, you could assist anyone you know who is disabled in any way to help them go to register.

### CAN I STILL REGISTER IF I AM GOING TO BE 18 YEARS OLD IN DECEMBER, 1995?

No. You can register only if you turn 18 years on or before the 30th of September, 1995, which is the last day of the registration period.

### CAN I USE A PASSPORT TO REGISTER

Yes. You can produce your passport to confirm your identity, but this is not required. All you have to do is present yourself as a Ghanaian citizen of 18 years or older, and the registration officials will do all the rest.

All the same, take note that if you are not of sound mind, or if you are prohibited by any law in force from registering, your registration could be challenged and disqualified.

### AM I QUALIFIED TO REGISTER IF I CAME OUT OF PRISON LAST SEPTEMBER, 1994?

Yes, unless your sentence was more than a year. The law provides that one is not qualified if one has been in prison for more than a year within the last five years.

## WOMEN AND THE VOTE

Women form about half of the Ghanaian population, and their concerns are vital to the nation. All those who are citizens of 18 years or older should register as voters from the 15th to 30th of September, 1995, between 7 a.m., and 6 p.m. daily.

You do not need to be able to read or write to register to vote. This is because there will be a trained Registration Official at each local centre who will fill out the registration form according to the verbal information given by each applicant.

And remember! No husband or family head has the right to dictate to his wife, sister, mother, or anyone else as to whether to register or not, or how to vote. Registering and voting are fundamental individual rights for both qualified men and women in a democracy. Thus, men are not allowed to register or vote for their wives or anyone else, nor can women register or vote for their husbands or anyone else.

Some people think that a pregnant woman might be harmed when she sits

under a camera for a photo identify card. This is not true. Any doctor or health official will assure you that a woman will not be harmed in any way by photo taking. Such a belief is just superstition.

Most women in Ghana have very busy lives, rising early to care for their families, then going to the market, farm, or office, and hurrying home again for domestic duties; so some may feel they have no time to go register or vote. Others may think that politicians don't understand or care about women's needs, so why should they bother to vote? But remember that nobody knows more about your family and its best interests than yourself, and the politicians will care when they learn that, together, you have the power to elect them.

Remember that women are 50% of the population. Go register to vote! Your registration centre near where you live will be open seven days a week from 15th to 30th September, from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. when everyone can find time to go Elect leaders who understand YOU. Do it for yourself. Do it for your family. Do it for a strong Ghana.

## REGISTRATION 1995 IN A NUTSHELL WHAT EVERYONE NEEDS TO KNOW

WHY?  
WHAT?  
WHEN?  
EXACTLY WHEN?  
WHERE?  
WHO?  
HOW?

To fairly, freely, and popularly choose the nation's leaders  
Make an accurate new Voters' List  
15 through 30 September, 1995  
7 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily, including Sundays  
At a local centre near where you live - watch for announcements  
All Ghanaian citizens of 18 years and older by September 30th.  
Simple! Just go. Trained officials will ask the questions and process your answers.  
Check your name when the new List is exhibited. Keep your ID card safe.

THAT'S IT! GO REGISTER!

## CALLING ALL WORKERS TO REGISTER!

All workers who are Ghanaian citizens of 18 years or older, in both formal and informal sectors of the economy, either in state owned or private enterprise-- in short, everyone who works -- should take brief time away to register to vote. It only takes a few minutes and employers should allow workers a short time off to register, if they need it. Registering to vote is an important civic duty in a democracy.

You can register easily and quickly, even if you are always kept busy at your office, farm, market, factory, or any other work site. Employers who excuse their workers a few minutes off to register are exhibiting good citizenship and are to be commended.

If you are a farm worker or a fisherman, or anyone else needing to start work very early before 7 a.m., remember that your nearby registration centre is open seven days a week till 6 p.m., so surely, you can get there on your way home after your work day.

Surely, your local chief will encourage you and other people to go to register on even taboo days when you do not go to the farm or fishing or other work. Remember! You can put in a full day of work, and still find time to register at your nearby centre is open eleven hours each day for sixteen days from September 15th to 30th.

All Ghanaian workers should plan time to go early or get away briefly from work to register, or go after work on the way home. All local registration centres are open from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily, seven days a week, just so workers may have many time options to go and register. It only takes a few minutes, so start early to do it on your way to work or on your way home. No one may harass you around a centre and any attempt to do so should be reported to the police or the Commission.

Also remember! Only YOU can elect the leaders YOU want to represent YOUR interests and build a strong Ghana. Be heard! Be noticed! Be counted! Register!

## CONTEST WINNERS

The Electoral Commission salutes Sally Adu-Bonsu, a student at the University of Science and Technology (UST) at Kumasi, who won first prize in an art contest sponsored by the Commission for logo designs featuring voter registration, 1995. Ghanaians will soon see Sally's distinctive two-handed logo on the Commission's publications, stickers, portfolio covers, animated TV spots, letterhead, and press releases.

Sally was among 19 young artists and musicians selected by the members of the Commission to receive 32 awards for poster and logo designs, as well as original theme music for the Commission's 1995 Registration Public Education Campaign.

Top honours went to prolific artist Jeffrey Abban of UST who competed and won at least one prize in all four posters categories. All told, Abban won six awards for poster designs. His work in the category of "Posters for Special Audiences" will be seen around the country in posters encouraging expectant mothers, busy farmers, and employees to take time to register and vote, for which he won second, third and honourable mention prizes. Another of his posters encouraging a lazy citizen to vote won third prize in the "Full Registration" category, and he received yet another third prize in the "Confidence in Registration" category--three satisfied registrants. He also won honourable mention for a design illustrating the step by step registration process.

Jacob Tetteh and Jeybona Awuku Appiah, also of UST, both won four prizes. Jacob was awarded first prize in the "Confidence" category for his design showing a voter checking the register, and second prize in the "Full Registration" group. His third prize depiction of the steps of voter registration will appear on banners that speakers will use to describe the registration process. He also won third prize for his design for a voter ID card logo or round sticker.

Jeybona won first prize in the "Full Registration" category with an appealing 18 year old and her grandmother as new

## POLITICAL PARTIES AND DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS

While the Electoral Commission has, over the years, been making improvements to the electoral system, it is now time for the public to play its part to assure an efficient, trustworthy, and transparent electoral process.

At the minimum, all citizens who are eligible to vote must place their names on the new voters' register between the 15th and 30th of September, 1995, and receive a photo or thumbprint voter ID card. And political parties, trade unions, professional bodies, women's organisations, farmers groups, civil servants, and all public minded associations can help put out the word.

Political parties occupy a special position in this programme because they extend everywhere and provide the mechanisms by which aspiring politicians may be trained and assisted in running for public office. They provide the constituents that support candidates, and the constituents who influence elected leaders' public actions. No true democracy could function without political parties. Political

parties also served as links between voters and their Members of Parliament (MPs) whom they elected. Then, they monitor each step of the electoral process and alert both authorities and the general public about what's going on. They have a very responsible role to play on the public political scene.

Even though they support specific candidates, issues, and platforms, political parties still have a role to play in basic electoral public education, using Electoral Commission materials to disseminate correct messages about how to go about registering, voting, and monitoring the democratic process. It is only when it comes to supporting individual candidates or public issues that political parties and the Electoral Commission must part ways. But they can, and should, work together to be sure that everybody understands and uses the correct electoral procedures.

All political parties and politicians are invited to continue and intensify their dialogue with the Electoral Commission. Parties and politicians are part and parcel of the real life elections and of parliament in the Fourth Republic of Ghana.

## AN APPEAL TO PUBLIC INTEREST ORGANIZATIONS

Most Ghanaian citizens who are 18 years or older belong to at least one public interest organization that is non-partisan and private in character. Such groups include religious, social, professional, trade, women's and human rights associations.

They usually have members who share similar interests, and are organized as entities of people forming social units that influence the public social structure in various ways. They may be constant or temporary, large or small, formally organized loosely structured.

On a new outreach programme, the Electoral Commission of Ghana, has invited the leaders of over 160 of these groups to become informed about the Commission's 1995 Voter Registration campaign, and to inform their members and, through them, the larger public. The Commission has prepared a guidebook for use by these organisations at their meetings before the start of registration. All groups interested in a transparent electoral process are welcome.

The invited groups include the Christian and Muslim Councils of Ghana, Market Women's Associations, National Union of Ghana Students (NUGS), National Association of Farmers and Fish-

ermen, the National House of Chiefs, and many others. The Electoral Commission is providing them with voter registration posters, comic books, fliers, newspapers to disseminate, and even a workshop guide with a dramatic sketch to get the important points across to their members, and through them to the general public.

At a series of information meetings organized by the Electoral Commission across Ghana to explain the new voter registration process, public interest have found that they can help in many ways - by holding more group meetings, using a Registration drama, posting posters, giving our fliers and stickers, talking up registration, explaining the simple new process, clearing up misinformation, and taking neighbours with them to register to vote.

The Electoral Commission has also introduced a Speakers Bureau that has scheduled public appearances on Radio, TV, and before interested groups on registration and election subjects. The Commission hopes that everybody who reads this makes sure not to be left out of this important process in assuring free and fair democratic elections in Ghana.

registrants, and he took another first for his depiction of how registration officials process each applicant in three steps. He also took another first prize in the "Special Messages" group showing two 18-year-olds just registered; and then the judges also gave him honourable mention for his poster of a blind man stating that registering and voting is for everybody.

Not to be outdone, Ghanata College of Art students in Accra joined promptly in the contest and won six prizes. Felix Ken Degoo won second prize for a sensitive pen and ink washed sketch of checking the registration lists.

Fellow Ghanata student Arthur John Jr. won honourable mention for an appealing design showing a wide variety of Ghanaians - market women, fishermen, labourers, urban citizens and rural folks -- lining up to register. Then, Ebenezer Perbison won honourable mention for his poster urging people to register together.

Ghanatta's Mic Assam took second prize for drawing a clear set of registration steps, and two other Ghanatta students, Eunice Amegbor and K.T. Bewiasea, claimed prize and honourable mention for their voter card logo designs featuring a left thumb with an indelible ink cuticle mark and dark thumbpad marks.

Rita Antwi-Safee and Sampson Essien at UST captured second prize and honourable mention for their voter card logo designs, while fellow students Edward Ofori took first distinctive thumb print logo.

Stephen Avenorgbo got third prize for a logo entitled "I registered -- I'm making Ghana strong."

The musical theme contest also attracted several winners, including (in order); first prize to G.W. Addo for the best overall sound and lyrics; second to the John Teye School Band which developed a very good tune, third Sakyi Baidoo for lively rhythm; and honourable mention to Bright Amankwah and Holdda Kofi Quansah. Special mentions also goes to two Electoral Commission staff, Abraham Yartey and Elvis Annan who submitted excellent tapes not knowing that Commission staff are ineligible to compete in Commission sponsored contests.

All entries were judged on individual merit, with names of artists placed on the back and unseen by any judge. Only after judging were the names and schools of the winners divulged. First prize winners received ₵100,000; second prize winners ₵75,000; third prizes ₵50,000; and honourable mentions ₵25,000.

KEEP AND POST SO OTHERS CAN SEE IT TOO!

# VOTER REGISTRATION STEPS



**REGISTER  
TO VOTE**

**SEPT. 15 - 30**

**ELECTORAL COMMISSION OF GHANA**

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