

## **Election Situation Room (ESR)**

### **Local Government Elections for Councilors 2023**

#### **Statement on Voting and Closing of Polls**

##### **Introduction**

Voting in the 15<sup>th</sup> April 2023 councillorship elections opened and closed on stipulated time. Since the opening of polls at 8am, our 130 elections observers that were deployed across The Gambia have observed the process of voting at their respective polling stations.

Here is a rundown of observation of the voting process:

##### **Voting Process**

Most of the observed polling stations were easily accessible and the proper procedure for voting was largely followed. In almost all polling stations, voting information was correctly displayed both inside and outside the station.

Security was provided throughout the voting process in most of the polling stations observed as the police provided effective queue control. IEC polling staff and polling agents representing various parties and candidates were present in most of the polling stations.

The voting was conducted in secrecy, as required. There was no shortage of voting materials. While there was high presence of election observers, the media presence was largely low in the polling stations observed. Generally, only accredited persons were allowed inside polling stations.

In most of the observed polling stations, persons with disabilities, pregnant/breastfeeding mothers and the elderly were either assisted or given priority to vote. However, it was also observed that accessibility for wheelchair users was a challenge at some of the polling booths.

In most of the observed polling stations, women constituted the majority of voters, and most of them voted without any impediments. On the other hand, the turnout of youth was observed to be low.

Overall, the voting process was generally peaceful and calm.

## **Closing of Polls**

Generally, polls closed at the stipulated time of 5pm in most polling stations observed. IEC staff and polling agents as well as observers were present during the closure of polls. In almost 17% of polling stations observed, there were still voters in the queue at closing time and were allowed to vote as required by law.

Procedures for the close of polls were largely followed in most of the stations observed and polling agents signed off on the close of poll report, indicating their acceptance of the procedure.

## **Concerns**

The presence of non-accredited persons within polling stations and the display of party paraphernalia inside and around polling stations, although low, remain a recurring incidence in public elections. We observed isolated cases of party supporters canvassing votes around polling stations. However, there was no significant interference with the voting process. Also, there were clashes in and around polling stations although these were put under control without posing any disruption to the voting process.

## **Conclusion**

The CSO Coalition notes, with deep appreciation, the smooth and calm manner that characterised the vote today. We recognise and applaud the IEC, the police as well as observers and the media for the effective way they carried out their respective functions to ensure a smooth and peaceful elections.

At the same time, we deplore the minor incidences around polling stations which, if not addressed immediately, could have caused significant disruption to the voting process. For that matter, we reiterate our call for all electoral stakeholders to always exercise calm and address any grievances through dialogue and other peaceful means in line with the law.

As we look forward to the counting of votes and the declaration of results, the CSO Coalition remains committed to a free and fair elections as hallmark of democracy and sustainable development.

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**CSO Coalition on Elections,**  
15 April 2023