



## Election Observation Report: Councillorship By-Election at Bantanjang Ward in Foni Bondali, WCR and Kaiaf Ward in Kiang, LRR

### Introduction

The CSO Coalition on Elections was set-up in 2006 by a group of Civil Society Organizations under the leadership of TANGO. With the purpose of facilitating Civil Societies participation in elections and the electoral process as a whole in The Gambia.

The CSO Coalition on Elections-The Gambia being a national platform aims to facilitate and enhance CSOs' participation in elections and electioneering, democracy and good governance. With a membership of 30 Civil Society Organizations, the CSO Coalition on Elections continues to participate and influence public policy through election observation and monitoring and peace-building.

The Coalition on Elections was established to build local capacity for election observation to strengthen democracy and the integrity of elections in The Gambia. Its members were not interested in creating another organization but a platform to which various CSOs belong. The idea was to reduce competition for funding and at the same time harness the human and financial resources of the member organizations as means to strengthen civil society engagement in the democratization process.

The CSO Coalition on Elections is at the vanguard of the cause of advancing the promotion of democratic values, practices, and process in The Gambia especially in the context of the ongoing democratic transition.

### Background

On November 26th, 2025, the Independent Electoral Commission of The Gambia announced the conduct of Councillorship by elections for Bantanjang Ward under the Brikama Area Council and Kaiaf Ward under the Mansakonko Area Council respectively. The by -elections were necessitated by vacancies in the respective councillorship positions, in line with the provisions of Section 23 of the Local Government Act, 2002.

The exercise was organized to enable eligible voters within the affected wards to elect their respective representatives at the local government level. Voting was conducted at designated polling stations within Bantanjang Ward in Foni Bondali under the Brikama Area Council and Kaiaf Ward in Kiang under the Mansakonko Area Council, where polling streams were established to facilitate an orderly and transparent voting process. The Commission deployed electoral officials and materials in a timely manner to ensure the smooth conduct of the polls.

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This report documents key observations made throughout the electoral process in both wards, including the opening of polls, the voting process, the closing of polls, and the overall conduct of the by elections. The observations aim to provide an objective assessment of compliance with electoral procedures and to highlight good practices as well as areas that may require improvement in future electoral exercises

## **Opening of the Polls**

The Coalition team observed that polls opened on time 08:00am, with all essential voting materials adequately provided. Party agents were present at all polling streams and witnessed the pre-voting demonstrations conducted by IEC polling officers, with no objections raised regarding the preparations. The IEC polling officials followed standard procedures during the opening, including the demonstration of ballot drum opening and sealing, recording of security seal codes, counting of total marbles before voting, and the placement of ballot drums in the voting rooms, all conducted in the presence of party agents and observers. Each polling stream was adequately staffed with IEC polling officers. Security personnel were also deployed at every polling stream. There were no reports of missing names from the voter list, and no voter was allowed to cast a ballot without presenting a valid voter's card.

## **Voting Process**

The Coalition team observed that voter verification was strictly enforced, with all voters required to present a valid voter's card before being allowed to cast their ballot. Each party agent was provided with a copy of the voter roll to cross-check voter identities throughout the process. The indelible ink was applied to all voters' fingers to prevent multiple voting, and no incidents of attempted double voting were recorded. Secret ballot procedures were strictly adhered to, ensuring the privacy and integrity of the electoral process. Priority voting was appropriately provided for elderly voters and persons with disabilities and nursing mothers across all polling streams. The voting environment remained peaceful and orderly throughout the day.

## **Closing of the Polls**

The voting process officially closed at 17:00pm at all polling streams. Party agents accompanied the Presiding Officers during the removal of the ballot drums from the voting rooms and recording of all ballot drums seal numbers for counting purposes. The Presiding Officers properly sealed the ballot drums and accounted for all unused ballot tokens, securely returning them into the designated ballot sacks.

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### **Counting Process**

Following the closure of polls, ballot counting began in strict compliance with IEC guidelines. The process was conducted transparently, with party agents and observers present throughout. To promote transparency and public trust, copies of the official Count Forms, signed by the party agents, were publicly displayed at each polling stream.

### **Critical Incidents**

No critical incidents were reported during the opening, closing and voting process.

### **Recommendation**

As the 2026–2027 electoral cycle is in full gear, it is crucial for the National Assembly to sustain momentum on broader legislative and constitutional reforms. With the Elections Bill now passed, focus should shift to its effective implementation and oversight to ensure credible and inclusive electoral processes.

In addition, the National Council for Civic Education should further strengthen its public education efforts to enhance citizens' understanding of their civic rights and responsibilities, particularly in relation to elections.

### **Conclusion**

The CSO Coalition on Elections having observed this by-election, we wish to commend the security forces for providing adequate security throughout the process in ensuring voters exercise their franchise. The political parties, the women, youth and persons with disabilities for showing the courage and fortitude to partake in this by-election and finally the general electorates showing their commitment towards national duty and maintaining peace throughout this process. Similarly, to our fellow civil society and media colleagues for showing their commitment towards the electoral observation process and being committed to our duties as independent observers in ensuring free, fair and transparent elections.

CSO Coalition on Elections

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