

THE
CARTER CENTER



**The Carter Center
International Election Observation Mission to Côte d'Ivoire
Report #1**

Altogether, the atmosphere at and around the centers was calm, despite the often long waiting time and large number of petitioners. In some cases though, tensions were observed due to one or several of the following factors:

- Disputes among petitioners irritated by the long wait and anxious to be enrolled.
- Suspicions regarding the management of queues. Petitioners complained about others cutting in line, favoritism, or unfair advantage being given to acquaintances and/or political party members or supporters. Suspicions arose particularly when lines were managed by political party representatives or local youth.
- Petitioners originally from the village or specific area felt they should be registered before those who were not considered native to the community where the operation was taking place.
- There were two cases reported where individuals attempted to police the queues in an attempt to stop supposed foreign nationals from enrolling.

Over the course of the period observed, the Center's observers noted a progressive increase in the security of collection centers in the district of Abidjan. By the end of the observation period, the security forces were present in approximately one out of every two centers. Security patrols were also seen at regular intervals and the collection center managers had the appropriate contact details to call upon security forces should the need have arisen when security personnel were not present.

In the town of Bouaké there was a significant presence of security forces from the start of operations. At a majority of visited sites, two or three security officers were often present and the mixed patrols executed by Ivorian Security and Defense Forces (FDS) and the Forces Nouvelles Armed Forces (FAFN) appeared to work harmoniously together under the management of the Integrated Command Center.

Outside of Abidjan and Bouaké, security forces were seldom visible. Various explanations were given to justify the absence of security forces:

- Security forces did not receive official orders despite operations having been launched.
- The lack of means of transport made it difficult for security forces to travel to collection centers located outside towns.
- The collection center manager deemed the constant presence of security forces unnecessary, stating that security could be called upon should security forces be needed.

In cases when the centers did have security forces present, they were positioned along the exterior periphery of the center. In Bouaké, the security forces were sometimes observed inside the collection centers, contrary to the stipulations found in the Prime Minister's Circular.

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When considering logistical aspects of the operation, the Center's observers included all elements necessary for the functioning of the collection centers and for the timely implementation of each step of the identification and voter registration procedure, including:

- The presence of the entire collection center staff: one CEI head of the center, one CEI agent responsible for identification, one ONI (National Office of Identification) agent responsible

- Errors in the deployment of teams or material, possibly having been directed to the wrong site or the late arrival of the list of centers prevented the various actors from efficient coordination.
- There were cases where collection centers were falsely said to have electricity though this was not realized until the team arrived at the site. Delays thus ensued due to a lack of a generator or other equipment necessary for the center to function. It was often the case that information about each center location was not properly verified by the CEI because they lacked the means to visit and verify the information for every site.
- Generators that were not operational or cases where there was no means to purchase fuel to run them.
- In one specific case, the regional CEI refused to participate in the process in the absence of an operations budget.
- Other financial problems.

Technical problems were observed or reported more frequently outside of Abidjan. The generators needed to power the INS computers often broke down owing to the poor quality of fuel available in the CNO zone (the former rebel-held areas of the center, north and west of the country), the inadequate generator capacity to power the necessary equipment, and/or agents by some means damaged the generator. SAGEM equipment also had problems stemming from improper functioning of the battery or failure to hold a charge, but normally these issues were resolved within a day. A lack of sufficient light rendered it difficult to take ID photos.

There was also no standardized procedure for securing material outside of working hours. CEI officials reported that they had suggested that the material be stored in their premises but the administrators were hesitant to do so. In practice, the agents themselves became responsible for the security of equipment. When the collection center was located in a school, INS and SAGEM agents quite often found a place within the school to keep the equipment secure. In cases where agents did not find an appropriate place, the material was usually entrusted to the local chief, the mayor, or in rare cases in the homes of residents living nearby the location of the collection center.

For some of the centers located in towns, a system to ensure equipment was securely stored was eventually organized with the assistance of

scale of the logistical challenges to implement such as system was underestimated from the start. When and how the authorities will settle this predicament is unknown to The Carter Center at this time.

3. Registration Operations

In general, the agents carrying out the operations had a good grasp of the process, after what was a short breaking-in period during the earliest days of the operation. During the first several days of operation, agents made a significant number of mistakes on the registration forms that resulted in a number of forms being cancelled and the individual registration operation restarted again. Agents also appeared to follow the directives listing the required documentation to register and the means to check its authenticity. In some instances however, individual agents pursued in-depth questioning of petitioners who had names thought to be of a foreign origin. This tendency was acknowledged by some agents and heads of collection center, and seemed to be at least partly attributable to a case of arrest and sentencing of a National Identification Office (ONI) agent who registered a foreigner on the voter list. However, it was also possible that an overly-exhaustive interrogation by some agents may have led them to act beyond their terms of reference – which were limited to the checking of the formal elements outlined in the Circular – resulting in undue rejections.

Other irregular implementation of the Circular was observed. For example, the verification of dates appearing on the documents was sometimes subject to interpretation that could have resulted in unmerited rejections of petitioners. This situation seemed to have been corrected by verbal instructions communicated to agents in the collection centers. The verification of the official stamp on documents did not always follow the same criteria: the monetary value of the stamp was sometimes considered and sometimes not. In this case also, it appeared that verbal instructions had been given to agents to accept the validity of identification documents regardless of the monetary value of their stamps. The lack of uniformity in implementing these instructions appeared to be attributable to the fact that agents did not receive the instructions at the same time.

The following is a list of the most frequent reasons for rejections based on official procedures:

- Some petitioners under the age of 18 were not in possession of a certificate of nationality. This was observed in all the regions visited but with higher frequency in the CNO zone (the former rebel-held areas of the center, north and west of the country) due to the previous absence of tribunals competent to deliver such documents.
- Petitioners presented a notarized deed issued by a judge or a record of individual civil status issued by a state officer; this case occurred most frequently for citizens displaced as a result of the war.
- Illegible documents; due normally to mold or general deterioration as a result of bad conservation.
- A worn seal on the original document.
- Absence of the signature and/or capacity of the administrative authority on the original documents.
- Unreadable photocopies.

Other less frequent causes for rejection in conformity with the Circular were observed or reported:

- The petitioner was born before the civil registry was started.
- The original document and photocopy did not match.
- The written name on the document did not match that given by the petitioner.

Some irregular cases of rejection were observed or reported, including instances when:

- A petitioner whose name is common in neighboring countries, even though their parents were born in Cote d'Ivoire, was unable to register without a naturalization document.
- A petitioner had a foreign father and an Ivorian mother.

representatives, the UN mission radio ONUCI FM and television were among the sources of information for most people.

Key Findings and Recommendations

The launch of the identification and voter registration process was a significant step in implementing the Ouagadougou Political Accords. There is also a strong public interest to

result is that potential beneficiaries were usually unaware about the existence of such a mechanism.

Outside of Abidjan and Bouaké, the security of collection centers often appeared limited or nonexistent, including in areas where the security situation was considered volatile. Limited transportation restricted security forces capacity to patrol collection centers outside the main cities and towns. There was no uniform procedure put in place from the start outlining how equipment and materials should be secured outside of working hours and therefore this responsibility falls principally on agents themselves.

The representatives of the main political parties regularly followed the operations particularly in towns. By contrast, the presence of national civil society organizations in the observation of these operations was very limited. In spite of repeated requests to the CEI for authorization to observe the identification and voter registration process, some interested civic organizations are still waiting for a response.

The Carter Center makes the following recommendations:

- CEI and other actors should renew their cooperation in order to reallocate available resources more rationally and efficiently.
 - Improved planning, assessment, and more efficient coordination between the different structures could be reached by a more effective involvement of their representatives at decentralized level, especially to take advantage of their knowledge of local conditions.
 - Authorities should implement an improved payment system to avoid additional late payment of funds to various agents working in the operation.
 - CEI should develop and publish a more realistic electoral calendar based on a coherent estimation of deadlines (considering the delays already incurred) and the applicable legal framework.
 - The prompt redeployment of tribunals in the CNO zone will facilitate the inclusion of minors in the identification process and enable the proper adjudication of any legal disputes that may arise related to the electoral process.
 - The identification and voter registration and the reconstitution of civil registers lost or destroyed during the war must be effectively linked to ensure that all eligible petitioners have the opportunity to be included.
 - All institutions involved in the identification and voter registration should remind their
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- As the operation is extended to the sub-regions of the country, it would be useful to organize a patrol system for the security forces that will enable them to intervene quickly if needed. Furthermore, it would be useful to start identifying possible sites for keeping equipment and materials secure in rural areas.
- Political parties should continue to ensure that their agents observe all phases of the electoral process in a constructive manner. The Carter Center also underlines the important role of civil society organizations in civic education and non-partisan election observation and calls on the CEI to provide the appropriate authorization for qualified groups who wish to deploy observers.

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The Carter Center conducts election observation activities in a nonpartisan, professional manner as set forth in the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation. The Center coordinates closely with other international and domestic observer delegations and publishes its statements on its Web site: www.cartercenter.org.

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