

THE CASE FOR A NEW VOTERS REGISTER

Press Conference held by

THE NEW PATRIOTIC PARTY (NPP)

Alisa Hotel, Accra

AUGUST 18, 2015

Invited Guests
Members of the Press
Ladies and Gentlemen,

A good morning to all of you. I would like to thank all of you for taking the time to attend this important press conference on the need for a new voters register for the 2016 presidential and parliamentary elections.

A valid voters' register is essential for free and fair elections. The evidence that we are presenting here today is overwhelming proof that the 2012 Voters' register is incurably flawed and cannot be relied on for the 2016 elections. This morning we presented our arguments and evidence on this matter to the Electoral Commission. We however deem it important to share this with all Ghanaians.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the process of unraveling the mystery of surrounding Ghana's apparently bloated voters register has been a painstaking one. While we have had several pieces of the jig-saw puzzle, we have always been missing the final conclusive piece that will lay all doubts to rest.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is important by way of background to review some of the pieces of the jig-saw puzzle that we have previously presented.

First, the NPP remains concerned by the lingering disparity in the total number of registered voters provided by the EC at different times during the 2012 election cycle. The total registered voters for the parliamentary election stood at 13,628,817. The total number of registered voters that the EC gazette for the Presidential election was **14,158,890**. The EC initially attributed this difference to overseas registered voters who were registered for presidential voting but not parliamentary voting. The Chairman of the EC could not support this claim when the Supreme Court compelled him to do so. Indeed, he could only produce **705** registered voters. To date, the EC has not been able to explain who those supposed voters were, and for all practical purposes, the EC used more than one voters register for the conduct of the 2012 elections.

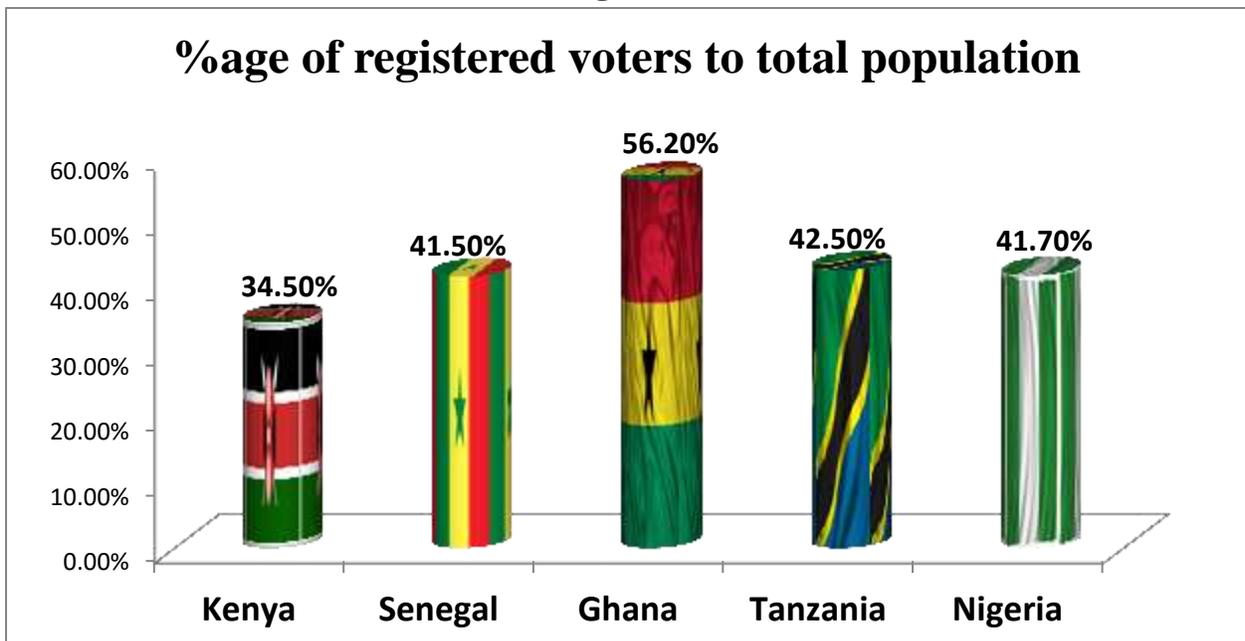
Second, the Electoral Commission as well as President John Mahama have questioned the credibility of the voters register on the basis of size. In the words of Dr. Afari Gyan concerning Ghana’s 2008 voters register:

“If our population is indeed 22 million, then perhaps 13 million people on our register would be statistically unacceptable by world standards. If that is the case, then it may mean that there is something wrong with our register.” The EC Chairman appealed thus: *“All of us as Ghanaians, if we think the figure is not realistic, have a collective responsibility to try to clean the register.”*

Then Vice-Presidential Candidate John Mahama, in an interview granted to the Daily Graphic in 2008 (reported by Donald Ato Dapatem), similarly stated that " With the current national population of 22 million, having almost 13 million people on the voters register is unheard of"

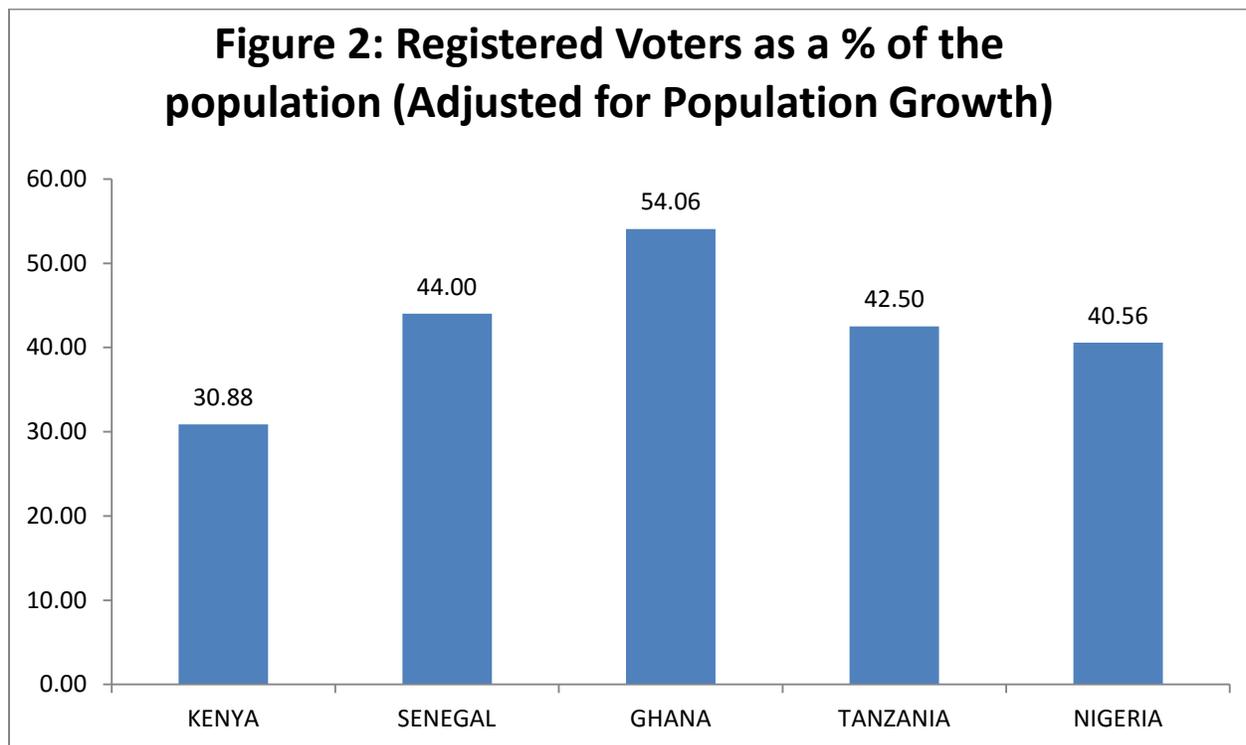
As shown in Figure 1 below, voter registration rates in the rest of Africa range from a low of 34.5% to a high of 42.5%. There is no reason why Ghana’s voter registration rate should be radically different from the rest of her contemporaries in Africa.

Figure 1



Even when these numbers are adjusted for population growth between the census date and the date of the elections in each country, the picture remains the same,

with Ghana having an abnormally high rate (54%) of registered voters relative to the population (Figure 2).



We note that this finding on its own does not prove conclusively that the 2012 voters register is bloated. It only suggests that it may be.

I. THE NATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE CARD

Third, Ladies and Gentlemen, another element of the jig-saw puzzle relates to registrations for the national health insurance card. The NHIS card is one of the cards the Electoral Commission has previously accepted as evidence of eligibility to register as a voter in Ghana. However, being a citizen of Ghana is not a requirement for obtaining a NHIS card. Indeed, even if you are an illegal immigrant or an international tourist on a day's visit to Ghana, you will still be allowed to register to join the NHIS, be issued a card to access Ghana's free medical care. A loophole therefore existed with the NHIS card for foreigners to be able to register as voters in Ghana.

In the run up to the voters' registration exercise for the 2012 elections, notwithstanding the precarious state of its finances with health service providers busily turning away NHIS cardholders for non-payment of arrears, the National Health Insurance Authority (NHIA) was busily undertaking free, special registration ostensibly for the poor and vulnerable.

The data for the special registration exercise indicates that it was curiously concentrated in the Brong Ahafo and Volta regions (two border regions). Of the total of some 905,000 special registrations in 2010 and 2011, 403,301 (44.5%) were in these two regions. When one considers that the poor and vulnerable are not disproportionately represented in these two regions (see Ghana Living Standards Surveys) it is very curious that over 40% of these special registrations are in these two **border regions** alone (Table 1 and Figure 3). While we are not against the special registration of the poor and vulnerable into the NHIS, the high numbers for the Brong Ahafo and Volta regions may be suggestive of foreigners coming across the border to take advantage of Ghana's NHIS or the deliberate registration of foreigners into the NHIS to provide them IDs for voter registration.

Table 1. NHIS Special Registrations 2010 & 2011

NHIS SPECIAL REGISTRATION EXERCISE				
REGION	2010	2011	TOTAL	% of Total
BRONG AHAFO	23,192	159,657	182,849	20.2%
VOLTA	80,152	140,300	220,452	24.3%
GT. ACCRA	39,048	117,972	157,020	17.3%
WESTERN	23,660	70,131	93,791	10.4%
CENTRAL	31,882	29,963	61,845	6.8%
UPPER EAST	47,216	6,683	53,899	5.9%
EASTERN	4,993	52,922	57,915	6.4%
ASHANTI	6,830	13,202	20,032	2.2%
NORTHERN	11,031	4,993	16,024	1.8%
UPPER WEST	8,296	33,817	42,113	4.6%
TOTAL (NATIONAL)	276,300	629,640	905,940	100.0%

It is against this background that the Supreme Court has declared in the case of *Abu Ramadan and Another v The Electoral Commission and the Attorney General* (Writ No.J1/11/2014) that “**upon a true and proper interpretation of Article 42 of the Constitution, the use of the National Health Insurance Card as proof of qualification to register as a voter pursuant to the Public Elections (Registration of Voters) Regulations 2012 (C.I. 72) is unconstitutional, void, and of no effect.**”. This ruling poses a major problem for the validity of the voters register since a large number of voters registered using the National Health Insurance card as their identification.

In the case, the EC argued that a large number of voters would be disenfranchised if the Supreme Court ruled that the use of the NHIA card was illegal. Furthermore, the Attorney General argued similarly “**to remove the card from the list in Regulation 1(3) of C.I. 72 will amount to depriving a broad section of Ghanaians of their right to vote**”. It is therefore clear that a broad section of Ghanaians used the NHIA card to register to vote in the 2012 elections. The Supreme Court has however declared all these registrations as void and of no effect. This means that the current voters register is tainted and must be replaced.

II. Unusual Increases in registration between 2008 and 2012

Fourth, Ladies and Gentlemen, the available data also shows unusual increases in the voters register in several constituencies between 2008 and 2012. In general, an increase in the voters register between two elections of a magnitude above 10-15% is high. An increase of the voters register by 25% between two elections is abnormally high and there are also several instances of this. One cannot credibly explain for example how increases in the voters’ register of magnitudes exceeding 40% can take place. Where did the people come from? Table 4 presents examples of constituencies with unusually high increases in the voters register between 2008 and 2012. What is interesting about the data is that quite a large number of the constituencies with unusual increases in the voters register are those that border neighboring countries. Take the Western region for example, where notwithstanding the oil find Sekondi and Takoradi saw a 5% decrease in registered voters while Suaman and Nzema East saw increases in the voters register by 23% and 27.7% respectively.

Table 4. Increase/Decrease in the Voters Register Between 2008 and 2012 (Selected Districts)

Districts	2008	2012	Difference	Percent
Ketu South	98,283	126,659	28,376	28.9%
Hohoe Mun	94,477	134,365	39,888	42.2%
Nkwanta North	29,233	44,553	15,320	52.4%
Ga-West Mun.	109,530	173,767	64,237	58.6%
Kpone Katamanso	50,383	79,442	29,059	57.7%
AdentaMun	60,859	90,507	29,648	48.7%
Nzema East	32,183	41,097	8914	27.7%
Suaman	16,953	20,891	3,938	23.2%
Takoradi	56,576	53686	(2,890)	-5.1%
Amenfi East	50,915	67,093	16,178	34%
Ningo Prampram	38,138	51,801	13,663	35.8%
Pusiga	27,555	35,856	8,301	30.1%
Asutifi North	26,766	34,957	8,191	30.6%

The evidence therefore strongly supports the assessment that the electoral register is clearly bloated. This is however just another piece of the jig-saw puzzle. On its own it is not conclusive evidence that the voters register is bloated. However, we believe we have finally discovered the final piece of this jig-saw, the smoking gun.

III. COMPARING THE TOGO AND GHANA VOTERS REGISTERS

Ladies and Gentlemen, over the years there have been persistent rumours about people coming from across the border in Togo, Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire to register and vote in Ghanaian elections. The curious case of increased NHIS special registrations in the Brong Ahafo and Volta regions (both border regions), coupled with the massive increase in the voter registrations in some border constituencies between 2008 and 2012 resulted in investigative work being undertaken to ascertain whether in fact, citizens of Togo Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire do register to vote in Ghanaian elections.

In this regard, our investigative team obtained the Togo voters register which was publicly displayed prior to the 2015 Togolese elections. Using facial biometric recognition technology, the system has found 76,286 potential matches of the same people, with the same names and faces on the Ghanaian as well as Togolese voters registers; some 2000 of which we present in the power point presentation. I should note that so far, we have only completed less than 10% of the work on the Togolese register and we will begin work on comparing the Ivorian register with Ghana's shortly and follow that with the Burkina Faso register. Even though our investigations are on-going, we are presenting our initial results because time is of the essence in this matter of a new electoral register. The EC, as we speak, is in the process of taking a decision on the issue and we have to make an input into this process at the earliest opportunity.

The evidence, we have shown you is damning and shows that Ghana's voters register has been compromised.

What is more troubling with the findings so far is that many of the pictures of the Togolese citizens on Ghana's register were not taken in a live environment but rather scanned from existing pictures and documents. We actually have an incredible situation of one polling station in Ketu south constituency (Temporary Booth Shikakope-Apekotuime) where most of the pictures on the voters register were scanned. These are evidenced by staple pin marks on the Photos in the register, which under the law should be digitally taken and therefore cannot have been stapled.

The question therefore is how these scanned pictures got into the EC voters register? This could only have been done by people with the necessary security permissions to do so. The evidence is therefore incontrovertible that Ghana's voters register has been compromised. It is not a document we can rely on for free fair and transparent elections in Ghana.

The case for a new voters register is therefore overwhelming.

Recommendations

1. A new voters register should be created to replace the over bloated 2012 register. We suggest that this register should be created no later than June 2016.
2. The new register should result in the issue of Permanent Voter Cards with biometric information embedded in the cards as was the case in Nigeria recently.
3. The period of registration for the new register should be limited to a maximum of two weeks and the registration should take place simultaneously across all polling stations.
4. The new register that is compiled should be independently audited by an internationally reputable firm before the 2016 election.
5. Copies of the new voters' register should be provided to political parties in both the electronic (csv file) and (pdf file) formats.
6. The new register should be sorted alphabetically by last name and gender.
7. The new Register should clearly delineate voters registered overseas by country and basis for registration (e.g., mission, scholarship, etc).
8. Statistical data supporting the new voters register (i.e. total number of votes, split by gender, polling stations, electoral area, constituency, region and country) should be provided to political parties.
9. The Public Elections (Registration of Voters) Regulations 2012, C.I. 72 be amended to ensure that political parties receive copies of the final register of voters based on which the EC will be conducting the General Elections at least ninety (90) days before the conduct of the elections.
10. Regulation 1(4) of C. I. 72 be amended to read that a registered voter cannot guarantee more than two (2) potential registrants. Copies of such

registrations should be made available to the political parties and should also be accessible by the general public.

11. Resource the National Identification Authority to create a register of all inhabitants of the land. This register will serve as the singular reference for all Government offices and programs, like NHIS, Free Education, Youth Employment, Passports, Driver's Licenses, Tax collection etc which in itself creates a disincentive to provide false information.