

# THE DEMOCRATIC QUALITY OF PRIMARIES IN GHANA: A LOOK AT THE 2020 NPP INTERNAL PARTY ELECTIONS

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## Key points

This paper examines the conduct of the 2020 NPP parliamentary primaries in Ghana. It shares insights on the extent to which the parliamentary primaries conform to fundamental principles of democratic elections and identifies the mechanisms that party executives and leadership use to circumvent the democratic processes.

A majority of the disqualified aspirants were first timers or did not occupy higher positions in government. Thus, incumbents who had no relatively influential aspirants contesting them were more likely to go unopposed after the vetting.

There are no laws regulating the internal elections of political parties in Ghana. The national election management body, the Electoral Commission's (EC) involvement in the candidate selection process is extremely limited.

To meet the democratic expectations, the processes for electing parliamentary candidates ought to meet democratic best practices such as openness and transparency, competitiveness and fairness. Also, democratic best practices and good governance require the existence of a listening and responsive leadership.

## INTRODUCTION

Primaries are part of the internal processes political parties use to select representatives to contest in inter-party elections<sup>1</sup>. They are organized in the form of an Electoral College where selected card bearing members of a political party vote for the aspiring candidates of their choice. Primary elections became the key approach for the selection of parliamentary and presidential candidates by the two leading political parties in Ghana- first by the New Patriotic Party (NPP) in 1996 and, later, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) in the early 2000s<sup>2</sup>.

In Ghana, political party primaries are not only a democratic imperative but also a constitutional requirement. The 1992 Constitution of Ghana maintains that political parties must be "democratic in their internal processes"<sup>3</sup>. This constitutional provision beckons political parties and their leaders to view the principles of internal party politics as an essential component of democratic politics. Thus, parliamentary primaries regardless of the form they take must reflect, at the minimum, the principles of democracy such as transparency, competitiveness and fairness.

However, there are no laws regulating the conduct of political party primaries in Ghana. Even the involvement of the national election management body, the Electoral Commission (EC), is limited to the counting and declaration of votes<sup>4</sup>. These lapses in intra-party elections administration coupled with the unfettered discretionary powers at the disposal of party officials foment conducts and practices that can severely impair the democratic prospects of party primaries.

1 Carey, John M., and John Polga-Hecimovich. "Primary elections and candidate strength in Latin America." *The Journal of Politics* 68, no. 3 (2006): 530-543.

2 Daddieh, Cyril K., and George M. Bob-Milliar. "In search of 'Honorable' membership: parliamentary primaries and candidate selection in Ghana." *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 47, no. 2 (2012): 204-220.

3 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, (Ghana), 7 January, 1993.

4 The Electoral Commission of Ghana only supervises the voting, counting and declaration of winning candidates. The Commission does not involve itself in the process of compiling the constituency albums for primaries which is a significant part of the primary election process where transparency.

This Briefing Paper examines the strategies that party executives used to undermine democratic quality of the NPP's 2020 parliamentary primaries and their implications on Ghana's democracy.

## CANDIDATE SELECTION PROCESSES

The candidate selection processes ran through three phases: sale and submission of nomination forms, vetting of aspirants, and election of candidates<sup>5</sup>. The NPP commenced the nomination process on January 20, 2020<sup>6</sup>, to allow the parliamentary aspirants to purchase nomination forms at the party's constituency offices. The national secretariat of the party issued three nomination forms to each constituency and constituted a constituency parliamentary election committee (CPEC) comprising five party members to supervise the sale and submission of the nomination forms. Alternatively, the party arranged for candidates who could not access the nomination forms at the constituency level to purchase the forms at the regional or the national secretariat. The CPEC members certified the nomination forms that were submitted by the aspirants and forwarded them to the regional Executive Committee and the national secretariat for endorsement by the General Secretary. The nomination form cost GHS 2,000 after which the aspirants were required to pay GHS 20,000 as the filing fee. In addition, all the aspirants who were not sitting members of parliament (MPs) were required to pay an extra GHS 30,000; women and persons with disabilities (PWDs) paid 50 percent of all the required fees. Different categories of aspirants incurred different fees for the nomination: aspirants who were not MPs paid a total of GHS 52,000 (an equivalent of USD\$ 9,630<sup>7</sup>); GHS 27,000 (an equivalent of USD\$ 5000) and sitting MPs GHS 22,000 (an equivalent of USD\$ 4,074).

After the form submission, the party grouped the fifteen regions, except the Volta Region, that took part in the primaries into five zones for the purpose of vetting aspiring parliamentary candidates. The vetting in each zone was carried out by a three-member representation appointed by the national executive committee, the regional chairman, regional secretary and the regional research and elections officer; and all the members of the CPEC. The list of qualified aspirants at the vetting was submitted to the regional party office for endorsement and onward to the General Secretary to be presented to the National Executive Committee (NEC). The party constituted a nine-member National Parliamentary Appeals Committee (NPAC) responsible for considering petitions from aspirants who were disqualified at the vetting. The process was open to all party members who had grievances against aspirants who had gone through the vetting. The NPAC considered all appeals and made recommendations for final consideration by the NEC.



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5 New Patriotic Party, 'NPP sets guidelines for parliamentary & presidential elections', 16th January, 2020. <  
<https://newpatrioticparty.org/npp-sets-guidelines-for-parliamentary-presi/>>

6 Ahiable, Gloria K. "2020 Elections: NPP Opens Nominations", The Ghana Report, 20 January, 2020. <  
<https://www.theghanareport.com/2020-elections-npp-opens-nominations/>>

7 The amount corresponds to the exchange rate as at January 2020

For the purpose of voting in the parliamentary primaries, the party communicated that 'the photo album/register which was used to elect the Constituency Executives in February 2018', would be used by the NPVC and the Electoral Commission of Ghana to conduct parliamentary primaries 2020. Voting by proxy was limited to only delegates and must be applied to the National Secretariat 3 weeks before the conduct of the parliamentary primaries.

## REQUIREMENTS FOR CONTESTING IN THE PRIMARY

Article 55 (5) of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana requires political parties to be democratic in all their internal processes including the election of candidates and party officers. The intent of Article 55 is to safeguard the democratic rights of members of political parties and aspiring candidates not only to vote and to be voted for but also the processes that lead to voting or being voted for.

Additionally, Article 2 [(3)(5)] of the NPP's constitution<sup>8</sup> expresses the party's intent to advance “freedom and justice”, “rule of law” and safeguard human rights through the practice of democracy. The party's constitution stipulates the grounds on which a member of the party can exercise their democratic rights to vote and to be voted for in any given election within the party. Article 11(4) of the NPP constitution requires the election candidate or delegate to be: a known and active member of the party for at least two years; a registered member and/ voter in the constituency which the person is contesting, of good character and is of good standing; and satisfied other administrative procedures such as paying the prescribed fees for parliamentary candidates and signed “undertaking for parliamentary candidates”. The grounds for disqualifying members from holding office or participating in elections include: (a) when found not to have completed ten years after serving a jail sentence for certain stated offences prior to their participation in the election(s); (b) when the person is suffering from mental disability or (c) is found not to be “of good standing— “a member shall be of good standing where he or she has paid in full and up to date all dues or levies he or she is liable to pay as a Member, and has discharged all his or her duties as a Member”, Article 3 (C) (NPP, 2009, p7).

“Interference by party leaders occurred at three different levels in the primary processes—the nomination (sale and submission of forms), vetting of parliamentary aspirants and the compilation of the constituency album.”

<sup>8</sup> New Patriotic Party (2009). Constitution of the New Patriotic Party. Accra: NPP, p.24-25.



*The lack of transparency in the handling of nomination forms (availability and access) allowed capture by a few officials- who schemed to frustrate and prevent prospective competitors from contesting.*



## RECKONING THE DEMOCRATIC DEFICITS IN THE CANDIDATE SELECTION PROCESSES

Ahead of the nomination process, rumors about plans by party leaders to protect some sitting MPs from being contested began to spread and elicited resentment from several groups within and outside the party. John Boadu refuted the allegations<sup>9</sup> and expressed the party leadership's commitment to ensure a competitive selection process, but the actions and inactions of party executives at the constituency, regional and national levels were not consistent with the principles of free, fair and competitive selection processes. Apparently, party leaders interfered at three different levels in the primary processes—the nomination (sale and submission of forms), compilation of the constituency albums<sup>10</sup> and vetting of parliamentary aspirants. The systematic and elaborate nature of the interference allowed some local executives to torpedo the democratic qualities in the selection processes.

Sale and submission of nomination forms. The interference in the primaries manifested prominently in the sale and submission of the nomination forms. In some constituencies, party officials refused to sell or accept completed nomination forms from some candidates and their supporters. The decision by the party's national leadership to (i) issue a limited number (merely three) of the nomination forms to each constituency and (ii) directly in the hands of the five-member CPEC committee (iii) without enough information systematically was very troubling. Apparently, the lack of transparency in the handling of nomination forms (availability and accessibility) allowed capture by a few party officials- who schemed to frustrate and prevent prospective competitors from contesting. For example, in the Okere constituency, Mr. Emmanuel Adjei-Lartey, managed to get a nomination form from the party's regional office after several efforts to purchase the form from the constituency executives failed<sup>11</sup>. Later, the regional executives requested the form from Adjei-Lartey to purportedly make some corrections but the form was never returned to him<sup>12</sup>. Several requests and protests by supporters of Adjei-Lartey to drive home their demands proved futile. In other constituencies including Suame and Bekwai<sup>13</sup>, nomination forms were not made available to other aspiring parliamentary candidates who wanted to contest the incumbent MPs. The attempts to prevent aspiring candidates, Mr. Francis Addai Nimoh in Asante Mampong<sup>14</sup> and Mr. Sammy Binfo Darkwa in Adansi Asokwa constituencies<sup>15</sup> from filing their nomination to contest incumbent MPs resulted in violent clashes.

9 Ghanaweb, 'Sitting MPs in Ashanti region will not contest unopposed – John Boadu', 27 January 2020 <<https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Sitting-MPs-in-Ashanti-Region-will-not-contest-unopposed-John-Boadu-849247>> (17 February 2021).

10 The constituency voters register that contains the names of qualified delegates who could vote in the primaries  
11 Ghana News Agency, 'NPP parliamentary aspirant for Okere threatens court action', 20 February 2020, <<https://newsghana.com.gh/npp-parliamentary-aspirant-for-okere-threatens-court-action/>> (17 February 2021).

12 Godwill Arthur-Mensah, 'NPP parliamentary aspirant for Okere threatens court action', Ghana News Agency, 20 February 2020, <<https://www.gna.org.gh/1.16899961>> (17 February 2021).

13 The Ghana Report, 'Challenger to Joe Osei Owusu is not NPP member – Bekwai NPP explains refusal to give nomination forms' <<https://www.theghanareport.com/amofa-agyemang-not-npp-member-bekwai-npp-shoots-down-osei-owusus-contender/>> (18 February 2020).

14 Ghanaweb, 'Several NPP supporters injured in violent clash at Mampong', 20 February 2020, <<https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Several-NPP-supporters-injured-in-violent-clash-at-Mampong-871690>> (17 February 2021).

15 Ellen Dapaah, 'NPP Primaries: Adansi Asokwa aspirant "disgusted" by supporters assault on Constituency Secretary', Citi News Room, 2020 February 2020, <<https://citinewsroom.com/2020/02/npp-primaries-adansi-asokwa-mp-aspirant-disgusted-by-supporters-assault-on-constituency-secretary/>> (17 February 2021).

Vetting of parliamentary aspirants. The party leaders used the vetting window to interfere in the candidate selection processes. The conditions under which one qualifies to contest in internal elections within the party are quite clear and verifiable in most cases except the requirement to discharge one's "duties as a member" or the failure to "nurture the constituency"<sup>16</sup> of the party. Many aspirants were disqualified for having brought the name of the party into disrepute. Due to the nebulosity and subjective nature of the provisions, party executives exploited them to disqualify a disproportionate number of aspiring parliamentary candidates at the vetting. In the Ablekuma West constituency, Mr. Albert Kan Dapaah Junior failed at the vetting. The charge was that he made false statements against the incumbent MP about four years ago that brought the name of the party into disrepute<sup>17</sup>. In the Atiwa East constituency, all three aspiring parliamentary candidates seeking to contest the incumbent Ms. Abena Osei Asare were disqualified for failing to prove that they were not behind some individuals who had invoked curses on the incumbent<sup>18</sup>. Mr. Patrick Kwabena Ampong Baidoo who was seeking to contest the incumbent MP for the Weija-Gbawe constituency, Ms. Tina Gifty Naa Ayeley Mensah, was disqualified for having allegedly told lies to some party executives about two years ago<sup>19</sup>. Mr. Philip Addison<sup>20</sup>, the lead Counsel for the party in the 2012 Presidential Elections Dispute at the Supreme Court of Ghana was disqualified for failing to nurture the constituency he was contesting for a seat.

Aspirants were disqualified for different reasons but a certain general pattern was observable. The majority of the disqualified aspirants were first-timers or did not occupy higher positions in government. It meant that incumbents who had less influential aspirants contesting them were more likely to go unopposed after the vetting. The highest number of disqualifications and unopposed candidates happened in the two stronghold regions of the ruling party- Eastern and Ashanti. The Eastern Region recorded the highest number of disqualifications of 15<sup>21</sup>, followed by the Ashanti Region<sup>22</sup> with nine disqualifications and five voluntary withdrawals. But Ashanti led with 14 sitting MPs going unopposed and nine unopposed sitting MPs from the Eastern Region. The next highest qualifications came from Greater Accra and

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16 Modern Ghana, 'NPP Primaries: 9 Dropped From Race In Ashanti region', 13 March 2020, <<https://www.modernghana.com/news/989073/npp-primaries-9-dropped-from-race-in-ashanti-regi.html>> (17 February 2021).

17 Seth Bokpe 'NPP Primaries: Ursula Owusu's Contender Albert Kan Dapaah Jnr Failed At Vetting', The Ghana Report, (2 March 2020), <<https://www.theghanareport.com/npp-primaries-ursula-owusus-contender-albert-kan-dapaah-jnr-failed-at-vetting/>> (17 February 2021).

18 Daniel Bampoe, 'NPP Dumps 15 Aspirants In ER', Daily Guide Network, 9 March 2020 <<https://dailyguidenetwork.com/npp-dumps-15-aspirants-in-er/>> (17 February 2021).

19 William Beeko, 'NPP vetting: Weija-Gbawe candidate Patrick Baidoo disqualified', GhanaWeb, 3 March 2020, <<https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/NPP-vetting-Weija-Gbawe-candidate-Patrick-Baidoo-disqualified-883666>> (17 February 2021).

20 Sammy Wiafe, 'NPP primaries: Philip Addison disqualified from contesting Akuapem North seat', Citi News Room, 8 March 2020, <<https://citinewsroom.com/2020/03/npp-primaries-philip-addison-disqualified-from-contesting-akuapem-north-seat/>> (17 February 2021).

21 Myjoyonline News, 'NPP primaries: Philip Addison, 14 others disqualified in Eastern region', 9 March 2020, <<https://www.myjoyonline.com/news/npp-primaries-philip-addison-14-others-disqualified-in-eastern-region/>> (17 February 2021).

22 David Apinga, 'NPP Ashanti disqualifies 9, approves 106 for primaries', The Ghana Report, 10 March 2020, <<https://www.theghanareport.com/npp-ashanti-disqualifies-9-approves-106-for-primaries/>> (17 February 2021).



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PARTY LEADERS SELECTIVELY INTERFERE IN THE CANDIDATE SELECTION PROCESSES IN ORDER TO AVOID NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES FROM LOCAL PARTY SUPPORTERS.

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“ Manipulation of constituency albums remained a key part of the methods that party leaders used to interfere with the democratic selection processes. Typically, local party executives in collaboration with some parliamentary candidates or other party leaders at the higher level interfered with the compilation of the albums to favor their preferred candidates.”

Central regions each with six disqualifications. The high disqualifications and unopposed candidates in party strongholds were quite interesting given that party leaders were expected to selectively interfere in the candidate selection processes in order to avoid negative consequences from local party supporters, especially in the safest seats where primaries create great opportunities for local party supporters to extract rent from the aspirants<sup>23</sup>. The audacity reflects the level of neglect and underestimation of the political consequences of interfering in safe seats.

Constituency albums. Typically, local party executives in collaboration with some parliamentary candidates and high-ranking party executives interfered with the compilation of the albums to favor their preferred candidates. As a result, controversies emerged over the legitimacy of some constituency albums ahead of the voting day. In many of the reported cases, aggrieved delegates complained that their names had been deleted from the constituency album while some persons they presumed to be illegitimate had been added to the constituency album. Apparently, the decision to use a two-year-old register or album without any transparency in the compilation and exhibition was bound to perpetuate the manipulation of the register and mar the democratic qualities of the primaries- signaling another strong indication of weak institutionalization of democratic ethos in internal party contests.

Some polling station executives in Asante Akyem North<sup>24</sup> bitterly complained about unjustifiable removal of their names from the constituency album. In Kwadaso constituency, some aggrieved delegates rejected the constituency album over the deletion of their names and inclusion of new names they presumed to be strange. Similar concerns in Mampong constituency nearly led to fisticuffs on the voting day<sup>25</sup>. Again, the then incumbent Member of Parliament, Mercy Adu Gyamfi popularly known as Ama Sey rejected the results of the primaries for the Akwatia constituency on the basis that four deceased delegates whose names were on the album were said to have voted in the primaries and contributed to her narrow defeat by four votes<sup>26</sup>. Voting in Subin constituency in the Ashanti Region proceeded after 51 delegates secured an injunction from a High Court in Kumasi<sup>27</sup>. The delegates' grievance was that their names had been deleted from the constituency album through the machinations of the incumbent Member of Parliament. In Effiduase-Asokore constituency, Kwame Adom Appiah, a candidate at the primaries was beaten by

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23 The constituency voters register that contains the names of qualified delegates who could vote in the primaries.

24 *Modern Ghana*, 'NPP primaries: polling station officers in Asante Akyem angry over 145 missing names in album', 16 June 2020, <<https://www.modernghana.com/news/1009557/npp-primaries-polling-station-officers-in-asante.html>> (17 February 2021).

25 *GhanaWeb*, 'NPP Primaries: Failed aspirant calls for annulment of result, re-run', 26 June 2020 <<https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/NPP-Primaries-Failed-aspirant-calls-for-annulment-of-result-re-run-990841>> (17 February 2021).

26 Prince Antwi, 'NPP primaries: Ama Sey rejects Akwatia results', *Ghana Guardian*, 2020 June, Retrieved <<https://ghanaguardian.com/npp-primaries-ama-sey-rejects-akwatia-results>> (17 February 2021).

27 Ansaah Marian, 'NPP decides: Court places injunction on Subin primary', *Citinewsroom*, 19 June 2020, <<https://citinewsroom.com/2020/06/nppdecides-court-places-injunction-on-subin-primary/>> (17 February 2021).

members of the security forces when he challenged and allegedly attempted to seize the constituency album<sup>28</sup>. The incidents created disunity among the local party members- just a few months leading to the general elections.

## IMPLICATIONS OF THE 2020 NPP PRIMARIES

The selective and manipulative schemes by party executives to influence the candidate selection processes had negative consequences beyond the electoral fortunes of the party. It has negative economic and political consequences for the political parties and overall democratic governance.

The frivolous disqualification of aspirants in the strongholds of the NPP especially in Ashanti impacted the electoral fortunes of the party, though marginally. For instance, Subin constituency, a safe seat of the NPP since 1996, recorded a reduction in the vote share to 72.54% in 2020<sup>29</sup> from 77.8% in 2016 following the disaffection from the parliamentary primary. Again, in Kwadaso constituency in the Ashanti Region the percentage of votes for the parliamentary candidate reduced from 90.0% in 2016 to 87.51% in 2020<sup>30</sup>. Similarly, the results for the NPP parliamentary candidate in the Asante Akim North constituency reduced from 64.3% to 63.9% between 2016 and 2020<sup>31</sup>. In the rare case of the Adansi Fomena constituency where the lack of transparency and disagreement in the compilation of the constituency album led to the breaking away of the then sitting MP, Andrew Amoako Asiamah to contest as an independent candidate, he wrestled the seat from the party in spite of it being one of the safest seats for the NPP. While we admit that the loss of votes in the general elections can be adduced to many factors beyond the happenings at the primary, it is reasonable to consider the impact of the primaries on the electoral fortunes of a party. Ichino and Nathan argued that interference by party executives in the primary selection processes has a greater tendency for creating disunity within the ranks of local party officials and it has negative implications on mobilizing voters to vote for the party's candidates.

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28 GhanaWeb, 'Lawyer who allegedly stole electoral album boycotts primaries', 20 June 2020, <<https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Lawyer-who-allegedly-stole-electoral-album-boycotts-primaries-985474>> (17 February 2021).

29 Graphiconline, 'NPP directs suspension of members who invoked curses on party leaders', June 2020 <https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/politics/npp-directs-suspension-of-members-who-invoked-curses-on-leadership.html> > (16 April 2021)

30 Peacefmonline, 'Election 2020: Kwadaso constituency results', December 2020, <<https://ghanaelections.peacefmonline.com/pages/2020/ashanti/kwadaso/>> (17 February 2021).

31 Peacefmonline, 'Election 2020: Asante Akim North constituency results', December 2020, <[https://ghanaelections.peacefmonline.com/pages/2020/ashanti/asante\\_akim\\_north/](https://ghanaelections.peacefmonline.com/pages/2020/ashanti/asante_akim_north/)> (17 February 2021).

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The increasing monetization of the primary contest is a major cause for concern. The cost of filling nominations to contest at the primaries increased by 100% to GHS 20,000 in 2020 from GHS 10,000 in 2015<sup>32</sup>. Again, the primary contest witnessed huge financial and material rewards exchanging hands between delegates and parliamentary aspirants. An investigation conducted by the Corruption Watch revealed that some candidates spent close to \$300 cash per the primary delegates in addition to other material rewards (TV set, fridges, pieces of cloth, farming implements, food items, etc.) just a few days preceding voting at the primary contest<sup>33</sup>. A clear case of corruption captured in the investigative report involved the Deputy Chief Executive Officer of the state-owned microfinance and small loans center (MASLOC), Hajia Abibata Shani Mahama Zakaria who was found giving out loans to primary delegates to win their votes<sup>34</sup>. The high cost involved in the contest does not only put the highest bidder ahead of competitors but also makes money the key determiner for selecting political leadership at that level. The temptation for politicians to use state resources to fund their primary contests is a high corruption risk. And, when elected, MPs become more interested in serving positions and roles that allow them to recoup their investment or recover their debt rather than key legislative and oversight functions.

#### **REFORMING THE NOMINATION PROCESSES TO MAKE IT CONSTITUTIONALLY AND DEMOCRATICALLY COMPLIANT**

To meet democratic expectations, the processes for electing parliamentary candidates ought to meet democratic best practices such as openness and transparency, competitiveness and fairness. Also, democratic best practices and good governance require the existence of a listening and responsive leadership. We recommend the following measures to strengthen the democratic conduct of parliamentary primaries.

- The sale of the nomination forms must reflect efficiency, transparency and competitiveness. The party should put in place an electronic application process that would allow unlimited access to nomination forms. An electronic application will ensure transparency in the management of the forms, promote efficiency and help control capture while minimizing acrimony and unhealthy competition.

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32 *Graphiconline*, 'NPP set parliamentary primary for April 15' <https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/politics/npp-set-parliamentary-primaries-for-may-24.html> > (2 March 2021)

33 Corruption Watch, 'Exposed: How candidates bought votes in NPP primaries' (July 2020). <https://corruptionwatchghana.org/2020/07/09/exposed-how-candidates-bought-votes-in-npp-2020primaries/> > (4 April 2021)

34 The deputy CEO was captured saying that she had used her discretion to increase the number of beneficiaries of MASLOC loans purportedly to induce them to vote for her in the primary contest in the Yendi constituency. See <https://corruptionwatchghana.org/2020/07/09/exposed-how-candidates-bought-votes-in-npp-2020primaries/>



- The party must establish an objective reference point to determine some of the offences prior to vetting. It will be more appropriate if the offences are determined by a body properly constituted to determine such matters. The party must ensure that the offences are presented earlier and determined by the disciplinary committee or any group properly constituted for that purpose. Again, the party must revise the vetting protocols to include only issues that are objectively verifiable in order to address indiscretion by party executives and acrimony among disqualified contestants. In the short term, the party can take proactive steps to recall and review the grounds for the disqualification of aspirants during vetting.
- Ensure that voting at the primary meets the basic democratic requirements of transparency, freeness, fairness and competitiveness by reforming the album compilation and certification processes. The reform must target the standardization of the constituency albums by stating clear timelines for compilation, exhibition and certification of the albums. Preferably, the state must fund the Electoral Commission to organize internal party elections. The reform will not only prevent the arbitrary removal of names and last-minute changes in the albums but also address the disunity that often accompanies party primaries.
- Adopt best practices and rules to demonetize the primary contest. The party must reduce filing fees to ease the financial burden on the candidates. In addition, the party must adopt rules that penalize the phenomenon of vote buying. The Representation of the People's Law, PNDC Law 284 prohibits vote buying and must be adopted and strictly enforced to restore the democratic norms of competitiveness, fairness and accountability in the conduct of primaries.
- The party can retain its experienced members by proactively working to resolve issues that are likely to undermine the MPs' positions in their constituencies. Thus, the party will be able to resolve foreseeable challenges prior to the primaries. Alternatively, the party can put in mentorship regimes and knowledge-sharing mechanisms to promote continuous training for all members- that will ensure that experience and knowledge is passed on to new MPs. It is preferable to have a pool of experienced MPs who can effectively discharge the work of the party but that should not be done in a manner that undermines democratic norms.

“The party must adopt rules that penalize the phenomenon of vote buying.”

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