

THE
CARTER CENTER



Taging Peace. Fighting Disease. Building Hope. W

Final Report to the Guyana Elections Commission on the 2006 General and Regional Elections

February 15, 2007

The Carter Center
One Copenhill
453 Freedom Parkway
Atlanta, GA 30307
www.cartercenter.org

Introduction

With USAID funding, The Carter Center conducted a targeted observation for Guyana's Aug. 28, 2006, national elections to demonstrate the Center's interest in and support for Guyana's democratization process. The Center also sought to assess the political and electoral environment in Guyana surrounding the 2006 elections in follow-up to former U.S. President Jimmy Carter's 2004 visit to Guyana. The 2006 elections marked a historic event in the country as Guyana experienced its most peaceful election in recent history.

The Center received invitations from the government of Guyana, the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM), and the newly created Alliance for Change (AFC) political party to observe the election. All major political parties welcomed the Center's observation initiative. The project included the establishment of a field office, the deployment of medium-term and short-term observers, and engagement with key election, government, and opposition party officials and with international stakeholders in Guyana. The Center's observation efforts were coordinated with international observer delegations

country, the mission aimed to assist Guyana in using the election and postelection periods as an opportunity to reaffirm its commitment to substantive governance and electoral system reforms.

In implementing the initiativ

at each station to ensure proper and smooth voting. Although the process for ballot calculation was tedious, polling officers remained vigilant in following established procedures. Carter Center observers recorded the presence of accredited political party agents from the ruling and major opposition party at each polling station visited. The OAS, EAB, and Commonwealth observers were seen at most polling stations, and AFC

1. The Voter Registry

GECOM should conduct a broadly acceptable verification of the voters list. The conducting of a house-to-house verification is strongly recommended because it is the most likely means of increasing voter confidence in the list.

2. Reforming GECOM

- a. GECOM should be independent from the government and be accountable to and receive funding from the National Assembly. The independence of GECOM from the government's administration will bolster the commission's credibility and independence.
- b. The Carter-Price formula for GECOM should be changed to ensure that GECOM is not divided solely along political lines.
 - i. GECOM should be composed of individuals who are solely committed to carrying out a successful and transparent elections process and who have the confidence of political parties, but can also maintain independence. As noted in the Carter Center's report on the 2001 elections, "As part of electoral reform efforts, Guyana should give careful consideration to alternative models, possibly reducing or eliminating political party representation and increasing the role of independent members of civil society and professional experts."
 - ii. Gender representation should be ensured in GECOM's composition.
- c. Communication among GECOM, the political parties, civil society, and election observers needs to improve. This can be achieved through the

- ii. Improved communication will also strengthen the relationship between GECOM and domestic observer groups.
- d. Ensure that appropriate legal remedies be exercised in considering challenges to the electoral results. In addition, new legislation should be debated that provides for correcting results, if evidence is later provided that errors were made in dete

intelligible to those who want to know the extant laws insofar as they relate to parliamentary, regional and local government elections.”

- d. Revitalize the Task Force on Local Government Reform.
 - i. Implement the agreed-upon recommendations of the Task Force on Local Government Reform.
 - ii. Finalize work of the Task Force on Local Government Reform on outstanding issues, specifically in the areas of allocating the greatest number of seats possible on a constituency/ward basis as well as in determining the overall system of local government and the formula for fiscal transfers.
 - iii. Consider contesting local elections on a nonparty basis.

These recommendations have also been identified by fellow international observer groups including the OAS and the Commonwealth. The Carter Center recommends that GECOM closely review and consider the additional recommendations made by those organizations.

The Carter Center is willing to engage in subsequent conversations with GECOM to expand upon these recommendations. The Center remains supportive of the government of Guyana as it continues to strengthen democracy through the development of democratic institutions and practices.