

GAMBIA

Date of Elections: 11 March 1987

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the elective seats in Parliament on the normal expiry of the members' term of office. General elections had previously been held in May 1982.

Characteristics of Parliament

The unicameral Parliament of Gambia, the House of Representatives, consists of:

- 36 "elected members";
- 5 "Chiefs' representative members";
- 8 "nominated members" appointed by the President of the Republic;
- the Speaker, elected by the House, who may either have been a member of it or not, but may not be a Minister or Parliamentary Secretary;
- the Attorney-General, who sits *ex-officio*.

Only the elected members, Chiefs' representative members, and the Attorney-General have the right to vote.

All members of the House have a 5-year term of office.

Electoral System

Requirements applicable to electors:

- Of elected members: to qualify, any citizen of Gambia must be registered on the electoral rolls, be at least 21 years of age, and a resident for at least six months of the constituency in which he is registered. No person under allegiance to a foreign State, insane, or serving a sentence of imprisonment is qualified, nor are Head Chiefs.

- Of Chiefs' representative members: these are elected exclusively by the Head Chiefs.

The electoral registers of each constituency are revised in (each "general registration year", i.e. every fifth year after 1968; a supplemental registration is carried out in each of the intervening years. Voting is not compulsory.

Requirements applicable to candidates:

- As elected members: any citizen who is at least 21 years of age, who can speak English well enough to take an active part in the proceedings of the House and who is qualified as an elector may be a candidate for election as an elected member. Undischarged bankrupts, persons under a sentence of death, those serving, or having in the preceding five years served, a sentence of imprisonment of at least six months and those party to certain government contracts are ineligible.

- As Chiefs' representative members: the same qualifications and disqualifications apply as for elected members, except that candidates for election as Chiefs' representative members need not qualify as electors.

Every candidate for election must be nominated by at least three voters of the same constituency and make a monetary deposit, which is reimbursed if he is successful or obtains at least one-fifth of the votes cast for the elected candidate.

Gambia is divided into 36 electoral constituencies, the boundaries of which are fixed by a presidential commission. In each of these, a single Deputy is elected by simple majority vote. Votes are cast by ballot tokens dropped through a hole next to the candidate's picture.

Chiefs' representative members must be approved unanimously by the Head Chiefs from a list proposed by them; if they are not so approved, they are selected on the basis of simple majority.

A by-election is held to fill any seat of an elected member or a Chiefs' representative member which becomes vacant between general elections.

General Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

The date of the legislative elections - held simultaneously with that for President of the Republic - was announced on 1 January by President Sir Dawda Jawara, who has been in power since independence in 1965. Nominations for the presidency closed on 9 February.

An unprecedented number of four parties - the ruling People's Progressive Party (PPP), the National Convention Party (NCP), the Gambia People's Party (GPP) and the People's Democratic Organization for Independence and Socialism - contested the polling, with 113 candidates running for the 36 popularly-elected House seats. The PPP advocated a continuation of its economic and financial austerity programme.

On polling day, Sir Dawda easily won a fourth five-year term with nearly 60% of the vote to 28% for Sherif Mustapha Dibba, leader of the NCP. Concurrently, the PPP won 31 parliamentary seats, the NCP taking the five others.

Statistics

*Results of the Elections and Distribution of Seats
in the House of Representatives*

Voters 2(Ki,000 (80.2%)

Political Group Number of
Seats of
Popularly-
Elected
Members

People's Progressive Party (PPP) .
National Convention Party (NCP)

36