

# The Nexus between Poverty and Elections in Africa: A Case Study of Somaliland and the Gambia

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**Abstract:-** This article explores the states of democracy and the conduct of elections in Somaliland and the Gambia. The article examines the democratic and electoral institutions responsible for the conduct of elections in the two countries and assesses their level of effectiveness for a free and transparent election. The article uses multiple case studies as the research design to generate data on elections in Somaliland and the Gambia. Triangulation was also adopted as a method of obtaining multiple data to test their validity and relevance for this study. The study adopted content analysis as the technique for data analysis. The study found that the conduct of elections in both Somaliland and the Gambia has been influenced by vote buying which is the consequence of poverty. The study found that limited economic opportunities in both countries make citizen trade off their votes for favors during elections. The study recommends widening economic opportunities and strengthening the media and civil society organizations for civic education and capacity building of political parties and government officials.

**Keywords:-** Election, Vote Buying, Poverty.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Despite the growth of democracy in Africa, the prevalence of poverty on the continent has always influenced voting behaviors in many African countries. Keefer & Vlaicu (2008) argue that competitive multiparty systems might emerge in Africa, they contend that emerging democratic governments would have to confront a legacy of poverty, illiteracy, militarization, and underdevelopment produced by incompetent or corrupt governments. Khemani (2010) questions whether the new demands being placed on African nations by international donor institutions as well as heightened individual expectations for better lives could be met by the nascent democracies on the continent. Vote buying has become a key part of election campaigns in Africa. Kramon, (2013) argues that underdevelopment and lack of economic choices have remained integral in determining the electoral outcome in the world. He argues that during the early phases of European Democracy, the widespread poverty in Western Europe was a key influence on voter behavior, he contends that votes buying was widespread in Europe and

notes this has disappeared due to advancement in European Democracy and the efforts by Western European countries to increase economic choices of citizens. Lehoucq, (2007) observes that the wave of democratic transitions in Africa has been celebrated as a win for human development and transformation in Africa, yet he cautions that the poverty and lack of strong economic foundations in many African countries that will provide alternative economic opportunities and sustainable employment for the citizens, constraints genuine elections in Africa. Leight & Foarta, et, al (2020) argue that despite the transitions to democracy in Africa, electoral reforms and genuine election outcomes remain elusive. They maintain that vote buying for electoral agents in Africa remains a key determinant of election outcomes in Africa. Politicians and government agents use money, favors, or gifts for votes in Africa.

Lindberg (2003) observed the frequent protests and rejections of the outcomes of elections in Africa are problematic and begs the question of whether legitimacy matters in elections in Africa. They argue that electoral campaigns in Africa and part of most developing countries are influenced by who pays the biggest price. Many scholars observed that in parts of the developing world which includes Somaliland and the Gambia, ideas do not win elections but rather the power of wealth. Njie & Saine (2019) suggest that political parties in Africa are not often grounded on strong ideology and belief. They argue that electorates in most of Africa vote for candidates who promise them favor in return for their votes. Rueda (2017) questions the nature of democracy and the construction of political parties in Africa. He argues that many political parties in Africa are ethno-clienteles without recourse for internal democracy and fundamental political ideology. Stokes (2007) argues that poverty is a threat to democratic consolidation because it cripples transparency and accountability in the electoral process.

Scholars argued that weak democratic institutions and bad governance produce poverty and retards the electoral legitimacy in Africa. Ndulu & Tennamwenge (2014) blame corruption, for the state of poverty and underdevelopment in Africa which retard genuine multi-party democracy and transparent electoral process in Africa. The question of why

some countries failed to build strong electoral institutions and ensure transparency in the conduct of elections in Africa is premised on the lack of consolidated democracy and economic empowerment of the citizens. Much of the debates on poverty and elections in Africa draw upon the socioeconomic and cultural preconditions necessary for democracy to thrive. Adejumobi (2000) set specific preconditions necessary for the growth of democracy and the emergence of strong institutions for the transparent conduct of elections in Africa. He argues that including the rule of law and strong democratic institutions will facilitate transparency and accountability in the conduct of elections in Africa. Strong democratic institutions and the widening of economic choices enable the citizens to adhere to democratic norms and values relevant to the conduct of credible elections in Africa. Shenhav (2006) claims that developing countries need some version of liberal values to ensure reforms in their electoral systems Laitin (2003) argues that economic stability is a prerequisite for the strengthening of democracy and transparency in the electoral process in Africa. He contends that African countries will need to deepen economic development and widen alternative economic choices of the people to enable them to value democracy which will foster credible elections in Africa.

Both Somaliland and the Gambia were commended by domestic and international observers for holding peaceful Presidential, parliamentary, and local council in elections 2021. Accordingly, domestic and international observers raised questions about unfair voting patterns in both countries. The incumbents of both countries often manipulate the public media and state apparatus to their advantage. Also, the local election observer missions in the Gambia and the Gambia participants (2021) have accused both the ruling National Peoples Party and the main opposition United Democratic Party of influencing voter decisions through acts of manipulation and vote buying. Observers point to the influx and participation of foreign nationals in both Somaliland and the Gambia's electoral process. The objective of this study is to assess how poverty and vote buying influence the voting pattern of people in Somaliland and the Gambia.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Democratization scholars have argued that the lack of strong institutions and good value systems retard democratic consolidation and credible elections in Africa. In some cases, political scientists attributed the failure of the conduct of genuine elections in Africa to the absence of certain preconditions such as economic opportunities and strong institutions. The primary aim of this section is to examine the existing literature on the nexus between poverty and elections in Africa. The section will review the concept of vote buying and Poverty as well as the theory of elites as relevant frameworks for the comprehension of this study.

### A. *The Concept of Poverty and Vote Buying*

Poverty is a complex and multifaceted issue that encompasses social, economic, and political dimensions, at its core, poverty is the lack of sufficient material resources and income to meet basic human needs, such as food, clothing, and shelter. Absolute poverty refers to the complete deprivation of the means necessary for a minimum standard of living.

Research indicates that vote buying has been a persistent electoral phenomenon in Africa, particularly in the 1990s and 2000s. Jensen & Justesen (2014) suggest that political support groups, engaged in large-scale vote buying during election campaigns, spending an estimated \$60 million on this purpose. Nichter (2008) argues that the Kenyan Electoral Commission acknowledged that the 1997 election fell short of being fair, with issues such as the lack of secret voting in 13% of polling stations and widespread vote buying on Election Day. Schaffer (2007) argues that Vote buying forms part of political clientelism. He maintains that vote buying is an exchange of votes for favors and rewards by political clientele in return for electoral support by voters. Stokes (2007) contends that Vote buying begs questions about the character of democracy and the nature of economic opportunities that exist for the citizens. He argues that the consolidation of strong electoral democracy requires minimal strengthening of economic alternatives for the citizens, citing that people only value elections when they are economically empowered. Empirical studies by scholars such as Scott (1969) revealed that poverty affects the genuine electoral outcome. He argues that voters are targeted by vote buyers in many African societies to influence their decisions in return for material favor. Afrobarometer (2021) observed that the widespread poverty in Africa compromised genuine electoral democracy. They argue that in at least 18 African countries research shows that citizens vote for candidates who promised them money and food. They observed that poor people vote for candidates not necessarily because they cherish democracy but because they want someone who can promise them favor. Even though electoral democracy has gained footing in Africa, the absence of viable economic opportunities makes the clientele form of election profitable in Africa. Nichter (2008) also claims that Vote buying is the use of financial or material enticements to voters by candidates or political parties during an election campaign period or Election Day in exchange for electoral support. Schaffer & Schedler (2007) argue that the desperation of poverty can also influence paying supporters of rival contestants to abstain from voting. They argue that politicians bribe voters to vote or not cast their vote for a specific candidate sometimes through forced coercion, such as deprivation of development projects and programs. According to the Westminster Foundation (2022), 91.7% of countries in the world ban the practice of vote buying however, they argue that despite the instructional mechanism to support the ban, the practice of vote buying goes unpunished in many parts of Africa. The Gambia Participates (2022) maintains that vote buying violates democracy and undermines the integrity of elections in Africa

and is a serious threat to peace and stability in Africa. According to Transparency International (2020), One-third of voters in Africa admitted to being offered favors in exchange for their vote during elections. The Gambia Participates (2022) argues that Vote buying and voter inducement are as old as elections in The Gambia. They claim politicians and political party affiliates give as low as 8 US Dollars to influence the voting decision of people in the Gambia. International Election Mission (2021) also observed that elections in Somaliland are not based on ideas but on personality. They argue that Clan members in Somaliland pay huge sums of money to not only the voters but also some candidates to force them to withdraw from elections. The Gambia Participates (2022) observes that non-Gambians from neighboring Senegal are financially mobilized by political parties to register and vote for their party.

Daffeh (2024) argues that poverty in Africa stimulates politicians' desire to establish a clientelist relationship with their constituents by offering exclusive benefits in exchange for political loyalty. He maintains that a lack of independence in the electoral system may enable vote buying in Africa. Jaw & Twum (2021) argue that voters' readiness to accept benefits in exchange for their vote is principally a consequence of poverty and social exclusion. They noted that poorer voters value immediate financial rewards to solve their most basic need of food than any benefit democracy comes with. Sanneh (2023) observes that because of extreme inequality and marginalization voters in poorer communities expect less change and social transformation than the outcome of the election could do in their lives and they are willing to trade off their votes. He notes that the majority of poor people are not interested in politics and do not attach relevance to democratic values, such people he contends are willing to engage in vote-buying proposals. Daffeh (2024) observes that Poor social justice mechanisms and lack of a redistributive economic system make some voters accept electoral offerings because that resonates with their sense of social justice.

### *B. The Elites Theory*

This theory provides a conceptual linkage for the understanding of electoral democracy and governance. It provides the basis to see what approach the government of the Gambia and Somaliland follows in the conduct of their election and the role the elites play in their democratic process. According to Cox (1996), this theory suggests that democracy and genuine elections are necessary for development which ensures equal participation of everyone in the electoral process of the state, and argues that the elites should be the guardians of the conduct of transparent elections and facilitate democratic values and standards. Elite theory concerns the nature and distribution of resources among the citizens. Ross (2006) argues that the involvement of the elites in a democracy is germane, he contends that elites should serve as moral standard bearers for the conduct of genuine democratic elections.

Delican (2000) argues that elites control the formal institutions of government and are influential elements in government and the whole electoral decision-making process. There are different views on the role of elites in democracy. Some scientists like Dowse and Hughes (1983) believe that elites are guards of democracy protecting it from the dangers of totalitarianism and ensuring the conduct of transparent and free elections, while others like Magstadt (2006) believe that elites are the main threat to the survival of democracy and the conduct of genuine and free elections. He claims that elites in democracy only facilitate the participation of a few notably the rich and influential in the electoral process. He argues that popular electoral participation is constrained by an elite which undermines the conduct of free and fair elections in Africa. Conversely, scholars such as Carlton (2017) argue that elites facilitate the consolidation of transparent and free elections as well as facilitate vibrant democratic governance. He contends that the elites are highly educated and informed and therefore, they are best positioned to support the conduct of elections and democratic governance through policy formulation and provision of intellectual and critical support to the electoral process. In the case of the Gambia and Somaliland, the assumption of the elites and election is more applicable in this study. While some praised the elites for facilitating the electoral policy development process in the Gambia and Somaliland, others chided elites for strengthening electoral manipulations and voter buying in these countries.

Elites provided critical support to autocratic governments by compromising the independence of the electoral institutions and providing a rubberstamp Parliament that easily did the bidding of dictators. Despite the contrasting perspectives on elites in elections, Horowitz (1959) believes that the role of the elites is crucial in the conduct of free and fair elections and democratic promotion. He claims that the elites do not only provide policy initiatives for democratic survival but also ensure the respect of human rights and the rule of law which are cardinal for the conduct of free and fair elections. Therefore, the role of the elites in elections remains ever important to this study.

### **III. EMPIRICAL LITRATURE OF ELECTIONS IN THE GAMBIA AND SOMALILAND**

The Gambia is one of the smallest West African states surrounded by Senegal on three sides, except for the Atlantic Ocean front. The main languages are, Mandinka, Wolof, and Fula, and 90% of Gambians are Muslim. The Gambia gained independence on February 18, 1965 from Britain and has a population of 2 Million (GBoS 2013). Abdi (2011) maintains that Somaliland was a British protectorate, while the rest of what would become Somalia was an Italian colony. He observes that nationalist movements gained momentum in the 1950s, and Britain and Italy began coordinating plans for the independence of their respective Somali territories. Geshekteer (1985) reasons that Somaliland gained independence on June

26, 1960, and Somalia followed suit on July 1, 1960. Renders (2012) argues that Somalia and Somaliland formed a merger but due to the dominance of Somalia in the political affairs of both countries the merger fell. He reasons that despite the lack of international recognition, Somaliland has been praised for its political stability and democratic transitions of power. Farah & Lewis (1997) contends that the government of Somaliland continues to advocate for its recognition as an independent state, arguing that it has restored its sovereignty.

Both in the Gambia and Somaliland, the conduct of elections is coordinated and overseen by the Independent Electoral Commission. The electoral system in the Gambia is based on the principle of the first-past-the-post system, in this system, a candidate needs only to obtain a simple majority of all votes cast to be declared the winner. Both in the Gambia and Somaliland, the President is voted for five years by a popular mandate. The Gambia has one legislative house with 58 members 53 of whom are elected by the people and 5 are nominated by the President. Somaliland has two houses of Parliament, the House of Representatives constitutes 82 elected members and the House of Elders constitutes 82 members that represent the traditional leaders of the country.

Somaliland's constitutional ratification in 2001 through a public referendum, with 97% of the population and 1.1 million voters supporting it, marked a significant step towards democratic transition (Somaliland Constitution, Article 9, 2001). The constitution outlined a move away from the clan-based system, stipulating the adoption of a multi-party approach with a limit of three political parties (Somaliland Constitution, Article 9, 2001). In line with these democratic principles, Somaliland enacted electoral legislation and adopted inclusive policies based on a multi-party democratic system in 2002. This included the establishment of Local Councils and a House of Representatives, further strengthening the democratic framework (Somaliland Constitution, Article 40, 2001). The constitutional provisions and subsequent legislative actions demonstrate Somaliland's commitment to fostering a more inclusive and representative political system, marking a significant milestone in the country's democratic development. Walls (2009) maintains that Somaliland approved the introduction of a multi-party system through a referendum in 2001. Since then, the country has held several presidential and parliamentary elections, although some have been delayed, with peaceful transfers of power.

The Gambia transitioned to a multiparty consolidated democracy after the 2016 election. Sanneh (2023) explains that the first President of the Gambia Dawda Kairaba Jawara led the country for nearly 30 years from 1965 -1994 when he was overthrown by his former body- guide Lieutenant Yaya Jammeh. Mehta (2019) argues that Jammeh who promised to give back power to a civilian leader after a six-month transition ended up ruling the Gambia as a ruthless despot for

22 years (1994-2016). Courey-Boulet (2016) argues that Jammeh legitimized his presidency through bogus elections in 1996, 2001, 2006, and 2011. He argues that Jammeh intimidated and suppressed any form of dissent and controlled press freedom in the Gambia. Reuters (2017) explains that in 2015, Jammeh declared The Gambia an Islamic Republic with gross disregard for the provisions of the Gambian constitution. Courey-Boulet (2016) expounds that Jammeh's 22-year governance was premised on poor human rights and electoral misconduct. He describes that Jammeh jailed 30 opposition political party supporters including Ousainou Darboe, leader of The Gambia's largest opposition United Democratic Party three months before the crucial 2016 elections. Nabbaneh (2022) expounds that seven Political parties under the name of *Coalition 2016* united to endorse Adama Barrow as the standard-bearer. This helped to avoid the disintegration of political parties that played to the advantage of Jammeh in the previous four elections he won. Barrow resigned from his party, the United Democratic Party (UDP) before the election to carry the objectives of *Coalition 2016*. The independent Electoral Commission of the Gambia (IEC 2017) indicated that Jammeh lost the election in 2016 to Barrow, who won 43.3% of the votes with a 3.7% margin over Jammeh who scored 39.6% President Jammeh accepted the outcome of the election and later denied it, plunging the country into a post-election crisis.

#### IV. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Multiple Case studies were used as the research design for this study, the study also adopted triangulation to collect data from different sources. This technique enables us to discover several sources of data and test their validity. Data sources for the study were obtained International Election Observer Mission, Afrobarometer, The Gambia Participates as well as the Independent Electoral Council of the Gambia and Somaliland. We have verified the data sources and found them to be dependable sources of information for electoral decisions and planning in these countries. Secondary data from seminal journals on the subject were also utilized for the study. Data for this study were carefully selected from tonnes of literature to augment the findings. The data were generated within nine years (2016- 2024). We adopted Content analysis as the method for Data analysis in this study. We synthesized and critically analyzed the data generated to enable us to establish patterns systematically by identifying differences and similarities.

#### V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the results from data generated from the independent electoral Commissions of the Gambia and Somaliland (2016/2017-2021). Data from Election Mission and the Gambia participants will also be presented which is followed by a comprehensive discussion on the conduct of elections in both the Gambia and Somaliland and

how poverty and vote-buying influence voter behaviors.

**VI. THE OUTCOME OF 2016 AND 2021 ELECTION RESULTS IN THE GAMBIA AND SOMALILAND**

*A. The 2016 and 2021 Elections in the Gambia*

The table obtained from the Independent Electoral Commission of the Gambia (IEC 2016) presents candidates and the percentage scores in the 2016 and 2021 Presidential elections. Adama Barrow won both the 2016 and 2021 elections securing 43.3% of voters in 2016 and 53% of the votes in 2021. Adama Barrow won the election in 2016 with a total of 227,708 votes securing 43.3% while Jammeh secured 208,487 votes with 39.6% with Mama Kandeh securing 17.1% of the votes cast. This shows that Barrow emerged as the winner of the election securing a simple majority. In the 2021 Presidential elections, the incumbent Adama Barrow emerged victorious with 53% of the votes cast over five of the other candidates including the main opposition party, UDP. Despite the protest by the three opposition party such as the Gambia Democratic Party, the United Democratic Party, and the Independent candidate Essa Mbaye Faal in 2021 over their claims of unfair elections, the Supreme Court of the Gambia validated the outcome of the polls declared by the Independent Electoral Council of the Gambia. The findings show that while President Barrow's party won a majority of the seats in the 2022 parliamentary elections, the opposition United Democratic Party won popular votes in the urban areas and won 4 of the 7 local governance councils.

**Table 1: 2016 Presidential Election Results of the Gambia**

Candidate	Votes	(%)
Adama Barrow	227,708	43.3
Yahya Jammeh	208,487	39.6
Mamma Kandeh	89,768	17.1

Source: Independent Electoral Commission, 2016.

**Table 2: 2021 Presidential election results of the Gambia**

Candidates	Votes	Percentage
Adama Barrow	457,519	53.2%
Ousanou Darboe	238,253	27.7%
Mama Kandeh	105,902	12.3%
Halifa Sallah	32,435	3.8%
Essa Fall	17,206	2.0%
Abdoulie Jammeh	8,252	1.0%
Total votes cast	859,567	100%

Source: Independent Electoral Commission, 2021.

*B. 2017 and 2021 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections in Somaliland*

Somaliland held a Presidential election on 13 November 2017. The election featured three contesting candidates, the incumbent President Ahmed Mohammed Mahmoud did not contest. Muse Bihi Abdi from the ruling Kulmiye party won the election with an absolute majority of 55.1% securing

305,909 of the total votes cast while Abirahman and Faisal secured 40.7% and 4.2% of the votes respectively. According, the 2021 parliamentary election which was the first in Somaliland since 2005 was evidence of political stability in Somaliland. Three Political parties contested the election, the populist party, Waddani, the justice and welfare party UCID, and the ruling liberal party Kulmiye. The finding shows that more than one million people out of the six million Somaliland citizens registered to vote. Waddani party won 31 seats, the ruling Kulmiye party won 30 seats and UCID won 21 seats of the total 82 seats in Parliament.

**Table 3: 2017 Presidential Election Result of Somaliland**

Candidate	Votes	Percentage (%)
Muse Bihi Abdi	305,909	55.1%
Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi Irro	226,092	40.7%
Faisal Ali Waraabe	23,141	4.2%
Total Valid Votes	555,142	100%

Source: Somaliland National Electoral Commission (SLNEC)

**Table 4: 2021 Parliamentary Election Results of**

National Political Parties	Votes	Seats	Percentage
Kulmiye Party	256,524	30 Seats	36.9%
Waddani Party	258,658	31 Seats,	37.2%
UCID Party	179,553	21 Seats	25.0%
Total	694,735	82 Seats	100.0%

**Somaliland**

Source: Somaliland National Electoral Commission (SLNEC)

*C. 2021 Voter Registration And Parliamentary Election In Somaliland*

The distribution of valid voter registrants across the regions in Somaliland suggests a significant disparity, reflecting the uneven population distribution and the distinction between core and peripheral regions. Maroodijeh, Togdheer, and Sahil are the core regions, accounting for a combined 69% of the total valid registrants. These regions are home to the major urban centers of Hargeisa, Burco, and Bebera, respectively, which have relatively higher population densities and economic significance. The high number of valid registrants in these core regions can be attributed to the concentration of the urban population and better access to voter registration facilities.

Peripheral Regions, Sanaag, Sool, and Awdal are the peripheral regions, comprising the remaining 31% of the total valid registrants. These regions are generally more rural and geographically distant from the central political and economic hubs of Somaliland. The lower number of valid registrants in these peripheral regions may be indicative of challenges in voter mobilization, registration, and access to registration facilities, as well as lower population densities compared to the core regions. The disparity in valid registrants between the

core and peripheral regions suggests a correlation with the urban-rural divide within Somaliland. The higher number of valid registrants in the core regions, particularly Maroodijeh (home to the capital Hargeisa), reflects the concentration of the urban population and their greater access to voter registration processes. Conversely, the lower numbers in the peripheral regions may be attributed to the challenges faced by

rural and remote communities in accessing voter registration services. These regional disparities in voter registration highlight the need for Somaliland to adopt more inclusive and equitable strategies to ensure the political participation of all citizens, regardless of their geographic location or urban-rural divide. Addressing these imbalances could contribute to a more representative and democratic electoral process.

**Table 5: 2021 Voter Registration and Election in Somaliland**

No.	Region	Local Council and Parliamentarian	Percentage	2024 Final Registration
1	Maroodijeh	263,739	44%	497,734
2	Togdheer	90,053	16%	181,804
3	Awdal	65,618	12%	92,620
4	Sool	137,155	10%	232,279
5	Sahil	63,080	9%	98,966
6	Sanaag	75,090	8%	119,648
	Total votes	694,735	100%	1,222,051

Source: Somaliland National Election Commission (NEC)

## VII. EVIDENCE OF VOTES BUYING IN THE SOMALILAND AND THE GAMBIA

The findings of this study suggest evidence of election manipulation and vote buying in both Somaliland and the Gambia. The findings from the election observer mission in both the 2017 Presidential election and the 2021 Parliamentary election in Somaliland revealed growing concerns about voter buying. The findings suggest the incidence of vote buying and violation of electoral codes occurred in the 2017 and 2021 elections in Somaliland. The findings show that both the International Election Observation mission and the University of Hargeisa's Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies revealed concern about voter buying and the failure of the National Electoral Commission of Somaliland to address the concerns.

The findings from the Gambia participants and the International Foundation for Electoral System suggest that the 2021 presidential and 2022 Parliamentary elections in the Gambia were marked by multiple cases of voter buying. The findings from the Gambia participants revealed that political agents reach out to deprived communities and poor settlements in the Gambia that need money for food and health care. The findings show that voters are sometimes given as low as 8 United States dollars in return for their votes. The findings show that the opposition parties complained that the party of the incumbent president registered non-Gambians from neighboring Senegal to vote during the 2021 presidential election. The findings show that three opposition parties, the United Democratic Party, the United Democratic Congress, and the independent candidate filed a petition to the Supreme Court of the Gambia on allegations of electoral manipulation and vote buying. Even though the case was thrown out on procedural grounds, it signaled cases of opposition complaints of vote buying in the election. Accordingly, the finding shows unequal media time during elections between the opposition

and the incumbent in both Somaliland and the Gambia. In the case of the Gambia, the Commonwealth Observer Mission (2016) reported that the Gambia Radio and Television Services gives more hours to the incumbent candidate than the opposition candidates which compromises fair and credible election practices.

## VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Both countries should address corruption which is a major cause of poverty and vote buying in Africa. The evidence showed that both countries have a competitive multiparty democracy, however, both countries struggle to produce independent electoral systems and mechanisms to control vote buying and strengthen democratic accountability. Both countries need to widen economic choices for the citizens to enable them to have decent chances of employment. Access to information is also a critical component to ensure public accountability and transparency, therefore, they need to empower the media and Civil Society Organizations to provide civic education and build the capacities of political parties and government officials on democratic and genuine electoral conduct. This will empower the citizens with knowledge and skills for the conduct of free and transparent elections which will consolidate their democracies and empower their citizens economically.

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