

KENYA VOTE

KAS sending observation team for the 2010 Referendum By Lisa Hecht, Intern at KAS Kisumu

On August 4th 2010, around 12,400,000 registered voters were asked to voice their opinion on the proposed constitution at one of 27,000 polling stations all over Kenya. The weeks ahead of the D-day were marked by heated campaigns from the “yes” and the “no” side but also by increasingly loud calls for a peaceful and fair election. Bearing in mind the 2007 general election as well as a history of violence accompanying each election in Kenya for the past decades, fears and expectations ran high at the same time. Consequently, the referendum was not only about a new constitution but also another test for the country to prove its compliance to democratic standards. While police and military presence were increased all over the country, more substantial efforts were undertaken to raise awareness among Kenyans and promote peaceful elections. Apart from addressing security concerns, the intention was to



conduct a fair and transparent election and avoid allegations of election rigging as happened during the last general election in 2007. Therefore, the Interim Independent Electoral Commission (IIEC) introduced a new system which aimed at improving transparency and heightening confidence in the democratic process. One of the measures was to redo the voter register for the referendum in order to

avoid multiple registrations of voters, to delete dead voters from the register and to ensure an orderly proceeding during election day. Well in advance the jobs of polling station officials were advertised publicly and after successfully undergoing a transparent recruitment process the officials received training on how to conduct the referendum.

When the day of the referendum finally came, observers were deployed all over the country to monitor whether Kenya indeed would get the peaceful and fair election it was aiming at. Among the different national and international groups and individuals who obtained the IIEC accreditation for observation was, for the first time in Kenya, a team from the Kisumu-office of the project “Partnership for Peace”. This project, implemented by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAS) and co-funded by the EU, is focusing on peace-building and consequently furthering democratization in Kenya. KAS observers were present in hot-spots such as Kuria, Kisumu, Mt. Elgon, Eldoret, Kapsabet, Nakuru, Meru and Nairobi.

All over the country, polling stations opened at 6.00 am in the morning for eagerly waiting



voters who had been queuing outside the stations for hours already. The IIEC officials took up their work and remained busy especially throughout the first hours of the day. Officials were responsible for checking the voter's identity, making sure they were in the voter register, handing out the ballot paper and finally after a successfully casted vote marking the registration

card and the voter's finger with ink. Following this procedure, the observation team paid close attention to the adherence to principles of impartiality and professionalism. The day passed quietly with no disruptions and this impression was later confirmed by the national media which had no incidents to report. Around 5.00 pm polling stations closed and started to prepare for the vote count. The results were then electronically transmitted, before the ballot boxes were sent to the IIEC in Nairobi. Thus, it was ensured that the results were not delayed as it happened in the 2007 election.



The KAS election observation team unanimously reported an orderly and peaceful proceeding of the election and had no complaints about irregularities. The same was true for other observation teams. Overall only few and minor irregularities were accounted for. In the referendum the majority of Kenyans clearly voted in favour of the new constitution, and even its opponents accepted the outcome. Having passed this election without the formerly common occurrences of violence, unrest or incidents of election rigging, the referendum can be regarded as a positive landmark on Kenya's way towards a stable democracy.



Part of the observer team from KAS, from left Ms. Hanna Carlsson (project manager), Nora Löhle (intern KAS Kisumu), Irina Clemens (intern KAS Kisumu), Lisa Hecht (intern KAS Kisumu) and Johanna Wallhof (intern KAS Nairobi)