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**بنیاد انتخابات آزاد و عادلانه افغانستان**

Free & fair Election Foundation  
of Afghanistan

### **FEFA's Report on Voter Registration 3ed phase**

#### **Summary:**

The Independent Electoral Commission commenced the third phase of the VR process in six provinces on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2008 and concluded it on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2009. Based on the IEC plan, in this phase 124 centers covering 576 stations were established.

Based on its action plan for the third phase of voter registration, FEFA managed to observe 70% of the voter registration process in 6 provinces (Nangarhar, Laghman, Khost, Farah, Paktika, and Zabol). Every FEFA observer has managed to observe at least 3 relevant stations of a VR center. So FEFA has effectively managed to observe the third phase of the VR process.

Also, 6 provincial master trainers received extensive training at FEFA HQ in Kabul and after receiving training they were deployed to their respective provinces where they conducted one day training for 136 observers, including 42 women. The training provided the observers with the following skills: the importance of observation to the VR process, observation methodology, practical exercises for using the checklists, conducting interviews, reporting system and timeline, etc.

The reporting methodology of FEFA requires it's provincial and district officers and observers to report in three formats:

- 1- Urgent reports, which is sent to HQ—mostly visa phone-- on issues of serious nature and those that needs immediate corrective measures by IEC.
- 2- Weekly report based on standard reporting format
- 3- Reports based on Observation Checklists, once the VR relevant phase is over

This brief report is based on the weekly reporting of the FEFA's observer teams in the mentioned six provinces.

The monitoring team of FEFA upon visiting the field offices verified most of the findings.

FEFA's have regularly shared it's findings with IEC through weekly meetings with Mr. Najafi, Barakzi and the head of external relation Mr. Afghanzi. FEFA also conducted

follow up meetings with the relevant IEC personal in Kabul to share specific information and physical evidence and submitted its recommendations for improvement of the process.

In accordance with the observation methodology this report covers only the violations, which occurred repeatedly (at least three times) that indicates a systematic manner, and thus, isolated violations have not been included in this report.

### **Procedural Violations:**

#### **Multiple Registrations**

Multiple registrations have been one of the main violations observed in the third phase, as was also observed in the second phase. Unfortunately, in the third phase multiple registrations have increased compared to the second phase. FEFA's observers have recorded at minimum of four time violation in 85% of the stations covered by FEFA.

Based on FEFA's observers' reports, those involved in such violations have been identified by IEC and security officials, but in none of those cases the violators were stopped, prevented or legally pursued. Provinces where the highest number of such violations has occurred are: Nangarhar, Laghman, Khost, and Farah.

#### **Underage (under 17) Registrations:**

Underage (under 17 years of age) registration has increased in the third phase of the VR process compared to the second phase. In 95% of the stations covered by FEFA cards were repeatedly issued to underage voters. Examples have been observed in Nangarhar province (Voter Registration Center Istiqlal School, Center Public Hospital, Kochi's Center Tribal provincial office, Center Kama district); Khost province (Center Shahid Mohammad Dawood High School, Center Ismail Khail and Mandozi district, Center provincial office) [?] province Center Markazi High School, Center Mermen Nazo High School); Paktia province (Central Hospital Center, Soliman Baba High School, Center of Orgon district) Zabul province (Shah Jawi district, center at Qalat Hospital); Laghman province (Qarghaie district center, Ali Nigar district and Roshan High School, centers).

#### **Women's Participation**

Women's participation has been good in central Nangarhar, Laghman, Farah and Khost provinces, but it has been poor in outer districts of these provinces. In addition, women's participation has not occurred directly, they were registered by a male family member who provided a list of details for them. The following figures show the percentage of stations covered by FEFA issuing cards in the absence of women to a male family member who provided a list of details: 99% of VR stations in Paktika province (1% was

women hospitalized in Sharna Central Hospital and they were registered directly); 90% in Zabul Province; 90% in Khost province and 30% in Nangarhar province.

Employing male staff in the female centers has been one of the other main procedural violations occurred in the in third phase of the VR process, and this had a negative impact on women's participation. This violation has been observed in 93% of the mobile stations. Also it has been observed that mobile stations especially at the district level were run by male staff. However, in Paktika province no females were employed at all, and in Zabul province with the exception of 3 female teams in Qalat city, we have not seen any women in the stations across the province. In Khost province, in almost all districts no female were employed, also in Nangarhar, Farah, and Laghman all of the mobile stations conducting assignments outside of the cities, had no women employees.

Also, another reason for a reduction in women's participation in the third phase of the VR process has been locating some of the VR centers inside government buildings. 10% of the VR stations were placed in government buildings in the third phase, and women's participation has been very low or non-existent in such areas.

FEFA's evaluation generally indicates that security, cultural issues, VR stations being far away, lack of female staff in female stations and the legality of women's registration based on lists by provincial officials of IEC have been the main causes for the low level of women participation.

### **Lack of Staff Impartiality**

Lack of impartiality has been one of the problems of which many cases have been observed in the third phase of the process.

Some of the senior officials in VR centers have been accused by some people and civil society groups of having political affiliation. In Nangarhar province a female Kochi member of the parliament (?) has willfully fired the local IEC official and appointed a relative of hers instead. She wanted to use the process to her benefit, the investigation by FEFA observers indicated. Although the IEC provincial officials were notified about the incident, no action was taken to prevent such violations from reoccurring. Also, two brothers of the Deputy of the Da Soli Ghurzang Political Party, and the manager of the Rana Magazine of the same party were employed as staff in Nangarhar province and they were accused of misusing the process for their advantage. The son of the President of Fesabil Allah Party, who is also a member of that party, was appointed as the logistics officer for Nangarhar province. The head of VR station (DFC) of Alinegar district, Lagman province is accused to be an active member of Afghan Milat Party and misused his position, according to the local people.

Another concern for active civil society and the public has been the lack of impartiality of the IEC staff in changing the location of VR stations from one area to another, and FEFA's observers have observed that officials and heads of VR centers have misused their authorities in this regard. Examples: On the 5<sup>th</sup> January 2009, Station has been relocated from Abdul Wakil School to the house of the Nangarhar Provincial Council Representative's house for three days; on 8<sup>th</sup> January Station 014 was relocated from the

Bibi Zainab Girl's High School to the house of one of the representatives of the Wolosi Jirga (lower house) in Nahiya 3. This has occurred when he invited about 400 people to his house for Khatm-e Quran (Quran recitation).

In changing the location of VR stations procedure has not been followed in Alinegar district and Meterlaam city of Laghman; Pechar Agham, Gusha and Naziyan districts of Nangarhar; Argon, Meta Khan and Katwaz districts of Paktika; Mosa Khail district of Khost. FEFA has asked for the opinion of the provincial officials in this regard, but have not received a satisfactory response.

### **Protection of Sensitive Materials at Night**

The lack of protection of sensitive materials at night has been one of the major concerns for the public and civil society groups in terms of transparency of the process. The lack of storing materials safe during night have provided an opportunity for those opportunists who intend to have more cards in order to effect the outcome of the coming election by faking and deception.

In 20% of the stations observed by FEFA, it has been witnessed that the sensitive materials have not been sealed properly according to the procedure. For example in Laghman province it has been observed that the Head of the Station (DFC) in Alisheng district, the Head of the Station (DFC) in Qarghaie district and the Logistics Officer of Basram village, Meterlaam City Station have taken sensitive materials to their homes at night. In all of these places people have criticized such behaviors. In Nangarhar province, Sherzad district, Qala Akhund and Kama district stations, Khusgunbad School in Behsood district, Shewa district station and in some of the other provinces a lack of securing the stations has caused various problems. As happened on 28 December 2008, when due to lack of keeping the sensitive materials safe, a camera and printer was stolen from a station in Paktika and this delayed the VR process for two days and caused serious concerns in people's minds. As on 29<sup>th</sup> December 2008 in Zabul, in one of the stations the printer cartridge was sold by one of the officials. Although the provincial officials of the IEC with the support of the security organs identified the person and it was verified, the accused person instead of getting charged continued to be at his job.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of January a few of the active civil society members have shown FEFA observers the registration books which are the most sensitive materials in the process and based on their contents has accused the IEC officials for misusing their positions.

### **Inaccessibility of the VR Stations**

Locating VR stations far away from populated residential areas had a negative impact on people's participation especially on that of women. Based on FEFA's observers' reports, 35% of the stations covered by FEFA people were complaining about stations being far way which has caused tens of thousands of women to be deprived of participating in the process. Examples of the stations being far away from residential areas: a minimum of 12 KM distance between Neta Khail village and VR station in Kama district of Nangarhar; a minimum of 15 KM distance between Kalata Alam Khan village and VR station in Anar

Dara district of Farah; a minimum of 25 KM distance between Sayeed Khail village and VR station in Dowa Manda district of Khost. On top of stations being far away, winter has also caused serious problems in Zabul and Paktika and as a result women's participation has remarkably decreased.

In addition, another major problem identified in 10% of the FEFA coverage in the first week of the third phase included failure of technical devices mostly camera batteries, which did not work properly, and it caused repeated delays for several hours in the process.

This problem has been witnessed mainly in Nangarhar, Laghman, and Khowst provinces.

### **Presence of Observers and Media**

In 98% of the stations covered by FEFA it has been observed that except for FEFA's observers there have been no other observers and no national or international media as well. The exception being a few cases where FEFA has observed presence of journalists from local radio stations in Nangarhar, Laghman, Khost and Paktika.

### **Problems with stations for Kochis**

Kochis are mainly residing in areas where there are warmer climates during this season, and they were mainly noticed in Nangarhar, Laghman and Khost in the third phase. Based on FEFA's observation lack of enough stations for women has been the main problem for Kochis.

### **Security**

The security situation had a negative impact on the implementation of the third phase of VR process as it had on the second phase. The kidnapping of IEC staff at the start of the process in Farah and Paktika and then their release with the cooperation of local people had a negative impact on morale of staff working in this process. Due to the security problems the IEC despite its plan was not able to start the process until the end of the third process in Kakar and Arghandab district of Zabul; and until the last week in Wowmana, Geyan and Naka districts of Paktika. The IEC has announced their inability to implement the process saying that they were not assured from security institutions of ensuring security in those areas.

A fear of potential attacks from both sides to the conflict or being arrested by coalition forces was considered to be the main cause of the low turn out, especially for women. On the 8<sup>th</sup> December 2008 due to an operation by coalition forces in Batki Koot district of Nangarhar and subsequent arrest of a few locals accused of supporting terrorists, people's participation in the villages around where the incident happened has been very little or none.

Issuing Night Letters at the beginning of the third phase by the oppositions in Bati Koot district of Nangarhar, Baak district of Khost and Meterlaam city of Laghman had

negatively impacted on people's participation, especially that of women, in the close by areas. In the said areas people's participation decreased for three days to the lowest level in the third phase.

### **Evaluation and Analysis**

FEFA's analysis has been based on information collected from numerous interviews conducted by its observers and several gathering with local communities and civil society organization functioning locally.

FEFA's observers' assessment identified that the IEC staffs are not familiar with the process especially in female stations. Lack of a control and monitoring system for a fair and transparent process of IEC is the main cause of the procedural violations in the third phase of the VR process. FEFA's findings indicate that in at least 93% of VR stations covered, the IEC staff has not paid enough attention to ID checking. FEFA's observers have not observed even one case where the provincial official of IEC has monitored their field staff.

Another matter which needs to be discussed is the presence of staff with a tendency of tribalism and political agendas. This has been a factor for two of the main violations (multiple registrations and underage registrations).

FEFA's observation has indicated that public awareness has had little impacts on people, especially on women in remote areas. When FEFA observers have consulted people outside other VR stations, 67% have complained about the lack of the effect of the IEC's public awareness strategies before the commencement of the third phase of VR process.

### **Recommendations:**

FEFA's observation from the third phase of the VR process indicates that underage and multiple registrations form the highest number of violations in this phase. A repeat of such violations in the fourth phase, if not prevented, could undermine the fairness and transparency of the election. In this regard FEFA will appreciate any actions that the IEC will take to prevent such violations reoccurring in the next phase.

Employing male staff in the female stations and locating stations inside government buildings were violations that happened in the second phase and they were also repeated in the third phase. These violations had a negative impact on people's participation, especially women. FEFA believes that if stations are located in public buildings like schools, hospitals, religious schools, etc, it can increase the level of people's participation.

Registering women based on a list of details and a man or woman fingerprinting instead of the woman being registered has caused another problem that was not expected. As the IEC has announced, it will conduct a list correction at the end of the process to identify matching fingerprints. If the IEC will conduct such procedure, in that case most of the women who were registered based on the lists, will not be able to vote. FEFA believes that it is not the fault of these people, but it is the IEC who intentionally allowed them to

register in such a way. So it is necessary that when conducting list correction, they should consider the rights of those, especially women, not to be violated, and to protect the right of women to voting and to address this problem, IEC should find a proper solution.

FEFA's observation has indicated that the security situation like other problems directly impacted on the level of people's participation, especially women, and also affected the IEC work program.

With the security threats currently existing in the provinces where the fourth phase will take place, security organizations need to take serious action to enable the IEC to run the process correctly and successfully and provide a secure environment for participants, especially women.