



FEFA

بنیاد انتخابات ازاد عادلانه افغانستان

Free & fair Election Foundation
of Afghanistan

FEFA's Brief Report on the First Phase of Voter Registration Process

The Free and Fair Election Foundation of Afghanistan (FEFA) was prepared for observing the first phase of the voter registration process, but due to funding difficulties FEFA could only observe 20% of VR registration centers with 363 volunteer observers in fourteen provinces (Badakhshan, MedanWardak, Sarpul, Ghor, Ghazni, Noorstan, Konar, Parwan, Kapisa, Takhar, Bamyan, Dikondi, Panshir, Logar) all findings of observation report were shared and pointed out to the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) staff by holding by weekly meetings. Also, the findings from the start of the process were announced through the media.

Despite funding problems FEFA's volunteer observers have partly continued observing the VR process from the fourteen above-mentioned provinces voluntarily and they have sent the latest reports about the process to the central office. The reports indicate that the registration process in these fourteen provinces has been satisfactory, but there are indications of problems in some of these provinces.

Procedural Violations

Multiple registrations: Multiple registrations have been one of the main problems in this process. In many confirmed instances from the start of the process until now FEFA's observers have witnessed multiple registration violations and they have been reported.

Multiple Card distribution: FEFA's observers have witnessed in Doaba district of Nooristan that the registration center's staff have distributed cards to community elders without following procedure. FEFA's observers have reported that the numbers of these cards are up to 100 and similar violations have been reported from Asmar district of Kunar; Andar district of Ghazni; and Cheghcheran City of Ghor. When contact was made with the electoral provincial authorities of Kunar, satisfactory changes to avoid violation have been made. This sort of violation has been more serious and wider especially in the last week of the first phase of registration.

Women's Participation:

Women's participation has been observed in the registration process, but in some provinces due to culturally inappropriate services and lack of security women's participation has been low compared to the rest of the provinces and this is worrying.

Women's participation has been a lot lower in Maidan Wardak and Nooristan provinces compared to Parwan, Kapisa, Ghor and Takhar provinces. Also there have been differences in women's participation between districts of the some provinces, for example in Ghazni province in Andar district female registration has been much lower than Jaghori district.

Opening of Centers:

Although the official opening times for the registration centers are set at 7:30am daily, it has been the case from the start of the process that most centers in most provinces have not opened before 8:30am

Also, some centers have been closed on unusual occasions. In one case in Dawlat Yar district of Ghor province a registration center was closed for two days because of the head of the area's wedding party.

A large number of VR registration station have been closed occasionally or permanently from the start of the process for security reasons - in Andar, Khugyani and Nawa districts of Ghazni province; Jalrez and Jeghato districts of Maidan Wardak province; Shahrak, Tolak and Charsada districts of Ghor province; Kharwar district of Logar province; and Doaba district of Nooristan Province.

Location of the Centers:

The Electoral Commission has not paid enough attention to choosing the location of the registration centers and this has caused people not to attend the registration centers in some villages.

At the beginning of the process district buildings and other government offices were used and this has caused people especially women not to access the centers, because culturally it is not appropriate for women to go to such places. Also similar problems have been reported from Shegel, Asmar and Nari districts of Kunar province and also Nangraj, and Doaba districts of Nooristan province.

The Electoral Commission has started to change the location of the offices from one area to another to solve these problems. The procedure that has been used for changing centers has been difficult and time consuming. According to communication that FEFA has had with the commission, the only change that the Electoral Commission has made in their procedure is to give provincial officials authorization to change centers' location.

Security:

Although security organizations have taken measures to provide security for the registration process in the 14 provinces, FEFA has seen a lack of security in some districts and due to this some registration centers have been closed. This has been the case in three districts of Ghor province (Shahrak and Tolak...); one district in Logar province (Kharwar); three districts in Ghazni province (Khugyani, Andar and Nawa) and one district in Nooristan province (Doaba).

Recommendations:

Public awareness

FEFA has praised the commitment of the IEC to public awareness of the first phase of registration. We also recommend that more attention should be paid to different categories of eligible people through different and effective ways of public awareness.

FEFA believes that only running short term programs before the start of the process in some areas, especially in villages, is not very effective. The IEC needs to use other available sources (eg, public councils and religious scholars) to promote the value of the process while it is running to encourage all eligible people, especially women, to register before the registration phase ends in their area so as to not lose the chance to vote in the coming election.

Location and movement of Centers from one area to another

We have seen in the first phase of the registration process that when choosing the centers location it has to be accessible to the public. This needs attention and debate.

FEFA with the experience from the first period of the registration, suggests that more need to be done in choosing centers' location and they should be located in populated residential areas and public areas where they are accessible to the public, especially women.

Also, from the experience of the first phase FEFA suggests that the changing locations mechanism needs to be simplified to avoid time wasting. Potentially this will have a positive effect on women's participate in future periods.

For example, if specific locations in districts and villages are identified and these are accessible to eligible women and security is discussed with the local authorities in advance, then this program should run in a specific time frame in that area.

Alternative Programs:

As we observed in the first phase the proportional level of eligible women's participation, and the number of people registered, was much lower in the unsafe areas than in the safe areas. The IEC in conjunction with responsible security organisations needs to run special programs in order to increase the proportion of women's participation. However, when running alternative programs, priority should be given to the districts and provinces where female participation is low.

Avoiding Violations

One of the violations occurring in the first phase of the VR process was that of people registering getting more than one card. In this case FEFA observers have observed

specific and documentary evidence. Issuing registration cards in dozens in some areas is another violation committed by IEC staff.

FEFA believes that if the perpetrators are handed to the proper and legal authorities and the violations are publicly released through the media, it will have a positive effect and could prevent similar violations in future phases.