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Coalition of Ethiopian Civil Society
Organizations for Elections

FINAL OBSERVATION REPORT

Outstanding and Reelections of the Sixth
General Elections held in Benishangul Gumuz,
Afar, Somali and Central Ethiopia Regions in
June 24 2024.



November 8, 2024
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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About CECOE

The Coalition of Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations for Elections (CECOE) is a non-profit and non-governmental civil society organization with more than 175 member organizations. CECOE was licensed by the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (F.D.R.E). Authority for Civil Society Organizations (ACSO) in 2019 with registration number 4748 under the Civil Society Organizations Proclamation 1113/2019.

CECOE was established with the aim of enhancing and coordinating the role of Ethiopian civil society organizations (CSOs) in election observation, voter education, preventing electoral conflicts, and providing capacity building and support for its member organizations.

CECOE is a committed member of the East and Horn of Africa Election Observers Network (E-HORN), African Election Observers Network (AfEONet), a pan-African coordinating platform, and member of the Global Network of Domestic Election Monitors (GNDEM), which connects regional networks and individual monitoring organizations across more than 88 countries worldwide.

Disclaimer

This report is made possible through the generous support of the Embassy of Ireland and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The views expressed herein are solely those of CECOE and do not necessarily reflect the positions or views of the Embassy of Ireland, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the National Democratic Institute (NDI), or any other partner organizations.

Acronyms

CECOE: Coalition of Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations for Elections

NEBE: National Election Board of Ethiopia

CSO: Civil Society Organization

ACSO: Authority for Civil Society Organizations

USAID: United States Agency for International Development

NDI: National Democratic Institute

HoPR: House of Peoples' Representatives

E-HORN: East and Horn of Africa Election Observers Network

AfEONet: African Election Observers Network

GNDEM: Global Network of Domestic Election Monitors

FDRE: Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

LTO: Long-Term Observer

GHC: Grievance Hearing Committee

PwD: Person(s) with Disability

IDP: Internally Displaced Person



Acknowledgment

CECOE would like to express its sincere gratitude to several individuals and organizations for their valuable contributions and support for the observation activities for the outstanding elections and in preparing this report. First, CECOE is grateful to the National Democratic Institute (NDI), its Resident Director, Dr. Franklin Oduro, and all NDI staff for the financial and technical support provided. CECOE also would like to thank Irish Aid and the Embassy of Ireland for their financial contributions. Moreover, CECOE appreciates its member civil society organizations - namely - Central Ethiopia Teachers Association (CETA), Somali Non-State Actors Coalition (SONSAC), Redeem the Generation, Empathy for Life and Development Association (ELIDA), Development for All (DFA), Benishangul Gumu Development Association and the Boro Shinasha Development Association for their contribution in the overall observation process. Most importantly, CECOE recognizes the contributions and efforts of short-term and long-term observers who volunteered to observe the electoral processes. At last, CECOE expresses heartfelt thanks to its board, management, staff and volunteers who worked effortlessly to make the observation successful.

Executive Summary

Background

The Coalition of Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations for Elections (CECOE), a non-profit, non-governmental organization committed to promoting democratic elections in Ethiopia, conducted an observation mission for the outstanding and re-elections held on June 24, 2024. These elections took place in specific constituencies within four regions: Benishangul Gumuz, Afar, Central Ethiopia (Meskan and Mareko constituency), and Somali (Jigjiga constituency). The mission aimed to assess the electoral process's transparency, accountability, and adherence to democratic principles. This executive summary presents the key findings and recommendations stemming from the observation mission.

CECOE deployed 13 long-term observers (LTOs) from June 1st to June 30th, 2024, to observe the pre-election environment and provide comprehensive insights into the electoral landscape. On election day, CECOE deployed an additional 77 stationary observers strategically placed across the four regions, using a combination of proportional and convenience-based deployment strategies to maximize coverage within operational constraints.

The observers utilized standardized checklists and reporting forms to systematically collect data on various aspects of the electoral process, including voter education, campaign activities, polling station setup, voting procedures, counting, and the post-election environment.

Key Findings

The elections were generally peaceful across all observed areas. CECOE noted improvements in several aspects of the electoral process compared to previous elections. The availability of electoral materials at most polling stations was satisfactory. There was increased accessibility for persons with disabilities (PWDs) at several polling stations. Deployment of the required number of election officials at observed polling stations was noted.

Pre-election

Significant shortcomings were observed in pre-election voter education. Inadequate frequency and reach, particularly in Benishangul Gumuz, was a concern. Limited accessibility for marginalized groups like women, PWDs, and IDPs was also observed. Insufficient funding and language barriers hindering effectiveness were another issue. While campaigning was generally unrestricted, there were instances of concern. Restrictions on political party operations, particularly targeting the Boro Shinasha Democratic Party in Benishangul Gumuz, were observed. The use of hate speech and inflammatory rhetoric, notably in Benishangul Gumuz and the Somali region, was also documented.

Election Day

Despite improvements, several irregularities were documented. A lack of adequate shelter for voters queuing at the majority of polling stations was observed. The widespread absence of functional Grievance Hearing Committees (GHCs) presented a concern. Instances of voters being allowed to vote without indelible ink marking in Afar and Benishangul Gumuz were noted. Individuals being allowed to vote without proper identification or witness testimony in Afar and Benishangul Gumuz was also documented.



Post-Election

While generally peaceful, concerns were raised regarding the spread of exaggerated or false information about election results by some media outlets. A critical breach of protocol occurred when the mayor of Jigjiga prematurely announced election results on social media before the official declaration by NEBE.

Key Recommendations

1. Significant gaps remain in voter education, with many citizens, particularly in rural areas and marginalized communities, lacking adequate information about their voting rights and the electoral process. To foster a consistently informed electorate, CECOE recommends a multi-pronged approach: establishing long-term, well-funded voter education programs; empowering village-level groups; integrating voter education into the formal education curriculum; leveraging community radio; diversifying media platforms; and securing consistent financial support from both domestic and international partners.
2. While campaigning was generally active, concerns arose regarding restrictions on political party operations, especially targeting the Boro Shinasha Democratic Party, and the use of hate speech and inflammatory rhetoric, primarily in Benishangul Gumuz and the Somali region. To ensure a fair and peaceful campaign environment, CECOE recommends that NEBE should actively invest and address all restrictions on political parties; implement a comprehensive code of conduct prohibiting hate speech and incitement; and collaborate with social media companies and civil society to proactively monitor and address harmful online content.
3. Election day was largely peaceful, and improvements were noted in polling station setup and the deployment of election officials. However, the lack of adequate shelter for voters, the widespread absence of functional GHCs, and inconsistencies in applying voting procedures, including instances of voting without indelible ink marking or proper identification, persisted. To strengthen election day procedures, CECOE recommends: mandating shelter at all polling stations; reforming the GHC system to ensure functionality and accessibility; providing robust training for polling officials on electoral procedures; implementing monitoring mechanisms to assess compliance; and holding officials accountable for violations.
4. The post-election period remained relatively calm, but the premature announcement of election results by the mayor of Jigjiga before NEBE's official declaration highlighted the vulnerability of the process to misinformation. To safeguard election integrity and counter misinformation, CECOE recommends: publicly reiterating NEBE's sole authority in announcing results and taking action against premature declarations; fostering collaboration between NEBE, media outlets, and reputable CSOs to disseminate accurate information; and promoting media literacy to equip citizens with the critical thinking skills needed to identify and reject misinformation.

Chapter One: Background

Electoral Legal framework

FDRE Constitution

Ethiopia has held Six General elections since the FDRE Constitution was ratified in 1995, using the first-past-the-post electoral system. The FDRE Constitution created a parliamentary system, designating the Federal House of People's Representatives (HPR) and Regional State Councils as the main legislative bodies.¹ The Constitution's preamble envisions establishing a democratic society, strongly committed to upholding the fundamental freedoms and rights of all individuals and communities.² To promote a democratic culture, the Constitution in Article 38 emphasizes the rights to vote, to be elected, and to participate in public affairs either directly or through freely chosen representatives. It also affirms the right to join political organizations, associations, and trade unions.³ The provisions require periodic elections be organized in a universal and equal suffrage using secret ballots.⁴

The FDRE Constitution acknowledges the importance of an election management body and establishes the National Election Board of Ethiopia as an independent entity responsible for overseeing free and fair elections at both the federal and regional levels. Article 102 of the FDRE Constitution establishes an independent National Election Board mandated to conduct elections across federal and state constituencies in a free and fair manner. Moreover, the constitution stipulates that members of the Board are to be appointed by the House of People's Representatives upon recommendation of the Prime Minister leaving out the particulars to be determined by law.

Proclamation for the Establishment of the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia, Proclamation No. 1133/2019

To ensure a fair and transparent electoral process, it is essential to have an independent election management body. In 2019, the House of People Representatives (HoPR) re-established the National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) through Proclamation No. 1133/2019. The Proclamation outlines an extensive list of powers and duties granted to the NEBE, which includes registering political parties, monitoring and overseeing them in compliance with the law, and impartially carrying out any elections or referendums held in line with the Constitution and Election Law. In addition, the Proclamation, under Article 7(2), mandates the board with the responsibility to authorize, monitor, and oversee civil society organizations that offer voter education,⁵ and issue licenses and follow up on election observers. The proclamation also authorizes the NEBE to issue directives to carry out its missions properly.

The Ethiopian Electoral, Political Parties Registration and Elections Code of Conduct (Proclamation No. 1162/2019)

The proclamation elaborated five types of election that are conducted in Ethiopia one of which includes Re-election.⁶ According to the proclamation, re-elections will be held when the NEBE decides to cancel election results owing to serious irregularities as per its mandate, and the Federal Supreme court receives a petition and gives a decision that has the effect of reelection.⁷

1 The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Constitution, Proclamation no. 1 (1995). The Constitution was adopted December 1994 and came into force on the 21st day of August 1995.

2 The FDRE Constitution, Preamble, paragraphs 1, 2 and 5

3 The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Constitution, Proclamation no. 1 (1995) Article 38

4 *ibid*

5 Proclamation for the establishment of the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (2019). Proclamation number, 1162. Article 7(2) of proclamation 1133/2019

6 Proclamation number 1162/2019 article 6

7 the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE), The Ethiopian Electoral, Political Parties Registration and Election Code of Conduct Proclamation (2019) Proclamation number 1162/2019.

Directive on Local Election Observers' Accreditation, Working Procedure, and Code of Conduct, directive no. 5/2020

The “Directive on Local Election Observers' Accreditation, Working Procedure, and Code of Conduct, Directive No. 5/2020” establishes the guidelines for accrediting local election observers, detailing their working procedures and outlining the ethical standards they must adhere to. This directive ensures that election monitoring is conducted impartially and effectively, maintaining transparency and integrity in the electoral process.⁸

The preamble of the directive outlines the directive's aims and objectives. Chapter One provides an overview of the proclamation and defines essential terms. Chapter Two details the accreditation process, including how to apply. Chapter Three covers the rights and responsibilities of local observers. Chapter Four establishes the code of conduct for observers. The final chapter explains the conditions under which accreditation may be revoked or suspended.⁹

Political Context

The political reform process in Ethiopia, which began in 2018, led to significant legislative and institutional changes. These included revisions to the electoral law, the reestablishment of the National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE), and an overall transformation of the electoral landscape. In 2019 and mid-2021 the newly established NEBE organized the Sidama referendum and the Sixth General Elections across most of the country, respectively. However, the 2021 general elections in Ethiopia were significantly impacted by various conflicts across several regions, notably in Tigray, Oromia, Amhara, Benishangul-Gumuz, and Afar. These conflicts impeded the democratic reform process in Ethiopia, as the security challenges they posed compounded with the Covid 19 pandemic made it difficult to carry out elections in a manner that was both comprehensive and competitive. The situation led to the postponement and reorganization of elections in several regions, highlighting the broader challenges Ethiopia faced in its pursuit of democratic consolidation during this period.

In the September 2021 elections for the Meskan and Mareko constituencies situated in the Central Ethiopia Region, severe intimidation and irregularities were reported, including the presence of militias, voter coercion, and discrepancies in voter numbers. Children were allegedly allowed to vote, and observers faced threats. Due to these issues, the electoral board confirmed that force was used to compel voting, leading to a decision to hold a re-election in these constituencies for the second time.¹⁰

During the September 2021 General elections, in the Somali region Muye Muluqe Constituency (for Regional Council), a recount was scheduled to take place because of the difference observed among the number of voters who signed on the register in all polling stations, the ballot papers found in the box, and the ballot papers found on the ground; and also the difference between the total number of the ballot papers received by the constituency and the number of ballot papers found inside and outside of the ballot boxes were not tolerable. As a result, parties and independent candidates in the constituency have been invited to observe the recount. Additionally, in Jijiga Town Constituency (for Regional Council). It has been verified through numerous witnesses that voters were coerced to vote for a single party in 26 polling stations, and also that observers were not able to observe the election process in 13 constituencies. These actions are believed to have the potential of altering the result, so the Board decided that re-election should be held.¹¹ Due to these irregularities, the NEBE decided to hold a re-election to ensure the integrity of the process in Jijiga constituency.¹²

⁸ Directive on Local Election Observers' Accreditation, Working Procedure, and Code of Conduct, directive no. 5/2020

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ መስከረም 20 ቀን 2014 ዓ.ም ድምጽ አሰጣጥ ተከናውኖባቸው በአቤቱታ ምክንያት ይፋ ያልተደረጉ የምርጫ ክልሎችን አስመልክቶ የተሰጠ መረጃ | የኢትዮጵያ ብሔራዊ ምርጫ ቦርድ. (n.d.). <https://nebe.org.et/am/node/671>

¹¹ <https://nebe.org.et/en/node/672>

¹² Ibid

As a result of these cancellations, some seats in the Federal Parliament and Regional Councils that were supposed to be filled by representatives from these constituencies remain vacant. This situation reflects the challenges NEBE faced in ensuring a transparent and credible electoral process in regions affected by political and logistical difficulties. The vacancies in the Federal Parliament also highlight the impact of these irregularities on the representation of these regions at the national level.

On April 8, 2024, NEBE announced that it would hold the outstanding and re-elections. These elections were originally set for June 13, 2024, but in order to avoid clashing with the Muslim festival of Eid al-Adha, they were postponed twice: first to June 16 and then to June 23, 2024. Moreover, NEBE also planned to establish a total of 1,261 polling stations across four regions: Benishangul Gumuz, Afar, Central Ethiopia, and Somali. According to the electoral calendar, voter registration was scheduled from April 29 to May 13, 2024, excluding Jigjiga 2 Constituency. Candidate registration was set from April 29 to May 8, 2024. Some polling stations weren't initially open because of public and religious holidays falling on the same day of the election. As a result, voter registration was extended to May 20 and candidate registration to May 14, 2024. In Jigjiga, due to numerous irregularities, voter registration and voting were scheduled for the same day, June 16.. To accommodate the increased voter load, 52 additional polling stations were established, bringing the total to 1313. The number of voters per station was not to exceed 750.

Table 1: Summary of Polling Stations by Region

Region	Constituencies	Polling Stations	Voters per Station
Afar	9	388	≤1,500
Benishangul Gumuz	18	578	≤1,500
Central Ethiopia	1	172	≤1,500
Somali	1	123	≤ 750
Total	29	1,261	

NEBE recruited and trained election officials for voter registration and election day in Afar, Benishangul Gumuz, Central Ethiopia (Meskan and Mareko), and Somali (Jigjiga) Regions. Polling officials for Central Ethiopia and Somali regions were recruited from Addis Ababa. The recruitment covered 29 constituencies and 1261 polling stations, with 1 Zonal Coordinator for Afar Zone 5, 89 Constituency Officials (3 per constituency and 4 for Central Ethiopia and Somali), and 1,261 Polling Station Officials (5 per polling station).

The NEBE adopted three approaches to register voters for the outstanding and re-elections that took place in 2024. The first approach was the registration of voters in 123 polling stations on polling day in “Jijiga 2” constituency. The second approach was conducting new voter registration from April 29 until the end of May 2024 in Afar, Benishangul Gumuz, and Central Ethiopia in 643 polling stations. As a result, the total number of newly registered voters was 491,681, comprising 280,972 (57.14%) male voters and 210,709 (42.9%) female voters. The third approach the NEBE adopted was to maintain the voter roll for the 2021 general elections.

The total number of candidates across all regions included 12 independent candidates and 348 political party candidates, making a combined total of 360 candidates. Out of these, 23 candidates (6.39%) were female, while 337 candidates (93.61%) were male.

For the House of Peoples’ Representatives (HoPR), there were 28 candidates in total, including 5 female candidates (17.86%) and 23 male candidates (82.14%). While for regional councils, the total number of candidates was 348, with 71 female candidates (20.43%) and 277 male candidates (79.57%).



Table 2: House of People's Representative Candidate Distribution by Region and Gender

Region	Independent Candidates	Candidates for HoPR	Male	Female
Afar	0	5	3	2
Benishangul Gumuz	0	20	17	3
Central Ethiopia	3	6	6	0
Somali	0	0	0	0
Total	3	31	26	5

Table 3: Regional council (RC) Candidate Distribution by Region and Gender

<i>Region</i>	<i>Independent Candidates</i>	<i>Candidates for RCI</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Afar	0	90	73	17
Benishangul Gumuz	0	223	174	49
Central Ethiopia	3	13	10	3
Somali	3	22	20	2
Total	6	348	277	71

Chapter Two: Observation Methodology

This section outlines the methodology employed by CECOE for observing the electoral process. The approach encompassed three phases: Pre-election, Election day and Post-election observations to ensure a comprehensive assessment of the electoral environment and activities. This methodology was designed to provide an in-depth understanding of the political dynamics, the execution of electoral procedures, and the overall integrity of the election process.

Long-Term Observation

CECOE's long-term observation methodology was a comprehensive and systematic approach designed to observe the electoral process thoroughly, from the pre-election phase through to the post-election phase. The primary goals were to assess the political environment, the administration of the electoral process, and the level of citizen engagement and participation.

CECOE recruited 13 long-term observers from its member organizations. These observers underwent training sessions covering electoral laws, observation techniques, reporting mechanisms, and the use of standardized checklists. They were strategically deployed across the regions to ensure comprehensive coverage of key areas:

Regions	Number of observers
Benishangul Gumuz	9
Afar	2
Central Ethiopia	1
Somali	1
Total	13

Deployment followed a proportional observation methodology, ensuring that areas with higher political activity and potential issues received adequate attention. During the pre-election phase, observers observed the political environment, including campaign activities, voter education efforts, and overall security. A total of thirty two (32) reports were collected, providing detailed insights into the political and electoral environment. Observers used standardized checklists and reporting forms to collect data systematically on various aspects of the electoral process, documenting incidents of violence, intimidation, or other irregularities. These reports were submitted to the CECOE data center for analysis, ensuring timely and accurate information flow.

Observers remained in their respective regions during the post-election phase to monitor the counting of votes and the announcement of results. They reported on any post-election disputes, incidents, or irregularities. A total of eleven (11) reports were collected during this phase, offering detailed information on the concluding activities of the electoral process.

Election Day Field Observation

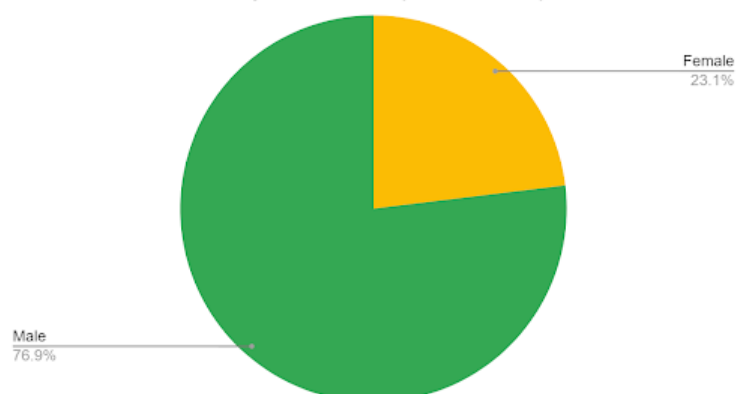
On June 23, 2024, CECOE conducted a comprehensive observation of the election day process. The observation focused on electoral activities from the opening of polling stations to the counting of votes and aggregation of results. Due to operational and logistical constraints, CECOE was unable to deploy observers in the Metekel and Kamashi Zones of Benishangul Gumuz, which may have limited the scope of electoral activities captured in these areas.

On election day, CECOIE deployed Seventy Seven (77) stationary observers across Benishangul Gumuz, Afar, Somali, and Central Ethiopia. The distribution of observers was as follows:

Regions	Number of observers
Benishangul Gumuz	20
Afar	37
Central Ethiopia	12
Somali	8
Total	77

The observer team comprised Eighteen (18) females and Fifty nine (59) males.

Distribution of the stationary observers by Gender



Deployment and Observation Details

Benishangul Gumuz: CECOIE deployed 20 stationary observers in Benishangul Gumuz, specifically in the Assosa zone. The deployment followed a convenient deployment methodology, focusing on accessible areas to maximize observation coverage within logistical constraints.

Afar: A total of 37 observers were stationed at 37 polling stations across the Afar region. This deployment utilized a proportional methodology, ensuring that observers were deployed proportionally to the number of polling stations established in each woreda.

Central Ethiopia: In Central Ethiopia, 12 stationary observers were deployed at 12 polling stations in the Meska and Mareko Woredas. A proportional deployment methodology was employed, ensuring that observers were deployed proportionally to the number of polling stations in these two woredas.

Somali: CECOIE deployed eight stationary observers across eight polling stations in the Somali region. The deployment followed a convenient deployment methodology, focusing on accessible and strategically significant polling stations.

Reporting and Data Collection

Observers were required to report on seven key activities during election day: Arrival and setup of polling stations, Voting process, Closing of polling stations, and Counting and aggregation of results. Each observer submitted reports on these activities throughout the day, totaling 85 reports. This resulted in 595 reports received at the CECOE data center.

Data Center

To ensure the accuracy and quality of reported information, CECOE established a data center at its headquarters in Addis Ababa. The data center, staffed with 13 data clerks, was responsible for:

- Verifying the reports submitted by observers
- Following up on incomplete or missing information
- Receiving critical incidents reported during election day

The data center played a crucial role in maintaining the integrity of the observation process, ensuring that all reported data was accurately processed and analyzed.

Chapter Three: Observation Findings

Pre-election Observation Findings

The following findings are based on data collected from observers deployed by CECOE from June 1, 2024, to June 30, 2024. These observers reported on the pre-election political environment checklists. CECOE received 32 reports on the pre-election political environment during this period.

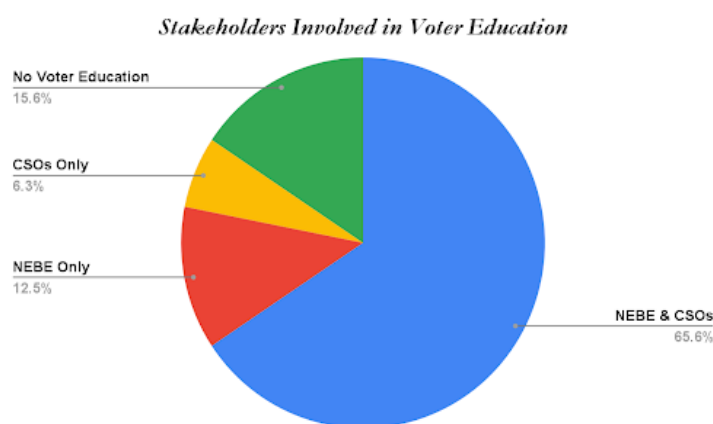
Voter Education

In the Federal Republic of Ethiopia, voter education is primarily the responsibility of NEBE. Proclamation 1133/2019, Article 7(2), empowers the NEBE to grant permission, follow up, and supervise Civil Society Organizations engaged in the provision of voter education. The proclamation provided the mandate for conducting voter education primarily to the NEBE.

As part of the pre-election political environment scanning, CECOE observers reported on the availability, mode of delivery, accessibility, and major challenges of voter education activities. The summary below is based on 32 observer reports.

1. Availability of Voter Education Activities

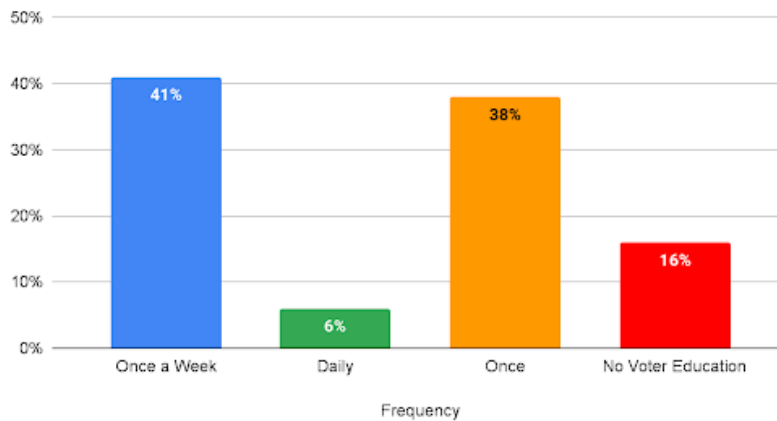
Voter education plays a critical role in a democracy by empowering citizens with the knowledge and skills necessary to participate meaningfully in elections. It helps voters make informed choices, increases participation, reduces electoral fraud, and fosters trust in the democratic process. In connection with this, 21 (66%) observation reports revealed that voter education activities were conducted by both NEBE and civil society organizations. Four (12%) reports claimed that only the NEBE delivered voter education, and two (6%) reports indicated that only civil society organizations were involved in conducting voter education. However, five (16%) reports indicated no voter education was observed in their areas, particularly in the Assosa Zone in the Benishangul-Gumuz region..



2. Frequency of Voter Education

Regular voter education events are essential for encouraging sustained citizens participation, bolstering knowledge. CECOE's Long Term Observers (LTOs) observed the frequency of voter education provided. As a result, 13 (41%) observation reports indicated that voter education was given once in a week. Voter education was given out on a daily basis, according to two (6%) observation reports and once, according to 12 reports (38%). According to Five (16%) reports indicated that no voter education was given at all.

Frequency of Voter Education Activities



3. Inclusiveness of Voter Education

Inclusiveness is a key aspect of voter education, ensuring that all segments of the population are considered. CECOE observers focused on the extent to which voter education activities included various groups. Accordingly, 18 (56%) observation reports showed that voter education was inclusive of both genders: internally displaced people (IDPs) and people with disabilities (PWDs). Nine (28%) reports revealed that voter education was not inclusive of gender, PWDs, and IDPs. According to five (16%) reports indicated that no voter education was given at all.

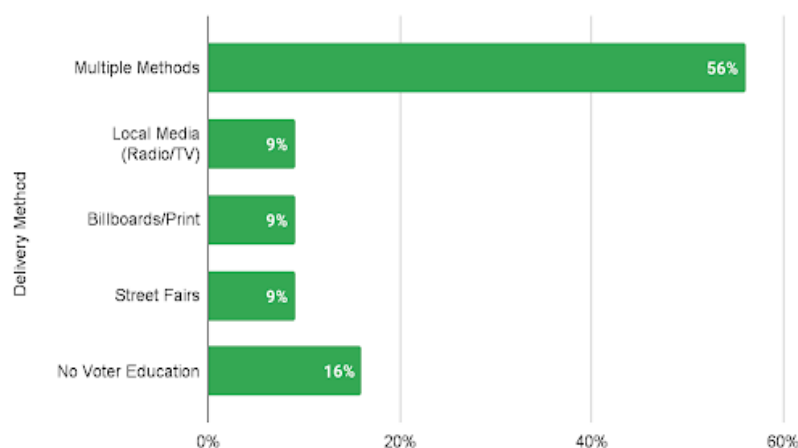
Regarding the participation of men and women in conducting voter education, 19(59%) reports claimed that both genders, internally displaced people, and people with disabilities were involved in the provision of voter education. However, eight (25%) reports indicated that these groups were not involved in conducting voter education. Five (16%) reports indicated that no voter education was given at all.

4. Mode of Delivery of Voter Education

The mode of delivery is crucial in voter education. CECOE observed different delivery modes by various stakeholders, including face-to-face interactions, billboards, print media, street fairs, local media (radio or television), social media, and information technology.

Eighteen (56%) reports mentioned the use of multiple methods in voter education. Voter education was carried out via local media, according to three (9%) reports (radio and television). Three (9%) further reports revealed that printed materials and billboards were used in voter education campaigns. In a similar vein, Three (9%) reports claimed that street fairs were used for voter education. However, five (16%) reports stated that there was no voter education provided at all.

Methods of Delivery for Voter Education



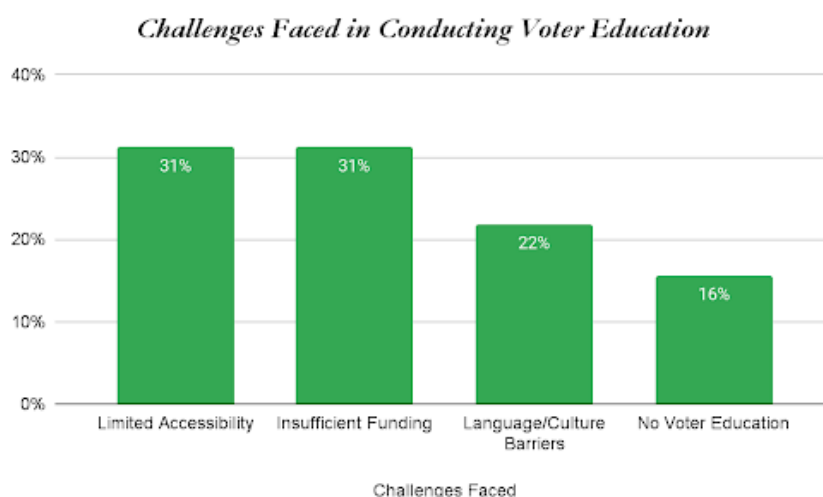
5. Content of Voter Education

The content of voter education is vital in informing the electorate about key aspects of the election. CECOE assessed the information provided during voter education activities.

While 25 (78%) reports revealed that voter education provided information about the election date, conversely, Two (6%) reports indicated that voter education did not provide information about the election date, and Five (16%) reports claimed that no voter education was provided at all. Additionally, 25 (78%) reports showed that voter education included a list of required documents for voter registration and voting day. Conversely, Two (6%) reports indicated that voter education did not include such a list, and five (16%) reports revealed that no voter education was observed at all.

6. Challenges Faced

Challenges to the effectiveness of voter education can significantly impact its success. CECOE observers identified several obstacles that affected the voter education program. Ten (31%) reports revealed that limited accessibility for women, people with disabilities, and other groups was a significant issue. Another 10 (31%) reports indicated that insufficient funding was a major challenge. Seven (22%) reports showed that language and cultural barriers hindered the effectiveness of voter education, and five (16%) reports claimed that no voter education was observed at all.



Election Campaigns and Debate

As part of pre-election observation, CECOE attempted to provide insights into the presence of campaign activities, methods used, issues raised, quality of discourse, organizational aspects of debates, and media coverage. The summary below is based on 32 observer reports.

1. Availability of Campaigning

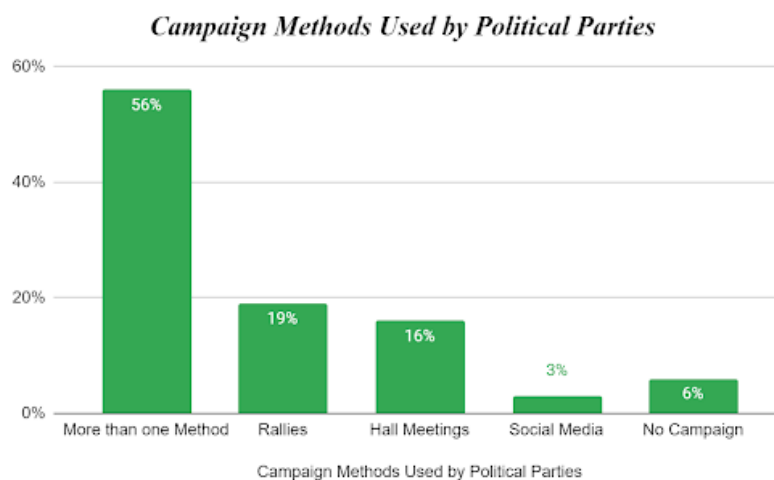
Thirty (94%) reports showed that campaign activities were widely observed, demonstrating the active engagement of political parties in the electoral process. However, two (6%) reports revealed no campaign activity, particularly in Central Ethiopia, Meskan and Mareko woredas, and the Benishangul Gumuz region in the Asossa Zone.

While 28 (88%) reports indicated no restrictions or limitations related to campaign activities, one report indicated that in the Benishangul Gumuz region, Metekel Zone, Dibate Woreda, Doben Kebele, an incident was reported where the Kebele administrator prohibited a meeting organized by the Boro Shinasha Democratic Party in the Kebele hall, despite initial approval. Additionally, the administrator destroyed the party's campaign materials, including billboards, undermining their ability to conduct effective campaign activities.

Campaign messages focused on addressing key issues and making pledges to voters. Twenty (75%) reports indicated that political parties addressed multiple issues during their campaigns. Four (12%) reports highlighted specific additional issues, and one (3%) report noted concerns related to security issues, while two (6%) reports revealed no campaign activity at all.

2. Methods of Campaigning

Campaign efforts utilized various methods to reach voters effectively. Eighteen (56%) reports noted that campaigns were conducted using more than one method, demonstrating a diversified approach. Six (19%) reports showed that rallies were a primary method of engaging voters. Five (16%) reports revealed that hall meetings were a significant mode of campaign interaction, and One (3%) report indicated the use of social media, while two (6%) reports revealed no campaign activity at all.



3. Inflammatory or Divisive Messaging

During the campaign period, concerns were raised about the tone and content of some messages. Six (19%) reports showed instances of inflammatory, divisive, misleading information, or hate speech. One notable incident involved the Boro Shinasha Democratic Party in the Benishangul-Gumuz region, which was observed using hate speech and conflict-instigating language in its campaign within the Metekel zone. Reports indicated that these harmful messages were disseminated both directly in face-to-face interactions and indirectly through online platforms. Specifically, campaign materials and speeches included derogatory remarks about other ethnic groups, aiming to incite fear and mistrust among the local population.

Additionally, a significant confrontation emerged between the Boro Shinasha Democratic Party and the Prosperity Party in the Metekel zone, Bulen Woreda. The conflict included mutual accusations and inflammatory rhetoric. Both parties were observed engaging in disinformation campaigns on social media, spreading false claims about each other's policies and intentions. In another instance, hate speech was documented during a public procession. Supporters of both the Boro Shinasha Democratic Party and the Prosperity Party were observed making inflammatory statements against each other.

4. Debates

Debates organized by NEBE, CSOs, or educational institutions provided a platform for candidates to discuss their policies. However, the occurrence of these debates was limited. Only three (9%) reports indicated that debates were organized, while 29 (91%) reports indicated that no organized debates took place. Among the few organized debates, radio emerged as a prominent medium for conducting these debates.

CECOE observers were tasked to follow and report on the quality of debates, focusing on fairness and clarity. Three (9%) reports noted concerns about equal speaking opportunities and neutrality among moderators during observed debates, as well as unclear procedures and inconsistent communication with participants before debates, while 29 (91%) reports indicated that there were no organized debates.

The content of the debates that did take place showed potential areas for improvement. According to three (9%) reports, the debates tended to focus more on criticism rather than addressing substantive issues. Additionally, the same 29 (91%) reports reiterated that there were no organized debates.

Civic Space Scanning Report

Ensuring a conducive civic space that facilitates the participation of civil society organizations, political parties, the media, and journalists is crucial for the integrity of any electoral process. CECOE's pre-election observation focused on monitoring the openness of civic space by assessing any undue restrictions and limitations on these critical stakeholders. Here are the key findings:

1. Media and Civil Society Organizations

All 32 reports (100%) indicated that there were no pressures, restrictions, arrests, or killings aimed at preventing journalists or the media from reporting freely about the election. Additionally, there were no pressures, restrictions, arrests, or killings aimed at preventing civil society organizations from operating freely. The reports also observed no identity-based exclusions, attacks, or intimidation during the pre-election period, reflecting inclusivity and tolerance in the electoral process. Furthermore, no harassment or abuse against women was reported leading up to voting day, underscoring a secure environment for female participation in the electoral process.

2. Political Party Operations

Ensuring that political parties can operate freely is fundamental for a fair electoral process. However, three (9%) reports indicated incidents of pressures, restrictions, arrests, or killings aimed at preventing political parties from operating freely. Despite these challenges, 29 (91%) reports did not show such issues, indicating overall freedom for political activity.

- **In Benishangul Gumuz, Metekel Zone, Dibate Woreda:** A member of the Boro Shinasha Democratic Party, Zeleke Abdisa, was detained and later released by regional police. The reasons for his arrest were not disclosed.
- **In Benishangul Gumuz, Metekel Zone, Gilgel Beles Town:** Two-party agents of the Boro Shinasha Democratic Party, who are also public servants, were temporarily transferred to other locations.
- **In Benishangul Gumuz, Metekel Zone, Guba Woreda:** The Salary of a member of the Boro Shinasha Democratic Party, Yadeta Fikadu, who registered as a candidate for the elections, was suspended

3. Election Board Operations

The effective functioning of the election board is crucial for maintaining the integrity of the electoral process. Thirty (97%) reports indicated that there were no incidents that hindered the activities of the NEBE during the pre-election period. However, one (3%) report highlighted challenges in Benishangul Gumuz, Metekel Zone.

4. Duress on Voters

Although the majority, 30 (94%) reports did not show such activities, two (6%) reports indicated that there were incidents of attempts to force citizens directly or indirectly. In the Somali region, Jigjiga constituency, messages were circulated through government employee channels on WhatsApp, instructing every employee to vote for the Prosperity Party as a duty. Employees were also directed to take a photo of their ballot paper on election day as evidence.

Election Day Observation Findings

Benishangul-Gumuz Region

Due to operational, logistical and budgetary constraints, CECOE observers were deployed only in the Asossa zone, with no deployment of observers in the Metekel and Kamashi zones. This report is therefore based on data gathered from 20 stationary observers that were deployed at 20 polling stations, using a convenient deployment methodology, who reported on the entire election day. The report captures data on the arrival of observers at polling stations, the opening and setup of polling stations, voting, closing, counting, and aggregation of results. CECOE deployed its observers in Ten, Eight and Two polling stations that were established in urban areas, semi urban areas and in rural areas respectively.

Arrival at Polling Stations

1. NEBE officials are expected to arrive at polling stations before the opening time to ensure that they are ready for voting to begin at 6:00 a.m. In 18 polling stations, election officers were present when observers arrived at the polling stations by 5:30 a.m.
2. In all 20 (100%) polling stations, CECOE observers were allowed to enter and observe the voting processes.
3. The electoral law provides that polling stations must open at 6:00 a.m. Reports from observers indicated that the voting processes commenced at 6:00 a.m. in 18 polling stations, while in 2 polling stations, the voting process started between 7:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m.
4. The electoral law prohibits the establishment of polling stations in some locations, such as military camps, private residences, police stations, religious buildings, health facilities, recreational centers, and political party offices. Accordingly, all (20) polling stations that were observed were set up in locations that are not prohibited under the electoral law.
5. With regards to campaigning activities during voting day, the electoral law provides a clear prohibition of any kind of campaign activities inside or near 200 meters from polling stations. In line with this, there were no campaign activities that have been reported in all (20) polling stations.

Setup of Polling Station

1. With regard to the set up of polling stations, 14 polling stations observed were established in tents, while 4 were established in buildings, and 2 were set up in sheds or trees.
2. The availability of shelters outside of polling stations to protect voters in line from rain and sun is an important element in the set-up of polling stations. Seven (7) polling stations observed had shelters that protected voters from direct sun and rain, whereas 13 polling stations did not have shelters to protect voters from rain and sun.
3. Another crucial matter in the setup of polling stations relates to the accessibility of polling stations for persons with disabilities (PWDs), pregnant women, women carrying infants, and elderly voters to polling stations. Observation findings show that 14 polling stations were accessible while 6 polling stations were not accessible.
4. Availability of electoral materials in polling stations is a requirement under the electoral law for the appropriate setup of polling stations. Observers verified whether electoral materials such as ballot papers, electoral roll, official NEBE stamp, results and reconciliation form, indelible ink, ballot boxes, NEBE's official seals, and Grievance submission forms were available at polling stations. Observation findings show that in the 20 polling stations where CECOE's observers were deployed all of the electoral materials were available.

5. The electoral law requires the polling station head to show that ballot boxes are empty prior to the commencement of the voting process. In all (20) polling stations the polling station head has shown that ballot boxes were empty before the voting processes started.
6. As per the electoral law, a minimum of three polling station officials must be present in polling stations. An average of five polling station officials were present in the polling stations observed by CECOE observers. Of these, an average of two polling station officials were female. Concerning the gender representation of Chair person of polling stations, in three polling stations, the Chair person were female, while 17 polling stations had male Chair person of polling stations. In addition, there were no persons with disabilities (PwD) among the polling station workers in all polling stations observed.
7. The electoral law establishes three-member grievance hearing committees in polling stations. Accordingly, in two polling stations, grievance hearing committees were established in line with the requirements of the electoral law. In some of the polling stations observed, the committees that were established were contrary to the electoral law. In the majority of the polling stations, Grievance Hearing Committees were not established at all.
8. With regards to the presence of political party agents in polling stations, CECOE observers reported that there were political party agents in 18 polling stations.

Voting Process

1. In all (20) polling stations, CECOE observers were not asked to leave the stations during the voting processes.
2. Polling station officials prioritized people with disabilities, the elderly, the frail, pregnant women, and parents with young children in 19 polling stations. Where as in one polling station poll workers didn't give priority to such voters
3. Persons with disabilities were allowed to receive assistance from a personal assistant of their choice in 10 polling stations while in 10 polling stations no voter needed assistance.
4. The electoral law requires voters to show proof of their residence and identity in order to register and/or cast their votes. Voters who fail to bring proof of their identity and residence should not be allowed to take part in the voting processes. However, the electoral vote allows voting to take place in such instances through witness testimony. In line with this, in 14 polling stations, voters who didn't bring proof of identity and/or living residence were allowed to vote through witness testimony. In the remaining 6 polling stations all voters have brought proof of their identity and residence.
5. On the contrary, some voters were not allowed to vote despite bringing proof of their identity and residence in two polling stations named “አሶሳ 03 ምርጫ ጣቢያ 03 03 ሀ 2 and “አሶሳ 01 ምርጫ ጣቢያ 01 ሀ 2A”. In these polling stations, some voters were not allowed to vote for their names were not found on the voter roll, six voters who arrived at the polling station after 06:00 PM were prohibited from voting despite NEBE's announcement to extend the voting until 8:00 PM
6. The electoral law requires indelible ink to be applied on voters before he/she is allowed to register and vote. All voters were marked with indelible ink in 19 polling stations, while voters were not marked with indelible ink in one polling station “አሶሳ 02 ምርጫ ጣቢያ 02 02 ሀ 1B”
7. As per the election proclamation, polling station officials are required to verify whether the names of voters are found in the voter roll. Contrary to the law, in two polling station named “አሶሳ 03 ምርጫ ጣቢያ 03 03 ሀ 2” one person and “ቡልደግሉ 01 ምርጫ ጣቢያ ቡልደግሉ ከተማ 01” six individuals were allowed to vote without their names appearing on the voter roll on the ground that these persons were either PwDs or elderly.
8. The electoral law requires polling station officials to stamp all ballot papers before handing them out to voters. In all (20 (100%) polling stations, polling station officials stamped all ballot papers all the time

9. The secrecy of the vote was respected throughout the day in all 20 (100%) polling stations.
10. In all 20 (100%) polling stations voters without visible disability and who were not elderly were not assisted to vote.
11. There was no presence of unauthorized person(s) in all 20 (100%) polling stations during the voting period.
12. In all polling stations observed there were no cases of intimidation and harassment in general as well as targeting women voters, party agents, observers and poll workers, in particular.
13. The voting process was not interrupted during the whole day in all 20 (100%) polling stations.
14. The election proclamation states that the official legal closing time of polling stations is 6:00 PM. During a press release on June 24, 2024, NEBE announced the extension of the closing time of polling stations for additional two hours until 8:00 PM. Seventeen (17) polling stations closed between 6:00 PM until 7:00 PM while three polling stations closed at 8:00 PM.
15. All voters who were queued at polling stations during the closing time of the polling station at 6:00 PM were permitted to cast a ballot in accordance with the law. Reports from observers in three polling stations indicated that voters were allowed to vote after 6:00 PM as per the decision made by NEBE.

Counting

1. Observers were not asked to leave the polling station during the counting time in all polling stations .
2. Counting of votes must occur in polling stations on the day of the election. In all polling stations counting was conducted at the polling stations on voting day.
3. The counting process was interrupted in four polling stations (አሰላ 03 ምርጫ ጣቢያ 03 03 ሀ 2 ፣ አሰላ 01 ምርጫ ጣቢያ 01 ሀ 2A, አሰላ 02 ምርጫ ጣቢያ 02 02 ሀ 1B and አሰላ 01 ምርጫ ጣቢያ 01 ለ 2 ፈንቲግራራ ምርጫ ጣቢያ ጉለለ.) as a result of the delayed communication of the announcement to extend the voting until 8:00 PM
4. There were no interferences, harassment and/or intimidation during the counting process in all polling stations
5. The polling station chairperson clearly displayed the ballot papers during the counting in all polling stations.
6. The polling station chairperson did not apply the same criteria in the determination of valid and invalid ballot papers. This incident occurred in one polling station named “አሰላ 03 ምርጫ ጣቢያ 03 03 ሀ 2” where the chairperson was observed validating ballots that appeared to be invalid.
7. In the majority of the polling stations that CECOE observed, there were no formal complaints. However, observers reported that they have heard citizens expressing their complaints informally to the polling station Chairperson.

Afar Region

This report is based on information collected from 37 observers stationed at 37 polling stations in the Afar region. These observers monitored the entire election day using a proportional deployment methodology. The report covers data on the observers’ arrival at the polling stations, the opening and setup of the stations, voting, closing, counting, and the aggregation of results. Thirteen (13) of the observed polling stations were located in urban areas, 17 were in semi-urban areas, and 8 were in rural areas.



Arrival at Polling Stations

1. NEBE officials are expected to arrive at polling stations before the opening time to ensure that they are ready for voting to begin at 6:00AM. In 34 (92%) of the polling stations, polling officials were present when observers arrived at polling stations by 5:30 A.M.
2. In 37 (100%) polling stations, CECOIE observers were allowed to enter and observe the voting processes.
3. The electoral law provides that polling stations must open at 6:00 A.M. Reports from observers indicated that the voting processes commenced at 6:00 A.M in 37 (100%) of the polling stations.
4. The electoral law prohibits the establishment of polling stations in some locations such as military camps, private residence, police stations, religious buildings, health facilities, recreational centers and political party offices. Accordingly, 37 (100%) of the polling stations that were observed were set up in locations that are not prohibited under the electoral law.
5. With regards to campaigning activities during voting day, the electoral law provides a clear prohibition of any kind of campaign activities inside or near 200 meters from polling stations. In line with this, there were no campaign activities that have been reported in 37 (100%) of the polling stations.

Setup of Polling Station

1. The location where polling stations are established has an impact on the overall electoral process in terms of ensuring citizen's access to polling stations. Twenty three (62%) of the polling stations observed were established in tents while four (11%) were established in buildings and 10 (27 %) of the polling stations were set up under trees or sheds made of grass and canvas.
2. Availability of shelters outside of polling stations to protect voters in queue from rain and sun is an important element in the set up of polling stations. Twelve (32%) of the polling stations observed had shelters that protected voters from direct sun and rain whereas 25 (68%) polling stations did not have shelters to protect voters from rain and sun.
3. Another crucial matter in the setup of polling stations is related to the accessibility of polling stations to voters with mobility challenges such as the elderly, voters carrying children and persons with disabilities. Twenty four (65%) of the polling stations were accessible while 13 (35%) of the polling stations were not accessible.
4. Availability of electoral materials in polling stations is a requirement under the electoral law for the appropriate setup of polling stations. Observers were asked whether electoral materials such as ballot papers, electoral roll, official NEBE stamp, results and reconciliation form, indelible ink, ballot boxes, ballot box seals, and grievance submission forms were available in polling stations. Across 37 (100%) of the polling stations observed, all electoral materials were available
5. The electoral law requires the polling station head to show that the ballot boxes are empty prior to the commencement of the voting process. In 37 (100%) of the polling stations the polling station head has shown that ballot boxes were empty before the voting processes started.
6. As per the electoral law, a minimum of three polling station officials must be present in polling stations. An average of five polling station workers were present in polling stations that were observed. Of this an average of two polling station officials were Female. With regards to the gender representation of Chairperson of polling stations, in Six (16%) of the polling stations the Chairpersons were Female while 31 (84%) polling stations had Male Chairpersons. In addition to these, there were no Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) among the polling station workers in all 37 (100%) polling stations observed.
7. The electoral law establishes a three member grievance hearing committees in polling stations. Accordingly, in 14 (38%) polling stations grievance hearing committees were established while the committees were not established in 23 (62%) of the polling stations.

8. With regards to the presence of political party agents in polling stations, observers reported that there were political party agents in 29 (78%) of the polling stations whereas in eight (22%) of the polling stations.

Voting Processes

1. In 37 (100%) polling stations, CECOE observers were not asked to leave the stations during the voting processes.
2. Polling station officials prioritized people with disabilities, the elderly, the frail, pregnant women, and parents with young children in 36 (97%) of the polling stations. Where as in one (3%) of the polling station poll workers didn't give priority to such voters
3. Persons with disabilities were allowed to receive assistance from a personal assistant of their choice in 32 (86%) of the polling stations while in five (14%) of the polling stations no one needed help. However, in one polling station with a name ፈንቲግራራ ምርጫ ጣቢያ ጉለሊ., one person was repeatedly providing assistance to voters who required assistance.
4. The electoral law requires voters to show proof of their residence and identity inorder to cast their votes. Voters who fail to bring proof of their identity and residence should not be allowed to take part in the voting processes. However, the electoral vote allows voting to take place in such instances through witness testimony. Contrary to this, in one polling station ገዋንኔ 01 ምርጫ ጣቢያ ጋልኤብ ሀ ፣ voters who didn't bring proof of identity and/or living residence were allowed to vote without witness testimony. In the remaining 36 polling stations all voters who brought proof of their identity and residence were allowed to cast their votes.
5. According to the election proclamation, voters who are registered and able to show proof of identity and residence must be allowed to vote. In line with this, in 37 (100%) of the polling stations observed all eligible voters were allowed to vote.
6. The electoral law requires indelible ink to be applied on voters before he/she is allowed to register and vote. All voters were marked with indelible ink in 34 (92%) polling stations, while in three (8%) polling stations there were instances of voting without an indelible ink being marked in their fingers. These incidents occurred in አዋሬ ና ለምለምንን ምርጫ ጣቢያ ደንገባዲስ, ሃይና ቢዳሪ ምርጫ ጣቢያ ሃይ and ከልዋን 01 ምርጫ ጣቢያ ከልዋን ከተማ polling stations were eleven, eight and six individuals , respectively, voted without indelible ink marked on their fingers.
7. As per the election proclamation, polling station officials are required to verify whether the names of voters are found in the voter roll. Contrary to this, in one polling station ገዋንኔ 01 ምርጫ ጣቢያ ጋልኤብ-ሀ_1 five individuals were allowed to vote without existing on the voter roll.
8. The electoral law requires polling station officials to stamp all ballot papers before handing them out to voters. In 37 (100%) of the polling stations, polling station officials stamped all ballot papers all the time
9. The secrecy of the vote was respected throughout the day in 37 (100%) of the polling stations.
10. In 37 (100%) of the polling stations voters without visible disability and who were not elderly were not assisted to vote.
11. At some point during voting, there was the presence of an unauthorized person(s) particularly Kebele official inside the ገዋንኔ 01 ምርጫ ጣቢያ 01 ጋልኤብ ለ polling stations.
12. In 37 (100%) of the polling stations observed there were no cases of intimidation and harassment in general as well as targeting women voters, party agents, observers and poll workers, in particular.
13. The voting process was not interrupted during the whole day in 37 (100%) polling stations.

14. The election proclamation states that the official legal closing time of polling stations is 6:00 PM. Thirty seven (100%) of the polling stations closed at 6:00 PM in line with the election law.
15. All voters who were in line at the polls during the closing time of the polling station at 6:00 PM were permitted to cast a ballot in accordance with the law in 13 (35%) of the polling stations while in 24 (65%) of the polling stations there were no voters in the queue at the closing time of polling stations .

Counting

1. Observers were not asked to leave the polling station during the counting time in 37 (100%) of the polling stations observed.
2. Counting of votes must occur in polling stations on the day of election. In 37 (100%) of the polling stations observed counting was conducted at the polling stations on voting day.
3. The counting process was not interrupted in 37 (100%) of the polling stations.
4. There were no interferences, harassment and/or intimidation during the counting process in 37 (100%) of the polling stations
5. The polling station chairperson clearly displayed the ballot papers during the counting in 37 (100%) of the polling stations observed
6. The polling station chairperson applied the same criteria in the determination of valid and invalid ballot papers in 37 (100%) of the polling stations observed.
7. In the majority of the polling stations that CECOE observed, there were no formal complaints. However, observers reported that they have heard citizens expressing their complaints informally to the polling station Chairperson.

Central Ethiopia Region (Meskan and Mareko Constituency)

This report is based on information gathered from 12 stationary observers at 172 polling stations, who reported on the entire election day using a proportional deployment methodology for the remaining and outstanding elections which took place in Meska and Mareko Woredas of the Central Ethiopia Region. The report captures data on the arrival of observers at polling stations, the opening and setup of polling stations, voting, closing, counting, and aggregation of results. On the location of the polling stations observed, CECOE observers were deployed in Seven polling stations which were established in urban areas whereas two of polling stations were set up in semi urban areas while three polling stations were established in rural areas.

Arrival at Polling Stations

1. NEBE officials are expected to arrive at polling stations before the opening time to ensure that they are ready for voting to begin at 6:00AM. In 12 (100%) of the polling stations, polling officials were present when observers arrived at polling stations by 5:30 A.M.
2. In 12 (100%) polling stations, CECOE observers were allowed to enter and observe the voting processes.
3. The electoral law provides that polling stations must open at 6:00 A.M. Reports from observers indicated that the voting processes commenced at 6:00 A.M in 11 (92%) of the polling stations. However, in one polling station **ምርጫ ጣቢያ ቆሽ 32ኛ ክ/ጦር ብርጌድ 2** the voting process commenced before 6:00 AM.

4. The electoral law prohibits the establishment of polling stations in some locations such as military camps, private residences, police stations, religious buildings, health facilities, recreational centers and political party offices. Accordingly, 12 (100%) of the polling stations that were observed were set up in locations that are not prohibited under the electoral law.
5. With regards to campaigning activities during voting day, the electoral law provides a clear prohibition of any kind of campaign activities inside or near 200 meters from polling stations. In line with this, no campaign activities were reported in 12 (100%) of the polling stations.

Setup of Polling Station

1. The location where polling stations are established has an impact on the overall electoral process in terms of ensuring citizen's access to polling stations. Ten (83%) of the polling stations observed were established in tents while One (8%) were established in buildings and One (8%) of the polling stations were set up in a shed.
2. Availability of shelters outside of polling stations to protect voters in queue from rain and sun is an important element in the set up of polling stations. Three (25%) of the polling stations observed had shelters that protected voters from direct sun and rain whereas Nine (75%) polling stations did not have shelters to protect voters from rain and sun.
3. Another crucial matter in the setup of polling stations is related to the accessibility of polling stations to voters with mobility challenges such as the elderly, voters carrying children and persons with disabilities. Twelve (100%) of the polling stations were accessible to voters with mobility challenges.
4. Availability of electoral materials in polling stations is a requirement under the electoral law for the appropriate setup of polling stations. Observers were asked whether electoral materials such as ballot papers, electoral roll, official NEBE stamp, results and reconciliation form, indelible ink, ballot boxes, ballot box seals, and grievance submission forms were available in polling stations. Across 12 (100%) of the polling stations observed, all electoral materials were available.
5. The electoral law requires the polling station head to show that the ballot boxes are empty prior to the commencement of the voting process. In 12 (100%) of the polling stations the polling station head has shown that ballot boxes were empty before the voting processes started.
6. As per the electoral law, a minimum of three polling station officials must be present in polling stations. An average of 5 polling station official workers were present in polling stations that were observed. Of this an average of two polling station officials were female. With regards to the gender representation of Chairperson of polling stations, in four 33% of the polling stations the Chairperson were female while eight (67%) polling stations had male Chairperson of polling stations. In addition to this, there were no Persons with Disabilities (PwD) among the polling station workers in all polling stations observed.
7. The electoral law establishes a three member grievance hearing committees in polling stations. Accordingly, in three (25%) polling stations grievance hearing committees were established while the committees were not established in nine (75%) of the polling stations.
8. With regards to the presence of political party agents in polling stations, observers reported that there were political party agents in eight (67%) of the polling stations whereas in four (33%) of the polling stations.

Voting Process

1. In 12 (100%) polling stations, CECOE observers were not asked to leave the stations during the voting processes.
2. Polling station officials prioritized people with disabilities, the elderly, the frail, pregnant women, and parents with young children in 12 (100%) of the polling stations.

3. Persons with disabilities were allowed to receive assistance from a personal assistant of their choice in eight (67%) of the polling stations while in four (33%) of the polling stations no one needed help. Additionally, there were no voters who were repeatedly providing assistance to voters who sought help.
4. The electoral law requires voters to show proof of their residence and identity in order to cast their votes. Voters who are unable to bring proof of their identity and residence should not be allowed to take part in the voting processes. However, the electoral law allows voters to vote in such instances through witness testimony. This procedure was followed where registered voters who were unable to bring proof of identity and residence were allowed to cast their votes by bringing witnesses who gave testimony.
5. According to the election proclamation, voters who are registered and able to show proof of identity and residence should be allowed to vote. In line with this, in 10 (83%) of the polling stations observed all eligible voters were allowed to vote. However, in two (16%) of the polling stations, individuals who brought proof of their identity and residence were not allowed to vote due to the fact that the IDs they brought were issued in less than six months prior to the election day.
6. The electoral law requires indelible ink to be applied on voters before he/she is allowed to register and vote. All voters were marked with indelible ink in 12 (100%) polling stations.
7. As per the election proclamation, polling station officials are required to verify whether the names of voters are found in the voter roll. In 12 (100%) of the polling stations, polling station officials verified names on the voter roll before allowing voters to cast their vote.
8. The electoral law requires polling station officials to stamp all ballot papers before handing them out to voters. In 12 (100%) of the polling stations, polling station officials stamped all ballot papers all the time.
9. The secrecy of the vote was respected throughout the day in 12 (100%) of the polling stations.
10. In 12 (100%) of the polling stations voters without visible disability and who were not elderly were not assisted to vote.
11. During the whole election day, there were no unauthorized person(s) who entered polling stations in 12 (100%) of the polling stations.
12. In 12 (100%) of the polling stations observed there were no cases of intimidation and harassment in general as well as targeting women voters, party agents, observers and poll workers, in particular.
13. The voting process was not interrupted during the whole day in 12 (100%) polling stations.
14. The election proclamation states that the official legal closing time of polling stations is 6:00 PM. Twelve (100%) of the polling stations closed at 6:00 PM in line with the election law.
15. All voters who were in line at the polls during the closing time of the polling station at 6:00 PM were permitted to cast a ballot in accordance with the law in four (33%) of the polling stations while in eight (67%) of the polling stations there were no voters in the queue at the closing time of polling stations.

Counting

1. Observers were not asked to leave the polling station during the counting time in 12 (100%) of the polling stations observed.
2. Counting of votes must occur in polling stations on the day of election. In 12 (100%) of the polling stations observed counting was conducted at the polling stations on voting day.

3. The counting process was not interrupted in 12 (100%) of the polling stations.
4. There were no interferences, harassment and/or intimidation during the counting process in 12 (100%) of the polling stations.
5. The polling station chairperson clearly displayed the ballot papers during the counting in 12 (100%) of the polling stations observed
6. The polling station chairperson applied the same criteria in the determination of valid and invalid ballot papers in 12 (100%) of the polling stations observed.
7. There were no formal complaints submitted to the established grievance hearing committee in three polling stations in Meskan and Mareko Constituency.

Somali Region (Jigjiga Constituency)

This report is based on information gathered from eight (8) stationary observers across 123 polling stations, who reported on the entire election day using a convenient deployment methodology in the Somali region. The report captures data on the arrival of observers at polling stations, the opening and setup of polling stations, voting, closing, counting, and aggregation of results. CECOE observers were deployed across 8 polling stations situated in Jigjiga constituency which were established in urban areas.

Arrival at Polling Stations

1. NEBE officials are expected to arrive at polling stations before the opening time to ensure that they are ready for voting to begin at 6:00AM. In all eight (100%) of the polling stations, polling officials were present when observers arrived at polling stations by 5:30 A.M.
2. In all eight (100%) polling stations, CECOE observers were allowed to enter and observe the voting processes.
3. The electoral law provides that polling stations must open at 6:00 A.M. Reports from observers indicated that the voting processes commenced at 6:00 A.M in all eight (100%) of the polling stations.
4. The electoral law prohibits the establishment of polling stations in some locations such as military camps, private residences, police stations, religious buildings, health facilities, recreational centers and political party offices. Accordingly, all eight (100%) of the polling stations that were observed were set up in locations that are not prohibited under the electoral law.
5. With regards to campaigning activities during voting day, the electoral law provides a clear prohibition of any kind of campaign activities inside or near 200 meters from polling stations. In line with this, no campaign activities were reported in seven (88%) of the polling stations. In one polling station “ጽ/ቤት 09 ምርጫ ጣቢያ ዞን-3/ሐ”, there were campaign activities observed within 20 meters of the polling station that members of the Prosperity Party conducted. Additionally, there were instances in the same polling station where polling station workers that were recruited from the Somali region were agitating voters to cast their votes for candidates listed between 3 and 9 on the ballot paper.

Setup of Polling Station

1. The location where polling stations are established has an impact on the overall electoral process in terms of ensuring citizen’s access to polling stations. Six (75%) of the polling stations observed were established in tents while two (25%) were established in buildings.
2. Availability of shelters outside of polling stations to protect voters in queue from rain and sun is an important element in the set up of polling stations. Six (75%) of the polling stations observed had shelters that protected voters from direct sun and rain whereas two (25%) polling stations did not have shelters to protect voters from rain and sun.

3. Another crucial matter in the setup of polling stations is related to the accessibility of polling stations to voters with mobility challenges such as the elderly, voters carrying children and persons with disabilities. Five (62%) of the polling stations were accessible to voters with mobility challenges while three (38%) of the polling stations were not accessible to voters with mobility challenges.
4. Availability of electoral materials in polling stations is a requirement under the electoral law for the appropriate setup of polling stations. Observers were asked whether electoral materials such as ballot papers, electoral roll, official NEBE stamps, results and reconciliation form, indelible ink, ballot boxes, ballot box seals, and grievance submission forms were available in polling stations. Except for one polling station **ጽ 06 ምርጫ ጣቢያ 02** where grievance submission forms were not available all electoral materials were available across the polling stations observed.
5. The electoral law requires the polling station head to show that the ballot boxes are empty prior to the commencement of the voting process. In all eight (100%) of the polling stations the polling station head has shown that ballot boxes were empty before the voting processes started.
6. As per the electoral law, a minimum of three polling station officials must be present in polling stations. An average of 4 polling station official workers were present in polling stations that were observed. Of this an average of 2 polling station officials were female. With regards to the gender representation of Chairperson of polling stations, in two of the polling stations the Chairperson were female while six polling stations had male Chairperson of polling stations. In addition to this, there was one polling station which had a Persons with Disabilities (PwD) among the polling station workers in all polling stations observed.
7. The electoral law establishes a three member grievance hearing committees in polling stations. Accordingly, only in two polling stations **ጽ 06 ምርጫ ጣቢያ 02** and **ጽ 04 ምርጫ ጣቢያ 03** grievance hearing committees were established in accordance with the law. However, in other polling stations CECOE observed the grievance hearing committees were either established inconsistently with the law or not established at all.
8. With regards to the presence of political party agents in polling stations, observers reported that there were political party agents in six (75%) of the polling stations whereas in two (25%) of the polling stations.

Voting Process

1. In all eight (100%) polling stations, CECOE observers were not asked to leave the stations during the voting processes.
2. Polling station officials prioritized people with disabilities, the elderly, the frail, pregnant women, and parents with young children in seven (88%) polling stations while these groups of voters were not given priority to vote in one polling station.
3. Persons with disabilities were allowed to receive assistance from a personal assistant of their choice in all eight (100%) of the polling stations.
4. The electoral law requires voters to show proof of their residence and identity in order to cast their votes. Voters who are unable to bring proof of their identity and residence should not be allowed to take part in the voting processes. However, the electoral law allows voters to vote in such instances through witness testimony. This procedure was followed where registered voters who were unable to bring proof of identity, and residence were allowed to cast their votes by bringing witnesses who gave testimony.
5. According to the election proclamation, voters who are registered and able to show proof of identity and residence should be allowed to vote. In line with this, in all eight (100%) of the polling stations observed all eligible voters were allowed to vote.
6. The electoral law requires indelible ink to be applied on voters before he/she is allowed to register and

vote. All voters were marked with indelible ink in all eight (100%) polling stations.

7. As per the election proclamation, polling station officials are required to verify whether the names of voters are found in the voter roll. In all eight (100%) of the polling stations, polling station officials verified names on the voter roll before allowing voters to cast their vote.
8. The electoral law requires polling station officials to stamp all ballot papers before handing them out to voters. In all eight (100%) of the polling stations, polling station officials stamped all ballot papers all the time.
9. The secrecy of the vote was respected throughout the day in all eight (100%) of the polling stations.
10. In three (38%) of the polling stations voters without visible disability and who were not elderly were assisted to vote.
11. During the whole election day, there were no unauthorized person(s) who entered polling stations in all eight (100%) of the polling stations.
12. In all eight (100%) of the polling stations observed there were no cases of intimidation and harassment in general as well as targeting women voters, party agents, observers and poll workers, in particular.
13. The voting process was not interrupted during the whole day in all eight (100%) of the polling stations.
14. The election proclamation states that the official legal closing time of polling stations is 6:00 PM. All (8) of the polling stations closed at 6:00 PM in line with the election law.
15. All voters who were in line at the polls during the closing time of the polling station at 6:00 PM were permitted to cast a ballot in accordance with the law in five (62%) of the polling places in accordance with the electoral law while in three (38%) of the polling stations there were no voters in the queue at the closing time of polling stations.

Counting

1. Observers were not asked to leave the polling station during the counting time in all eight (100%) of the polling stations observed.
2. Counting of votes must occur in polling stations on the day of election. In all eight (100%) of the polling stations observed counting was conducted at the polling stations on voting day.
3. The counting process was not interrupted in all eight (100%) of the polling stations.
4. There were no interferences, harassment and/or intimidation during the counting process in all eight (100%) of the polling stations.
5. The polling station chairperson clearly displayed the ballot papers during the counting in all eight (100%) of the polling stations observed.
6. The polling station chairperson applied the same criteria in the determination of valid and invalid ballot papers in all eight (100%) of the polling stations observed.
7. Our observers did not observe the lodging of grievances at the polling station as there were no grievance hearing committees. However, in the majority of the polling stations that CECOE observed, there were no formal complaints. However, observers reported that they have heard citizens expressing their complaints informally to the polling station chairperson.

Post-election Observation Findings

CECOE deployed a total of 11 observers for the post-election observation to scan the political environment, collect public opinion, and observe the civic space for one week. The following information is based on 11 observer reports.

Post-election Riots and Protests

All, 11 (100%) reports indicate there were no restrictions on movement or the right to assembly, mass protests, or public riots related to the election process and results. Additionally, there were no incidents of arrests, intimidations, harassment, or killings of media professionals, political parties, or political party members, nor hate speech, abusive, or threatening speeches.

Public Opinion on Election Results

1. Eight (73%) reports indicate positive views towards the election outcome, One (9%) report shows a negative sentiment indicating dissatisfaction with the results in the public, and Two (18%) reports show a neutral stance.
2. Two reports (18%) indicated that there were statements focused on post-election stability, aiming to reassure the public. Four (36%) reports indicated that there were allegations of electoral fraud, revealing underlying concerns or disputes, while five (45%) reports noted that there were no statements from parties or candidates.
3. Five (45%) reports revealed that there were reported formal complaints filed, while Six (55%) reports indicated no formal complaints.

Two (18%) reports indicated that there was exaggerated or false information in media reports about the election results, while nine (82%) reports did not perceive such issues. According to the electoral law, NEBE is the only authority authorized to announce election results. Contrary to the law, on June 24, 2024, the mayor of Jigjiga announced on his Facebook account that the Prosperity Party won in Jigjiga by uploading the NEBE constituency result form. Additionally, there were celebration events prepared by the office

Limitations on the Civic Space

All, 11 (100%) reports indicate no journalists, observers, civil society workers, or citizens were arrested in connection with the election, and neither security nor law enforcement agencies took steps to stop and/or prevent incidents of violence, damage, hate speech, or false information.

Chapter Four: Analysis and Discussion of Findings

This section of the report presents an analysis and discussion of the findings of the observation data.

Pre- election

Voter education

Available literature shows that “voter and civic education are necessary to ensure that all constituents men and women alike understand their rights, their political system, the contests they are being asked to decide, and how and where to vote.”¹³ This implies that the success of a democratic election, for the most part, depends on voters’ understanding of their rights and responsibilities, becoming “knowledgeable and well informed to cast ballots that are legally valid and to participate meaningfully in the voting process.”¹⁴ The primary responsibility for delivering voter education in Ethiopia falls on the National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE). Article 124(1) of Proclamation No. 1162/19 imposes an obligation on the NEBE to provide civic and voter education. CSOs also play a supplementary role in the delivery of voter education and voter information with the approval of the NEBE. To this end, Article 7(2) of the NEBE establishment Proclamation No. 1133/2019 and Article 124(2) of the election Proclamation No. 1162/19 empower NEBE to grant permission, follow up, supervise civil society organizations conducting voter education, and conduct voter education. CECOE deployed 13 Long Term Observers (LTOs), from June 1, 2024, to June 30, 2024, to observe the provision of voter education, among others, across the four regions ahead of the June 24, 2024, outstanding and re-elections. While two-thirds of the reports from LTOs revealed that both NEBE and CSOs delivered voter education, less than a quarter of the reports indicated that no voter education was observed.

Studies shed light “high voter participation depended on high voter education.”¹⁵ Put it differently, there is a direct correlation between the frequency of voter education and voter turnout. Less than half of the LTOs observation findings show that voter education has been delivered either once in a week or only once. What’s more, Five (16%) of the observation reports that came from Benishangul-Gumuz region, Assosa zone indicated that there was no voter education.

Voter education should ideally be accessible to all individuals who are of voting age. Tailored voter education messages are necessary in order to ensure the inclusion of women, persons with disabilities (PWDs), and internally displaced people (IDPs). CECOE monitored whether voter education is directed at women, PWDs, and IDPs and whether or not these target groups participated in its delivery. While slightly more than a quarter of the observation reports indicated that the voter education was not inclusive and one-sixth indicated that no voter education was undertaken, more than half of the reports demonstrate that inclusive voter education was provided. Almost half of the studies also noted that voter education was either not undertaken at all or was not provided in an inclusive manner. More than half of the observation findings confirmed that voter education was delivered by both men and women, as well as by PWDs and IDPs. A little over one-third of the observation reports revealed that voter education was either not undertaken at all or was not provided by any of these groups.

The electorate needs to be aware of their rights and obligations in order to exercise their right to vote. To cast a legally valid ballot and actively engage in the electoral process, they must also possess the necessary information and awareness. Therefore, among other things, the voter education program’s messages must educate the public about its rights and obligations as well as significant dates and deadlines that affect voting, such as Election Day and voter registration deadlines. It must also cover the use of secret ballots, the use of documents required for registration and voting as well as when and where to cast a ballot. The great majority of LTOs that monitored the delivery of voter education show that they disseminated information about the election date and a list of necessary documents for voter registration and voting day despite some observation reports showing that voter education was not given at all.

¹³ <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/publication/Chapter5.htm>

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ <https://dspace.unza.zm/server/api/core/bitstreams/23144583-51fb-46f7-9d59-f48e8490f552/content>

Social, cultural, political, and economic challenges compromise the quality, scope, and scale of voter education, resulting in low voter turnout, high invalid votes and spoiled votes, and election-related complaints, among others. CECOIE observation findings revealed that limited accessibility for women, PWDs, and other social groups and insufficient funding were identified as the major challenges in the delivery of voter education. Observation findings further showed that language and cultural barriers also hindered the effectiveness of voter education.

Election Campaigns

Along with low voter turnout and a high rate of spoiled and invalid ballots, social, cultural, political, and economic issues also undermine the scope and scale of voter education programs. These issues also give rise to concerns about elections and other associated issues. Findings from the CECOIE observation program showed that the main issues were inadequate funding and restricted accessibility for women, PWDs, and other social groups. Voter education was also less successful due to linguistic and cultural difficulties.

Contesting parties in Central Ethiopia, Meskan and Mareko woredas, and the Benishangul Gumuz regions in the Assosa Zone were seen to be actively participating in political campaigns without any hindrance or obstruction, according to the vast majority of observer reports. In addition to making promises to voters, the campaign activities covered a wide range of political, social, economic, and security issues.

Observation findings verified that the competing parties reached out to voters in a variety of ways. A fifth of the observation reports indicated that public rallies were the primary means of voter engagement, and a sixth of the reports indicated town hall meetings as the primary means of campaigning. However, over half of the observation reports indicated that political parties conducted campaigns using multiple methods, demonstrating a diversified approach. Observers reported very little use of the social media campaign approach

Election Day

Setting up shelter for voters is not a matter of choice but of necessity to protect them from the sun and rain. This becomes considerably more significant—which is generally the case—when elections are held during the rainy season. Voters are prone to run away in the event of rain, which would mean they would forfeit their right to vote. Observation findings revealed that the majority of the polling stations observed did not have adequate shelter for voters. The electoral law empowers the NEBE to establish a three-member polling station GHC. The proclamation further states that where a voter is denied the right to vote, he or she has the right to promptly lodge a complaint with the Polling Station GHC and get a decision. In the majority of polling stations CECOIE observed, the committees that were established to hear grievances were either inconsistent with the electoral law or they were not established at all.

The idea of equal suffrage is anchored on the principle of “one person, one vote.” Its implementation also entails putting in place safeguards to reduce, if not completely eliminate, the potential for multiple votes and fraud. In the same way, the Ethiopian electoral law stipulates marking voters’ fingers with indeclinable ink to make sure a voter casts only one vote. Contrary to this legal principle, in several polling stations in Afar region and one polling station in Assosa in Benishangul-Gumuz region, where CECOIE deployed its observers, voters were allowed to vote without marking their fingers with indelible ink. Although the irregularities are not widespread, even in polling stations where CECOIE deployed its observers,

The electoral law laid down detailed requirements and procedures for an eligible voter to register. It also provides remedies, particularly in the event of a loss or damage to a voter’s card. It also suggests that any voter whose voter’s card is lost or damaged has the right to apply to the polling station during working hours prior to election day or before the end of voting hours if it is on election day. The electoral law empowers election officers to issue the voter a replacement card or allow the voter to vote after verifying the identity of the voter against the voter register and recording the incident in the minutes. Contrary to these established procedures, in a couple of polling stations in the Assosa Zone in Benishangul-Gumuz region, individuals whose names were not on the voter register were allowed to vote on the grounds of disability or age.

The electoral law states that a voter casts his vote if he carries his voter's card, his name is listed in the electoral roll, and it is ascertained that he has not yet voted. Satisfying these cumulative criteria not only warrants the eligibility of a voter but also entitles him to cast his vote at a polling station where he or she is registered. Contrary to these mandatory criteria, in one polling station in the Afar region, several individuals were allowed to vote without presenting either proof of identity or the testimony of witnesses.

Post-election

The absence of riots, protests, and harassment, along with the no restrictions on journalists, observers, and civil society workers, is crucial for a healthy democratic process as it allows for transparency, accountability, and the free flow of information. The peaceful environment observed can be attributed to this unrestricted civic space, where stakeholders can operate without fear of repression or violence. The majority of positive views towards the election outcome reflect general public satisfaction, with minimal dissatisfaction. However, there were significant challenges related to the dissemination of accurate information. Instances of exaggerated or false information in some media reports were noted, which can undermine public trust in the electoral process.

Additionally, there was a critical breach of protocol regarding the announcement of election results. According to electoral law, the National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) is the sole authority authorized to announce election results. Despite this, on June 24, 2024, the mayor of Jigjiga in the Somali region announced on his Facebook account that the Prosperity Party had won in Jigjiga by uploading the NEBE constituency result form. Furthermore, the mayor's announcement was followed by celebration events prepared by his office, which could be perceived as prematurely validating the results before an official declaration by NEBE. Such actions can potentially lead to disputes and questions regarding the integrity of the election process.

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

As part of its main goal, CECOE set out to contribute to increasing the transparency and accountability of the electoral processes that occurred in the Benishangul-Gumuz, Afar, Central Ethiopia, and Somali regional states on June 24, 2024, by gathering observation data in a systematic manner. Other objectives for the observation of the outstanding and re-elections included improving CECOE's observation methodology, gaining more experience in the recruitment, training, and deployment of observers, and gathering and reporting observation findings. The conduct of the pending and re-elections conducted in the four regions was peaceful. In polling stations where it deployed its observers, CECOE found improvements in making voting materials fully available, making polling stations accessible to PWDs, pregnant women, and the elderly, and assigning five election officers in accordance with electoral law. Nevertheless, CECOE also discovered Ten (10) irregularities, that warranted the attention of the NEBE, including limited voter education, restriction on political party operation, hate speech and inflammatory rhetoric, duress on voters, voter allowed to vote without indelible ink, voter allowed to observe without being in the voter roll, voter allowed to observe without proof of identity or witness testimony, inconsistent or non existing grievance hearing committees, campings near polling station on election day, premature announcement of election results.

Recommendations

Some understand elections as a one-day activity focussed on election day while the proper understanding of elections is to view them as a cyclical event covering the pre-election, election day and post-election periods. Similarly, preparations and implementation of voter education programs are often made during the election year. While the public should have been sensitized about its rights, duties, and the importance of participating in the electoral process, among others, on an ongoing basis, the awareness-raising activities are done once every four or five years. Observation findings show that the delivery of voter education is far from satisfactory. Shortage of time, limitations in the diversification of delivery, limitations in the inclusion of marginalized groups, and limited scope and scale of the provision are the major setbacks of civic education. To address these shortcomings in medium and long-term CECOE recommends the following:

- CSOs should consider forming and providing training to groups at the village level to carry out civic and voter education in their localities.
- Devote a section for voter education in the civic education curriculum to reach the student youth, which is potential voters. This will be the easiest and cheapest way of reaching young voters.
- NEBE and CSOs should consider utilizations of community radios that uses vernacular language to promote voter education among the rural populatio
- Voter education should be delivered across a variety of media, including radio, TV, and social media, in addition to in-person and print media, to reach as many people as possible.
- NEBE should allocate adequate funds to run civic-voter education from election to election.
- International partners should also provide financial support to CSOs who are committed to carrying out civic education in hard-to-reach areas and utilize methods to reach out to the electorate in rural settings.
- NEBE should consider the establishment of shelter as an integral part of setting up polling stations.
- An effort should also be made to make the proportion of female chief election officers equal to that of male chief election officers.

- The widespread absence of functional Grievance Hearing Committees (GHCs) represents a serious threat to the integrity and credibility of elections in Ethiopia. To rectify this critical shortcoming, CECOE calls upon the National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) to prioritize the following urgent reforms, drawing upon the recommendations outlined in the CECOE Policy Brief on Electoral Grievance Hearing Mechanisms:¹⁶
- 1. assess and identify the legal, institutional, and operational challenges that prevented the full and proper establishment of GHCs. This assessment should include a thorough examination of planning, logistical, resource allocation, and training-related issues.
- 2. Undertake a comparative study of complaint-handling mechanisms in countries with similar development indicators, considering factors such as literacy rates, geographic distribution of polling stations, and the complexity of electoral laws. This benchmark study should identify best practices and lessons learned that can inform the Ethiopian context.
- 3. Given the evidence suggesting that the existing GHC mechanism may be overly ambitious and difficult to implement effectively, NEBE should, based on the findings of the assessments and benchmarking exercises, initiate a process of legal reform. This reform process should aim to create a more practical, efficient, and accessible GHC system that upholds voters' right to seek redress for electoral grievances.
- NEBE should take corrective action against election officers who were involved in flagrant violations of the electoral laws

¹⁶ <https://cecoe.org/download/cecoe-policy-brief-electoral-grievance-hearing-mechanism-in-ethiopia/>

The Coalition of Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations for Elections (CECOE) is a non-profit and non-governmental civil society organization with more than 175 member organizations. CECOE was licensed by the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (F.D.R.E). Authority for Civil Society Organizations (ACSO) in 2019 with registration number 4748 under the Civil Society Organizations Proclamation 1113/2019.

CECOE was established with the aim of enhancing and coordinating the role of Ethiopian civil society organizations (CSOs) in election observation, voter education, preventing electoral conflicts, and providing capacity building and support for its member organizations.

CECOE is a committed member of the East and Horn of Africa Election Observers Network (E-HORN), African Election Observers Network (AfEONet), a pan-African coordinating platform, and member of the Global Network of Domestic Election Monitors (GNDEM), which connects regional networks and individual monitoring organizations across more than 88 countries worldwide.



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