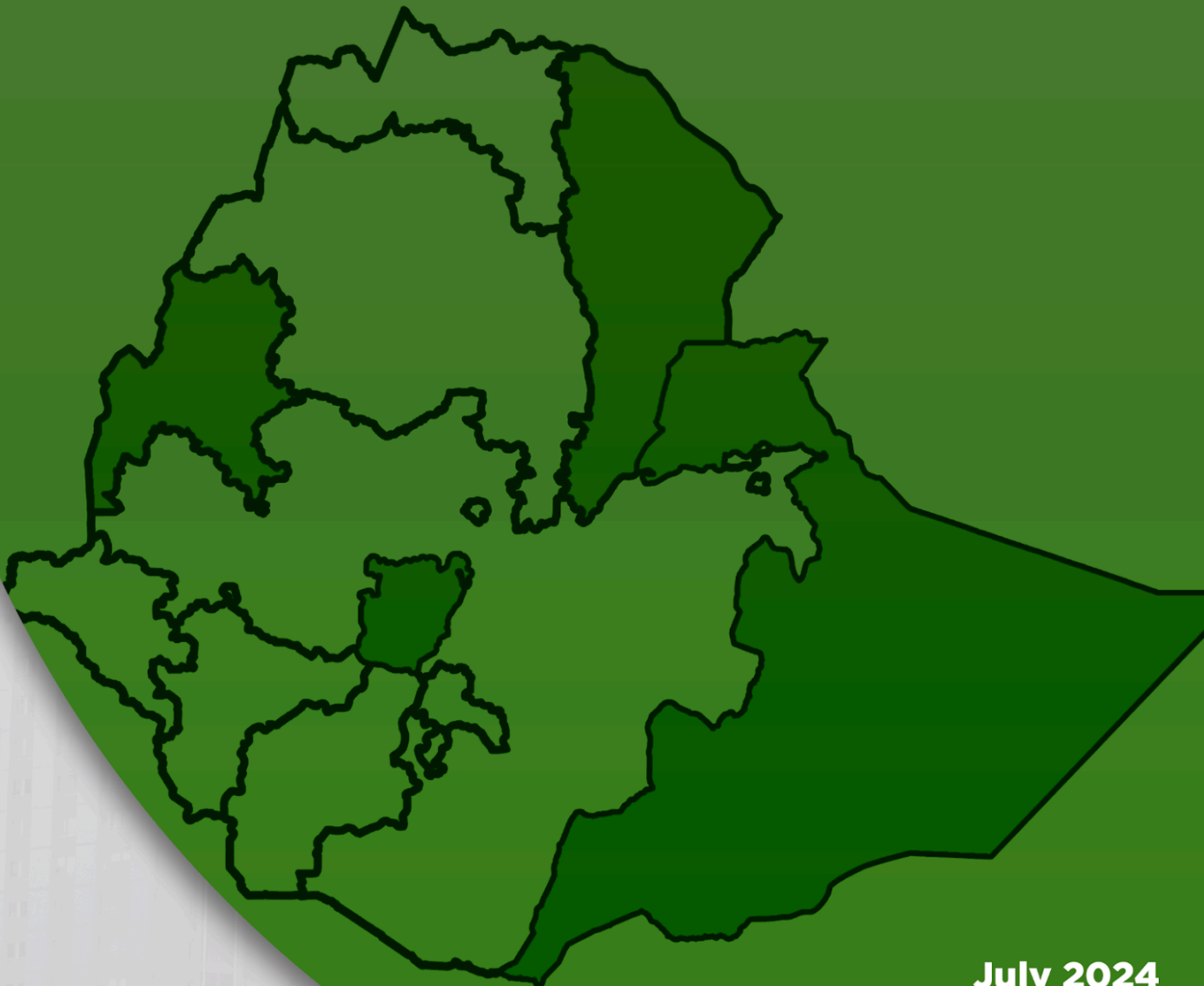




ኅብረት ለምርጫ (CECOE)

የኢትዮጵያ የሲቪል ማህበራት ድርጅቶች ኅብረት ለምርጫ
Coalition of Ethiopian Civil Society
Organizations for Elections

Preliminary Statement on the outstanding and reelections held in Benishangul Gumuz, Afar, Somali and Central Ethiopia Regions



July 2024
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

The Coalition of Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations for Elections (CECOE) is a coalition of over 175 indigenous civil society organizations. CECOE is an independent citizen's election observation group whose main objective is to contribute to making elections held in Ethiopia comprehensive, transparent, accountable, and inclusive.

The political reform process that began in 2018 led to various legislative and institutional reforms, including revising the electoral law, reestablishing the National Elections Board of Ethiopia (NEBE), revisiting the political parties registration systems, and changing the overall electoral landscape ahead of the sixth general election. Despite these efforts, the reform faced challenges, due to conflicts that took place particularly in Tigray, in some parts of the Oromia, Amhara, Benishangul-Gumuz, and Afar regions, which impeded not only the democratic reform process but also adversely affected the conduct of the 2021 general elections in the named regions. Additionally, the NEBE canceled election results in some constituencies in the former South Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region (SNNPR) and the Somali region due to serious irregularities found in the electoral process. As a result, some seats in the Federal Parliament are vacant. Furthermore, the regional state councils of the areas where elections have not been conducted remain unrepresented.

Considering the importance of organizing elections in the areas where the sixth general elections did not take place and constituencies where a decision for re-election was given, particularly in the Benishangul Gumuz, Afar, Somali and Central Ethiopia regions, the NEBE announced that it would organize outstanding elections and the re-election of the sixth general elections in the four regions.

On April 8, 2024, the NEBE issued an electoral calendar, setting the voting day for June 13, 2024. This date was again pushed to June 16, 2024,. However, June 16, 2024, as a voting day, coincided with the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Adha, which forced the NEBE once again to push the voting day to June 23, 2024. According to the NEBE, 1258 polling stations will be established (578 polling stations in Benishangul, 388 PS in Afar, 123 in Somalia, and 169 in Central Ethiopia).

Summary of findings

The main objective of observing the remaining elections and re-elections conducted on June 23, 2024, was to contribute to increased transparency and accountability in the electoral process by providing systematically gathered information. To achieve this end, CECOE deployed stationary observers (STOs) on Election Day who arrived at their assigned polling stations by 5:30 a.m. The STOs were required to observe the entire process of the voting day at their assigned polling station until the announcement of results.

Availability of electoral materials

The observation findings across regions where elections took place show that, except in the Somali region, where a grievance submission form was missing, all election materials were readily available in the rest of the polling stations where CECOE deployed its observers. In this regard, NEBE has accomplished a commendable job by making electoral materials available on time compared to previous experiences.

Accessibility of polling stations

The accessibility of polling stations encourages marginalized segments of society to participate in the electoral process, reduces their disenfranchisement, and thereby contributes to increased voter turnout. The observation findings, which are common across all regions where CECOE deployed observers, show that polling stations were accessible to persons with disabilities (PWDs), pregnant women, women with children, and elderly people. This is another positive improvement worth mentioning.

Gender composition and number of election officers

Observation findings on the number and gender compositions of poll workers cut across the regions where CECOE deployed observers. In almost all the polling stations, CECOE observed the number of poll workers to be five, which is consistent with the electoral law. Observation findings further revealed that out of the five poll workers, at least two were female. In some polling stations, female poll workers served as the chief election officers. Although deploying a minimum of three election officers in a polling station is legal, deploying five observers, at least, in polling stations CECOE observed fully satisfies the requirements of the electoral law and hence is laudable. Consistently satisfying the requirement is in compliance with the electoral law. On the other hand, there is still a room for increasing the proportion of female chief election officers.

Shelter

The availability of shelter outside polling stations is critical to protecting voters in queue from rain and sun. One important consideration while setting up polling stations is whether there is a place for voters waiting in line to shelter from the sun and rain. This is even more important when elections take place during the rainy season, which is often the case. In the event of rain, voters are highly likely to flee and thereby lose their rights to vote. CECOE's observers deployed in the four regions reported that the majority of polling stations did not have adequate shelter for voters.

Grievance Hearing Committees

The electoral law empowers the NEBE to establish three-member grievance-hearing committees at polling stations, among others. However, in the majority of polling stations CECOE observed, except for the Jigjiga two polling stations (ጁ 06 ምርጫ ጣቢያ 02 and ጁ 04 ምርጫ ጣቢያ 03), which were

established in accordance with the law, the committees that were established to hear grievances in the remaining polling stations were either inconsistent with the electoral law or they were not established at all.

Campaigning and Presence of unauthorized persons in polling stations

One of CECOE's observation findings show that in one polling station ((ጁ 09 ምርጫ ጣቢያ ዞን-3/ሐ),) in Jigjiga, individuals campaigning for the Prosperity Party were observed within 20 meters of the polling stations, contrary to the electoral law, which strictly prohibits campaigning within a 200-meter radius of the polling stations. Similarly, in Afar, during voting, unauthorized individuals, more specifically, Kebele officials were present inside the “ገዋንኔ 01 ምርጫ ጣቢያ 01 ጋልኤብ ለ” polling station.

Voting Without Proof of Identity

Several individuals at two polling stations in Assosa zone (አሶሳ 03 ምርጫ ጣቢያ 03 03 ሀ 2 and ቡልደግሉ 01 ምርጫ ጣቢያ ቡልደግሉ ከተማ 01) were allowed to vote while their names were not on the voter roll, on the ground of disability or age. Additionally, contrary to the established electoral procedures, in one polling station in the Afar region (ገዋንኔ 01 ምርጫ ጣቢያ ጋልኤብ ሀ), voters were allowed to vote without presenting either proof of identification or the testimony of witnesses.

Failure to mark voters' finger with an indeclinable ink

While the electoral law requires marking voters fingers with an indelible ink prior to voting, seven voters were allowed to vote at one polling station in Assosa zone (አሶሳ 02 ምርጫ ጣቢያ 02 02 ሀ 1B) without marking their fingers with the indelible ink. Similarly, in Afar region 11, 8, and 6, individuals voted without marking their fingers with indelible ink at three polling stations (አዋሬ ና ለምለምነን ምርጫ ጣቢያ ደንገባዲስ, ሃዶና ቢዳሪ ምርጫ ጣቢያ ሃዶ, and ከልዋን 01 ምርጫ ጣቢያ ከልዋን ከተማ), respectively.

Interruption of vote counting

Due to the delay in communicating NEBE's announcement of the extension of the voting hours to 8 p.m., vote counting was interrupted in several polling stations in Assosa zone, namely, አሶሳ 03 ምርጫ ጣቢያ 03 03 ሀ 2, አሶሳ 01 ምርጫ ጣቢያ 01 ሀ 2A, አሶሳ 02 ምርጫ ጣቢያ 02 02 ሀ 1B, and አሶሳ 01 ምርጫ ጣቢያ 01 ለ 2ፈንጉግራራ ምርጫ ጣቢያ ጉለሊ.

Benishangul-Gumuz

Due to logistical and operational constraints, CECOE deployed observers only in the Asossa zone, leaving out the Metekel and Kamashi zones. This report is prepared based on data gathered from 20 stationary observers deployed in 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.

Arrival at Polling Stations

1. NEBE officials are required 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 19 polling stations, election officers were present when observers arrived at the polling stations by 5:30 a.m.
2. In all polling stations, CECO observers were allowed to enter and observe the voting processes.
3. The electoral law requires that polling stations must open at 6:00 a.m. Reports from observers indicated that the voting processes commenced between 6:00 a.m. and 7:00 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 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 established in locations that are not prohibited under the electoral law.
5. Concerning campaigning, the electoral law expressly forbids doing any form of campaigning on Election Day within 200 meters of polling stations or close to them. Observers reported that no campaign activity was observed within 200 meters in all (20) polling stations, which is consistent with the said law.

Setup of Polling Station

1. The location of polling stations has an effect on citizens' participation in the electoral process. Observation findings show that 16 polling stations were established in tents, 4 in buildings, and 2 in shelters made of tin or under trees.
2. The availability of shelters outside of polling stations to protect voters from rain and sun is an important element in the set-up of polling stations. 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 inaccessible.
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 CECOIE's observers were deployed 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 all (20) polling stations, the polling station head has shown that ballot boxes were empty before the voting process 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 the CECOIE observers. Of these, an average of two polling station officials were female. Concerning the gender representation of heads of polling stations, in three polling stations, the heads were female, while 17 polling stations had male heads of polling stations. In addition, there were no persons with disabilities (PWDs) among the election officers in all polling stations observed.
7. The electoral law establishes three-member grievance hearing committee in polling stations. Accordingly, in two polling stations, grievance-hearing committees were established, while in some polling stations, contrary to the electoral law, committees were established, and in the majority of the polling stations, grievance-hearing committees were not established at all.
8. Regarding the presence of political party agents in polling stations, CECOIE observers reported that there were political party agents in 18 polling stations.

Voting Process

1. In all (20) polling stations, CECOIE's observers were not asked to leave the polling stations during the voting processes.
2. Polling station officials gave priorities prioritized to persons with disabilities (PWDs), the elderly, the frail, pregnant women, and parents with young children in 19 polling stations. Where as in 1 polling station poll workers didn't give priority to such voters
3. Persons with disabilities were allowed to receive a personal assistant of their choice in 10 polling stations while in 10 polling stations no one 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. Consequently, voters who fail to present proof of identity and /or residence are not allowed to take part in the voting process. However, the electoral law permits people who are unable to present proof of identity or residence to do so through witness testimony. In line with this, in 14 polling stations, voters who failed to present proof of identity and/or residence were allowed to vote through witness testimony. In the remaining 6 polling stations, all voters have presented proof of their identity and residence.
5. In the contrary, some voters were not allowed to vote despite presenting 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 on the

ground that their names were not found on the voter roll. Moreover, 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 between 7 voters were not marked with indelible ink in one polling station “አሶሳ 02 ምርጫ ጣቢያ 02 ሀ 1B”.
7. As per the election proclamation, polling station officials are required to verify whether the names of voters are on the voter roll. Contrary to the law, in two polling station named “አሶሳ 03 ምርጫ ጣቢያ 03 ሀ 2” one person and “ቡልደገሉ 01 ምርጫ ጣቢያ ቡልደገሉ ከተማ 01” six individuals were allowed to vote without their names appearing on the voter roll on the ground that they 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) 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) polling stations.
10. In all (20) of the polling stations, voters with non-apparent disabilities and who were not elderly were not assisted in voting.
11. During voting, there was no presence of unauthorized person(s) in all (20) polling stations.
12. In all 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 throughout the day in all (20) polling stations
14. The election proclamation states that the legal closing time of polling stations is 6:00 pm. During a press release on June 23, 2023, NEBE announced the extension of the closing time of polling stations for an additional two hours until 8:00 PM. 17 polling stations closed between 6:00 PM while 3 polling stations closed 8:00 pm.
15. While all voters who were in the queue at the polls during the closing time of the polling station at 6:00 pm were allowed to cast a ballot in accordance with the law, in 2 polling station voters were permitted to vote after 6:00 pm.

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. Accordingly, counting was conducted at the polling stations on voting day in all polling stations.
3. The counting process was interrupted in 4 polling stations (አሶሳ 03 ምርጫ ጣቢያ 03 03 ሀ 2፤ አሶሳ 01 ምርጫ ጣቢያ 01 ሀ 2A, አሶሳ 02 ምርጫ ጣቢያ 02 02 ሀ 1B and አሶሳ 01 ምርጫ ጣቢያ 01 ለ 2፡፡፡፡፡፡፡ ምርጫ ጣቢያ ጉለሊ.) as a result of the delayed communication of the announcement made by the NEBE 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. During the counting of ballot papers, polling station heads clearly displayed the ballot papers in all polling stations.
6. In one polling station, the polling station head did not apply the same criteria in the determination of valid and invalid ballot papers. This incident occurred in the polling station named አሶሳ 03 ምርጫ ጣቢያ 03 03 ሀ 2 where the head of the polling station was observed validating ballots that should have been invalidated.
7. No formal complaints were submitted to the grievance-hearing committees established at the polling stations, though observers reported that they had heard citizens expressing their complaints informally.

Afar

This report is based on information collected from 37 stationary observers at 37 polling stations in the Afar region. These observers, who were deployed using a proportional deployment methodology, monitored the entire Election Day. The report covers the observers' arrival at the polling stations, the opening and setup of the stations, voting, closing, counting, and the aggregation of results.

Arrival at Polling Stations

1. Electoral officials are required to be present at the polling station before the opening of the polling station at 6:00 a.m. in the morning. In 34 (92%) polling stations election officials arrived at the polling stations at 5:30 a.m.
2. In 37 (100%) polling stations, CECOE observers were allowed to enter into the polling stations and observe the voting processes.
3. According to the electoral law, polling stations must open at 12:00 am. CECOE's observers reported that the voting process had begun between 6:00 am and 7:00 am at 37 (100%) polling stations.
4. The electoral law prohibits the establishment of polling stations in locations such as military camps, private residences, police stations, religious buildings, health facilities, recreational

centers and political party offices. Accordingly, 37 (100%) of the polling stations observed were established in locations that are not prohibited under the electoral law.

5. With regard to campaigning activities during voting day, the electoral law prohibits any kind of campaign activities inside or near 200 meters from polling stations. In line with this, in 37(100%) of the polling stations no campaign activities were reported.

Setup of Polling Station

6. 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. 62% (23) of the polling stations observed were established in tents while 11% (4) were established in buildings and 27 % (10) of the polling stations were set up under trees or sheds made of grass and canvas.
7. Availability of shelters outside of polling stations to protect voters in queue from rain and sun is an important element in the setup of polling stations. 12 (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.
8. 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. 24 (65%) of the polling stations observed were accessible while 13(35%) of the polling stations were not accessible.
9. Availability of electoral materials in polling stations is a requirement under the electoral law for the appropriate setup of polling stations. Observers who 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. 37 (100%) of the polling stations observed, all electoral materials were available.
10. The electoral law requires the polling station head to show that the ballot boxes are empty prior to the commencement of the voting process. Before the voting processes started, the polling station head showed that ballot boxes were empty in 37(100%) of the polling stations.
11. As per the electoral law, a minimum of 3 polling station officials must be present in polling stations. An average of 5 polling station officials were present in polling stations that were observed. Of these, an average of 2 polling station officials were female. With regards to the gender representation of heads of polling stations, in 6(16%) of the polling stations the heads of the polling stations were female while 84% (31) polling stations had male heads of polling stations. In addition to this, there were no Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) among the polling station workers in all polling stations observed.
12. The electoral law establishes a three-member grievance-hearing committee (GHC) in polling stations. Accordingly, in 14(38%) polling stations grievance-hearing committees were established while in 23 (62%) 3) of the polling stations, the committees were not established.

13. Regarding 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 8 (22%) of the polling stations, there were no political party agents..

Voting Processes

1. In 37 (100 %) polling stations, CECOE observers were not asked to leave the polling stations during the voting processes.
2. Polling station officials gave priorities prioritized to persons with disabilities (PWDs), the elderly, the frail, pregnant women, and parents with young children in 36 (97%) of the polling stations. Where as in 1(3%) of the polling station election officials didn't give priority to such voters
3. Persons with disabilities were allowed to receive a personal assistant of their choice in 32(86%) of the polling stations while in 5 (14%) of the polling stations no one looked-for assistance. However, in one polling station named **ፈንቲገራራ ምርጫ ጣቢያ ጉለሊ**, one person was repeatedly assisting voters who required assistance.
4. The electoral law requires voters to show proof of their residence and identity in order to cast their votes. Voters who fail to present proof of their identity and residence are not be allowed to take part in the voting processes. However, the electoral law permits people who are unable to present proof of identity or residence to do so through witness testimony. Contrary to this, in one polling station “**ገዋንኔ 01 ምርጫ ጣቢያ ጋልኤብ ህ**”, voters who did not bring proof of identity and/or residence were allowed to vote without witness testimony. In the remaining 36 polling stations, all voters who presented proof of their identity and residence were allowed to cast their votes.
5. According to the election proclamation, registered voters who are able to show proof of identity and residence should 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 to a voter's fingers before he or she is allowed to register and vote. All voters fingers were marked with indelible ink in 92% (34) polling stations, while in three polling stations there were instances of voting without indelible ink being marked in their fingers. These incidents occurred in “**አዋራ ና ለምለምንን ምርጫ ጣቢያ ደንገባዲስ, ሃዶና ቢዳሪ ምርጫ ጣቢያ ሃዶ** and **ከልዋን 01 ምርጫ ጣቢያ ከልዋን ከተማ**” polling stations were 11,8 and 6 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 on the voter roll. Contrary to this, in one polling station named “**ገዋንኔ 01 ምርጫ ጣቢያ ጋልኤብ-ህ_1**” five individuals were allowed to vote although their names were not 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, election 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 with non-apparent disabilities and who were not elderly were not assisted in voting.
11. At some point during voting, an unauthorized person(s) more specifically Kebele official was present inside the “ገዋጎጎ 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 legal closing time of polling stations is 6:00 p.m. 37 (100%) of the polling stations were closed at 6:00 pm in line with the election law.
15. In 13(35%) of the polling voters who were in a queue at the polling stations during the closing time at 6:00 pm were permitted to cast ballot in accordance with the law, while in 24 (65%) of the polling stations voters who were in the queue at the closing time of polling stations were not allowed to vote .

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 head clearly displayed the ballot papers during the counting in 37(100%) of the polling stations observed
6. The polling station head applied the same criteria in the determination of valid and invalid ballot papers in 37(100%) of the polling stations observed.
7. There were no formal complaints submitted to an established grievance hearing committee though observers reported that they have heard citizens expressing their complaints informally to the polling station head.

Central Ethiopia (Meskan and Mareko)

This report is based on information gathered from 12 stationary observers who were deployed to 12 polling stations to observe the reelelections, which took place in Meskan and Mareko Woredas in the Central Ethiopia Region. The observers who observed the entire Election Day were deployed using proportional deployment methodology. 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.

Arrival at Polling Stations

1. Election officials are required to arrive at polling stations before the opening time to ensure that they are ready for voting to begin at 6:00 am. In 12 100% of the polling stations, election 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 requires that polling stations must open at 6:00 A.M. Reports collected 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 “*፲ ምርጫ ጣቢያ ቆሽ 32ኛ ክ/ጦር ብርጌድ 2*” the voting process commenced before 6:00 a.m.
4. The electoral law prohibits the establishment of polling stations in 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 established in locations that are not prohibited under the electoral law.
5. With regard to campaigning activities on voting day, the electoral law prohibits any kind of campaign activity inside or near 200 meters from polling stations. In line with this, no campaign activities were reported at 12 (100%) polling stations.

Setup of Polling Station

1. The location of polling stations has an effect on citizens’ participation in the electoral process. Observation findings show that 10 (83%) of the polling stations observed were established in tents while 1 (8%) was established in a building and 1(8%) of the polling stations was 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 setup of polling stations. 3 (25%) of the polling stations observed had shelters that protected voters from direct sun and rain whereas 75% (9) polling stations did not have shelters to protect voters from rain and sun.
3. Another crucial matter in the setup of polling stations is accessibility of polling stations to voters with mobility challenges such as the elderly, voters carrying children and persons with

disabilities. 12 (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. Observation findings show that in the 20 polling stations where CECOE's observers were deployed electoral materials were available in 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 displayed that ballot boxes were empty before the voting process 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 that were observed. Of this, an average of two polling station officials were female. With regards to the gender representation of heads of polling stations, in 4 (33%) of the polling stations, the heads were female, while 8 (67%) polling stations had male heads of polling stations. In addition to this, there were no persons with disabilities (PwD) among the polling station officials in all polling stations observed.
7. The electoral law establishes three-member grievance-hearing committees in polling stations. Accordingly, in 3 (25%) polling stations, grievance hearing committees were established, while in 9 (75%) of the polling stations, the committees were not established.
8. With regards to the presence of political party agents in polling stations, observers reported that there were political party agents in 8(67%) of the polling stations whereas in 4 (33%) of the polling stations political party agents were not present..

Voting Process

1. In 12(100 %) polling stations, CECOE observers were not asked to leave the polling stations during the voting processes.
2. Polling station officials prioritised 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 a personal assistant of their choice in 8(67%) of the polling stations while in 4 (33%) of the polling stations no one needed help. Additionally, there were no voters who repeatedly assisted voters who sought assistance.
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 provide proof of their identity and residence should not be allowed to take part in the voting process. However, the electoral law permits people who are

unable to present proof of identity or residence to do so through witness testimony. This procedure has been followed where registered voters who were unable to provide 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 provide 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 2 (16%) of the polling stations, individuals who provided proof of identity and residence were not allowed to vote due to the fact that the IDs they brought were issued less than six months prior to the election day.
6. The electoral law requires indelible ink to be applied on voters' fingers before he/she is allowed to register and vote. All voters' fingers 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 on the voter roll. In 12 (100%) of the polling stations, election officials verified names on the voter roll before allowing them 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, election officials stamped all ballot papers all the time
9. The secrecy of the vote has been respected throughout the day in 12(100%) of the polling stations.
10. In 12 (100%) of the polling stations, voters with non-apparent disabilities and who were not elderly were not assisted in voting.
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 at 12 (100%) polling stations.
14. The election proclamation states that the legal closing time of polling stations is 6:00 p.m. 12 (100%) of the polling stations were 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 4(33%) of the polling places in accordance with the electoral law, while in 8(67%) of the polling stations there were no voters in the queue at the closing time of the 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 head clearly displayed the ballot papers during the counting in 12(100%) of the polling stations observed.
6. The polling station head 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 an established grievance hearing committee though observers reported that they have heard citizens expressing their complaints informally to the polling station head.

Somali Region (Jigjiga Constituency)

This report is based on information gathered from 8 stationary observers across 8 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. CECOIE observers were deployed across 8 polling stations situated in Jigjiga constituency, which were established in urban areas.

Arrival at Polling Stations

1. Election officials are required to arrive at polling stations before the opening time to ensure that they are ready for voting to begin at 6:00 am. In all (8) of the polling stations, election officials were present when observers arrived at polling stations by 5:30 a.m..
2. In all (8) polling stations, CECOIE's 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 collected from observers indicated that the voting processes commenced at 6:00 a.m. in all eight (8) polling stations.
4. The electoral law prohibits the establishment of polling stations in locations such as military camps, private residences, police stations, religious buildings, health facilities, recreational

centers and political party offices. Accordingly, all (8) of the polling stations that were observed were set up in locations that are not prohibited under the electoral law.

5. With regard to campaigning activity, during voting day, the electoral law provides a clear prohibition of any kind of campaign activity inside or near 200 meters from polling stations. In connection with this, in seven polling stations observed election campaign activities were not conducted. However, in the "J 09 Zone-3/C" polling station, individuals were campaigning for the Prosperity Party 20- meters away from the polling station called "Zone-3/C." In addition, election officials recruited from the Somali region were persuading voters who came to the polling station to vote for candidates that appeared from 3 to 9 on the ballot papers.

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. 6 of the polling stations observed were established in tents while 2 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 setup of polling stations. 6 of the polling stations observed had shelters that protected voters from direct sun and rain whereas 2 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. 5 of the polling stations were accessible to voters with mobility challenges while 3 of the polling stations were not accessible to voters with mobility challenges.
4. The availability of electoral materials in polling stations is a requirement under the electoral law for the appropriate setup of polling stations. Observers who were asked whether electoral materials such as ballot papers, electoral rolls, official NEBE stamps, results and reconciliation forms, indelible ink, ballot boxes, ballot box seals, and grievance submission forms were available in polling stations. Except for one polling station, “ጅ 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 polling stations, the polling station head has shown that ballot boxes were empty before the voting process started.
6. As per the electoral law, a minimum of three polling station officials must be present in polling stations. An average of four polling station officials were present in the polling stations that were observed. Of this, an average of two polling station officials were female. With regard to the gender representation of heads of polling stations, in 2 of the polling stations, the heads were female, while 6 polling stations had male heads of polling stations. In addition to this, there was one polling station that had persons with disabilities (PwD) among the election officials in all polling stations observed.

7. The electoral law establishes 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 that the grievance hearing committees were either inconsistent 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 6 of the polling stations whereas in 2 of the polling stations there were no political party agents.

Voting Process

1. In all 8 polling stations, CECOE observers were not asked to leave the stations during the voting process.
2. Polling station officials gave priorities to persons with disabilities, the elderly, the frail, pregnant women, and parents with young children in 7 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 8 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 provide proof of their identity and residence should not be allowed to take part in the voting process. 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 (8) of the polling stations observed all eligible voters were allowed to vote.
6. The electoral law requires indelible ink to be applied to a voter's fingers before he or she is allowed to register and vote. All voters' fingers were marked with indelible ink in all eight polling stations.
7. As per the election proclamation, polling station officials are required to verify whether the names of voters are on the voter roll. In all 8 of the polling stations, election officials verified names on the voter roll before allowing them 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 8 of the polling stations, election officials stamped all ballot papers all the time.
9. The secrecy of the vote was respected throughout the day in all 8 of the polling stations.

10. In three of the polling stations, voters with non-apparent disabilities and who were not elderly were assisted in voting.
11. During the whole election day, no unauthorized person(s) entered all eight (8) of the polling stations.
12. In all eight (8) 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 (8) of the polling stations.
14. The election proclamation states that the official closing time of polling stations is 6:00 p.m. All (8) of the polling stations were closed at 6:00 p.m. in line with the election law.
15. All voters who were in queue at the polls during the closing time of the polling station at 6:00 p.m. were permitted to cast a ballot in accordance with the law in 5 of the polling places in accordance with the electoral law, while in 3 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 (8) of the polling stations observed.
2. Counting of votes must occur in polling stations on the day of election. In 8 of the polling stations observed counting was conducted at the polling stations on voting day.
3. The counting process was not interrupted in all (8) of the polling stations.
4. There were no interferences, harassment and/or intimidation during the counting process in all (8) of the polling stations.
5. The polling station head clearly displayed the ballot papers during the counting in all (8) of the polling stations observed
6. The polling station head applied the same criteria in the determination of valid and invalid ballot papers in all (8) of the polling stations observed.
7. There were no complaints submitted to grievance hearing committees, which were established as per the law, though observers reported that they had heard citizens express their complaints informally to the polling station head in polling stations where grievance hearing committees were not established in accordance with the law

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