

28 Sept 2010: 10 days after E-Day

Afghanistan *Wolesi Jirga* Elections, 18 Sept 2010

For the 2010 Afghan *Wolesi Jirga* elections, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) is conducting an observation mission and analyzing the electoral process before, during and after election day. This mission involves more than 140 international analysts and Afghan observers throughout the country. For more information, visit NDI.org and AfghanistanElectionData.org.

Candidate agents watch while Afghans vote IEC accredits nearly 370,000 candidate agents

Wolesi Jirga candidates recruited large numbers of agents to monitor the voting process on their behalf on election day. The Independent Election Commission (IEC) endorsed the candidate agents (CAs) as an important oversight measure, and many candidates viewed them as an important safeguard against fraud.

In the weeks running up to election day, the commission accredited just under 370,000 CAs, including about 88,000 women. NDI trained more than 36,000



Candidate agents and Independent Election Commission officials closely observed the voting process on election day in Afghanistan.

CAs on polling day procedures, of whom almost 10,000 were women.

Large numbers of CAs were apparent in many polling stations on election day, when they sometimes greatly outnumbered voters. One NDI observer noted the youth of most CAs, saying: “We took this as a positive sign that despite the flaws in the process in years past, there is still energy among youth to participate in the process.”

Continued on p. 2

IEC announces partial results

Votes from several polling centers in Khost province have been invalidated “based on evident fraud,” the IEC has announced. The commission has compiled a list of 620 polling centers where fraud has potentially taken place, it said, so additional similar decisions could be forthcoming.

The list was based on complaints received from IEC staff and others, and on reports from national and international observers. The IEC has instructed intake teams – which are responsible for verifying the authenticity of election materials – to pay particular attention to polling stations associated with these allegations, in order to identify any irregularities.

In Khost, a southeastern province, the commission said it invalidated all votes in two of five polling centers in Terzai district. Citing fraud, the IEC also tossed out votes cast in favor of four particular candidates at one polling center and two additional polling stations in the provincial capital.

The IEC also announced that it will recount votes at 19 polling stations in seven provinces. That decision was taken after observers and the Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC) noted problems with the results forms after counting had finished.

The IEC tally centre in Kabul has received 99.7 percent of all tamper-evident bags, which contain the results and reconciliation



IEC Chairman Fażel Ahmad Manawi announces measures to combat fraud in the process of tallying polling station results. The IEC has begun invalidat-

forms submitted by polling stations. The commission added that it has posted partial preliminary results from nine provinces on its website. The IEC has referred to the ECC 81 candidates who failed to submit the required campaign expenditure forms.

Afghanistan's candidate agents watch over vote (continued from p.1)

Fraud concerns were a clear motivator. "The only way to stop it is with candidate agents," said one candidate in Balkh province who deployed almost 1,000 CAs. Another candidate in the province said he recruited CAs who were from insecure districts so they could watch over voting there. Many candidates were unable to campaign in such districts and there was concern that fraud would be more likely to take place in insecure polling stations.

But while the widespread use of candidate agents was viewed as an integral oversight measure, it also posed challenges, some of which were observed on election day. Some appeared to overplay their watchdog role by attempting to disrupt polling stations, while others reportedly intimidated voters.

An IEC official in Mazar-e-Sharif accused CAs of creating disturbances at some polling stations around the city to force staff to close the stations

and quarantine ballots. The official said this happened primarily at polling stations where rival candidates appeared to be getting a large number of votes. But he was able to respond to all such incidents and prevent polling stations from being shut.

Also in Mazar-e-Sharif, NDI observers watched a group of CAs at one polling center stop a young man from entering the building.

NDI trained over 36,000 candidate agents throughout Afghanistan. Below, a scene from a training session for women in Herat.



The CAs gathered around him and scrutinized his voting card until security personnel told him to leave. Although the young man appeared to be below the legal voting age of 18, CAs are not permitted to accost voters or otherwise disrupt the voting environment.

In Faryab, an international official reported groups of CAs clashing with those of rival candidates. The official said many CAs in the province are members of armed militias connected to candidates, and their presence was a form of voter intimidation.

Spotlight: Electoral Media Commission

Afghanistan's Electoral Media Commission (EMC), responsible for monitoring media and adjudicating complaints surrounding the September elections, had a much lower profile this year than during the 2009 election cycle, according to many media professionals interviewed by NDI. The EMC is appointed by the IEC to deal with violations of the Media Code of Conduct. In 2009, the EMC received 47 complaints during the campaign period as compared to only 11 this year.

Interviewees attributed the low number to a lack of public outreach by the commission and lower visibility. Last year, the EMC held weekly press conferences to update journalists and the public on its activities. This year, the commission held only "about four" press conferences in total, according to an EMC official. Nazir Zoy, the EMC head, said the commission did not need to hold as many press conferences because it published its media monitoring reports on the IEC website and in three newspapers.

Of the 11 campaign period complaints received this year, all were from Kabul except for one from Khost province. The EMC adjudicated all of them. The EMC is now in the process of investi-

gating 92 complaints about alleged violations of the "silence period," the two days preceding election day when media outlets are prohibited from mentioning candidates in their coverage or running campaign advertisements.

One complaint about a violation of the silence period involved Heywad TV in Kandahar, which belongs to relatives of President Hamid Karzai. Two days before the election, Ahmed Wali Karzai, brother of the president, appeared on Heywad TV, urging the population not to vote for three "national traitors" who supported Abdullah Abdullah in his presidential bid last year. Images of the three candidates were displayed on screen as the speech was broadcast.

The EMC is composed of five commissioners and a president selected by the commissioners. Since the EMC is part of the IEC structure, it does not have its own budget or the authority to determine any rules and regulations. As such, its powers are limited. For example, when the IEC decided to delete one paragraph in the Media Code of Conduct allowing journalists to compete as candidates, the EMC was not consulted or permitted to object.

NDI, which has worked in Afghanistan since 2002, is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, nongovernmental organization working to support and strengthen democratic institutions worldwide through citizen participation, openness and accountability in government. For the 2010 elections, NDI conducted seminars for over 1,700 candidates, organized training for political parties and more than 240 women candidates, and provided technical assistance to the Free and Fair Elections Foundation of Afghanistan (FEFA), the country's largest domestic election monitoring organization. NDI also trained over 36,000 candidate agents nationwide to report on election-day activities.