

The Wondo Genet Referendum

The National Electoral Board, by the powers vested by article 27 of the electoral law, has the mandate to conduct various types of elections. One of these is a referendum. This is the procedure in which people express their interest or will and help make a decision after assessing public interest, as per article 32 of the revised electoral proclamation no.532/07.

The House of Federation and the Ministry of Federal Affairs discussed and reached an agreement with both regional governments Oromia and SNNPR, in order to conduct the referendum in Wondo Genet.

Accordingly, the Board has gathered input from the stakeholders by setting up a forum on the implementation and timetable of the referendum to focalize and give a prompt response to the referendum. After that, it has incorporated the necessary inputs into the timetable and implemented it upon its approval.

The Legal Framework of the Referendum

Article 32-532/07

1/ Referendum is conducted to assess public interest or make decisions when decided by a competent body in accordance with the constitution.

2/ The Board, in accordance with the directive given by the body that authorized the referendum, shall hold the referendum by organizing polling stations in a way convenient to execute the referendum. .

3/ particulars shall be determined by the regulation to be issued by the Board.

Subject to this proclamation, the following are the requirements that need to be fulfilled to be registered as a voter

Conditions for Registration

In order to vote a person must be:

- Ethiopian citizen
- Resident living in kebeles and woredas within Oromia or SNNR region
- 18 years or above on date of registration
- Has been residing in the kebele for six months
- For the referendum, a person can register after providing evidence that he/she is a permanent resident and proof of identity.
- Election officers must verify the voter's residency.

People who are not eligible for registration:

Those who are ineligible to vote are:

- Non-Ethiopian citizens
- A person below 18 years on date of registration and has been residing in the area for less than six months
- A person who is proved to be incapable of deciding due to mental disorder by an appropriate expert organ;
- A person whose electoral rights are restricted by law or by a court of law.

Preparation of the Referendum

Before the referendum took place, the National Election Board of Ethiopia had undertaken various preparatory works for the referendum in a short period. In general, it outlined and submitted the necessary budget for the referendum to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development for approval. 1,426,885.03 Birr (one million four hundred twenty-six thousand eight hundred eighty-five Birr and three cents) was allocated for conducting the referendum in three Kebeles as instructed by the House of Federation.

It prepared the particulars of the referendum, along with the timeline, published and made it available to the relevant referendum management bodies, as well as to the House of Federation; the Ministry of Federal Affairs; and the presidents of both regional governments.

Timetable

Registration of referendums was held at each polling station, from October 25 to October 31, 2008. Voting took place on November 9, 2001, from 6:00 am to 6:00 pm, peacefully, at each polling in the presence of public observers and state agents. Accordingly, the referendum process, starting from the provision of training to official announcements of the result, looks as follows:

No.	Activity	Date
1	Provision of training to the referendum officers at the center	October 18 and 19, 2008.
2	Awareness creation on the manner of conducting a referendum, before the voter Registration	October 24, 2008.
3	Voter registration	October 25-31, 2008.
4	The date for displaying the electoral roll to the public	November 1-5, 2008.
5	The date for lodging complaints relating to registration of voters	November 1-7, 2008.
6	Orientation provided to the residents of the Kebele on the voting process	November 2, 2008.
7	Voting day	November, 9 2008.

8	The announcement of result by the polling station	November 10, 2008.
9	The official announcement of result by the Board	November 16, 2008.

Polling Stations

The Board's experts conducted field studies and organized the polling stations during the pre-referendum period. The field study was conducted in the following 13 Kebeles in Wondo Genet Woreda for the execution of the referendum;

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|-----------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Yuwa | 6. Chuko | 11. WeshinaSiyema |
| 2. Aruma | 7. Intaye | 12. ShashanaKekele |
| 3. Edo | 8. Abaye | 13. GutunaUtma |
| 4. Busa | 9. Kela 01 | |
| 5. Baja Factory | 10. WoteraKechema | |

Voting Materials

Voter registration cards, electoral rolls, and other documents and materials required for voter registration have been duly prepared and delivered to the polling stations on time. Ballot papers; posters; and other documents and materials, required for voting have been duly prepared and delivered to the polling station, timely, sealed based on the number of the registered voters.

Referendum Election Officers

It prepared the particulars of the referendum, along with the timeline, published and made it available to the relevant referendum management bodies, as well as to the House of Federation, the Ministry of Federal Affairs, and the presidents of both regional governments.

A total of 233 referendum election officers, who were loyal to the constitution, neutral, and did not originate from the two regions, were recruited from Addis Ababa; after being properly trained; sworn into office and deployed at polling stations on October 20, 2008.

The Oromia and Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Representatives of regional governments appointed one representative at each woreda and one representative in each of the 46 polling stations in the 13 kebeles upon request of the Board, who observed the process.

In addition, the states have been required to choose their symbols; hence, the Oromia region chose "Oda" as its symbol, while the Southern Nation Nationalities and People region chose "Hut" as its symbol.

Selection and Training of Public Observers and Representatives of States

The residents of the polling station were summoned and provided with overall briefing about the referendum process by polling station officers and representatives from the two states. On that day, five public observers and three security personnel were elected at each polling station by the residents in accordance with the electoral law.

Voter Registration and Voters' Information

Pursuant to the timetable issued by the Board, voter registration was held at polling stations from October 25 to October 31, 2008. Accordingly, a total of 54,807 voters: 28,869 male voters, 25,938 female voters, were registered. A one-day orientation on the voting process was also provided in each polling station.

Voting, Vote Counting, and Announcement of Results

All polling stations were set up with all required security standards a day before polling. According to the timetable, the voting day was on November 9, 2008. At the beginning of voting, the referendum officers, public observers, and former administration agents held opening minute. Voting took place from 6a.m.to 6p.m. and voters holding voter's ID card exercised their democratic rights, in a peaceful and fair manner. All stakeholders signed and took a closing minute which included the particulars of the voting day and that the voting process is completed peacefully.

Announcement of Vote Results

The vote counting results at each polling station was immediately sent to woreda branch office, and the tabulation was undertaken in the presence of referendum agents and public observers after sorting it based on kebele. The results of the tabulation in the kebele were given by for both regions' woreda agents. During its 70th regular meeting on November 14, 2008, the Board approved the that the referendum was legitimate and peaceful. Accordingly, the results of the general referendum are provided in the table below.

Particulars of the Result

Type of Information	Number	Percentage
Number of registered voters	54,807	
Number of voters who cast their ballot	53,155	96.99%
Total number of voters who voted to be delineated within the Oromia Regional State	19,029	35.8%
Total number of voters who voted to be delineated within the SNPPR	31,686	59.6%
Canceled votes	-	-

Invalid ballot	-	-
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Complaints relating to the referendum and how they were resolved

Complaints raised at some polling stations during voter registration:

1. Individuals under 18 years old are registered as avoter;
2. Those who have not lived at the polling station for 5 years has been registered as voters;
3. People who are residents of another kebele are registered as a voter;

Lodged at: -

1. Polling station 1a and 1b,in ShashanaKebele;
2. Polling station 1b, in ChukoKebele;
3. Polling station 2a,in InteyeKebele.

In the Kebeles mentioned under no. 1 and 3, complaints were made by representatives of the polling stations in the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Regional State, while complaint under no. 2 was made by agents of polling station in the Oromia Regional State.

The complaints, as per the electoral law and the procedure on raising complaint and resolution regulation, have been reviewed at the polling station and appeals office of both constituencies and public observers, as well as by the relevant local government representatives.

A group including members of the Board moved to the scene to evaluate whether the entire process was conducted as per the electoral law and the Board's manual. As per the report provided, the process was conducted in a peaceful and legal manner.