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NATIONAL ELECTION BOARD OF ETHIOPIA

ELECTORAL CYCLE

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Electoral Cycle

In an electoral system, the general activity relating to the election process, starting from the preparation during the pre-election period until the announcement of the results and issuance of certificate to the winners during the post-election period, is known as the election cycle.

Therefore, the election cycle consists of three main parts. They are:-

1. Pre-election period.
2. Election period; and
3. Post-election period.

1. THE PRE-ELECTION PERIOD

This is the phase before voting where major election-related activities take place. The pre-election period is whereby activities relating to preparation of the legal framework, planning and implementation, budget allocation, preparation of the electoral calendar, preparedness and registration of political parties, recruitment, training and assignment of election officials, constituency delimitation, voters registration, gender inclusion, voter and civic education, engagement and operations of the media take place.

1.1 Planning

The concept of planning involves a decision-making process where an organ formulates its goals and objectives, specifies strategies, and identifies performance indicators. On the other hand, planning is the process of designing the strategy that delivers our goals and mobilize resources, as well as create good opportunities to deliver our goals.

An election implementation plan is incorporated in the election management body's (EMB) annual strategic plan and allows the EMB to prepare electoral activities, administration and implementation within the mandates of the legal framework. In general, an election operational planning is the process by which the EMB formulates its vision, mission, goal, and purpose, and prepares for implementation in a short period of time. Planning raises four key questions:

- What have we accomplished so far?
- What do we want to accomplish?
- How can we accomplish it? And
- How can we measure accomplishment?

Election implementation plans are prepared by individuals who participate in the election process and have a paramount significance in forecasting financial and human resource needs, operational

goals, key activities, desired outcomes, timeline, and implementation guidelines.

1.2 Election Budget

The election management body can achieve its set objectives and goals when it has the budget for implementation. Major activities that require budget include, capacity building engagements, trainings, fees associated with election officials, and procurement of election materials.

Once the needed budget is available, it requires addressing the gaps and establishing a productive, efficient and quality resource management system. Comparative analysis with respect to electoral organs from various countries show that the budget allocated for elections is approximately equal to that allocated for military, education or health institutions. Since implementing an election is costly, research shows that electoral organs that conduct elections with public funds face shortage in their budget.

A budget request may be made during the pre-election period, during election, and the post-election period. In comparison, the budget request for the pre-election period is significantly higher as this budget request is contingent upon the type of election and the number of elections planned.

Although a vast number of countries generally carry out elections on their own budget, some countries are provided with financial aid and assistance from the international donor community. In Ethiopia, for example, although the government allocates budget to conduct elections, international donor communities also support capacity building activities to some extent.

Thus, although the budget required for election is extremely high and adversely impacts the allocation of public funds, it is of great importance in its contribution in building democracy and peace at a national level.

Factors to consider in electoral budget planning:

Some of the key factors that help determine budget allocation for election are: estimated number of voters (estimated statistical data), number of polling stations, number of constituencies/zones and woredas, number of election officers, and number of political parties and their candidates.

In addition, information gathered from previous elections can also provide a foundation in determining budget allocation for future elections. Furthermore, in preparing electoral budget, it is of great significance for the election management body to take into account new technologies and modern procedures, long-term strategic goals, and learn from the experiences of other countries.

1.3 Preparation of the Electoral Calendar

The electoral calendar contains detailed list of activities in the electoral process from the pre-election period to announcement of election results in the post-election period. It is a document that is mainly used by election officers, political parties, mass media, the public, and other stakeholders. The election management body carefully and meticulously prepares the electoral calendar so as to ensure that the election is conducted in a free, fair, and participatory manner.

Since the election process is limited by time, all activities take place within a prescribed time frame. As such, the electoral calendar should explicitly state the election day and breakdown of time, the roles and responsibilities of the executing organ, and list and connectedness of activities. Therefore, the electoral calendar can be a viable element of electoral planning and operations.

When preparing the electoral calendar, the publication and dissemination of documents, public holidays, and the social and cultural context of all citizens should be taken into account. In addition, the calendar should be prepared by taking into account the time available for political parties to register candidates and campaign in light of their circumstantial positions, and to advance a multi-party system. Thus, when preparing the electoral calendar, the election management body engages political parties for their inputs to improve proposed timeline.

For the success of the election, the electoral calendar should also take into account the time needed to convene key stakeholders (mass media, mass-based associations, voters' education, and observers) for the purposes of consultation, training and discussion forums. In addition, the time it will take to properly organize and train election officers at various levels should be reflected in the calendar.

1.4 Voter and Civic Education

The key to developing democratic values within a country is that citizens are provided with civic and voters education in a quality, broad and accessible manner. A society that is uniformed and has limited access to knowledge can put a challenge to the overall conduction the election as planned. Therefore, in order to ensure that the election is properly conducted, and the outcome is well received, an emphasis should be given to civic and voters education.

1.4.1 Civic Education

Civic education is a form of education in which citizens develop awareness and understanding of the formation and structure of government, the democratic system, power ownership of the public, human and democratic rights and obligations, social issues, environmental preservation

and conservation of natural resources.

Even if their constitutional rights were to be violated by any government body, citizens can utilize this education to stay aware of their rights and obligations and to fight for them.

Civic education plays a significant role in helping citizens gather and steer discussions on their human and democratic rights, social issues, public services, their economic and political plans, and about public servants which they appointed or gave representation to at all levels.

The most important reason that civic education is required is that citizens can have a clear understanding of their power and capabilities to ensure that their rights are respected in accordance with the constitution, as well as to play their part in the democracy building process.

A. Delivering civic education on a regular basis

If civic education is delivered on a regular basis, it will help embed the concepts of democracy, the human and democratic rights of citizens, and the nature and characteristics of the constitution into the community. A citizen who is well equipped with these concepts:

- Exercises his rights and obligations properly;
- Monitors and evaluates processes, and identifies solutions through discussions, consultations, and debate;
- Recognizes social, economic and political problems and posits effective solutions;
- Develops the ability to speak, communicate, analyze, and advocate; and
- Promotes participation of the community.

B. Stakeholders in the Provision of Civic Education

Mass Media

Public and private printing press and electronic media outlets play a vital role in civic and voter education by delivering a wide range of information to the community. A vast majority of the community listens to the radio; watches TV; reads the newspaper, and uses social media.

An information gathered through these outlets can further be shared with family and acquaintances. Therefore, the election management body needs to establish strong and healthy relations with the media. In addition, by designing a strategy that strengthens and nourishes its relations with the media, the election management body can broaden its opportunities to provide accurate and up-to-date information on all fronts of its operations through community outreach.

The election management body must provide verified and up-to-date information, not only when requested by the media, but also upon its own initiation. By establishing a media center, it should put in place a system for distributing press releases and preparing press conferences.

By its nature, election reporting is unique in comparison with other themes of reporting. As such, the election management body must develop and implement a code of conduct for the media and update it regularly. It is also important to create discussion opportunities and public forums specifically for the media to create awareness. When this happens, the community can be able to access information easily and timely, and the media can also play a role in creating a community that is well-informed about elections.

Civil Societies

Civil societies play an important role in the democratic process. They have an invaluable role in enhancing public participation in the electoral process, and in providing civic and voter education to create awareness. Therefore, despite the processes put in place by the election management body for voter and civic education, civil societies can also play their part in engaging and taking a lead in such provisions.

1.4.2 Voter education

Voter education is provided to raise awareness on activities at all levels of the electoral cycle. Through a voter education, the voter will be provided with an extensive information that he/she needs to register, to be physically present and vote, and to follow the outcome of the election. A community that lacks awareness and knowledge about the electoral process can make it difficult to effectively conduct the election. That is, if voters do not have a clear understanding of the various processes of the election, it is possible for large number of electoral materials or ballot papers to get invalidated and go to waste during voter registration and on election day. Thus, since activities during the voter registration and voting have significant impact on the results and reception of the outcome of the election, an emphasis has to be made on the provision of voter education to be able to address gaps and flows during the voter registration and voting. Depending on the situations in the country, the election management body can provide voter education more broadly in cooperation with various stakeholders, and political parties can also play their part.

1.4.3 Stakeholders

Stakeholders are those who may influence the electoral management body or those who may be

influenced by the body itself. These are institutions like the United Nations that directly and indirectly assist the EMB to successfully implement its mission and goals by providing technical, financial and capacity building support as needed.

Accordingly, stakeholders include: political parties, independent candidates, the federal government, the House of Peoples' Representatives, the House of Federation, the Judiciary, Regional state governments, the Regional Councils, democratic institutions, voters, the mass media, civil associations, researchers/academicians, public observers, and domestic and foreign observers. Similarly, implementing partners are universities (in providing vocational support and training), the Ministry of Defense, the United Nations (providing finance and capacity building), the African Union Commission (organizing public forums), and donors.

1.5 Collecting and Organizing Election Information

An election is a big national event that engages millions of voters and various stakeholders, including political parties, directly and indirectly and requires carefully collected, compiled, organized and updated information. The process of collecting, compiling, organizing, and disseminating information for all types of elections (general elections, local elections, referendums, and re-elections) can be done by referring to information from previous elections.

The election management body, with the help of modern technology, must put in place an information communication system that will help deliver election information to the public, organize vote counting, and announce election results timely and effectively. It is also imperative to establish communication systems whereby information from one polling station to the central station can be transmitted quickly.

Accordingly, information that need to be gathered and organized through the medium of modern communication system and technology include:

- Complete personal information of electoral officers recruited at all levels (name, address, education level, telephone number etc.);
- Name and number of constituencies, woreda, polling stations, and kebele;
- The number of registered voters, those who voted, and no-shows (by gender and age)
- The number of invalidated ballot papers or those incorrectly filled;
- Problems encountered at polling stations and remedial actions taken;
- The number of participating political parties and contesting candidates; and
- The number of votes received at each level, organized in hard copy and digital copy formats.

For newly added zones, weredas, cities and kebeles throughout the country, efforts should be made to keep their information up to date, by collecting through regional offices, and reinforcing on-going developments. Furthermore, it is important to identify and organize, and convey messages to voters and other stakeholders timely and effectively.

1.6 Recruitment and Training of Election Officers

The election process is subject to time constraints and requires a large workforce. Recruitment and permanent hiring of election officials can be costly and the responsibilities of most election officers can end within a limited period of time.

The electoral management body in our country undertakes the election process by hiring staff permanently and temporarily. Among those hired for temporary assignments are election officials and individuals assigned for documentation tasks. In particular, as the election approaches, the electoral management body recruits and trains election officials and deploys them to woredas and polling stations.

1.6.1 Recruitment of Election Officers

One of the key elements to conducting a free, peaceful, fair and democratic election and to gaining public trust is to recruit with the utmost care and caution, election officers that are capable of prioritizing these key attributes at all levels.

1.6.2 Training of Election Officers

Providing adequate and comprehensive training to election officers in advance is crucial to the success of the overall electoral process. The training will enable election officers to understand and implement international principles and standards. Furthermore, training should be provided on a regular basis to familiarize them with modern electoral practices and revised laws, and to create awareness on related code of conducts and regulations.

The election management body also provides training of trainers to those who will later deliver the training to election officials at all levels on a wide range of topics, including the legal framework, lodging of complaints and dispute resolution, candidate registration, voter registration, voting, vote counting and announcement of results, usage of modern technology, usage of election documents and materials, and allocation of budget.

Because elections officials are large in number, it is not feasible to provide training to all of them

through members of the election management body. As such, it is crucial for wereda or constituency level election officials to train their colleagues at polling station levels. In providing training, it is crucial to follow standardized methods, and utilize pre-recorded videos and standardized training materials.

1.6.3 Training Manual

The election management body quite frequently prepares various materials that are essential at all levels of the electoral process. As such, it is also important to prepare easy to comprehend and standardized training manuals for election official to use. The manual needs to be translated into applicable regional languages, has to be easy to understand and apply, and needs to include substantial practice exercises and check lists to enhance awareness for election officials.

1.6.4 Organizing Polling Stations

A polling station is a place where registration of voters, the voting process, and counting of votes take place at various levels of an election. The organization of a polling station must take into consideration its accessibility, availability, and convenience to the public at large.

The number of voters at a given polling station is determined by the electoral law based on the number of people in rural and urban areas. The structural organization of the polling station is identified as ordinary polling stations and special polling stations.

Polling Stations

Polling stations are those found at the lower stage of the election management body's organizational structure and are the sole place where voter registration, voting, and vote counting take place. Therefore, polling stations need to be organized with the adequate workforce and materials. According to the Election Law of Ethiopia, a given polling station has to have an Election Officers Committee comprising of five individuals.

Factors to consider when organizing a polling station:

- The location must be accessible or close to the people (residents);
- Must be accessible for voters with disabilities;
- Maximum number of voters each polling station can accommodate cannot exceed 1,500;
- Location of the polling station must be conducive to safety and security;
- The polling station must create an environment for voters to be present and cast their votes with out any hassle;
- With the help of Geographic Information Systems, the location of polling stations must be accurately identified taking into consideration demographic details;

Special Polling Stations

Special polling stations are established for the purpose of enfranchising those living outside their constituencies for various reasons, such as soldiers, civil workers and their families, students at higher learning institutions, internally displaced persons, and those imprisoned citizens who are eligible to vote. These polling stations allow for these voters to cast their votes in their temporary locations.

1.7 Preparedness of Election Officers

In a given election, the professional competence and neutrality of election officers is crucial. In order to conduct an effective and efficient election, the election management body must put in place a competent workforce, materials, and financial resources. Specifically, processes related to recruitment and training of election officers, the use of technology, preparation and distribution of ballot papers and other election materials, as well as the deployment of election officers need close attention.

Nonetheless, an election cannot be effective and efficient with simply by putting in place competent and neutral election officials. It needs to be backed by stronger cooperation between the election management body, political parties, the media, and other stakeholders for a successful and effective conduction of an election.

1.8 Preparation and Publishing of Election Forms

In an effort to carry out elections in a free and impartial manner, election forms and documents must be properly prepared and completed.

All electoral processes, for example, starting from voters and candidates registration, as well as announcement of election results require their own distinctive forms and documents. These forms, if not properly designed and carefully filled out by election officers, can bring a challenge in terms of capturing complete information and can further complicate the credibility of the election results.

1.8.1 Design of Forms

When designing ballot forms, they should be simple, easy, and clear. In addition, by understanding the types and use of the various forms, election officers should play their part to ensure that the election is transparent and credible.

Things to consider when designing election forms:

- Identifying the type of election and designing appropriate forms;
- Engage stakeholders for their inputs;
- Translate forms into different languages to ensure accessibility to all regions;
- Determining the quantity, size, color, type of forms.

1.8.2 Types of Forms to Prepare

A. Candidates Registration Forms

These are forms used by independent or political party candidates in the candidate registration-related processes. These include, forms used for collecting of candidature endorsement signatures by independent candidates, forms used for registering nominated candidates, posters used to publish list of candidates, forms used to submit list of candidates to the election management body, and candidate identification cards.

B. Voter Registration Forms

These include, the voter card for eligible voters, electoral roll, memorandum on the registration of the day, the opening and closing minutes, and the number of registered voters report. In addition, it includes a variety of IDs issued to election officers and stakeholders at all levels.

C. Voting, Vote Counting, and Announcement of Results Forms

Forms used for voting, vote counting and announcement of results include: ballot forms, ballot papers, public notification posters, calendars, complaint submission and resolution submission forms, minutes forms, election process reporting forms, vote counting forms given to candidate representatives, vote counting tabulation forms, and candidacy identification documents.

1.8.3 Distribution and Dissemination of Election Documents and Materials

Election documents and materials, according to the type of election, should be carefully organized, distributed, and disseminated in a timely manner. As delays in these processes could cast further challenges to the overall electoral process, they should be addressed promptly and with emphasis.

Organization of election documents and materials

Distribution of these documents includes the identification, numeration, compilation and proper classification of election documents and materials as required. An election by nature is a major event where tens of thousands of voters show up to vote in a single day. Election documents and materials need to be prepared for various polling stations and kebeles, making the task extensive and complex requiring thorough attention. Therefore, if documents are not carefully organized according to required scales, the challenges on election day are pervasive and do not provide opportunities to address them.

Things to consider when organizing election documents and materials:

- Hire, train and deploy qualified workforce;
- Collect and organize documents and materials with complete information;
- Identify needed documents and materials and acquire in time;
- Categorize and store documents and materials by type, language, and address;
- Count and compile election documents as needed;
- Handle leaky and fragile materials separately and with care;
- Sort and store documents according to their counts (by candidate, by voters, by date of election day) for easy filing and retrieving;
- Identify each document by number and to which council (kebele, woreda, city, sub-city, zone, House of People's Representatives, or regional council) it will be allocated to; and organize it in a checklist for easy follow-up.
- Sort and wrap documents with plastic, and package in a box according to packaging and labeling information;
- In each box's labeling, write names and numbers of polling stations, regions, zones, districts, kebeles of where the documents are going;
- Monitor and supervise continuously to ensure that documents are sorted and stored safely and appropriately according to the checklist;
- Categorize and store the packaged boxes by zone and constituency in an orderly manner. (Those to be sent to farther areas should be stored closer);
- Store packaged boxes in order by district, kebele, polling station, or sub-city for easy distribution.

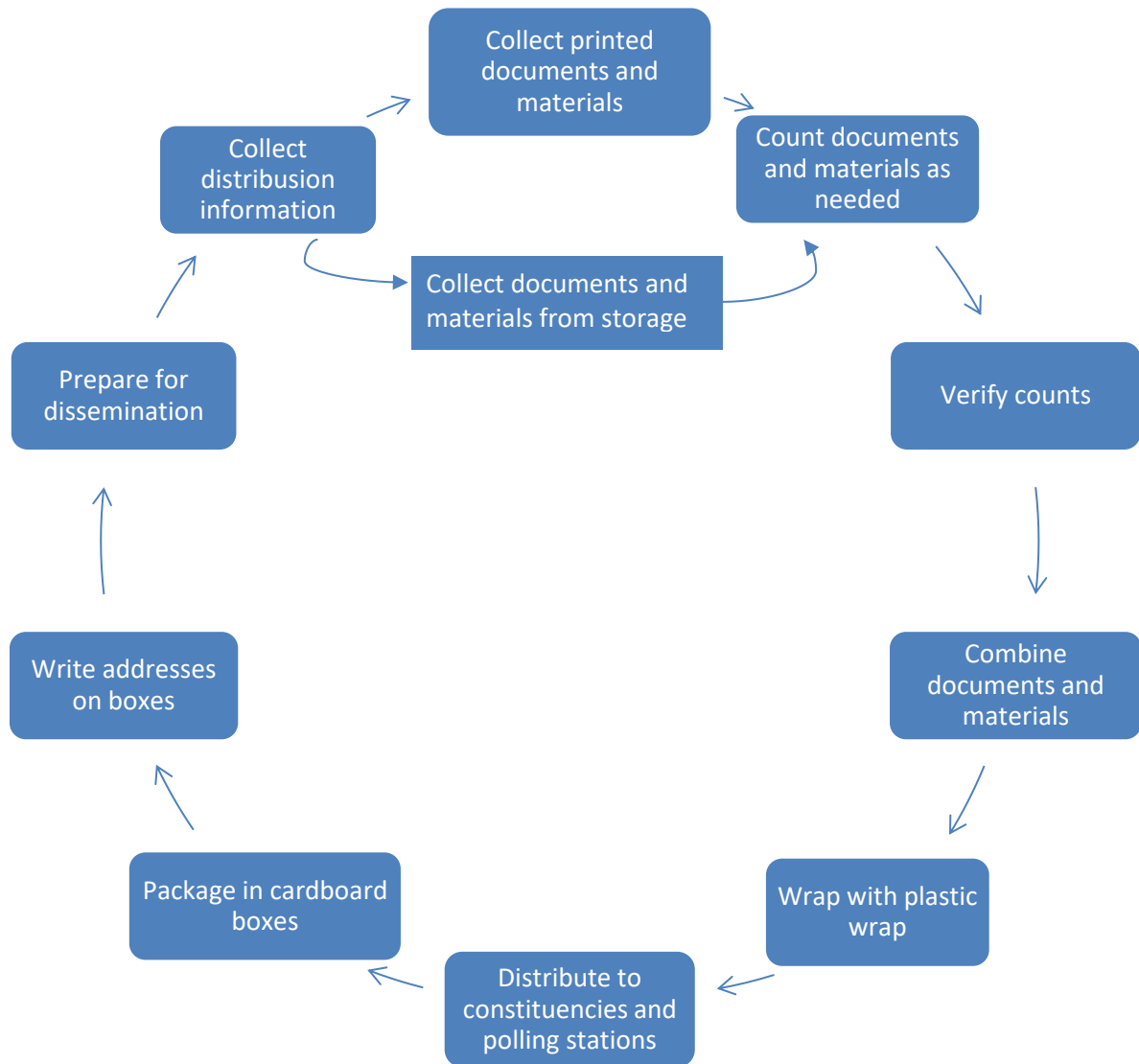


Chart 1- Distribution of Election Documents and Materials

Distribution of election document and materials

All election documents and materials, for the purpose which they are intended, must be subjected to monitoring and implementation by election officers at all levels. In fact, these documents and materials need to be distributed to polling stations well in advance from voter registration and candidate registration activities, as well as prior to polling day. In addition, strict protective measures should be taken during the transportation and distribution of these documents and materials from one station to the other. Specifically, safe, secure and convenient location must be identified for vehicles carrying documents to park, transit, and operate. When vehicles are in motion, a member of the election management body must accompany, and must ensure that documents are carefully delivered to the concerned authorities.

In general, in order to ensure the fair and accessible distribution of election documents and materials, the distribution process must prioritize distant areas as well as handle fragile items with precaution. In addition, continued monitoring is needed to ensure that materials and documents have reached their destination timely and properly.

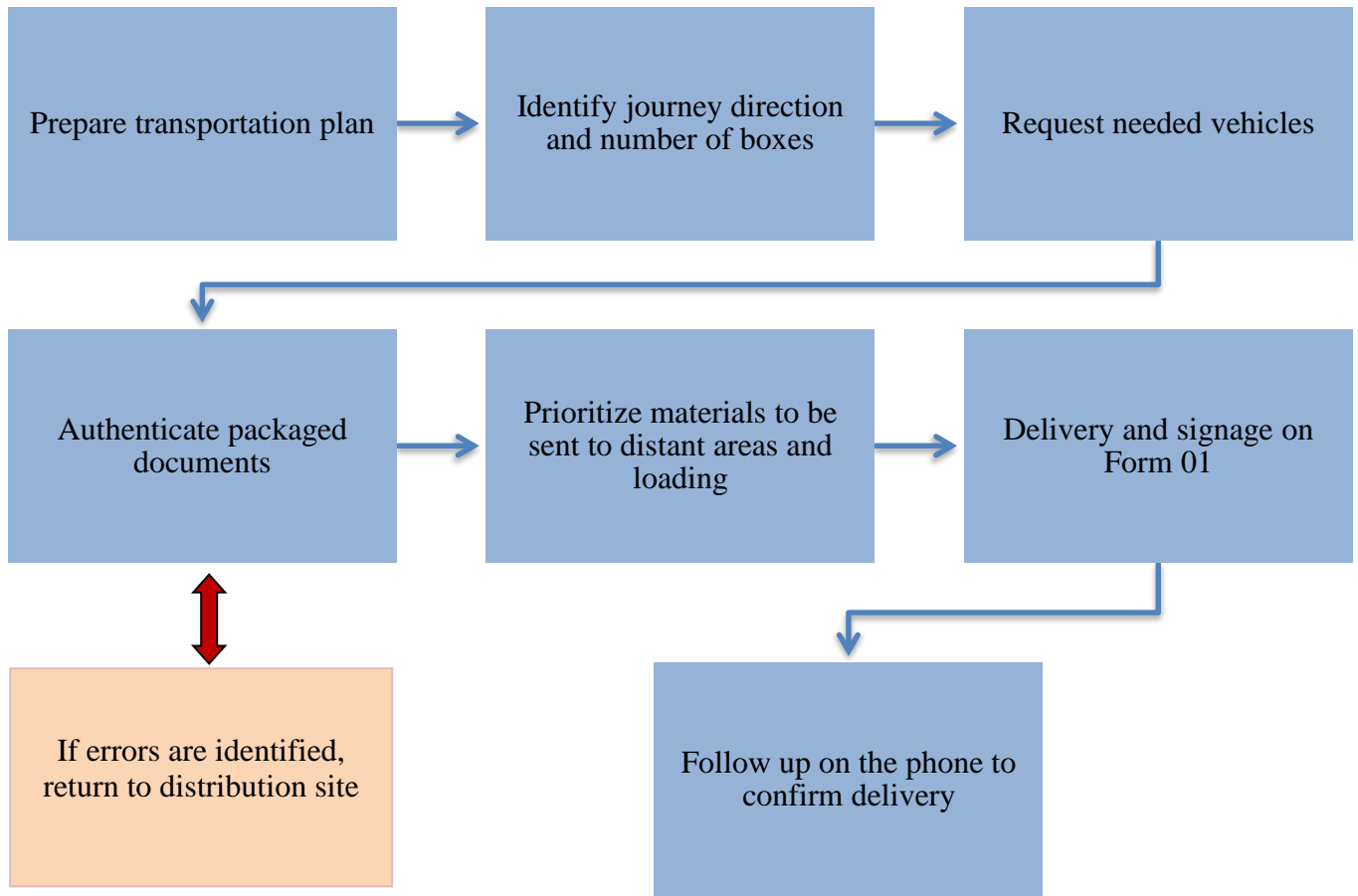


Chart 2- Distribution of Election Documents and Materials

1.10 Voter Registration

A voter registration conducted with fairness and inclusivity is essential for the integrity of the overall electoral process. In this regard, it is important to understand, as outlined in the legal framework, the requirements needed to conduct voter registration and their consequences.

Voter registration is one of the most complex and costly endeavors in the election process. Hence, thinking about the technical aspects of voter registration is not sufficient, rather, it is important to take a more holistic approach to political, administrative and operational processes.

The quality of a voter registration process is one of the determining factors of the outcome of the election, and can therefore influence a country's democratic establishments. Therefore, if a voter registration cycle is transparent and participatory, it can build confidence in the democracy of the country.

There are various types of voter registration methods, some of which may be more cost-effective, easier or more reliable than others. In principle, the voter registration process must be clear, effective, efficient and sustainable.

1.11 Candidate Registration

Candidates' registration is conducted to allow political parties and independent candidates to register and compete equally and impartially, to exercise their rights without any discrimination, to offer alternative ideas to the public, to promote a culture of democracy, and to participate in free and fair elections.

Internal democracy among political parties can have a profound positive or negative effect on the overall outcome of the election cycle. Therefore, when political parties provide lists of their candidature, it is important to review whether they meet all requirements as outlined in the legal framework. In addition, it is crucial for political parties to implement internal undertakings according to their set rules in a transparent and participatory manner. The overall candidate nomination and arrangement process must be clear and comprehensive, as well as impartial.

Furthermore, in handling candidates' registration, the election management body must create an enabling environment for competing political parties to conduct political campaigning freely, and must carry out continued monitoring and evaluation to ensure that political parties act in accordance with the electoral law and code of conduct during campaigning.

Various legal frameworks, such as electoral laws and directives, must also be promulgated and implemented with respect to the registration of candidates. Accordingly, every Ethiopian citizen has the right to participate, equally and impartially, in the election process as a political party candidate or independent candidate within the provisions of the electoral law.

In order to effectively conduct candidate registration, the election management body performs preliminary preparations and related activities in advance. It is also crucial to provide training regarding various aspects, such as candidate presentation, registration, lodging of complaints and resolution, for competing political parties and independent candidates.

After the registration process, the election management body must collect, organize and keep

details of registered political party and independent candidates. Lists of political party candidates and independent candidates must also be posted at polling station and constituency levels, through posters or other mediums, to allow for the public to get a good understanding of the candidates.

In order to conduct a timely candidate registration, the election management body must prepare according to the electoral calendar by printing relevant forms and documents, by organizing adequate workforce, by counting, compiling and sorting documents and materials, and by ensuring timely distribution.

1.12 Constituency Delimitation

Delimitating electoral constituencies timely, fairly and in ways that ensure equal representation of voters is one of the key activities that can guarantee a fair, peaceful and sustainable electoral process. When planning for a constituency delimitation, the election management body must provide sufficient training to its officers, staff, and other stakeholders involved in the process.

As the election management body is mandated to handle constituency delimitation processes, it has the responsibility to clearly identify, define and inform officers, employees, and stakeholders on all steps, as well as develop guidelines that outline the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders and constantly monitor enforcement of those guidelines.

A constituency delimitation is a complex, costly and lengthy process. As such, the internal social and political affairs of the country should be fully accounted for during operations. In addition, when planning to undertake this process and selecting activities, election officers must make preliminary assessment of the various issues related to the management and budgeting aspects.

Constituency delimitation, particularly in an electoral system that uses single-seat constituencies, must be conducted on a regular basis. If the process is not repeated over a period of time, the population size in each constituency may fluctuate and consequently, may distort the balance of representation. Therefore, it is crucial to maintain the balance of representation by continuously and regularly conducting a constituency delimitation. This is a matter of serious concern and critical consequences not only to candidates but also to the electorate and various groups of the public residing in a given constituency, as the outcome of the election or the composition of representation at the councils may vary based on changes in the boundaries of constituencies.

International Principles for Constituency Delimitation

Constituency delimitation results in different outcomes depending on the type of election and the electoral system. Nonetheless, there are standard principles applicable to the process regardless of the electoral system, and among the international election criteria, these principles help

implement the equal vote (equal weight of each vote) principle.

In summary, the universal principles for constituency delimitation are the following:

- Representation;
- Equal weight of votes;
- No quid pro quo; and
- No discrimination.

Stakeholders for constituency delimitation

In Ethiopia, the election management body is in charge of constituency delimitation, however, the process also involves a wide range of stakeholders. Such stakeholders include;

- The House of People’s Representatives
- The House of Federation
- Regional Governments
- Central Statistical Agency; and
- The Ethiopian Mapping Agency.

2. THE ELECTION PERIOD

According to the electoral cycle, numerous crucial activities take place during the election period. These include: voting, vote counting and results announcement, loading of complaints and resolution.

2.1 Voting, Vote Counting, and Results Announcement

Voting day is where voters cast their ballots to elect their chosen one from a list of political party candidates and independent candidates that are registered and competing in a democratic manner. In most countries, voting day is a single day affair, however, in some countries, it may take place over a longer period of time.

Usually, the date that is convenient for voters is preferred; a date that voters can be free to come out and vote, and a date that is not a public holiday. In addition, voting hours can be between 6:00 am and 6:00 pm.

Precautions before the Election Day

- Organize polling stations in a way that they are suitable and accessible to voters, and voters must be informed about the location and the general voting procedure;
- Deploy security personnel to the polling stations, with detailed instruction of their duties

and responsibility;

- Supply ballot papers and other essential materials for the voting process in sufficient amount and type;
- Provide a one-day orientation to voters about the use of ballot papers, the number of candidates, candidature symbols and names of their political parties or their names if running independently, and the name of the council to which each candidate is running for. Moreover, posters with list of candidates must be displayed at polling stations and other public places;
- Protect and safeguard election documents and materials starting from their delivery until the end of the results announcement phase.

2.2 Voting Day

Before the voting day begins, it is crucial for political party candidates, independent candidates and representatives, and public observers to come together and reach consensus on the overall voting process.

On voting day, adequate explanation is provided to voters on how to vote. In addition, it is important to provide a secret ballot room to allow voters cast their ballot freely and confidentially. Priority is given to the visually impaired and the elderly with an option to vote with the guidance of their chosen assistants.

In order for the election process to be transparent and trusted, an understanding and consensus must be reached among political party representatives with regards to the number of ballot papers supplied, the ballot box and the keys codes.

2.3 Vote Counting

Vote counting takes place at the polling stations, however, where complaining circumstances arise, it can also be done at the constituencies. Vote counting must be handled in a place where political parties' representatives, independent candidates, and observers can be in attendance to observe the process.

Since the vote counting process cannot be interrupted under any circumstances, it is important to put in place all necessary materials in advance, such as comfortable desks, sufficient chairs, pens, forms, lighting equipment and etc.

The vote counting is done using a counting chart, tally, or other modern counting mechanisms, and the counting of the ballot papers must be done in a transparent, accurate and reliable manner.

Results of the counting must be signed and submitted with representatives of the political parties and independent candidates. This encourages stakeholders to have confidence in the outcome of the election.

It is also crucial to ensure that results are carefully recorded on the appropriate form and submitted to the appropriate organ.

2.4 Announcement of the Results

One of the main goals of election cycle is to announce the results to the public in a timely manner. Failure to report election results on time can become a cause for conflict and uncertainty. Therefore, the election management body, using modern information technology systems, must organize the results from the polling stations, all the way to the center, and announce to the public at each stage.

Official results announcements must include:

- Number of registered voters;
- Number of voters that cast their ballots (voter turnout);
- Number of valid votes;
- Number of registered voters who did not cast a ballot;
- Spoilt ballot papers; and
- Invalid ballot papers.

The election management body is mandated to handle the results announcement, results are announced at polling stations, constituencies, region/city administrations, and national levels through posters, electronic mediums, print media, as well as official website (s).

2.5 Grievance and Dispute Resolution

The election management body is vested with the power to establish and coordinate with, at every level, a political parties' joint forum and a grievance hearing committee which enable it to resolve disputes related to the overall electoral process through dialogue and understanding. Accordingly, each polling station will have a grievance hearing committee composed of and led by a select election officer deployed to the specific polling station. In addition to the officer, selected registered voters, (one male and one female) who are not members of a political party, and who are known for their good ethics, can join this committee in compliance with the guidelines set by the election management body.

Complaints Relating to Voter Registration

When a complaint on voters' registration is presented to the grievance hearing

committee, the committee at the polling station level assesses the compliant and issues a decision within 24 hours. If the committee does not make a decision within 5 days, or if the voter rejects the committee's decision, the voter has the right to submit an appeal to the constituency level grievance hearing committee within 5 days. The constituency level grievance hearing committee will then assess the compliant, or the reasoning for rejecting the initial decision, and passes a written decision within 5 days. If the voter rejects this decision once again, he or she has the right to request for the matter to be reviewed by federal or regional courts. Subsequently, the court that received the compliant will gather all necessary information to help it review and pass a decision on the matter.

Complaints Relating to Candidates Registration

Complaints relating to candidates' registration will be submitted to constituency level grievance hearing committees, and the committees must provide their decisions in writing within 5 days. A political party candidate or independent candidate that is not satisfied with the decision has the right to take his/her compliant to grievance hearing committees established at regional branch office levels within 5 days, and the committee has 5 days to make its decision. If the candidate is unsatisfied with this decision, he/she has the right to appeal to the regional/state Supreme Court. The court gathers all necessary information to help it review and pass a final decision on the matter within 15 days.

Complaints Relating to Voting

Complaints relating to voting will be submitted to the polling station level grievance hearing committee, and the committee makes a decision immediately to allow the voter to cast his/her ballot in time. Alternatively, the committee can first allow the voter to cast a temporary ballot and pass the compliant to the constituency level grievance hearing committee for decision within the day. The constituency level grievance hearing committee, or on a case by case basis, a regional or federal court will make a decision on the matter before the end of the voting day, and before vote counting ends. If a written decision confirming the voter's legitimacy is not presented to the constituency office in time, the voter's temporary ballot will be rejected.

3. THE POST ELECTION PERIOD

The post-election period covers the period after election results are announced. During this period, a wide range of activities, such as post-election evaluation, preparations for constituency delimitation and institutional strategic planning take place.

3.1 Post-election evaluation

Post-election evaluation is a process in which the election management body uses international and national standards to periodically review democratic elections, so as to determine whether or not electoral activities are executed properly in accordance with the constitution and the electoral law. The evaluation is conducted after the election results are announced and the winning political party is determined.

In addition to demonstrating the electoral process, the post-election evaluation helps identify the strengths and weaknesses of the participations of various stakeholders, including voters, election officers, local observers, political parties, the judiciary, and other influential parties involved in the overall electoral process.

Accordingly, the evaluation contributes to the success of the overall election system by further strengthening strengths and improving weaknesses, and by taking the necessary steps in preparing for future elections.

In accordance with the country's electoral law and the electoral calendar, the election management body announces election results to the public. Nonetheless, political parties may reject the outcome or may raise other complaints. When such circumstances occur, a system must be put in place to address and resolve them.

In general, the post-election evaluation is an opportunity for the election management body to revisit the overall electoral process and identify the challenges, successes, learning opportunities, and collaborations with stakeholders, and to prepare for future elections.