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NATIONAL ELECTION BOARD OF ETHIOPIA

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The National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) Sixth General Elections Result

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Addis Ababa - Ethiopia

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Introduction

The National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) has undergone several institutional, administrative, operational, and decision-making reforms since its re-establishment under Proclamation No. 1133/2011. To mention some among the accomplishments: the starting off of the Management Board; the adoption of the Ethiopian Electoral, Political Parties Registration, and Election's Code of Conduct Proclamation 1162/2011 after extensive consultation; the completion of the re-registration of political parties; and the drafting of more than 30 elections directives and guidelines. The Management Board, when it took over the NEBE to conduct the sixth general elections, had to transform an institution with weak capacity, to one that is independent; and in terms of manpower and resource mobilization, it had worked relentlessly to cultivate strong relationship with a number of partner organization that support the NEBE.

In this process, the FDRE House of Peoples' Representatives and the government have made significant contributions to reform election law, to modernize the electoral process, and approve the budget that would allow NEBE's institutional independence.

Election Planning and Preparation

From the onset, it was clear that the sixth general election was going to be different from the previous ones. The Management Board realized that the election was going to be conducted in a complicated political social environment. Although the Board began preparations, knowing that the election was going to take place in a very socially and political difficult situation, the disruption caused by the global COVID-19 pandemic delayed the election by 10 months, creating an a very different operating environment than what the country and the Management Board expected.

In January 2020, the Management Board announced that the election will be held on August 29, 2020; however, after undertaking certain activities, the emergence of the global Covid 19 pandemic in the country, pushed the election process forward. During this time, besides mobilizing additional resources to combat COVID-19, the Management Board worked tirelessly to ensure that the changing socio-political situation does not affect the success of the elections conducted this year.

Following the September 2020 decision of the FDRE House of Peoples' Representatives to hold the sixth general election in the Ethiopian calendar 2013, the Management Board has been preparing for this election by planning and allocating for its human resource, procurement, operation, and resource needs. Accordingly, the schedule for the sixth general election was announced on January 3, 2021; and ultimately besides the elections date being pushed by 16 days from the announced date, it is possible to conclude that the rest proceeded as planned.

NEBE has made significant efforts to improve the preparation and quality of the sixth general election, including the introduction of a transparent ballot boxes, a secret voting booth to protect the integrity of the ballot, and the use of security measures at all levels for the first time. These items such as seals and tamper evident bags enhance the credibility of the election as well as set

the standard for upcoming national elections, so previous standards are not used anymore. A total of 845,075, 945.60 birr was spent on election materials.

Registration of Candidates and Participation Parties

In accordance with the criteria set in the Ethiopian Electoral, Political Parties Registration, and Election's Code of Conduct Proclamation 1162/2011, the re-registration of political parties resulted in the reduction of number of parties, collaborations, and coalitions numbering to 52. The 52 political parties that met these criteria took, separately and through their coalitions, 49 ballot symbols. At the beginning of the registration process, a total of 9,505 candidates from 46 political parties were registered, of which 148 were private candidates and 1,987 were female candidates. The registration took place in 674 constituency offices throughout the country.

Candidate registration process was not challenge free; as it is well known, the election and its process require a quick response and action based on a timely and set schedule that is appropriate for relevant stakeholders. Due to the lack of cooperation from regional and city governments during the registration process, the national registration of candidates was split from February 15, 2021 to March 4, 2021 and from February 22 to March 5, 2021. As a result, the candidate registration deadline was extended by an additional 15 days, further tightening an already tight electoral schedule. Challenges in relation to transportation and logistics during the candidate registration process had shown in some ways to the NEBE how transport and logistics could affect the electoral process.

Since the commencement of candidate registration, the Board has been working tirelessly to provide information to voters and those who monitor the elections process. Accordingly, NEBE prepared radio and newspaper spots about candidate registration, and broadcast messages related to candidate registration and the election through 19 media outlets for two weeks.

During the candidate registration period, NEBE received more than 500 complaints from most of the competing political parties and opened a 665 toll-free hotline where it received up to 400 calls a day about issues related to candidate registration, and worked tirelessly to resolve these issues.

Voter Registration

During its plans to conduct voter registration at about 50,000 polling stations, the NEBE faced significant challenges in recruiting willing and non-partisan election officials. In this difficult and crucial task, identifying and recruiting non-partisan individuals was challenging due to a lack of human capacity, the lack of a culture of volunteerism, and limited support and cooperation from political parties to support the process.

However, around 152,700 election officers were able to conduct the election diligently, despite few shortcomings. However, due to serious problems with the recruitment of polling station workers, the first day of voter registration had to be postponed, from its planned date March 1, to March 25, 2021.

Voter registration, which was one of the main activities of the election, commenced in 42,585 polling stations and rife with various challenging events. As a result, some of the issues are mentioned as follows. There were parts of our country where voter registration did not take place; complaints from places where voter registration took place; and places where voter registration took place partially.

Issues such as extreme logistics and transportation challenges during the distribution of voter registration materials, delays in cooperation, low turnout of voters to register in the first weeks of the voter registration period, have made the voter registration period to be extended twice.

During the voter registration process, three media messages were broadcasted through 62 media outlets, mainly in five languages, and in addition 14 social media campaigns, and 10 text messages encouraging voters to register were disseminated. As a result of all of these efforts, a total of 38,234,910 voters were registered.

The election officers working on candidate registration and voter registration received training from the NEBE on their specific duties and electoral process in four tier cascade training. Unlike the past, all of these election officers received training using the same operational materials they were going to use. As a result, the packing and distribution of training materials were carried out separately and the training was rolled out at various levels - in 20 cities and 674 constituency offices.

Ballot Lottery and Printing of Ballot Papers

One of the new changes adopted during the sixth general election was determining the positions of candidates on the ballot paper through ballot lottery. When deciding to draw ballot lottery for candidates, NEBE aimed at ensuring that all parties had a fair opportunity, and set an exemplary process; and through this, voters can choose without any influence. A total of 1150 federal and regional constituencies were drawn during the ballot lottery, and for the first time in our election history, the ballot papers had the pictures of the candidates. The ballot papers were printed in two countries and were designed with the aim to provide high quality, voter information, and fair competition despite the challenges encountered during the candidate vetting process. About 9 million USDs had been allocated for the printing of ballot papers and the full cost was covered by national budget.

Participation

One of the major achievements of the sixth general election is the participation of various stakeholders. In the process, 169 civil society organizations were accredited to provide voter education, while 46 local civil society organizations were accredited to observe the election, who were able to deploy 44,560 observers on election day.

More than 20 discussions were held on all laws and draft directives by political parties, and 16 discussions were held weekly since the timeline was issued. In the process, the National Election

Board of Ethiopia has been able to obtain a number of inputs and recommendations from the parties.

The Board has been working tirelessly to improve the flow of information and transparency in the run-up to the sixth National Election, and about 70 media outlets have been accredited through their 1,971 journalists to support the work, which is part of this legal right to vote. Out of these, about 160 journalists were accredited on behalf of international media outlets.

The Board has also made significant efforts to involve disenfranchised members of the community, both voter and candidates, in the process of training and support for female candidates, including the inclusion of people with disabilities in the legal and operational frameworks. About 99 of the candidates competing in this election are people with disabilities.

Polling and Results

The Board had taken steps to ensure that there were no major problems on Election Day by learning from the pre-election activities. In this regard, with the support of federal and regional government leaders, the process has been carried out as planned. Due to the high voter turnout and the lack of efficiency of the Board, in some areas, the inconvenience of voters has become a source of frustration and learning curve for the Board.

On the day of the election, 40,365 polling stations were opened, and registered voters have been casting their ballots peacefully for the whole day. The Board had been able to solve the logistical problems of the day quickly and finalize the voting process without any basic difficulties. Although there were voters that went to the polls on June 21, despite conducting voter registration, due to various reasons in a total of 70 constituencies voters did not cast their vote.

Following the process on the Election Day, the Board addressed various issues related to the voting process. After the Election Day, the Board received complaints via its lawyers through a fair grievance process, which organized the complaints and supported political parties, as well as reviewed the evidence presented to them on complaints filed on 165 constituencies. Complaints from 30 parties and seven independent candidates mainly addressed administrative action, cancellation of results, and re-election.

The Board has taken steps to investigate any irregularities in the process that may change the election results, and they are as follows:

- Ordered a recount in 10 constituencies where three of them were for House of Representatives.
- Denbia 1 - Amhara Regional State House of Representatives
- Bako Gazer 1 - SNNPR House of Representatives
- Dire Dawa 2 - Dire Dawa City House of Representatives
- Afambo, Amibara, Abala, Konba, Gulina - Afar Regional State
- Jur Constituency - Gambella Regional Council

- Sherkole Constituency - Regional Council Benishangul
- Qucha Constituency Election - on the process counting for regional and the House of Representatives

Recognizing that the irregularities in 10 constituencies could have a significant effect on election results, it has decided to hold a re-election in those areas. The constituencies for which these decisions were made are as follows. These are some of the areas where these decisions were made, including the denial of observers and representatives, the fact that the election process was under the influence of the local government structure, and the fact that a large number of voters were barred from voting.

These are

Amhara State House of Representatives and Regional Councils -

- Merto le Mariam
- Adet
- Raya Kobo
- Baty
- Molale

Afar Region

- Dalul Regional Council

Benishangul

- Mengi Constituency - Regional Council

SNNPR

- Maskan and Mareko 2 (House of Representatives and Regional Council)
- Bule (House of Representatives and Regional Council)
- Basketto Special (Representatives and Regional Council)

Challenges and Successes

It is not exaggeration to say that there have been many challenges in the process since the start of preparations for the sixth general elections. Among the challenges, some of them are:

- The institution's low execution capacity when received by the NEBE resulting in capacity-building and election preparation work taking place simultaneously within a short amount of time.
- The Board's limitations regarding human resource capacity and relevant experience to undertake such a major event across the country.
- Various activities that undermine the scale of political competition during the election process (attempts by government agencies in the lower echelons of government to interfere in the process, partisan reports in public and private media, etc.)

- The voting process in some constituencies not taking place on the same day as in other constituencies due to security concerns in our country.
- Especially related to the voting process, the disruption of party agents' work at lower levels
- There was a serious lack of capacity to implement and understand the basic electoral standards.
- It was difficult to carry out the election process efficiently in the midst of the many political, military and social events that took place during the election period.

Despite the above challenges, it has taken a lot of effort to make the election peaceful and credible, and it is important to remember some of the major achievements of the Board, of which it is proud.

Among these:

- The National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) is proud of its successful efforts to establish a non-partisan institution.
- The Board has introduced new and irreversible procedures to modernize the election, that will be helpful for future elections.
- The Board has worked tirelessly to gain the trust of political actors, especially political parties, through continuous dialogue during the election process.
- Its ability to hold a peaceful and credible election in the face of security concerns, and at a time when political tensions are high.

Results of the sixth General Election

In accordance with the authority given to the NEBE under Article 7 of Proclamation No. 1133/2011 and Article 62 of Proclamation No. 1162/2011, the NEBE has issued the following results.

Table - 1 – Results Table

Thanks

The NEBE would like to thank the following members who have made significant contributions to the success of the sixth General Elections.

1. The large number of citizens who voted in the sixth general elections
2. NEBE staff
3. Constituency officers, zonal coordinators, and poll station workers who participated in the sixth general elections
4. Political parties and candidates who participated in the sixth general elections
5. FDRE House of People's Representatives
6. FDRE Government
7. FDRE Election Security Task Force
8. FDRE Ministry of Defense
9. FDRE Air Force
10. FDRE Ministry of Finance
11. FDRE Ministry of Transport



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12. FDRE Federal Police
13. All regional governments and regional security forces
14. CSOs who observed the election period and provided voter education
15. Ethiopian Airlines
16. Commercial Bank of Ethiopia
17. Ethio-Telecom
18. Ethiopian Civil Aviation Authority
19. Ethiopian Postal Service
20. Public and private medias and journalists who reported on the sixth general elections.
21. Move One Logistics
22. Akakas Logistics
23. Andinet Bole Airport Cargo Gurmuk Services
24. Solomon Zewde Ship and Item Transport Agent
25. Segon Maril International Movers
26. Yeneneh Mulat Law Office
27. Beza Shewangzaw Law Office
28. Yalelet Teshome Law Office
29. Lomi Production
30. Zeleman Production
31. Resolution Studio
32. Detail Design
33. Construction Workers Association
34. Architects' Association
35. Ethiopian Skylight Hotel
36. United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the SEEDS project
37. United States Agency for International Aid(USAID) and International Foundation for Electoral System (IFES)
38. European Union (EU) and European Center for Election Support (ECES)
39. German Government's Mission to Ethiopia
40. Netherlands Institution for Multi-party Democracy
41. Open Society Foundation

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