

REINFORCING CREDIBILITY AND ACCEPTANCE OF ELECTORAL PROCESSES

The Role of Electoral Stakeholders and Electoral Administrations

Building the Relationship Between the Election Commission, Political Parties and Candidates to Enhance the Integrity of the Electoral Processes in Pakistan

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Pakistan: A Brief Introduction

- Key Statistics
- Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP)
- Evolution of democracy in Pakistan
- Strengthening Democracy: why collaboration between all stakeholders is critical
 - Diminishing electoral fraud and electoral violence
 - Improving the legal framework for elections
 - Increasing voter participation, particularly women voters
 - Cultivating democratic mindsets among our growing youth population

Post General Elections 2008 — Efforts to build relationship with Political Parties and CSOs

- ECP's consultation with stakeholders was a rare event;
 - The ECP's first Five-Year Strategic Plan (2010-2014)
 - Establishment of Consultative Forums:
 - The appointment of judicial officers as DROs and ROs
 - A Code of Conduct for Political Parties and Candidates
 - Review of election symbols
 - Use of magnetic ink
 - Electoral rolls with photographs and NIC numbers of voters
- “Increased consultation with political parties contributed to increased confidence in, and performance by, the ECP.”*
- (European Union Election Observation Mission)

Consultation/interaction with PPs helped Building Trust & Confidence of parties in the ECP

One of the confidence-building measure was the new initiatives taken by ECP:

Here are just some examples:

- Development of Computerized Electoral Rolls System (CERS) using Civil Registry database, completely eliminating multiple entries and other inaccuracies in the Voters' List. System is based on unique identifier i.e. NIC number of a voter.
- Launch of 8300 SMS service – used by 55 million voters to check their details on the voters roll and find out the location of their polling stations.
- The use of technology to improve the efficiency and transparency of elections.
- Dissemination of information to ensure parties and candidates are fully informed about all aspects of the electoral process.

Measures to strengthen consultative process with PPs?

- Stakeholders outreach:
- To openly and transparently interact with electoral stakeholders, share information, seek input on key matters, and further strengthen the trust between them and the ECP to make the electoral processes more credible.
- One of the objective under this goal is to strengthen the two-way communication system with political parties and hold regular consultations on issues related to electoral reforms and various electoral matter

Healthy signs of such consultation/interaction!

1. Willingness of parties representing in the parliament to bring about legal amendments in election laws to improve them so as to remove the gaps and deficiencies therein;
2. Demarcation of boundaries of Union Councils/Wards for Local Government Elections should be done by the ECP;
3. As a result of interactive meetings with Women Caucus in the National Assembly, ECP was persuaded to set for itself, a number of objectives in its Draft Strategic Plan 2014-2018;

Some important objectives

- Conduct research to identify barriers which prevent women from registering and exercising their right to vote, including analysis of the polling stations with high and low women turnout;
- Devise a strategy to reduce the gap between men and women voters on the electoral rolls;
- Develop a strategy for reducing turnout gaps between men and women;
- Develop a mechanism for increasing the percentage of female polling staff;
- Develop a concept note to identify advantages of having picture on CNIC for women to further improve registration of women with pictorial identification and implement the approved recommendations

Concluding Remarks

- **A Collaborative Endeavour:**
 - The objectives mentioned above as well as the goals and objectives we conceived and put together in our Draft Strategic Plan 2014-2018 are achievable but can only be accomplished if the ECP and political parties work together, bound by the same vision for strengthening democracy in Pakistan.
- **A Collaborative Roadmap:**
 - What we need is to foster consensus on what needs to be done, and how. Our next Strategic Plan, currently in draft form, offers a way forward.

THANK YOU