

KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS (PHASE-II)

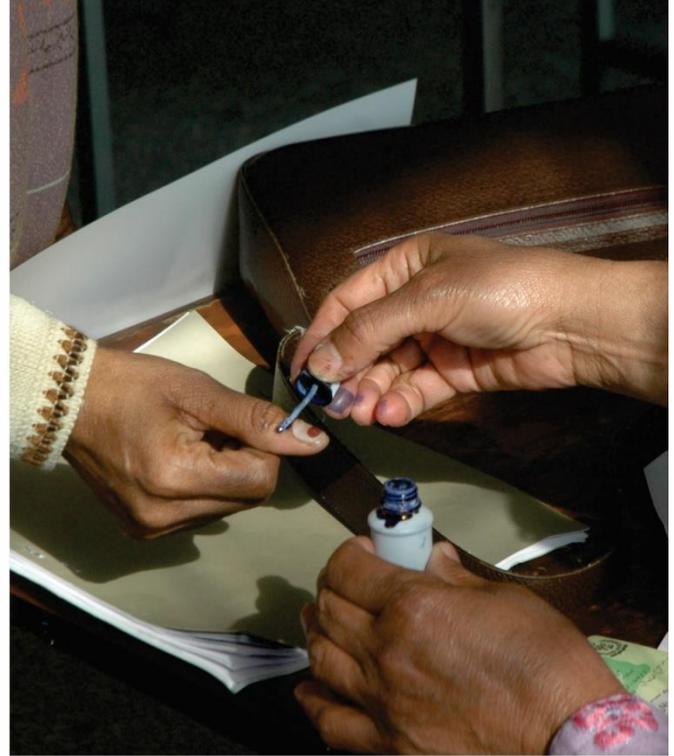


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Peaceful, well-managed polling day marks completion of LG Elections

- Seven percent ballots excluded from count
- Margin of victory for chairmen of 28 *tehsil* councils less than ballots excluded from count

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) successfully completed the second phase of the local government (LG) elections with around 41 percent of the 8.5 million registered voters in 18 districts turning out to vote on March 31, 2022 to elect 12,875 representatives on general and reserved seats in an election that was largely peaceful, orderly and transparent. Although the ballots excluded from the count were more than the margin of victory in 28 *tehsil* contests for the seats of chairmen, the election outcome was accepted by all contending political parties.

Against the backdrop of political uncertainty amid the impending no-confidence motion (NCM) against the Prime Minister and resulting political fragmentation, the election process remained largely peaceful with a reasonable voter turnout. The election remained highly competitive as political unity among opposition parties at the center did not translate into electoral alliances or seat adjustments at the local level. As many as 34,734 candidates including the ones fielded by 25 political parties were in the run for general and reserved seats at the *tehsil*, neighborhood and village council level.

In what was an undeniably a complex, complicated and largescale electoral exercise with more than over 72,000 deployed election officials to manage 6,170 polling stations (3,951 combined, 1,151 male and 1,068 female) comprising 16,509 polling booths (9,218 for men and 7,291 for women), KP has become the first province to have



fulfilled its constitutional responsibility under Article 140-A(1) to form the third-tier of governance providing representation to local representatives including the marginalized communities such as peasants, workers and women. However, the election followed a delay of more than two years primarily due to weak political will to decentralize powers that manifested in the shape of legal complications and inadequacies. The provincial government legalized the delay through an amendment in the KP Epidemic Control and Emergency Relief Act, 2020 on the pretext of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).

The ECP had initially scheduled the second phase of KPLG to take place on March 27, 2022, but the date was changed to March 31, 2022 following the Supreme Court's reversal of an earlier order by the Peshawar High Court that required the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to hold these elections after Ramadan. The KPLG elections during the second phase were held to elect mayors of two city councils, chairmen of 63 tehsil councils, and members of 1,659 village councils and 171 neighborhood councils across 18 districts including Abbottabad, Swat, Malakand, Upper Chitral, Lower Chitral, Lower Dir, Upper Dir, Shangla, Tor Garh, Lower Kohistan, Upper Kohistan, Kolai-Palas, Mansehra, Battagram, Kurram, Orakzai, North Waziristan and South Waziristan. The elections were postponed in a neighborhood council (NC) Sainabad (Mansehra) due to wrong allotment of the election symbol, and two village councils – VC Wahab Khel (Shangla) and VC Mekahband (Malakand) – due to the deaths of the contesting candidates. Moreover, the voting at 18 polling stations in eight districts (South Waziristan, North Waziristan, Kolai Palas, Mansehra, Abbottabad, Kurram, Upper Kohistan and Battagram) was halted and subsequently postponed due to incidents of violence.

While election result of 11 *tehsils* is still awaited, the turnout in 54 *tehsils* where provisional consolidated result has been notified remained 41 percent – highest being 55 percent in Seo *tehsil* of Upper Kohistan and the lowest 14 percent in Serwakai *tehsil* of South Waziristan. According to the available gender-disaggregated data for 49 *tehsils*, the female turnout remained 30 percent as compared to 41 percent male turnout with none of these *tehsils* reporting women turnout less than 10 percent of the total polled votes. The Returning Officers (ROs) responsible for Beharin, Khwazakhela, Bazai (Swat), Martung and Chakisar (Shangla) *tehsils* did not provide gender disaggregated data of polled votes on Form-XIX (Provisional Consolidated Statement of Results of the Count).

The number of ballots excluded from the count¹ at the polling station level was disconcerting, and remained almost seven percent (177,375) of the total votes polled (2,642,982). Of the 54 provisional results announced so far, there were 28 *tehsils* where the margin of victory was less the total number of ballots excluded from the count of the contests of seats of chairmen. For instance, in Kalkot *tehsil* of Upper Dir, the margin of victory between the winning and runner-up candidates from the chairmen seat was of seven votes, whereas the total ballots excluded from the count were 1,633. The Election Commission may ascertain the reasons for exclusion of ballots as per Section 8(b) of the Elections Act, 2017 to inform its voter information and education campaigns for future elections.

According to the ECP results of 52 seats for *tehsil* chairmen and two for city mayors, the largest vote share was bagged by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) with 29.02 percent of the polled votes, followed by Pakistan Muslim League – Nawaz with 13.64 percent, Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam Pakistan (JUI-P) with 12.24 percent, Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan (JIP) with 10.21 percent, Pakistan Peoples' Party Parliamentarians (PPPP) with 8.86 percent, Awami National Party (ANP) with 7 percent, Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) with 1.3 percent, Majlis Wahdatul-e-Muslimeen Pakistan (MWMP) with 1.16 percent and the remaining 12 political parties received less than one percent of the polled votes. The independent candidates secured 13.61 percent votes of the total votes polled.

¹ Ballots excluded from the count at the polling stations level are individually examined by the Returning Officer during the consolidation of results proceedings and upon his satisfaction that the exclusion was made as per law are rejected.

The ECP had deployed 18 District Monitoring Officers (DMOs) to monitor the violations of the codes of conduct, and served notices to government and opposition representatives including the Prime Minister, Governor, Chief Minister, and Federal and Provincial Ministers for appearing in public meetings in Lower Dir, Mansehra and Malakand ahead of the LG polls. The President of Pakistan had also promulgated an ordinance amending the Elections Act, 2017 through the election campaign, permitting a member of the Parliament (Majlis-e-Shoora), provincial assembly or elected member of local government, including member holding any other office under the Constitution or any other law may visit or address public meetings in any area or constituency during election campaign. The controversial ordinance was partially implemented by the ECP, allowing only members of Parliament and provincial assemblies to participate in the election campaign.

With the exception of two instances reported from *Shingri Pine* and *Banda Mori Shumarli* village councils of Battagram of bar on women voting, no other reports were received by FAFEN observers. Women participation as candidates for general seats remained a cause of concern. Only 33 women contested the general seats² for *tehsil* chairman, while no woman candidate vied for any of the two mayor seats in Swat and Abbottabad. Another point of concern remained the uncontested election on almost 10 percent of the LG seats – 351 (six percent) general seats, 533 (29 percent) women reserved seats, 151 (eight percent) peasants/workers reserved seats, 233 (13 percent) youth reserved seats and 50 (three percent) non-Muslim reserved seats.

This preliminary report is based on the observation of 513 (eight percent) of 6,170 polling stations set up for the second phase of LG elections. This includes reports from 125 male polling stations, 122 female polling stations and 266 combined polling stations. FAFEN's observation methodology is based on the KPLG Act, 2013 (as amended up to September 2021), the Elections Act, 2017, the Elections Rules, 2017, and the Codes of Conduct notified under the laws. For the training of FAFEN's election-day observers, as many as 20 workshops were held across the districts covering technical aspects of voting and counting processes. A total of 319 accredited observers (165 female and 154 male) were trained to observe the second phase of KPLG polls. Each observer was required to observe up to four polling stations for in-depth observation of the quality of the electoral process.

1. Orderly and Peaceful

Despite the complexity of the electoral exercise that voters to cast six ballots, the voting and counting process at a majority of the observed polling stations (93 percent) remained orderly and smooth, marking slight improvement in comparison to the first phase of KPLG when orderly conduct was reported at 88 percent of the observed polling stations. Although the ECP had ensured provision of adequate staff at a majority of the polling stations for the second phase, one of the major reasons for the disorderly voting process at seven percent of the observed polling stations remained slow processing of votes, which was recorded at more than nine minutes from verification to the casting of ballot. According to FAFEN observers, voters took up to five minutes from identification to casting of their votes in 29 percent of the observed polling stations where three APOs were processing ballot papers. At 24 percent of the observed polling stations, it took six to ten minutes for each voter to vote. At five percent of the observed polling stations, it took more than 10 minutes for each voter to cast his or her ballot.

Another reason for disorderly conduct of polling was undue breaks by polling staff for lunch, prayers, etc., which was observed at six percent of the observed polling stations although the law requires uninterrupted voting during the prescribed polling hours. Undue breaks and slow processing of votes mostly lead to long queues and

² This data is based on analysis of information received from 10 districts – Abbottabad, Batagram, Chitral Lower, Dir Lower, Dir Upper, Malakand, Mansehra, North Waziristan, Orazai and Upper Chitral.



overcrowding inside polling stations and booths, which potentially trigger untoward situations. Simplification of vote processing procedures and appointment of competent staff are essential to ensure that the voting process in the upcoming LG elections in the other three provinces and Islamabad Capital Territory remain orderly. Option of single counterfoil for issuance of multiple ballot papers may be explored as it would reduce the requirements of staff and corresponding training needs.

At 33 percent of the observed polling stations, voting started at the prescribed time of 8:00 am. However, the remaining observed polling stations opened for voting after the stipulated time but before 9:01 am. The ECP should take up additional efforts to start the polling process at the legally stipulated time by ensuring that all required staff and election materials are timely available.

FAFEN observers also reported that Presiding Officers (PrO) at 38 percent of the observed polling stations did not follow the clear ECP guidelines for setting-up polling booths in separate rooms, which also led to overcrowding leading to slow processing of votes inside the booths.

Although the polling remained largely peaceful in most districts, FAFEN observers reported scattered incidents of verbal and physical brawls at 29 polling stations in 13 districts. At eight observed polling stations, the PrOs had to halt the polling process due to these incidents. FAFEN's media monitoring also highlighted six incidents of violence leading to a death and multiple persons sustaining injuries in South Waziristan, Upper Kohistan, Swat and Abbottabad.

Security, however, remained well-managed at a majority of polling stations where police was constantly at guard both outside and inside. FAFEN observers reported to have seen police performing their security duties outside 83 percent and inside 71 percent of the observed polling stations. At 31 percent of the observed polling stations, CCTV cameras were also installed. However, the law does not specify the use of the footage of these CCTV cameras as to whether these can be used as evidence in cases of election disputes and be presented at tribunals.

— 2. Campaigning and Canvassing Restrictions Largely Ignored —

Election-day campaigning and canvassing continued to be widespread despite a legal bar. Political parties and independent candidates had set-up camps within the prohibited legal limits around 66 percent of the observed polling stations. Such campaigning and canvassing around polling stations at times become a source of election-day violence due to intense competition, and may also create an atmosphere of intimidation for voters especially when there is a lax control on the display of arms and weapons. FAFEN observers reported to have seen armed persons in party camps around seven percent of the observed polling stations – a clear violation of the law and code of conduct that proscribes carrying and displaying weapons.

These party camps were also observed to have been actively engaged in campaigning and canvassing on election-day. In addition to distributing campaign materials such as caps, stickers and badges, etc. at 16 percent of the observed polling stations, these camps at 34 percent polling stations were also issuing voting *parchis* (chits) to voters, which bear the serial number of voters on the electoral rolls. FAFEN observed voters at 23 percent of the observed polling stations carrying these *parchis* with the election symbol of some party or an independent candidate, which also compromises the secrecy of their choice of candidate. Such *parchis*, although illegal and also banned by the Supreme Court's decision in the Pakistan Workers' Party case 2012, are meant to facilitate the work of Polling Officers who otherwise have to look up each name in the electoral rolls taking additional time in

the processing of ballot papers for voters. The ECP may consider setting up facilitation desks at polling stations for the purpose to minimize reliance of polling staff on these *parchis*.

Despite instructions to PrOs in their handbooks as per law and rules, they failed to remove campaign materials at the outer perimeters of 24 percent of the observed polling stations. At these polling stations, the campaign material belonged to PTI (74 percent), followed by PPP (50 percent), JUIP (48 percent), PMLN (33 percent), ANP (23 percent) and JIP (11 percent). Similarly, PrOs did not remove campaign materials inside three percent of the observed polling stations.

In violation of the provisions of the code of conduct for political parties and contesting candidates, the workers of political parties and independent candidates were observed to have been providing transport facility to voters at 17 percent of the observed polling stations. Observers also reported presence of unauthorized persons inside polling stations before the start of poll at nine percent of the observed polling stations – a practice that needs to be completely controlled as such persons generally exert influence over election officials. The use of magisterial powers by the PrOs must be reinforced as a deterrent to eradicate such election-day practices.

FAFEN observers also reported multiple election actors – polling officials, candidates, election or polling agents, politicians or elected representatives, public officials and security personnel – attempting to illegally influence the voting process at seven percent of the observed polling stations. According to FAFEN observers, voters were being asked about their voting choice at five percent of the observed polling stations; election process was being interfered with at two percent of the observed polling stations; polling agents were being barred from monitoring the polling process at one percent of the observed polling stations; and, voters were being influenced to vote in favor of a party or candidate at three percent of the observed polling stations.

3. Absolute Secrecy of Vote Yet to be Achieved

According to FAFEN observers, ECP-provided secrecy screens to protect the secrecy of voters were available at 85 percent polling booths of the observed polling stations. Last minute changes in polling schemes that also alter the number of polling booths assigned to a polling station often result in shortfall of election materials including secrecy screens, compelling the election staff to employ makeshift arrangements. At 93 percent of the polling booths, the ECP-provided secrecy screens were installed in a manner that voters could cast their votes in complete privacy. The secrecy screens, however, were placed in a manner at seven percent of the observed polling booths that could have potentially compromised their secrecy.

At eight percent of the observed polling booths, the CCTV cameras were angled at the secrecy screen in a manner that might have compromised the secrecy of voters. While adequate arrangements for voters' secrecy were largely in place, FAFEN observers reported breaches of voters' secrecy by election and police officials, polling agents and unauthorized persons. Unauthorized persons were observed to have been accompanying voters behind the secrecy screens at nine percent of the observed polling stations; polling or election agents at four percent, security officials at two percent and candidates at one percent.

4. Counting by Law but Cumbersome Ballot Processing Procedures Need Simplification

Keeping in view the complexity of the LG elections and rigorous legal requirements of the identification of voters by polling officers (POs) and documentation of the credentials of voters on the counterfoils before the issuance of



ballot papers by Assistant Presiding Officers (APO), the compliance with these legalities remained varied at the observed polling stations. This was similar to the observation made during the first phase of the KPLG elections.

FAFEN observed the voter identification and ballot issuance processes of 2,052 voters at 513 polling stations – up to four voters at each polling station. FAFEN observers reported compliance with the legally required identification process at 81 percent of the observed polling stations. Similarly, at 80 percent of the observed polling stations, the APOs were partially complying with the requirements of filling the counterfoils with the complete set of entries – name and number of the council, serial number of voters on electoral rolls, National Identity Card (NIC) number of voters and their thumb impressions along with their own signature and officials stamp. The APOs at 13 percent of the observed polling stations were completely following these legal formalities. In addition, the APOs were also required to sign and mark the back of the ballot paper with the official stamp for it to be considered valid at the time of counting. However, FAFEN observers reported non-compliance with this critical legal requirement at 16 percent of the observed polling stations, which might be one of the reasons for nearly seven percent votes being excluded from the count in the provisional consolidation statement of results.

The complete fulfillment of these requirements depend on the number of voters arriving to cast their vote. An APO who might be completely fulfilling these requirements during slow voting hours may not be able to fully comply with them during the rush hours. Complete compliance becomes particularly cumbersome where all three APOs were not available, requiring at times for two APOs to fill three counterfoils each, and at times one APO to fill six counterfoils for one voter to issue as many ballot papers. The Election Commission may need to simplify the requirements of the entries of the counterfoils, which are at times missed due to voter pressure at the polling stations.

The Election Commission may further inquire into the level of compliance with these legalities and their utility through assessing the records of a sample of polling stations in order to further improve their handbooks and other training materials for the election staff. Additionally, notwithstanding technological solutions, the ECP may also consider using one counterfoil for documenting voter credentials as against as many counterfoils as the ballot papers to further smoothen the voting process in the upcoming elections in other provinces and ICT where multiple ballots will be involved. This may also reduce the requirement of additional election staff for LG elections.

FAFEN observers reported a few instances of polling staff turning away voters, but these were for the reasons as clearly determined by law -- voters with original NICs being turned away because their name was not on the electoral rolls at the polling stations concerned or voters coming without original NICs. At 13 percent of the observed polling stations, one or more voters were turned away for not being registered on the electoral rolls of the polling stations. However, there were a few instances reported from three percent of the observed polling stations where voters were turned away because they were carrying an expired NIC though the law allows such voters to vote. At two percent of the observed polling stations, one or more voters were not allowed to vote despite possessing and producing their NICs. Similarly, at one percent of the observed polling stations, at least one voter was allowed to vote on identification documents other than the original NIC.

The Election Commission may clarify the role of the police and security officials on guard outside the polling stations in their code of conduct as they were seen checking NICs outside 85 percent and voter *parchis* outside 70 percent of the observed polling stations, a responsibility that is not assigned to them. Separating the election-related responsibilities and security duties will minimize the controversies around the role security officials in elections.

As far as the counting processes at the polling stations were concerned, FAFEN observers reported these processes were largely compliant with the procedural requirements. Of 106 polling stations where counting was observed, the main entrance was closed at 85 percent polling stations for voters who were not inside the premises of the

polling stations at 5:00 pm in accordance with the law. However, this, although covered by law, leads to disenfranchisement of voters who may be allowed to vote even if they are present outside the polling station in queues. Moreover, this legality is subjectively implemented as in many cases queued voters are allowed to enter the polling station before the main entrance is closed. The Election Commission may further clarify the provision in the spirit of discouraging disenfranchisement. The voters present inside 80 percent of the observed polling stations were allowed to vote after 5:00 pm, in line with the instructions provided in the ECP handbooks.

The integrity of the counting process is critically important to the legitimacy of the election results. Polling agents representing contesting candidates have the right to witness the counting process, to see each ballot as it is counted, to register an objection to any ballot if it is not validly marked, and to sign the result forms and have their copies. The election staff was observed to be varyingly complying with the ballot counting requirements during these elections. However, from one polling station, a FAFEN observer reported that polling agents of all contesting candidates were asked to leave the premises before the start of counting. At 74 percent of the observed polling stations, the staff was keeping a separate pile of ballots excluded from the count. The PrOs at 27 percent of the observed polling stations conducted a second count of the ballots on their own motion or on the request of polling agents. FAFEN observers reported from 14 percent of the observed polling stations where polling agents were seen to be touching the ballots during the counting processes. At only four percent of the observed polling stations, polling agents raised objections to the PrOs' decisions to exclude a ballot paper from the count.

5. Unrestricted Observation but Transparent Result Management at Polling Stations Need Improvements

Transparency of election is generally determined by the access of polling agents, independent ECP-accredited observers and media to observe the voting and counting processes. While there were no reports of restrictions on media to perform their duties on the election day inside and outside polling stations, FAFEN was also provided access to observe the voting and counting processes at all the assigned polling. FAFEN observed the process of opening of polls at 184 polling stations. At 80 percent of these polling stations, the PrOs showed the empty ballot boxes to polling agents as required by the law. The polling staff was observed to be acquiring signatures of polling agents on Form-XIV (Statement regarding Inspection of Ballot Boxes before Start of Polls) at 69 percent of the observed polling stations. At two percent of the observed polling stations, one or more polling agents were not allowed to sit through the opening proceedings or expelled. At five polling stations, polling agents of JUI-P, JIP, PPPP and an independent candidate objected to the opening proceedings.

Before the start of the polls, 71 percent of the observed polling stations had security officials present on duty, 13 percent had candidates and 64 percent had polling agents present inside the polling stations. At nine percent of the observed polling stations, unauthorized persons were reported to have been present inside the polling stations before the start of the poll. At all the observed 1,260 polling booths, FAFEN observers reported that ballot boxes were placed in a manner where they would be visible to the polling agents. At 79 percent of the observed polling booths, the polling agents were present inside booths. A majority of them (63 percent) had voters' lists.

The sign leading to the polling station entrance was found outside of 81 percent of the observed polling stations. As many as 82 percent of the observed polling stations had a chart pasted outside the building with its name and number. At all polling stations except the one where FAFEN observed the counting processes, the PrOs allowed polling agents of contesting political parties and independent candidates inside the counting room. The polling agents were seated at a place where they could clearly observe the counting process at 75 percent of the polling stations. Similarly, at 71 percent of the observed polling stations, the observers were seated in a way that they



could observe the counting processes. At 67 percent of the observed polling stations, adequate lighting arrangements were made for the counting process. At 63 percent of the observed polling stations, the polling staff would tell polling agents loudly about retrieval of an unstamped ballot. Similarly, at 66 percent of the observed polling stations, the polling staff called out loud the choice of voter on each ballot while counting.

At 40 percent of the observed polling stations, carbon copies of Form-XVII (Result of the Count) for mayor/*tehsil* chairman seats were provided to the polling agents. Copies of Form-XVIII (Ballot Paper Account) was provided to the polling agents at 39 percent of the observed polling stations for mayor/*tehsil* chairman seats. FAFEN observers could get the copies of Form-XVII for mayor/*tehsil* chairman seats at 40 percent of the observed polling stations. The PrOs pasted the copies of Form-XVII on the outer walls of 45 percent of the observed polling stations for mayor/*tehsil* chairman seats. Pasting of Ballot Paper Account on the outer wall was observed at 39 percent of the observed polling stations for mayor/*tehsil* chairman seats. At 25 percent of the PrOs interviewed at the observed polling stations confirmed that ECP monitoring teams had visited during the day.

6. Improved Polling Stations Management

The Election Commission had made elaborate arrangements of training of polling staff and supply of election materials. The training of staff and adequate availability of election materials are critical in running the polling station operations. More than two-third (69 percent) of PrOs interviewed by FAFEN observers reported that they had the prior experience of managing polling stations. Similarly, 96 percent of the interviewed POs shared that they have received a day-long training by the ECP with 95 percent expressing their satisfaction with the training and its contents. At 62 percent of the observed polling stations, the PrOs were wearing the ECP-issued badges. At around 90 percent of the observed polling stations, the critical election materials including indelible ink, stamp pads, and photographic electoral rolls were available in adequate quantities. Moreover, at 85 percent polling booths, the secrecy screens were available, while at the remaining polling booths, the election staff made makeshift arrangements. FAFEN observers reported that transparent ballot boxes were available at 86 percent polling booths. The last-minute changes in the polling scheme often lead to shortfall in election supplies at some polling stations, reinforcing the need for the ECP to ensure that final list of polling stations is implemented in letter and spirit.

FAFEN observers reported that usable toilet facility was available at 50 percent of the observed polling stations, while clean drinking water was available at 49 percent of the observed polling stations.

7. Inclusivity Measures Yield Results but Women Contestation Lacking

The election law includes specific provisions to enhance electoral and political participation of women alongside other marginalized groups including persons with disabilities, minorities and transgender persons. In addition to provisions for encouraging women to participate in elections, the law also requires the election officials to allow voters with disabilities a companion of their choice to escort them behind the secrecy screen to help them mark their ballot, provided the companion has his/her original NIC. FAFEN observers reported from 13 percent of the observed polling stations where PrOs prepared a separate list of the persons who provided assistance to voters with disabilities in casting their ballots.

The Election Commission had also ensured availability of ramps at 27 percent of the observed polling stations to facilitate wheelchair bound voters. Similarly, access to 48 percent of the observed polling stations was wheelchair worthy. The code of conduct for security officials required them to facilitate on priority persons with disabilities, senior citizens, transgender persons and pregnant and lactating women as well those accompanying infants. At three percent of the observed polling stations, the security officials were not giving preferential treatment to one of these groups of voters.

Low participation of women as candidates remained a cause of concern with only three women running for the office of chairman in 43 tehsils for which Form-X (List of Contesting Candidates) is available – one each in Darband tehsil of Mansehra, Darosh tehsil of Lower Chitral, and Ladha tehsil of South Waziristan. No woman contested for the office of mayor in Abbottabad and Babuzai (Swat). Among 7,012 candidates contesting for general seats in 39 city and tehsil councils, only 33 (less than one percent) were women.

In some locations, women continued were barred from voting by agreement among community leaders and/or candidates. FAFEN observers reported two instances of bar on women voting from two village councils in Battagram. It is important that the Election Commission may investigate such instances for safeguarding the interest of marginalized groups. In addition, the Election Commission must also take appropriate measures to ensure the gender disaggregated turnout is properly documented of voters on Form-XVII and Form-XIX as currently five out of 54 Form-XIX prepared by the Returning Officers (ROs) do not contain this information that is critical to determine the Commission's action under Section 9(1) of the Elections Act, 2017. According to the Election Act, 2017, if the turnout of women voters is less than 10 percent of the total votes polled in a constituency, the Commission may presume that the women voters have been restrained through an agreement from casting their votes and may declare, polling at one or more polling stations or election in the whole constituency, void.



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