



Somaliland Non State Actors Forum

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Date: 22/02/2016

Briefing Paper: 2

Awdal Voter Registration Preliminary Findings

Summary

From February 13 - 19 2016: Somaliland Non - State Actors Forum (SONSAF) in collaboration with Somaliland Civil Society Election Forum (SCISEF) deployed voter registration observers in 103 voter registration centers out of 138 voter registration centers covering approximately 75% of the Awdal region. The second region of the voter registration, civil society observation mission has prevailed to reach a significant number of registration centers, observers continually reported back that across the border areas of Ethiopia and Djibouti the voter registration centers encountered a crowd of people.

General Overview about the Voter Registration Situation in the Awdal Region

Domestic observers cultivated lessons learned from Togdheer and the scope of the operation of the domestic observers, following civil society policy interventions have been intensified and immediate feedbacks have been channeled to the concerned stakeholders.

In the meantime, domestic observers widely reported the huge impact made by the severe droughts in the region and the people in the long queues of the voter registration have been suffering and discussing much about the effect of the droughts and one old man in the queue told to the observers the *“politicians are needed to bear in mind that the current circumstance may curtail the anticipated turnouts in the region due to droughts.”*

Domestic observers confirmed that the voter registration exercise in Awdal region has started peacefully except one village called Hadayte where unidentified gun men took two voter

registration kits and domestic observers reported that two persons got minor injuries. This incident is linked to regional dispute over the areas that have no clear regional demarcation but domestic observers reported that this village of Hadayte which is under Lughaya district is not included in the disputed areas between the regions of Awdal, Maroodiyeex and Sahil.

Currently, the political parties and the Government of Somaliland agreed to conduct voter registration exercise in these disputed areas since citizens living in these districts have right to participate in the voter registration and elections as promised in the Constitution.

Hence, civil society is recommending that regional and district demarcation between these three regions should be based on a collective political decision to bring forward ultimate regional demarcation. The Ministry of Interior must take proactive measures in the anticipated disputed areas to strengthen the security presence.

Domestic observers also reported that there were some minor technical problems, particularly in the first two days, but this was not a new experience as there was similar in Togdheer region whereas these technical problems were constantly managed. Domestic observers pointed out that the technical problems encountered were solved by NEC staff who had such competence as they managed in Togdheer region.

In this regard, the observers together with regional civil society actors met with the traditional elders who raised some complaints related to the shortage of the registration centers in the Awdal region specially Borama district. The complaints were immediately responded by NEC adding some additional registration kits in Borama district.

Feedback from domestic observers stated that voter education and awareness raising activities were inadequately delivered to all districts in Awdal region, although there were some communities' self-sponsored groups including youth, women and traditional elders mobilizing and educating general public onwards.

In addition, visits of the political parties in the region have widely sensitized in Awdal region and the general public. Observers figured out that political parties strengthened their representatives or party agencies in the voter registration centers compared to Togdheer region.

Moreover, domestic observers are appealing to the Ministry of Interior to increase their representation in the registration centers where more kits have been deployed as observers reported that only one person from the Ministry of Interior was working over the four or five kits in one registration center with different queues.

Enhancing measures of the technical solutions by NEC will be more beneficial in the remaining regions in order to meet improved atmosphere. Observers have likewise recommended improving the voter education activities by ensuring maximum outreach and continuation.

Ultimately, SONSAF would like to emphasize that the civil society observation mission will be continued in the remaining days of the voter registration in Awdal region and final observation report will be presented at the end. SONSAF would also like to commend the

National Electoral Commission (NEC), Ministry of Interior, Police, Political Parties, regional Governor, Mayors, traditional elders and the civil society actors and in general all election stakeholders are appealed to continue their efforts to this end.