



ECP Urged to Facilitate DEC Cooperation and Transparency

DECs in KP Least Cooperative and Transparent

Introduction

Transparency is a hallmark of free and fair elections. Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN) encourages the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to send instructions to all District Election Commissioners (DECs) to ensure maximum transparency and cooperation with observers and other stakeholders throughout the election process.

This report aims to highlight the issues about election administration transparency as observed in 15 districts across Pakistan where FAFEN's District Long-Term Observers (DLTOs) conducted interviews with the DECs. The data has been compiled from five districts in Punjab, four in Balochistan and four in Sindh, three in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), and one in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). The interviews were conducted in the first week of February 2013.

The report also highlights public accessibility issues that FAFEN's DLTOs observed in 84 districts across the country. The report identifies potential issues related to public access to 41 out of 84 observed DEC offices in terms of security barricades and other factors.

FAFEN is deploying 130 DLTOs across the country as part of its comprehensive election observation strategy. DLTOs are monitoring both the pre-election and post-election environment in every district of Pakistan.

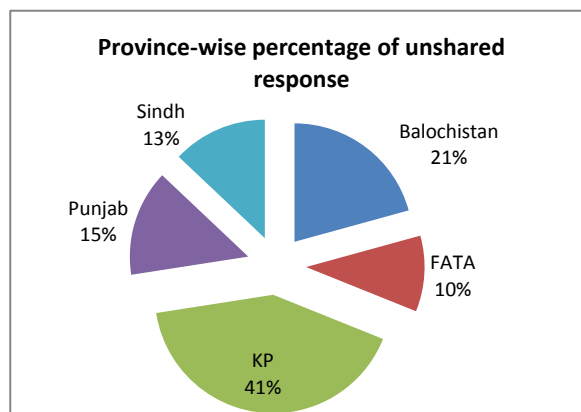
Legal Framework

Transparency of election administration necessarily entails access of citizens to information regarding the state's preparations for an election process. Article 19A of the Constitution of Pakistan (1973), part of the 18th Amendment of 2010, secures for every Pakistani citizen "the right to have access to information in all matters of public importance subject to regulation and reasonable restrictions imposed by law." The enabling Right to Information Act 2010 is intended "to promote the right to information as a constitutional right" and "to facilitate and encourage, promptly and at the lowest reasonable cost, the disclosure of information" (Article 3). Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), ratified by Pakistan in 2010, also protects the right to information.

1. Election Transparency

1.1 Cooperation of DEC

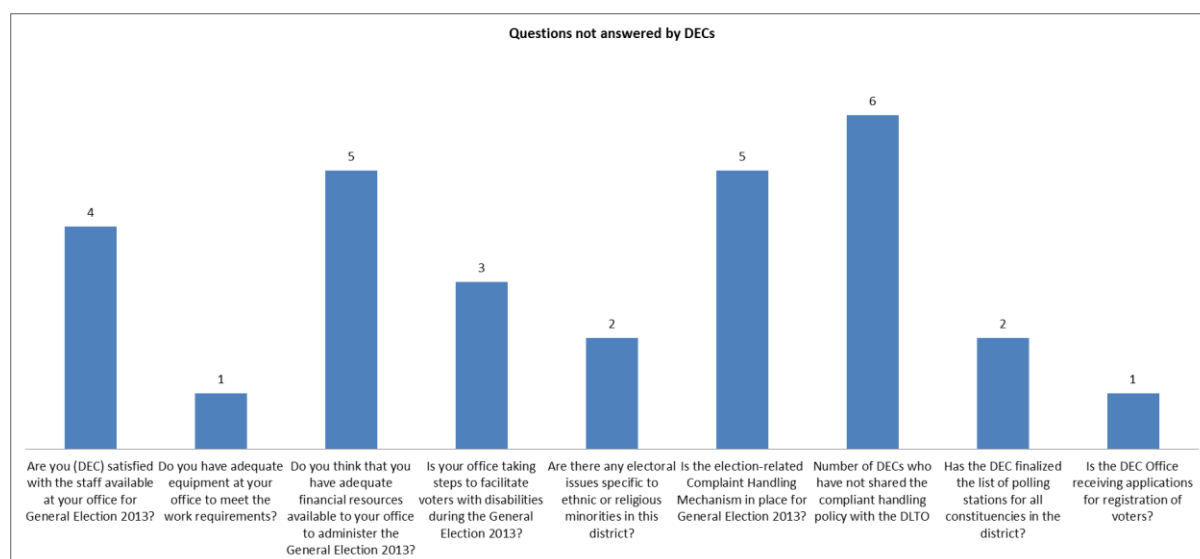
FAFEN observers found DECs from Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP) the least cooperative amongst the 15 districts covered in the first phase of



observation. Data has been obtained by dividing the total number of questions not answered in a particular province divided by the number of districts observed in that province. DEC's from KP were responsible for 41% of unanswered questions, followed by DEC's from Balochistan (21%), Punjab (15%), Sindh (13%), and FATA (10%). The percentage of unanswered questions from KP is almost twice that of the nearest province. In contrast, the DEC's in FATA were the most cooperative, answering most of the questions asked of them, compared to their colleagues in other provinces.

1.2 Unanswered Questions

FAFEN has prepared a standardized interview format consisting of 18 questions asked of the DEC's in direct interviews.



Of the DEC's approached for interviews by Friday, 8 February 2013, six DEC's declined to share their complaint handling policy with FAFEN observers. These DEC's represented the districts of Awaran (Balochistan), Buner and Kohistan (KP), Larkana, Malir and Shikarpur (Sindh). Another five DEC's based in Abbottabad, Buner and Kohistan (KP), Awaran (Balochistan), and Dera Ghazi Khan (Punjab) were unwilling to share information on whether or not they had set up a complaint handling mechanism for the upcoming elections.

Five DEC's in Mastung (Balochistan), Larkana and Okara (Sindh), and Abbottabad and Kohistan (KP) were unwilling to state whether the financial resources allocated to their districts are sufficient to conduct the General Election 2013.

2. Public Accessibility

2.1 Reasonable Distance to DEC Office

FAFEN's DLTOs reporting from 84 of the 129 districts across Pakistan found that nine DEC offices are not within one kilometer - a walk of approximately 15-20 minutes - of a public transportation stop. Punjab had the most DEC offices (5) at a far distance from public transport. Sindh, KP, FATA and Balochistan each reported a single such case.

DEC offices located beyond 1km of the nearest public transportation stop

District	Province
Attock	Punjab
Bahawalpur	
Lodhran	
Narowal	
Sahiwal	
Kharan	Balochistan
Khyber Agency	FATA
Torghar	KP
Mirpurkhas	Sindh

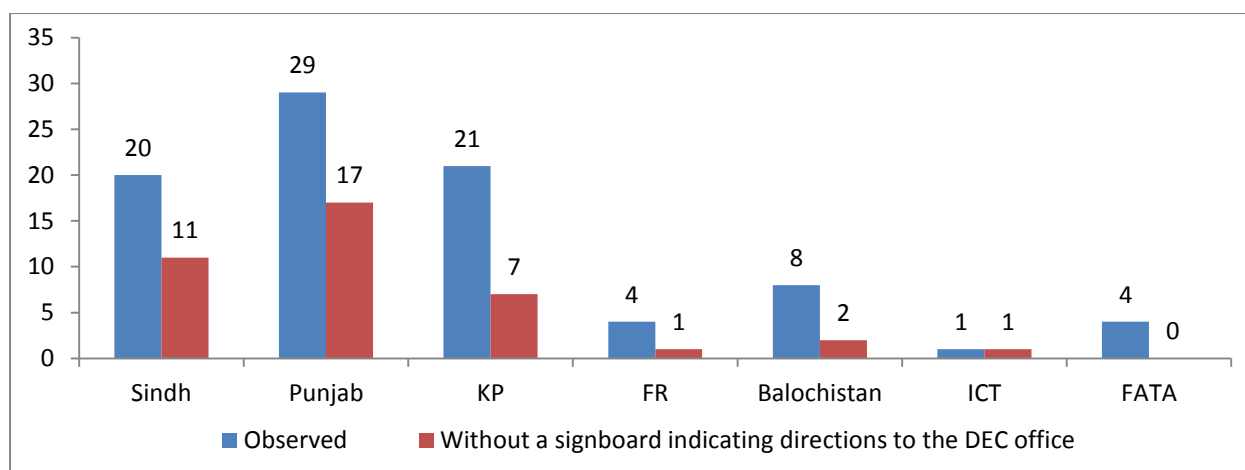
2.2 DEC Office Identification

FAFEN observers found that 17 of the 84 observed districts did not have a signboard indicating the DEC office. The majority of such instances were found in Sindh, with FAFEN DLTOs finding eight DEC offices without a signboard. This was followed by Punjab and KP, each with three cases, Balochistan with two, and the DEC office in Islamabad.

DEC offices without signboards	
District	Province
Badin	Sindh
Dadu	
Jamshoro	
Karachi West	
Naushero Feroz	
Tando Mohammad Khan	
Tharparkar	
Thatta	
Kasur	Punjab
Rajanpur	
Sargodha	
Bannu	KP
Hangu	
Tank	
Awaran	Balochistan
Khuzdar	
Islamabad	ICT

2.3 Directional Signboards

DLTOs also observed whether there was at least one signboard indicating the direction to the DEC office, potentially making it hard for citizens to find the offices. Of the 84 districts observed, the DLTOs found 39 cases where there was no directional signboard. The highest number of such instances were in Punjab (17), followed by Sindh (11), KP (7), Balochistan (2), Frontier Regions (1) and Islamabad Capital Territory (1). All four districts observed in FATA had a signboard directing people towards the DEC office.



2.4 Shared Offices

Of the 84 observed districts, 22 had DEC offices alongside or inside those of other government departments, which can potentially be confusing to people visiting the office. Sindh had the most shared offices (11), followed by KP (5), Balochistan (2), FATA (1), Frontier Regions (1) and the ICT (1).

District with shared office	Province	Office is shared with/located inside
Ghotki	Sindh	NADRA
Jamshoro		Education Department
Kamber Shahdadkot		Deputy Commissioner Office
Karachi Central		Deputy Commissioner Central Office
Karachi East		Deputy Commissioner Office
Karachi West		District Commissioner Officer Karachi West
Naushero Feroz		Revenue Department
Sukkur		District Accounts Office
Tando Allahyar		Government College of Commercial Education
Thatta		EDO Finance
Badin		Deputy Commissioner Office
Kohistan	KP	Health Department
Lower Dir		WAPDA
Torghar		DEC Mansehra
Abbottabad		Hazara Regional Election Commission Office
Buner		Offices of lawyers
Kech	Balochistan	NADRA
Awaran		Tehsildar office
Islamabad	ICT	Fisheries Department
FRs	FRs	Health Department for FR Peshawar
Orakzai Agency	FATA	FATA Secretariat Special Project, irrigation department
Kasur	Punjab	Deputy Commissioner Office

2.5 Security Barricades

FAFEN DLTOs were able to observe security in 41 of the 84 districts covered as part of the public accessibility observation. Generally, the more barricades a person is required to go through, the harder it is for him/her to access the DEC office, which impedes the functionality, accessibility, transparency of the office. Out of the 41 districts, seven offices were found to be located beyond police barricades. Most of them (5) were located in Sindh, while both Punjab and Balochistan had one such office.

DEC offices located beyond police barricades	
District	Province
Karachi Central	Sindh
Karachi West	
Khairpur	
Malir	
Shaheed Benazirabad	
Rawalpindi	Punjab
Kech	Balochistan

Except for Karachi West, the remaining six offices were also found to be located beyond Rangers/Paramilitary/FC barricades, while those in Khairpur (Sindh) and Rawalpindi (Punjab) were also located beyond army barricades. In addition, FAFEN observers reported that the DEC offices in Rawalpindi (Punjab), Malir, Shaheed Benazirabad (Sindh) and Kharan (Balochistan) were located beyond barricades erected by unidentified sources.

Recommendations

As requested in previous correspondence, FAFEN urges the ECP to send official instructions to all DEC offices and other election administration officials indicating the importance of full transparency and cooperation with FAFEN election observers and other stakeholders throughout the election process, beginning immediately.

DECs should be instructed, in particular, to share as much information as possible with observers and other stakeholders about all aspects of preparations for administration of elections in their districts.

ECP should take all possible measures to make DEC offices as accessible as possible to election stakeholders and members of the public.

About FAFEN

The Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN), established in 2006, is a coalition of 42 leading civil society organizations working to strengthen all forms of democratic accountabilities in Pakistan. Governed by the Trust for Democratic Education and Accountability (TDEA), FAFEN also implements robust programs in-between elections related to monitoring parliamentary affairs, connecting constituents to their elected representatives, monitoring the performance of public and elected institutions and advocating electoral and democratic reforms.