



Pre-U19/22-Mar-2013

71 DEC's hold 321 meetings with election stakeholders

Summary

This update is based on interviews with 71 District Election Commissioners' (DECs) between February 8 and March 15, 2013, about DEC's coordination meetings with a wide range of district election stakeholders. DEC meetings with election stakeholders are essential to ensure transparency, efficiency and accountability in local election administration.

District Long-Term Observers (DLTOs) of the Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN), who are deployed across the country, conducted the interviews in 71 districts. The interviews were conducted in 26 districts in Punjab, 23 in Sindh, 13 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), five in Balochistan, three in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and one in Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT).

In total, DEC's reported holding 321 meetings with election stakeholders. FAFEN has classified the electoral stakeholders who met with DEC's into seven groups: civil society organizations, political parties, district government officials, media, security officials, sitting Members of the National and Provincial Assemblies (MNAs/MPAs), and election observer groups.

One-third of all election stakeholder meetings hosted by DEC's (130, or 40.5%) were with representatives of various political parties. One-fifth of reported DEC meetings were with civil society organizations (68, or 21.2%) and another one-fifth of stakeholder meetings were with district government officials (61, or 19.0%). One-tenth of DEC meetings were with media representatives (33, or 10.3%).

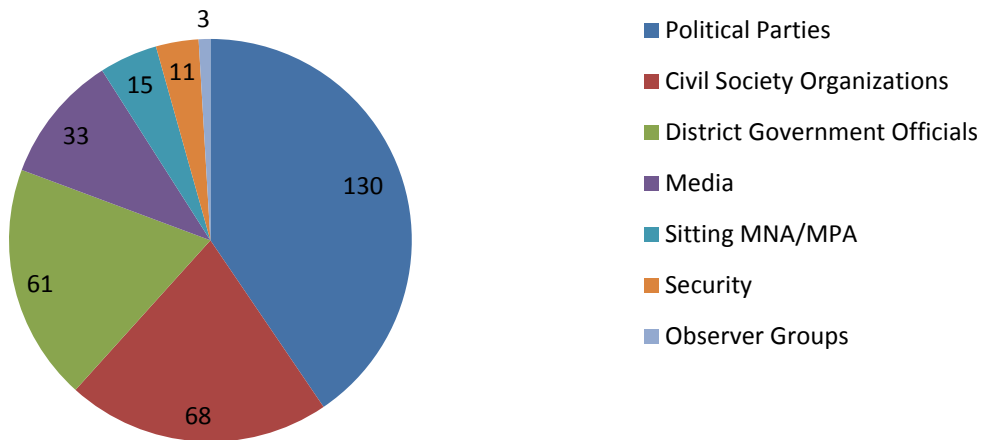
DEC's in 71 districts held only 11 meetings between February 8 and March 15, 2013, with security officials (3.4%) and three meetings with election observer groups (0.9%).

DEC Meetings, by Categories of Stakeholders

DEC's in 71 districts said that they held more than one-third of their meetings (130 out of 321, or 40.5%) with representatives of various political parties. One-fifth of reported DEC meetings were with civil society organizations (68, or 21.2%) and another one-fifth of stakeholder meetings were with district government officials (61, or 19.0%). One-tenth of DEC meetings were with media representatives (33, or 10.3%).

DEC's reported hosting another 15 meetings (13 in Punjab and two in KP) with sitting MNAs/MPAs (4.7%). Eleven meetings (eight in Sindh, two in KP, and one in Balochistan) were with security officials (3.4%). The DEC's of Okara (Punjab) and Mardan (KP) had three meetings with election observer groups (0.9%).

Number of DEC Meetings, by Categories of Election Stakeholders



DEC Meetings with Stakeholders, by Province

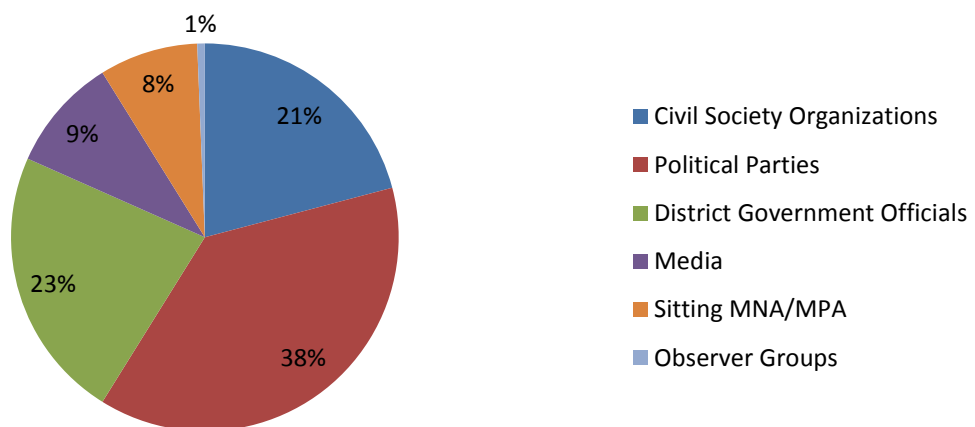
1. Punjab

FAFEN interviewed 26 DEC in Punjab, who reported that they had held 158 meetings with election stakeholders, or an average of six meetings with election stakeholders per district.

More than one-third of reported DEC meetings in Punjab were held with representatives of political parties (60, or 39%), followed by more than one-fifth of meetings with district government officials (36, or 22.8%) and with civil society organizations (33, or 20.9%). DEC in Punjab also held less than one-tenth of their meetings with media representatives (15, or 9.5%) and with sitting MNAs/MPAs (13, or 8.2%).

The DEC in Okara had a meeting with an observer group about sharing proposed polling schemes with political stakeholders. DEC in Punjab did not report having any meetings with security officials.

DEC Meetings with Election Stakeholders in Punjab



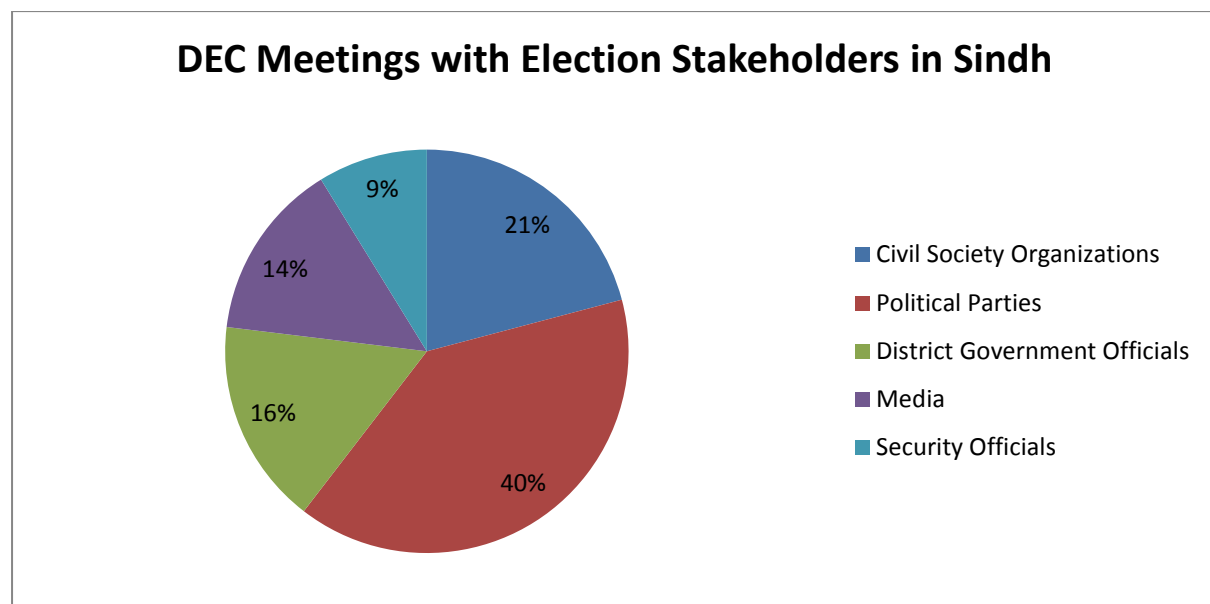
2. Sindh

FAFEN observers interviewed 23 DEC in Sindh, who reported holding 91 meetings with election stakeholders, or an average of 4 stakeholder meetings per district.

As in Punjab, more than one-third of DEC meetings in Sindh were with representatives of political parties (36, or 39.6%). The DEC reported holding one-fifth of their election stakeholder meetings with civil society organizations (19, or 20.9%), 15 meetings (16.5%) with district government officials, and 13 (14.3%) with representatives of the media.

Sindh DEC reporting holding another eight meetings (8.8%) with security officials. All meetings with security officials were reported in the districts of Karachi - three in Karachi South, two in Karachi West, and one each in Karachi East, Karachi Central and Malir.

DECs in Sindh did not report any meetings with election observer groups or sitting MNAs/MPAs.



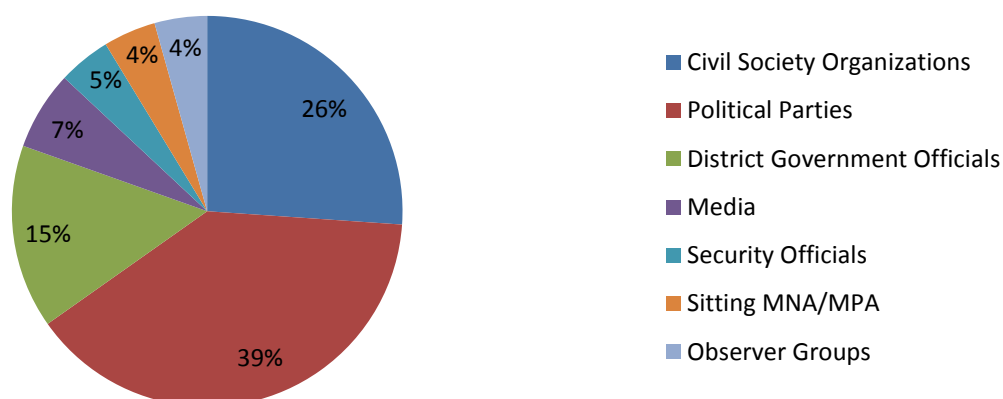
3. Khyber Pukhtunkhwa (KP)

Thirteen DEC in KP reported to FAFEN observers that they had held 46 meetings with various electoral stakeholders, or an average of 3.5 stakeholder meetings per district.

KP DEC reported holding one-third of stakeholder meetings with political party representatives (18, or 39.1%), one-quarter of meetings with civil society organizations (12, or 26.1%), seven (15.2%) with district government officials, three (6.5%) with media representatives, and two (4%) each with election observer groups and sitting MNAs/MPAs.

DECs in KP also held two meetings with security officials, but both of these meetings were reported by the DEC in Tank.

DEC Meetings with Election Stakeholders in KP



4. FATA, Balochistan, and Islamabad

Three DEC in FATA reported 12 stakeholder meetings, or an average of four meetings per Agency. Most of these meetings were held with representatives of political parties (7), followed by district government officials (3) and one each with civil society organizations and media representatives. The DEC in FATA did not report to FAFEN observers any meetings with security officials, sitting MNAs or observer groups.

In Balochistan, five DEC reported 10 stakeholder meetings, or an average of two meetings per district. Five meetings were held with political parties, three with civil society organizations, and one each with media and security officials. DEC in Balochistan did not report any meetings with observer groups, sitting MNAs/MPAs or district government officials.

The DEC in Islamabad reported holding a total of four meetings with electoral stakeholders. All of these meetings were with political party representatives regarding voter lists and voter registration.

Recommendations

Based on interviews with DEC around the country since February 2013, FAFEN recommends that:

1. DEC should ensure that they meet with representatives of all political parties and candidates on an equitable basis to avoid any perception of political bias. Ideally, all future DEC meetings with political parties and candidates should be held collectively (rather than one-on-one) and on a frequent, regular schedule.
2. DEC should meet as soon as possible with all relevant security departments to make security plans for the pre-election campaign period and Election Day.

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.

FAFEN Election Program

FAFEN is implementing a long-term election observation program nationwide, including both pre- and post-electoral processes. FAFEN is deploying 130 District Long-Term Observers (DLTOs) across the country to monitor all phases of elections. FAFEN's Constituency Long-Term Observers (CLTOs) will observe the political campaigns in all National Assembly constituencies during the two months prior to Election Day. In addition, FAFEN will deploy more than 43,000 trained, non-partisan citizens to monitor polling stations across the country on Election Day.

All FAFEN observers adhere to the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) Code of Conduct for National Observers as well as the Global Principles for Non-Partisan Election Observation and Monitoring by Citizen Organizations (April 2012). FAFEN's 10-month observation process, that began February 1, 2013, will help keep all election stakeholders informed on issues relevant to fairness and transparency at every stage of the election process.

FAFEN Election Observation Methodology

FAFEN's election observation activities are based on the Constitution and laws of Pakistan, global best practice standards for elections, as well as the legal obligations of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), ratified by Pakistan in 2010. FAFEN LTOs monitor and report on the activities of District Election Commissioner (DEC) offices, preparations of elections such as appointment and training of election officials, the process of candidate nominations, and (after the announcement of election schedule) compliance with the ECP's Code of Conduct for political parties and candidates.

In addition, LTOs observe and report on compliance of the executive branch with legal responsibilities and ECP regulations, including restrictions on transfers of civil service personnel and initiation of new development schemes. LTOs also monitor political and electoral intimidation and violence, the actions of the police and other security forces, and the overall political environment during the pre-election period. FAFEN LTOs use standardized checklists to report electronically to the FAFEN Election Observation Secretariat in Islamabad regularly. FAFEN compiles data and information from around the country to issue regular thematic updates for the consideration of voters and election stakeholders.