



Parliamentary Elections

2010

Polling Agents Manual



Prepared by National Democratic
Institute for International Affairs (NDI)
- Afghanistan Office

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Acknowledgement:

This manual is prepared by NDI to provide general information regarding rights and responsibilities of candidate and political party agents in monitoring polling and vote counting processes of 2010 parliamentary elections.

NDI thanks USAID for funding and IEC for providing related procedures in preparing this manual.

The institute hopes that with this manual on promoting awareness about Wolesi Jirga elections it can play a significant role in strengthening democracy and help candidate and political party agents learn about their roles and responsibilities in observing voting and counting processes effectively and systematically.

This manual will be taught and distributed to candidate and political party agents through half-day training programs to be conducted by NDI experienced trainers in 34 provinces of Afghanistan.



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Module One: Information on Voting and Counting processes

Polling

Opening: 7 am

Closing: 4 pm

Counting: starts immediately after voting ends

Voter Eligibility

- Have completed 18 years of age
- Have Afghan citizenship
- Have registered in advance
- Have been registered as a voter by the Commission
- Have not been deprived of his or her civil or political rights by a court of competent jurisdiction

The polling station chairperson is mandated to decide on a challenge made. If an agent is not happy with the decision made, they can file their complaints with Election Compliant Commission (ECC).

Polling centers and polling stations

It is important to first distinguish between polling center and polling station:

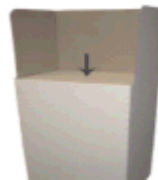
- Polling center: consists of a set of polling stations, at least two polling stations (one male and one female). In some polling centers, there are separate polling stations for Kuchis.
- Polling station: a specified place inside a polling center where voters cast their votes. The number of voters in each polling station shall not exceed 600 people.

General Principles for Voting

- Every voter shall vote in the province where they have registered and received voting cards. Proxy vote is not allowed.



- Every voter shall mark on the ballot in specific polling booth. More than one voter is not allowed to vote in the polling booth at a time.



- Priority shall be given to olds, people with disability and pregnant women to vote.





















- Voter shall leave polling station as soon as they cast their votes.

Election Materials

1. Sensitive materials
 - Ballot papers (used, unused and wasted)
 - Official ballot paper stamp
 - Reconciliation and tally form
 - Ink (indelible)
 - Punching machine
 - Ballot box seals
2. Non-sensitive materials (include stationeries the presence and absence of which will not affect the process)

Who are authorized to enter the polling stations?

  <p>Media representatives</p>	  <p>Domestic and international observers</p>	  <p>Candidate or political party agents</p>	  <p>Polling station chairperson and staff</p>
  <p>IEC members and officials</p>	  <p>Special Guests</p>	  <p>ECC members or representative</p>	  <p>Police- if called by polling station manager</p>
  <p>Voters or companions of disabled voters</p>			

Challenges and Complaints

1. Agents accredited by IEC are allowed to make complaints and challenges in the polling station. (Paragraph 1 of article 10 of regulation on polling was adjusted as follow: “Agents and candidate may challenge a voter’s right to vote in a polling center. Challenges in this regard should be made to the polling station’s chairperson before he/she is given a ballot. The chairperson of the polling station shall make a decision in this regard and record the objection, the decision, and the reason for the decision in the polling station journal.”)

Complaints

How to File a Complaint?

If a problem is not solved in polling station/center or by the chairperson, the agent can file their complaint with electoral complaint commission.

Complaint forms are available in polling stations and can receive them from the polling station chairperson. The form filled out should be submitted to the polling station chairperson to put it along with other complaints into a specific envelope.

Preparation for Counting

After the ballot boxes are sealed, the chairperson of polling station should collect all sensitive materials such as wasted ballot papers, unused ballot papers and stamps from all polling staff.

The polling station chairperson then is responsible to do the following:

- Counts all the ballot papers sent to the polling station in the morning
- Counts all the wasted ballot papers for each choice separately
- Counts unused ballots
- Counts total number of distributed ballots

The total should be equal to the number of ballots sent to the polling station in the morning.

Phases of Vote Counting

Counting is conducted in three separate phases: 1. Reconciliation, which means all used and unused ballots are counted. 2. Sorting ballots into categories. 3. Counting. In Kabul, due to large size of ballots, there is a separate procedure for sorting them.

Reconciliation of Ballots

Before starting to reconcile ballots, the polling station chairperson shall explain all phases to the agents. Queue controller is responsible to allow agents to enter and leave the polling station during the counting process.

What should be considered during reconciliation?

- When the ballot boxes were taken out of the safe places, were their seals intact?
- Were the seals numbers read aloud and did they match the numbers recorded in polling stations forms?
- Were the agents invited to check the numbers of seals before the ballot boxes were opened?
- Were all boxes emptied completely during vote counting?
- Did polling station staff inform all observers and agents of their activities properly and were their activities were easily observable and clear to the observers and agents?
- Was the ballot box placed on table?
- Were the ballot boxes emptied and shown to agents?

After ballot boxes are emptied, polling station officials open sealed ballots and sort them into categories. Each category consists of 50 ballots. Categories with less than 50 ballots are recounted by staff for reinsurance.

The chairperson announces the total number of collected ballots and put them into ballot boxes again. Then some agents will be asked to sign the completed reconciliation form at the end of the process.

If any concern rises during the reconciliation process, you should bring them to the attention of the polling station chairperson and note them.

You can fill out ECC complaint form if necessary.

Procedure on discrepancy in number of votes:

Any discrepancy in ballots cast in ballot boxes shall be addressed after the ballot boxes have passed the reconciliation process.

- The chairperson shall check whether counts recorded in reconciliation form is authentic or not, if not:
- The chairperson shall count wasted and unused ballots and compare them with number recorded in reconciliation form to make sure that the numbers in the form are accurate.
- If there is still discrepancy, the chairperson shall do recount of the ballots taken out of the boxes and compare them with the numbers recorded in the form so as to make sure that the numbers are accurate.

If discrepancy is not solved after implementing the above phases, the chairperson shall consider the following:

- Notify observers and agents of the discrepancy
- Continue to sort and count the ballots
- Record the discrepancy in journal and inform the polling center chairperson about it

Categorization

In classification phase, the ballots were sorted into categories of 50 during reconciliation, this time the votes of each candidate are put separately. If there is more than one choice marked on the ballot, that ballot is considered invalid.

The chairperson reads the name of each candidate loudly and places their ballots in their related categories.

In order to ensure transparency, the chairperson shall show each ballot, whether valid or invalid, to the agents before placing them in respective categories. After this activity, identification staff shall recheck categories of ballots to make sure that ballots are placed in appropriate category.

Module Two: Monitoring Polling and Vote Counting Processes

Code of Conduct for Political Parties and Candidates

Part One: General Provisions, Boundaries and Purpose:

This code of conduct was submitted based on article (56) of electoral law in order to regulate the participation of political parties and candidates during various election processes.

The legal and ethical standards set in this code of conduct shall regulate the activities of political parties and candidates during voter registration, candidate registration, electoral campaigns, polling day and vote counting processes. Political parties, candidates and their representatives are to respect determined regulations in the code of conduct; violating code of conduct will result in imposition of sanctions or serious contrivances made by IEC or Electoral Complaint Commission. Political parties and candidates are responsible for any



kind of violating determined rules in the code of conduct by both them and their members and loyalists.




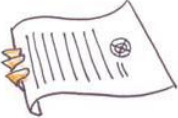


Part Two: Rights and Duties of Political Parties and Candidates

All leaders, members of political parties and independent candidates:



1. Have basic rights of freedom of speech, assemblies, rallies and activities for participation in various election processes.
2. Their electoral activities must not rest on ethnic, tribal, class, language, regional, gender and religious discrimination.
3. Ensure equal access and participation of women in political activities and voting.
4. Respect rights and freedoms of other political parties, independent candidates and the public to participate without any fear of intimidations and barriers in various election processes.
5. Respect vote secrecy and take necessary actions to promote the awareness of their supporters and agents regarding the significance of secrecy of vote, do not try to learn voters' tendency by using force.
6. Reinforce the prohibition of use of force or violence or threat to use force in their guidelines and instructions.
7. Must not have illegal armed force or its membership.
8. Must not support use of or use force or violence or intimidations. They should denunciate in the event of such incidents.
9. Respect the Holy Principals of Islam, provisions of the constitution and other laws of Afghanistan.
10. Avoid using words that spread hate or promote racial, ethnic, regional, language, class, gender and religious discrimination or tension.
11. Thoroughly cooperate with IEC, IEC secretariat, ECC (Electoral Complaints Commission), or any other authorities involved in electoral process.
12. Take required actions to ensure that their members and supporters know about electoral law, this code of conduct, regulation on electoral violations, other regulations, directions, guidelines and notifications of IEC, electoral complaint commission and election secretariat commission and follow them.






Introduction:

<p>As candidate and political party agent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You are the eyes and ears of candidate or political party on polling day and vote counting. • You are accredited observer and will be present in polling station on behalf of your candidate or political party 	
<p>How to become a candidate or political party agent?</p>	
<p>§ You should receive accreditation letter from IEC based on formal request of candidate or political party</p>	

<p>§ You should fully know the procedure on voting and counting as well as the rights and responsibilities of polling agents . NDI's training programs can be an example in this respect.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is good to have information about the voters of the area that turn out to this polling station to vote. 	
<p>As a polling agent, what can we do?</p>	
<p>1. Pre-election Period:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before going to polling station, you should have received training from representative of candidate/political party or NDI on how to monitor 	
<p>§ Have formal accreditation letter from IEC in order to benefit from the rights and responsibilities of an agent and be allowed to enter polling stations.</p>	
<p>§ Should determine in advance which polling station you will be monitoring and your familiarity with the people of the area will be helpful to better perform your duties.</p> <p>§ Know the address of polling station beforehand.</p> <p>§ List of polling stations will be distributed to candidates by IEC in advance</p>	
<p>§ Receive and make sure you have the materials you need to have on election day: for example, voting and counting manual, pen, notebook, checklist (reporting forms), accreditation card, food stuff, water and money for contingencies</p>	

2. On Election Day

<p>1. Be present in the polling station at least one hour before voting starts and make sure that the instructional signs are posted in necessary locations by polling station staff.</p>	
<p>2. As you enter polling station, carry your ID card and IEC accreditation letter in a way that should be visible to others and introduce yourself to polling station chairperson.</p>	

<p>3. If you arrive on time, please see the bags that contain ballot papers and other election materials</p>	
<p>4. As the polling station staff receive and count blank ballots, note the first and last serial numbers of the ballots</p>	
<p>5. Before voting starts, make sure that ballot box, which is shown by polling station staff, is empty and well.</p>	
<p>6. Record the serial numbers of ballot boxes, which are announced by the polling station chairperson, in your checklist, and make sure that the boxes were properly sealed.</p>	
<p>7. Make sure that ballot box is put in a place accessible to voters and observable to agents and observers present in the station.</p>	






Code of conduct for polling agents

Code of conduct for polling agents is a set of principles that regulate polling agents' behavior on election day. After receiving accreditation letter from IEC, polling agents are obligated to follow a set code of conduct.






Polling agents rights and responsibilities



Polling agents play key role in ensuring transparency and credibility of elections. In general, polling agents can identify electoral violations and collect information related to election from polling stations.

What a polling agent can do?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor polling and vote counting processes on behalf of a party of a candidate 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring unusual and suspicious activities to the attention of polling station chairperson and write their comments on the journal available in the polling stations. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor counting process, sign tally form and record announced results. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fill out complaint forms in polling stations and send them to the ECC 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enter or leave polling stations 	

What a polling agent cannot do?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interfere in election process. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Argue and quarrel with polling stations staff. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interfere with choice of candidate or secrecy of vote. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note any information that is considered interference with independence of the voter. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transfer any polling material and counting 	






<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk directly to voters or their companions 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch campaigning inside and outside polling station. 	

Difference between polling agent and observer:

















Polling agent: can immediately bring all information or complaints related to intimidation, or illegal behavior to the attention of ECC or IEC through their offices or election officials, or to the attention of relevant legal authorities through appropriate channels.

Observer- should act in accordance with electoral law, IEC approved procedures and other documents and not interfere with or disrupt any election phases directly. In a nutshell, observer does not have the right to challenge but polling agent (candidate or political party agent) has the right to challenge the eligibility of a voter provided that the challenge is made before the voter receives ballot.

You must remember!

<p>Only female agents and observers are allowed to enter female polling stations.</p>	
<p>IEC can revoke the accreditation should the agent, candidate, political party or observer violate code of conduct for polling agent and electoral regulations</p>	
<p>If there are a lot of agents and observers at a polling station, the chairperson shall draw a timetable to provide opportunity for all agents and observers.</p>	
<p>Polling agents are not allowed to carry badge or sign that indicates their connection with a party or a candidate.</p>	
<p>Polling stations shall remain open from 7 am to 4 pm. But those who have joined the queue before 4 can cast their votes after 4.</p>	

Issues to receive greater attention during voting

				
<p>Were eligible voters prevented from voting?</p>	<p>Were illegible individuals permitted to vote?</p>	<p>Did anyone vote more than once?</p>	<p>Did anyone intentionally leave campaign materials, like specific candidate poster, photo or symbol of a party inside polling booth?</p>	<p>Was the ballot stamped before given to voter?</p>
				
<p>Did anyone attempt to vote again?</p>	<p>Did anyone interfere with voting process?</p>	<p>Were unauthorized people present inside the polling station?</p>	<p>Was the line of voters orderly?</p>	<p>Was anyone who did not have registration card permitted to vote?</p>
				
<p>Was anyone permitted to vote who already had their finger inked?</p>	<p>Was anyone who refused to have their finger inked permitted to vote?</p>	<p>Were individuals permitted to challenge election process?</p>	<p>Were pregnant women, old and disabled people allowed to vote first?</p>	<p>Were people in need of help allowed to choose someone to assist them to vote?</p>
				
<p>Did voters</p>				

promptly leave
the polling
station after
voting?

Observing Opening of Polling Stations

On Election Day, you should arrive at the polling station at least an hour before the polling center opens and introduce yourself to the chairperson, showing him/her IEC accreditation letter. At that time the chairperson should be setting up the polling station, specifying places for polling staff, setting up the polling booth and ballot boxes, opening voters list, preparing ballot papers and other materials necessary for opening voting process.

What to be considered during opening:

Outside polling station

- Did anyone stop authorized staff from entering the polling station?
- Were there campaign signs and posters visible within 100 meters of the polling station?
- Were security personnel present at their specified place and did they not enter the station?
- Was the line of voters properly set?

Inside polling station

- Was situation of polling station checked and ensured that appropriate procedures are followed?
- Ballot boxes should be empty and sealed. Note the seal numbers.
- Polling station chairperson should record the numbers of ballots.
- Were all polling station staff present during the opening?

Observing Polling

Polling will start at 7 am. Only voters who have previously registered and show their registration card are allowed to vote.

In front of the door, the voter is checked by queue controller for having registration card and making sure that their finger is not inked. The voter then goes to identification and inking official for identification (attention should be paid to check the photo on the card with the voter face). If

a female voter's voting card does not have photo, the identification staff shall ask her about her name and specifics written on the card so as to make sure that card belongs to her. The number of voter's card is recorded and it is punched with punching machine and their figure is inked with specific ink. Voter in the parliamentary polling should vote in province where they have registered. The voter then goes to ballot distribution staff to receive ballot and mark their choice of candidate in specified place and then cast the ballot in the box.

Observing Closing

Polling centers across Afghanistan will be closed at 4 pm. Queue controller must be aware that the voters already standing in the line are allowed to vote and new voters(if voting period is not extended) are not allowed to join the line after 4 pm. After the last voter casts their vote, the polling station is closed and the ballot box is sealed.

Observing Vote Counting:

After the ballot box is sealed, the chairperson prepares place for vote counting to be conducted. Vote counting is done at the polling stations and the chairperson prepares appropriate place for all agents so that they can observe all phases of counting process. Before the process begins, the chairperson writes the names of all agents present at the station in the polling station journal.

Following should be taken into account during closing:

- Were all the individuals standing in the line at 4 pm allowed to vote?
- Were new voters prevented to join the line?
- Was anyone permitted to stand in the line after 4 pm?
- Did anyone create disturbance or obstacle during closing?
- Did anyone try to manipulate ballot boxes during closing?
- Were all ballot boxes sealed?

Following should be taken into account during sorting of votes:

- Was there agreement about validity and invalidity of ballots?
- Did the chairperson resolve the dispute about validity and invalidity of suspicious ballots and did they explain their reasons to others?
- Was there agreement about total votes of a candidate?
- Did anyone interrupt with counting process without any reason?
- Were the results of counting recorded in the form properly? Were the ballots put in ballot boxes again? Were the ballot boxes sealed and were the seal numbers recorded?

- Did the polling station staff inform all observers and agents of their activities properly and were their activities easily observable to observers and agents?

If there is any concern rising during counting and sorting process, please bring it to the attention of the chairperson. These concerns should be recorded and you can fill out ECC complaint form as well if necessary.

Checklist for Agents for Election Day

Monitoring Checklist for Polling Day Opening

FORM A: OPENING	No of Center:	Y	N	N/A
Name of Province:	No of Polling Station:			
Name of Polling Agent	Name of District:			
A Time of Arrival Time of Departure				
B1. Was the location of the polling station accessible B2. Were all necessary election material present: If no please explain				
B3. Were unauthorized personnel present inside the polling station If yes please explain				
B4. Was there evidence of intimidation by authorized or unauthorized personnel: If yes please explain				
B5. Was there evidence of campaigning or campaign materials in or (100 yards) in proximity to the polling station: If yes please explain				

<p>B6. Were all members of the polling officials present: If not please explain:</p> <p>B7. Were police or security forces present in or around the polling station: If yes please give numbers</p> <p>B8. Were voters queuing prior to the opening of the polling station: If yes, please give numbers</p> <p>B9. Were agents/observers prevented from entering the polling station: If yes, by whom</p> <p>B10. Did the polling station open on time: If not what time:</p> <p>B11. Were agents/observers present at the opening of the polling station: If so please list:</p> <p>B12. Were any complaints submitted prior to the opening of the polling station:</p> <p>Any Additional comments:</p> <p>C: Evaluation The overall conduct of the opening of the polling station:</p> <p>Very good good bad very bad.</p>			
Signature:			

Checklist for Agents for Election Day

Monitoring checklist for polling

FORM A: POLLING Name of Province:	No of Center: No of Polling Station:	Y	N	N/A
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Name of Polling Agent	Name of District:		
A Time of Arrival			
Time of Departure			
<p>B1. Is there tension/unrest in the polling station during polling: If yes please explain:</p> <p>B2. How many appointed polling officials were present Number:</p> <p>B3. Were the polling officials efficient/well trained If no please explain</p> <p>B4. Was there evidence of intimidation by authorized or unauthorized personnel: If yes please explain</p> <p>B5. 1 Were the voters checked for the proper identification: 2. Were any voters turned away because they did not have the correct ID If yes please explain</p> <p>3. Were voters checked for ink prior to voting If no how many</p> <p>B6. Were the ballot boxes empty and sealed correctly If not please explain:</p> <p>B7. Did you witness any of the following: a. Proxy voting b. Family voting c. Ballot stuffing d. The same person voting more than once: If yes please explain</p> <p>B8. Did the layout of the polling station allow for secrecy of vote: If no please explain</p> <p>B9. Were agents/observers prevented from observing the voting without obstructions</p>			

<p>If yes, please explain</p> <p>B10. Did you witness any of the following:</p> <p>a. Overcrowding</p> <p>b. Intimidation</p> <p>c. Violence or unrest</p> <p>d. Other problems</p> <p>If yes please explain</p> <p>B11. Did any governmental or electoral official misuse their position to influence others or the process</p> <p>If yes please explain</p> <p>B12. Did agents/observers make any complaint during the polling process?</p> <p>Any Additional comments:</p> <p>C: Evaluation The overall conduct of the opening of the polling station:</p> <p>Very good good bad very bad.</p> <p>Signature:</p>			
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Checklist for Agents for Election Day

Monitoring Checklist for Closing

FORM C: CLOSING	No of Center:	Y	N	N/A
Name of Provence:	No of Polling Station:			
Name of Polling Agent	Name of District:			
A Time of Arrival				
Time of Departure				

<p>B1. Were voters waiting to vote at the time of closing If yes how many and were they allowed to vote</p> <p>B2. Did the polling station close on time If no what time did it close</p> <p>B3. A. Were all appointed officials present If not how many b. Were any unauthorized personnel present If yes please explain</p> <p>B4. Were the ballot boxes sealed correctly at the end of the voting process If no please explain</p> <p>B5. A. Were the observers/agents allowed to note the seal numbers b. Were there any discrepancies: If yes please explain</p> <p>B6. Were agents/observers present for the closing If so who and how many</p> <p>B7. Were the closing forms filled in correctly If not please explain</p> <p>Evaluation The overall conduct of the opening of the polling station:</p> <p>Very good good bad very bad.</p>			
Signature--			

Checklist for Agents for Election Day

Monitoring Checklist for Vote Counting

FORM C: COUNTING	No of Center:	Y	N	N/A
Name of Province: Station:	No of Polling			
Name of Polling Agent	Name of District:			
A Time of Arrival Time of Departure				
B1. Did the counting process start immediately after the voting ended If no at what time and explain B2. Was the count performed by polling officials or any other unauthorized persons B3. Was the number of voted ballots equal to registered numbers If no please explain B4. Were unauthorized personnel present, if so whom and were they interfering with the counting process in any way; B5. Was there any indication of ballot box stuffing				

<p>B6. Were agents/observers present for the counting If so who and how many</p> <p>B7. A. Was the choice on every ballot announced aloud b. Were ballots clearly shown to all present</p> <p>B8. Were there any discrepancies over valid/invalid ballots If yes please explain</p> <p>B9. Were there any disputes/complaints If yes explain</p> <p>B10. Did the Presiding Officer fairly resolve any disputes/complaints</p> <p>B11. Did the Presiding Officer correctly complete the statement of the count</p> <p>B12 Did candidate/party agents sign the statement of the count</p> <p>B13 Did anyone interrupt the counting process If so explain</p>			
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<p>B14 Did agents/observers get a copy of the final results Did all entitled persons receive copies of the protocol</p> <p>B15. Were there any disputed complaints: If yes please explain</p> <p>B16 Were the results posted at the polling station</p> <p>B17 Were there any contested ballots Were the number of invalid/valid ballots correctly counted</p> <p>B18 Did you witness any unrest/violence/intimidation If yes please explain</p> <p>B19 Were you restricted in any way to observing the counting process If yes please explain</p> <p>Evaluation</p> <p>The overall conduct of the opening of the polling station:</p> <p>Very good good bad very bad.</p>			
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Signature:			