

POLICY BRIEF

Ensuring Electoral Transparency on Election Day:

The Role of Observers

October 2018

POLICY BRIEF

Ensuring Electoral Transparency on Election Day:

The Role of Observers

This policy brief is a publication produced by the Organization for Policy Research and Development Studies (DROPS). The policy brief is an initiative of the third pillar of DROPS' activities, namely its training and capacity-building programs on policy analysis.

Each year DROPS conducts a seven-month policy study workshop and one of the objectives of the workshop is the development of a policy brief on a timely policy relevant issue that is researched and authored by the participants of the workshop. The workshop takes a two pronged approach: first, it provides youth, representing diverse sectors including the civil service sector, Civil Society Organizations (CSO), academia, the private sector and media outlets, with the necessary tools to understand, analyze, and critique policies; second, it equips youth with the practical skills to formulate a policy brief, and or, study.

As part of this year's workshop, DROPS trainees have developed a joint policy brief on the processes involved in the effective monitoring of ballots on election day. In writing this policy brief, the trainees utilized both qualitative and quantitative data collection tools. Therefore, in addition to secondary research, the brief is also informed by a series of key informant interviews trainees conducted with representatives from the media, political parties and CSOs.

This policy brief was edited by DROPS editorial board and authored by the trainees of its 4th annual Seven-Month Policy Study Workshop: Ezharulhaq Fazli, Farah Elyaskhel, Farkhonda Tahery, Khojasta Sameyeee, Atefa Ibrahimy, Hamed Ahmadi, and Ali Ahmady.

OBJECTIVES

***Exploring** the key factors that limited the role of representatives of media, political parties, and civil society organizations in the observation and tallying of ballots during the 2014 presidential elections.*

***Identifying** concrete and policy-oriented recommendations aimed at assisting national policymakers and international stakeholders in Afghanistan and beyond through the use of primary and secondary data collection tools.*

***Addressing** the key factors that limited the role of representatives of media, political parties, and civil society organizations in observing and tallying of ballots during the 2014 presidential elections in order to identify gaps and draw lessons learned for the upcoming 2019 presidential elections.*

POLICY ISSUE

Numerous independent observers from media, political parties and civil society organizations were fielded during the 2014 presidential elections to observe and monitor the casting and tallying of ballots on the election day. Despite the high number of observers, various internal and external factors acted to limit their role and prevent them from effectively monitoring the elections and thus obstructed the reporting of mass instances of corruption that took place. These factors included lack of cooperation between Independent Elections Commission (IEC), its provincial offices, the Elections Complaint Commission (ECC) and the Ministry of Interior (MoI), in addition to issues surrounding security; capacity of observers, interference of local strongmen; and unlawful limitations on the presence of observers in polling and tallying centers. Failing to address these challenges in the 2018 parliamentary elections and the 2018 presidential elections hold the potential to yield the same results if left unaddressed. The absence of such measures jeopardizes the transparency and legitimacy of elections and undermines the electoral process and ultimately the future of democracy in Afghanistan.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Afghanistan's National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) should ensure security of observers representing media, political parties and civil society organizations on election day.
2. A mechanism should be created to facilitate coordination, awareness and flow of communication between the IEC, its provincial offices, ECC and MoI on the roles, responsibilities, rights and access of election observers.
3. The IEC and its provincial offices should ensure that observers have full access to election related information pertaining to the polling and tallying processes on election day.
4. The ECC must set up a hotline that allows observers to report on any actions taken by any individuals or bodies which acts to prevent and/or challenge the ability of observers to monitor the electoral process.
5. All observers from the media, political parties and civil society organization should be given adequate training and resources to enable them to carry out their duties and responsibilities in a professional and effective manner.

The rationale, context and means to implement the recommendations mentioned in this policy brief are elaborated further at the end of this report.

Introduction

2014 marked a critical juncture for Afghanistan as it had to plug the security gaps created by the withdrawal of US-led NATO troops, undertake preparations to assume responsibility of all security measures, and create an environment conducive to holding credible presidential and Provincial Council elections. The elections were expected to take the country one step further towards political stability and democratization, but instead, widespread electoral fraud and rigging of ballots pushed the country into a year-long electoral crisis that brought it to the verge of a civil war. The electoral crisis was eventually settled by a power-sharing arrangement brokered by the U.S., giving birth to the National Unity Government (NUG) we see today.

During the 2014 presidential and Provincial Council elections, observers were fielded from media outlets, political parties and CSOs to monitor the polling and tallying centers on election day.¹ These observers, however, were unable to ensure transparency and integrity of the polls as their roles were limited, and at times completely obstructed, by several factors. Some of those factors analyzed in this brief include lack of cooperation between election bodies, security institutions and line ministries, rising security; lack of capacity on part of observers, interference of local actors; and limitations imposed on the presence of observers in polling and tallying centers by various stakeholders.

This policy brief does not do justice to the cornucopia of factors that were at play in limiting and obstructing the presence of observers but rather attempts to present an analysis, evaluation and recommendations on a few of the key factors that were identified by the authors in their interviews and secondary research. The policy recommendations presented herein are intended to assist policymakers and relevant stakeholders with measures that could help in plugging gaps and challenges highlighted in the brief.

As such, this policy brief starts with an explanation of the legal provisions guiding the role of media in the elections, it sheds light on the role media played during the 2014 presidential election while highlighting the challenges and factors that restricted its roles. Following this the brief touches upon on the legal provisions that guided the role of observers from political parties, the role these observers played in the 2014 presidential election and highlights the factors that limited their role. The last section provides an overview of the legal provisions that guided the role of civil society observers providing an explanation as to the role they played and the challenges that restricted their ability to observe the polls on election day.

Media Observers: Successes and Limitations

Depending on perspectives and contexts, the term media can be defined in different ways. In the wider sense of the terminology, “media are channels of communication, serving to relay messages to various audiences.”² In this policy brief, the observation role played by members of traditional media outlets has been analyzed as it is presumed by the authors that

¹ Note: in this paper, observation of the Election Day encompasses observation of polling and tallying centers.

² *Media Assistance and Elections: Toward an Integrated Approach*. The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2015. <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/media-assistance-and-elections.pdf>

predominantly those media observers representing television, radio and print outlets were fielded on election day.

Since the fall of the Taliban regime, media has played a significant role in observing elections afforded to it by legal provisions stipulated in the 2004 Constitution and the 2013 and 2016 Election Laws.³ In elections, media play the role of a watchdog⁴ body monitoring the conduct of government officials and election bodies to ensure that they abide by the principles of transparency, integrity and neutrality.⁵ They also field observers on election day to monitor electoral activities including the casting and tallying of ballots.⁶

In the 2014 presidential and Provincial Council elections, 500 media outlets were fielded to closely monitor polling and tallying centers on election day.⁷ These media outlets were given accreditation letters by the IEC which allowed them to send 10,000 to 12,000 observers to overlook the voting process,⁸ which included reporting on public turnout, denial of permission to observers to enter the polling centers, interference of candidates and local strongmen, early closure of polling centers and issues surrounding the transfer of ballot boxes.⁹ Media observer's also helped draw attention to peoples concerns which touched upon shortage of ballot papers, closure of voting sites and lack of staff at voting centers.¹⁰

Despite their crucial role and significant presence, the media faced several challenges which limited their role as observers in the 2014 presidential election. The tumultuous security situation was voiced as a key challenge by media observers. In 2014, the security situation had become extremely fragile as 90% of the 800 International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) bases closed, U.S. troops were significantly reduced¹¹ and the threat of a full withdrawal had become entangled with the fate of the controversial Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA).¹² These events led media observers to become increasingly disheartened to monitor elections fearing security threats¹³ and even many foreign journalists reportedly refused to travel to Afghanistan to cover elections for this reason.¹⁴

³ Please refer to article 34 of the 2004 constitution on freedom of expression and media; clause 14 of article 4 of the 2013 election law on the role of media as observers; clause 13 of article 4 of the 2016 election law on the role of media as observers.

⁴ A watchdog body is an entity that introduces observers, who are individuals, on the election day.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Reza Moini. *Presidential Election in Afghanistan, Local Media on Front Line*. Reporters Without Borders, 2014. https://rsf.org/sites/default/files/en_rapport_afghanistan_bd2.pdf

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ *Series of Lessons Learned - Independent Elections Complaints Commission & A Flawed Interpretation of the Electoral*. Free & Fair Election Forum of Afghanistan (FEFA), 2014. <http://www.fefa.org.af/Home/Details?ps=122>

¹⁰ *Afghanistan Election Observation Mission*. Democracy International, 2015.

<http://democracyinternational.com/media/DI%202014%20EOM%20Final%20Report%20-%20Feb%2011%20FINAL.pdf>

¹¹ Wolfgang Toucher, Mathias Vogl, Peter Webinger (eds.). *Afghanistan: 2014 and beyond*.

<https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/FelbabBrown-book-chapter-Afghanistan-2014.pdf>

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Thomas Ruttig, "Under Fire: The status of the 2014 election observation," Afghanistan Analysts Network, 5 April 2014. Accessed on August 4, 2018 from <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/under-fire-the-status-of-the-2014-election-observation/>

¹⁴ Josh Smith, "Fear of violence sends foreigners packing ahead of Afghanistan's presidential election," Star and Stripes, 24 March 2014. Accessed on August 2, 2018 from <https://www.stripes.com/news/fear-of-violence-sends-foreigners-packing-ahead-of-afghanistan-s-presidential-election-1.274226>

Media observers also faced challenges in accessing polling centers on election day. This was a result of the lack of cooperation and coordination between the IEC, its provincial offices and the MoI on the rights of media observers. According to Mujeeb Khilwatgar, Managing Director of Nai Organization, some media outlets despite the accreditation letters given to them by the IEC were not permitted access to voting sites on election day by local police.¹⁵ Khilwatgar told DROPS that in some areas the police had not been informed by the IEC or its provincial offices of the access given to media observers.¹⁶ He also mentioned that in certain instances even the provincial offices of the IEC were not aware of this as it was not communicated to them by the IEC in the center. Thus in addition to local police even provincial level IEC offices were found to be refusing media observers access to polling centers on election day.¹⁷

A third key factor that limited the media's presence in voting centers on election day according to Khilwatgar was the intervention of agents known to be linked with various candidates who restricted the media's presence and reporting of the voting centers.¹⁸ Many of such instances have also been reflected in a report by Free and Fair Election Forum of Afghanistan (FEFA) which asserted that agents from candidates interfered with the role of media observers on election day.¹⁹

Political Party Observers: Successes and Limitations

Under the new democratic Constitution of 2004, former Islamist military factions, communist organizations, ethno-nationalist groups, and civil society organizations were the platform to transform themselves into political parties.²⁰ Election laws in the post 2001 period recognized the formation of political parties as important entities in the electoral process. According to clause 12 and 13 of Article 4 of the 2016 Election Law, political parties are able to introduce supervisors and observers to monitor the election process similar to media observers.²¹

Within this legal framework, political parties can play an important role as observers on election day. This was reflected during the 2014 presidential election where political parties received accreditation letters similar to media observers allowing them to field 18,330 persons to observe the voting and tallying processes.²² However, their participation was not without its limitations due to various internal and external factors.

Internally, the political party observers lacked the necessary training to effectively monitor and report on activities during election day.²³ Externally, unnecessary limitations were placed on observers by officials at the polling and tallying centers. For instance, during registration of

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Mujeeb Khilwatgar, Managing Director of NAI, interviewed by DROPS trainee Ezharulhaq Fazli on August 12, 2018 in Kabul.

¹⁷ Mujeeb Khilwatgar, Managing Director of NAI, interviewed by DROPS trainee Ezharulhaq Fazli on August 12, 2018 in Kabul.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Afghan Perceptions on Democracy and Elections: report of a survey by Free and Fair Election Forum of Afghanistan 2013-2014. FEFA, page 37.

²⁰ Thomas Ruttig, "Outside, Inside: Afghanistan's paradoxical political party system (2001-2016)," Afghanistan Analysts Network, May 2018.

²¹ The election law has used both "observer" and "supervisor" but the definition it provides for both of them is the same except that and observer can be a natural or legal person while a supervisor is only a natural person.

²² VOADARI, "سه صد هزار ناظر و مشاهد برای انتخابات افغانستان", 1391/2/8

²³ Thomas Ruttig, "Under Fire: The status of the 2014 election observation." Afghanistan Analysts Network, 5 April 2014.

voters, as well as during the polling process, the head of registration, and/or polling centers, who were granted the discretion to set time limits on the presence of observers, misused their authority and placed unacceptable time limits on the presence of observers.²⁴ Intended by the IEC as a measure to avoid overcrowding, this provision was used in a restrictive manner.²⁵ In some areas, observers' presence was restricted to just three to seven hours.²⁶ This was also a consequent of IEC's inability to set a cap on the number of observers to be allowed per polling center which then prompted them to set short time limits to avoid over-crowdedness.

Another requirement asked of political parties by the IEC was the disclosure of their plans, agents and representatives that would be fielded on election day. But according to Fazl Rahman Orya, senior member of the Grand National Coalition of Afghanistan he felt this to be a restrictive provisions on party observers.²⁷ Furthermore, Orya explained that during the 2014 elections, their observers were not allowed by the IEC provincial staff and police to carry recording equipment into the polling and tally centers to document fraud. This, he suggests, created significant problems for observers as their complaints on the fraudulent activities their witnessed were not accepted and, or considered valid, due to lack of supporting documentation and evidence to back them.²⁸

CSO observers: Successes and Limitations

The observation role played by civil society organizations (CSOs) on election day may appear to be similar to that of media and political parties, but the role of the CSOs, as a nonpartisan election observer, is fundamentally different. Unlike representatives of political parties, CSO observers are meant to be neutral entities. With that difference in mind, the role of CSO observers are very critical in ensuring unbiased monitoring of candidate activities and election processes. Their observation is critical in ensuring transparency on the election day because of their non-affiliation with candidates and political parties.

The Constitution highlights the importance of CSOs in strengthening democracy and encourages their establishment and activities in Afghanistan.²⁹ Taking advantage of the constitutional provisions afforded to them, thousands of CSOs were created in the post-2001 period. The CSO Sustainability Index, showed that in 2015 there were 5,789 associations registered with the Ministry of Justice, and 2,060 NGOs registered with the Ministry of Economy in Afghanistan.³⁰ These CSOs concentrate on an array of sectors such as health, education, social, cultural, religious, humanitarian, security and political affairs.³¹ With regards

²⁴ Anna Larson, "political parties in Afghanistan", March 2015.

²⁵ Fazl Rahman Orya, senior member of the Grand National Coalition of Afghanistan, interviewed by DROPS trainee Farah Elyaskhel on August 14, 2018.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ BBC Persian "ناظران خواستار برکناری کارمندان متقلب کمیسیون انتخابات شدند", 18 May 2014

²⁹ Zia Danish, "Jame Madani dar Qanon Asasi," Rahe Madaniat, Dec 2014, Retrieved on 22 July 2018 from: <https://madanyatonline.com>

³⁰ USAID. 2015 CSO Sustainability Index: Afghanistan. <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/2015-CSOSI-report-Afghanistan%2009-16-2016--DEC.pdf>

³¹ Capital, government type, population, and GDP in all reports are drawn from the Central Intelligence Agency, The World Factbook, available online at <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

to elections, their observatory role is supported in the 2016 Election Law.³² According to the 2016 Election Law, CSOs can be present at polling and tallying centers to monitor ballots on election day.³³

Since 2005, CSO observers have been involved in the monitoring of election processes³⁴ including the casting of ballots and tallying of votes on election day. Based on an estimation by FEFA, a total of 33,000 accreditation letters were distributed to CSOs in the 2014 presidential election.³⁵ Among this figure, FEFA fielded 9,500 observers and the Transparent Election Foundation of Afghanistan (TEFA) fielded 8,592 observers³⁶ across 34 provinces on election day in 2014.³⁷

Although the number CSOs that could obtain accreditation letters is not limited by any law,³⁸ only a handful of CSOs actually took on this observatory role. According to TEFA, only three CSOs carried out comprehensive observations of the election and were present across Afghanistan in 2014.³⁹ These three organizations were FEFA, TEFA, and Election and Transparency Watch Organization of Afghanistan (ETWA). Observers by FEFA, TEFA and ETWA monitored all election processes both before and after elections, including opening of the voting centers, the voting process, the closing of the voting centers, and vote tallying.⁴⁰ The monitors from TEFA in particular received a two-day training workshop before the election day and their observers were given a checklist to follow to ensure fairness, freeness, and transparency of votes.⁴¹

According to Zubair Zahid, a CSO observer, interviewed by DROPS these CSOs were thought to have conducted comprehensive observations because their activities followed a proper 'checklist' given to them by the IEC.⁴² Other organizations, states Zahid were not given the same checklists to facilitate their observations and thus their efforts were not seen in the same light as these three bodies.⁴³

While these three main CSO observers were seen to be the most effective in the monitoring the elections, they did however face their share of difficult challenges. Insecurity was identified as a significant challenge for CSOs. According to FEFA, only 65% of the country could be

³² "2014 Elections observation Report", FREE AND FAIR ELECTION FORUM OF AFGHANISTAN (FEFA), March 2014, Retrieved on 21 July 2018 from: <http://www.fefa.org.af/Home/Details?ps=119>

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ "The 2014 CSO Sustainability Index for Afghanistan", United States Agency for International Development, 2014, Retrieved on 23 July 2018 from: file:///C:/Users/Tahery/Downloads/2014-CSOSI-report-Afghanistan_r.pdf

³⁵ Mohammad Naiem Asghari, Project Manager at FEFA, interviewed by DROPS Trainee Khhojasta Sameyee on 05 September, 2018 in Kabul.

³⁶ Sughra Saadat, Spokeswoman for TEFA, interviewed by DROPS Trainee Farkhonda Tahery on September 05, 2018, in Kabul.

³⁷ Mohammad Naiem Asghari, Project Manager at FEFA, interviewed by DROPS Trainee Khhojasta Sameyee on 05 September, 2018 in Kabul.

³⁸ Sughra Saadat, Spokeswoman for TEFA, interviewed by DROPS trainee Farkhonda Tahery on September 05, 2018, in Kabul.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Sughra Saadat, Spokeswoman for TEFA, interviewed by DROPS trainee Farkhonda Tahery on September 05, 2018, in Kabul.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Zubair Zahid, Director of Kherad Foundation, interviewed by DROPS trainee Farkhonda Tahery on September 02, 2018, in Kabul.

observed in 2014 due to increasing security threats.⁴⁴ During an interview with DROPS, FEFA explained that five of its observers were kidnapped by the Taliban on election day, one of whom was killed.⁴⁵ Sughra Saadat, Spokeswoman for TEFA told DROPS that their observers were beaten by the Taliban in Maidan Wardak province and their reports were taken away from them in 2014.⁴⁶ Additionally, she noted that two of their observers were killed and three others were abducted on election day in 2014.⁴⁷

Threats from local strongmen posed another challenge for CSO observers in 2014. TEFA stated that its observers received threats by local strongmen in Faryab, Baghlan, Kunduz, Paktia, Maidan Wardak, Nangarhar and Ghazni provinces.⁴⁸ In some cases they received verbal threats on their way to polling centers to deter them from appearing at the polling sites. In some provinces their ID cards were taken from them. While in more serious cases, such as in Baghlan province, TEFA observers were detained by the Taliban on election day.

Lack of support and cooperation from the government was also highlighted as a factor that hindered CSOs efforts in monitoring of elections.⁴⁹ According to TEFA, the government did not pay heed to their repeated requests for security and simply bypassed them in their security plans for election day processions.⁵⁰ The IEC and its provincial offices were also not cooperative with CSOs.⁵¹ According to TEFA, receiving the accreditation letters was a challenge for CSOs due to the lengthy bureaucracy surrounding the attainment of these letters. TEFA told DROPS that it took the organization one year to obtain their accreditation letter for the 2014 election when in reality it could be issued within 48 hours. In addition, the IEC and its provincial offices refused to provide adequate and timely election related information to CSO observers.⁵²

An internal challenge for CSOs in 2014 was the lack of budget to recruit an adequate number of observers that could be fielded to all, if not most, polling sites throughout the country. This challenge was reflected by TEFA who explained to the authors of this brief that CSOs were unable to acquire donor funding to assist them in the hiring of large numbers of observers.⁵³ Additionally, Zubair Zahid noted that "Low salaries also resulted in lack of interest by CSO observers to play an active, effective and systematic role in the monitoring and observation of the elections."⁵⁴ According to Zahid, many examples of irregularities of CSO observers, including "coming late and leaving early," were also noticed on 2014 election day.⁵⁵

⁴⁴ Mohammad Naiem Asghari, Project Manager at FEFA, interviewed by DROPS trainee Khojasta Sameyee on 05 September, 2018 in Kabul.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Sughra Saadat, Spokeswoman for TEFA, interviewed by DROPS trainee Farkhonda Tahery on September 05, 2018, in Kabul.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Sughra Saadat, Spokeswoman for TEFA, interviewed by DROPS trainee Farkhonda Tahery on September 05, 2018, in Kabul.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² This was raised by FEFA, TEFA and Kherad Foundation.

⁵³ Sughra Saadat, Spokeswoman for TEFA, interviewed by DROPS trainee Farkhonda Tahery on September 05, 2018, in Kabul.

⁵⁴ Zubair Zahid, Director of Kherad Foundation, interviewed by DROPS trainee Farkhonda Tahery on September 02, 2018, in Kabul.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

Conclusion

Media, political parties and civil society organizations participated in relatively large numbers as observers during the 2014 presidential elections. In spite of this, the 2014 presidential election was fraught with corruption, suggesting that much needs to be done to prepare both the observers and the environment required to enable their effective participation in ensuring transparency and integrity of ballots.

As reflected in this policy brief, the role of observers were challenged and limited by several factors, but it should be noted that the factors highlighted in this brief represent only a handful out of a cornucopia of factors that acted in 2014 to limit fielded observers role in the monitoring of elections. Thus, this brief only attempts to expand upon a few noted factors as highlighted to DROPS by the various stakeholders that were interviewed.

Insecurity and intimidation by the insurgency was identified as one of the most challenging factors by observers which resulted from MoI's inability to ensure security of observers. Another factor was the interference of local strongmen and agents of candidates who imposed limitations on observers. A third factor was the lack of cooperation and coordination between the IEC, its provincial offices, ECC, MoI and other stakeholders on issues such as the number, time and role of observers. There were also various internal factors that each group of observers faced individually which limited the role of their observers. One was the lack of training, particularly for observers fielded by political parties. Another was the lack of donor funding resulting in CSOs not being able to deploy an adequate number of observers and which also hampered their capacity to retain volunteers who could observe the elections on their behalf.

To address these challenges, a mechanism for coordination to allow for the free flow of information between the IEC, its provincial offices, the ECC and MoI is required. This will clarify and ensure that all election bodies are on the same page when it comes to the roles, responsibilities and rights afforded to all observers on election day. Secondly, training programs must be created for observers to hone their understanding, build their capacity and provide them with a toolkit to assist them in not only executing their responsibilities as observers but also to teach them conflict resolution techniques that could help them address the various challenges that may appear on election day to obstruct their participation on election day.

To help the stakeholders address the above-mentioned external and internal factors, this policy brief provides a set of recommendations in the following pages.

Policy Recommendations:

- 1. Afghanistan's National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) should ensure security of observers representing media, political parties and civil society organizations on election day.** Security of observers should be incorporated in the security plan of ANDSF as pertaining to election day activities and should be afforded priority. The security forces should also take effective measures to prevent local actors who pose threats to observers in polling centers.
- 2. A mechanism should be created to facilitate coordination, awareness and flow of communication between the IEC, its provincial offices, ECC and MoI on the roles, responsibilities, rights and access of election observers.** The IEC and the MoI should coordinate their efforts and also provide, their staff who are placed in polling and tallying centers, training on the roles/rights of observers and their responsibilities towards ensuring that observers have an enabling environment to carry out their duties.
- 3. The IEC and its provincial offices should ensure that observers have full access to election related information pertaining to the polling and tallying processes on election day.** The IEC can facilitate observers' access to information by appointing one staff for this purpose in each of its polling centers. This staff member should be trained before elections and should be easily accessible on election day to provide information as per the request of observers.
- 4. The ECC must set up a hotline that allows observers to report on any actions taken by any individuals or bodies which acts to prevent and/or challenge the ability of observers to monitor the electoral process.** The IEC has the experience of using hotlines for public outreach, information sharing with voters, and encouraging people to vote.⁵⁶ In the run up to 2009 presidential election, a hotline service was set up at the headquarters of Roshan Telecommunication company and was funded by the Elections Project of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP/ELECT).⁵⁷ Between 25,000 to 35,000 people called the hotline every week to ask questions about elections,⁵⁸ a fact that proves how effective and wide-reaching a hotline could be. In 2014, the IEC used a similar toll-free hotline ahead of the presidential election⁵⁹ and it also had the same results. However, such hotlines have never been used for reporting of fraudulent activities on election day. Thus, this bring recommends that hotlines be developed to allow for the registering complaints and reporting of fraudulent activities on the day of elections while continuing to serve its previous role of providing outreach services to voters.

⁵⁶ UNAMA, "Elections Hotline Rings Non-Stop," 21 June 2009. Accessed on August 2, 2018 from <https://unama.unmissions.org/elections-hotline-ringing-non-stop-0>

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ UNDP, "Afghanistan election helpline answering 35,000 queries per week," August 13, 2009. Accessed on August 1, 2018, from <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/presscenter/articles/2009/08/13/afghanistan-voter-helpline-answering-35000-election-queries-per-week.html>

⁵⁹ UNAMA, "Afghan election body starts telephone hotline to answer poll queries," 17 July 2013. Accessed on August 5, 2018, from <https://unama.unmissions.org/afghan-election-body-starts-telephone-hotline-answer-poll-queries>

5. **All observers from the media, political parties and civil society organization should be given adequate training and resources to enable them to carry out their duties and responsibilities in a professional and effective manner.** Such trainings should be given to observers in cooperation with the IEC. These trainings should focus on honing observers understanding of election day processes and IEC checklist requirements, building their capacity in monitoring of ballots, and providing observers with a problem-solving toolkit to enable them to resolve issues that may come up election day.