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ပြည်သူများပူးပေါင်းလှုပ်ရှားမှုအဖွဲ့
PEOPLE'S ALLIANCE FOR CREDIBLE ELECTIONS

September 21, 2015

Press summary for immediate release

PACE observes lack of interference but notes low public participation in first week of voter list display; calls for intensified voter mobilization

Starting on September 14, the People's Alliance for Credible Elections (PACE) deployed 110 Long Term Observers to 110 townships across the country to observe the national voter list display process. From September 14-20, PACE observed 421 display centers across all states and regions in a roughly equal number of urban and rural display locations. In the first week of the display, observers found that the process was largely free from intimidation or interference and that most centers had the materials they needed. However, PACE observers found that many locations were not open during officially-designated hours. PACE also notes a relatively low level of voter participation, low presence of political parties and CSOs in the process, as well as a lack of voter education materials around many display centers. Looking forward to the final week of the process, PACE recommends that the UEC, political parties and CSOs intensify voter mobilization and that the UEC ensures that all display locations remain open during official hours.

According to PACE's methodology, observers stayed in display locations for the entire day to observe the whole process. PACE observers did not check the names or data on the voter list. PACE observers deployed each day of the display period except for September 18th.

In centers observed, PACE observers witnessed very few cases of intimidation or of interference by unauthorized people. Positively, 92% of centers observed had all required forms and materials. However, observers found that 19% of centers observed were not open during all official times designated by the UEC.

PACE is concerned that observers saw low levels of voter participation and outreach. In centers observed, PACE saw low levels of voter turnout and low levels of voters making changes or additions to the list. At approximately 42% of the displayed centers observed, PACE did not see voter education material and activities near the center. Furthermore, political parties and civil society representatives were not present at 87% and 79% of observed centers respectively.

Overall, PACE is encouraged by the lack of interference in the process and the fact that most centers are equipped with necessary materials. However, PACE urgently recommends measures to increase voter participation, including keeping centers open during official hours and intensifying voter mobilization campaigns.

PACE is a nonpartisan, election observation organization working in all states and regions in Myanmar to promote better elections. In the 2015 Elections, PACE will be deploying more than 2000 STOs (Short Term observers) on Election Day across the country and around 130 LTOs for national voter list display and campaign observation. PACE will be using “Systematic observation” methodology on Election Day, which has been using in more than 50 countries. PACE will continue its observation of the final week of the voter list display and will share final findings with the public once the process is complete.

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PEOPLE'S ALLIANCE FOR CREDIBLE ELECTIONS

PACE Voter List Update Monitoring

September 14-20th 2015, Preliminary Findings

Starting on September 14, the People's Alliance for Credible Elections (PACE) deployed 110 Long Term Observers to 110 townships across the country to observe the national voter list display process. All 110 were trained all of them in Yangon and Mandalay in mid-August on the voter list updating process, code of conduct for non-partisan observers, how to fill the check-list and to report back to PACE's Yangon office in a timely way.

For national voter list display observation, PACE focused only on the update process and not looking at which people are missing or the accuracy of the voter's information. Particularly, PACE is checking the level of voter engagement, efficiency of sub-commission's capacities and procedures and the presence of party and others. All LTOs are assigned to observe different display centers for 8 days over the two week display period and will remain in a center for an entire day.

Findings

From September 14-20, PACE observed 421 display centers across all states and regions in a roughly equal number of urban and rural display locations. The key findings in those locations are:

Voter Education

There was a lack of voter education materials and activities in and around a significant percentage of centers observed. As observers are only observing in and around the immediate vicinity of the center, it is possible that voter education activities could be happening in other locations.

- At approximately 45% of observed centers, PACE did not see any voter education materials.
- At approximately 64% of observed centers, PACE did not see any voter education activities.

Presence of Political Parties and CSOs

During the first week of observation, PACE found that at most centers observed, there were no political party representatives or other CSO volunteers present.

- At approximately 87% of observed centers, PACE did not see any political party representatives.
- At approximately 79% of observed centers, PACE did not see any other civil society volunteers.

Turnout and Submission of Changes

As PACE observers went to different display centers and remained the whole day, observers were able to see how many voters have come and checked their names on the list. In centers PACE has observed, LTOs have seen low turnout overall, and there are not large numbers of people requesting additions or changes to the list.

Display Center Management and Materials

To understand the administrative procedures of the centers, PACE observed whether centers were opened during the official opening hours and whether the required forms to add, delete and object were available to voters to ensure that voters' changes can be resolved according to UEC's guidelines.

- While most centers observed were open during the officially designated hours, a sizable percentage (19%) was not opened during the designated hours.
- A higher percentage of centers observed in rural areas were not opened during designated hours, compared to those in urban areas.
- 92% of centers that opened and were observed by PACE had all necessary forms and displayed the voters list.
- PACE received a small number of incident reports that officials in some centers were recording changes without using official forms.

Intimidation and Interference

A safe environment is one of the most important factors contributing to voter turnout. PACE observed whether any intimidation occurred in and around the centers. In nearly all of the centers PACE observed, we did not see intimidation of voters or interference by unauthorized persons.

- In 92% of centers that PACE observed, display officials provided equal assistance to all voters.
- In 97% of centers observed, PACE did not see any intimidation of voters.
- In 98% of centers observed, PACE did not see any interference by unauthorized persons in the process.

Recommendations

To Union Election Commission (UEC)

- In order to mobilize the voters, UEC should undertake various ways to reach out and inform citizen to check their names on the list for the final week.
- UEC should make sure all the centers are opened according to the official schedule unless UEC or other sub-commissions have officially announced the extension or delay of the display.
- To build voters' confidence over procedures and to promote transparency, UEC should give clear instruction to sub-commissions to follow all the procedures according the official guidelines to receive and resolve change requests.
- To make sure that the public, CSOs and parties have been informed that where display has been delayed and extended.

To Political Parties

- In order to make sure that all eligible voters' names are on the list, political parties need to reach out, educate and mobilize citizens to check and to take necessary measures to correct any problems.

To Civil Society

- To identify the places where voter education programs have been weak and intensify the outreach during the final week.

About PACE

The People's Alliance for Credible Elections (PACE) is a nonpartisan, election observation organization working in all states and regions in Myanmar to promote better elections. PACE was set up in 2013 with the initiation of three local nongovernment organizations namely 1) Loka Ahlin Social Development Network 2) Pandita Development Institute and 3) Yangon School of Political Science. The fundamental purpose of forming PACE is to engage the elections scheduled in 2015 in the short term and to establish a formal election focused organization which will be able to engage the whole electoral process in Myanmar in the long term. The PACE mission is "to ensure all citizens political rights including the right to vote and stand for office by engaging in activities that promote citizen participation, and safeguard political and civil rights through a program of electoral observation, policy advocacy and civic education." Since early 2014, PACE has developed its organizational structure to have a separate board of directors and has now become an independent organization particularly designed for election process observation in Myanmar.

In the 2015 Elections, PACE will be deploying more than 2000 STOs (Short Term observers) on Election Day across the country and around 130 LTOs for national voter list display and campaign observation. PACE will be using "Systematic observation" methodology on Election Day, which has been using in more than 50 countries.