



November 9, 2015: Preliminary Report – Election Day

Election Context

The 2015 elections are an important moment in Myanmar's history. In this context, the People's Alliance for Credible Elections (PACE) decided to observe the elections to create a space for citizens to engage in the election process. Additionally, PACE aims to contribute to better elections in Myanmar by making recommendations and promoting reforms to the election process.

The 2015 general elections are seen as the most competitive elections since the 1990 elections, with 91 political parties fielding more than 6000 candidates and with about 33 million eligible voters. Political leaders are openly contesting and competing for votes. Local and international media are more active. Myanmar is more engaged with the international and regional community. Positively, nonpartisan election observation was legalized for the first time and the Union Election Commission (UEC) has engaged with civil society and political parties more than in the past.

However, the electoral process has also been characterized by controversies and lack of trust. This includes concern surrounding the electoral legal framework, inconsistent implementation of policies, and the neutrality, competency and transparency of the Union Election Commission (UEC). Significantly, large parts of the public view the 25% reserved seats for military as undemocratic. The controversial decision to disenfranchise white card holders, the cancellation of voting in conflict-affected areas, and the challenges faced by IDPs raise the question of inclusiveness in the elections. Further, the lack of political consensus on key issues such as a post-election power transfer and constitutional reform perpetuated uncertainty and lack of confidence in the post-election period.

Starting in September 2015, the People's Alliance for Credible Elections (PACE) has been closely observing the pre-election period including the nation-wide voter list display process, the election campaign and final electoral preparations. Generally, PACE found that the voter list display process was open and there were no significant incidents of intimidation, interference, violence or harassment reported. However, voter mobilization was weak and public participation was modest. The resulting voter list has faced criticism and the accuracy of the list remains in question. Generally, the campaign environment was smooth with little intimidation and interference in rallies. However, the media has reported some isolated incidents, including the attack and intimidation of candidates and destruction of posters or billboards. In the final week of the campaign, PACE also observed the distribution of voter



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slips and in-constituency advanced voting. PACE received some critical incident reports about the advanced voting process, but is still collecting and confirming this data.

Main findings

PACE observers deployed around the country to watch the opening, voting and closing and counting process. Overall, PACE saw an orderly election day process where voters were able to participate. Most polling stations opened on time and facilities were usually accessible to voters. PACE observers saw low rates of intimidation of voters at the polling stations. In general, observers were allowed to watch the process, though some faced difficulty at the beginning of the day. Political party and candidate agents were present in a large number of polling stations.

PACE found that, in some polling stations, less than 10 people were turned away because they were not on the voter list. At the end of voting day, many stations still had a queue of voters and, in nearly all cases, those people were allowed to vote. Election officials in most locations followed voting procedures, however there were some isolated cases where some individuals not on the voter list were allowed to vote.

In nearly all locations, witnesses, observers and agents were allowed to stay during the count. Copies of the results form (Form 16) were posted in most locations. PACE observers did find some locations where advance ballots were not counted before election day ballots as required by procedures. Party and candidate agents raised complaints about the count in less than one-third of polling stations.

Detailed Findings

Opening

- 94% of observers were permitted to enter the polling station before voting began. PACE followed up with observers to ensure they were eventually allowed to enter polling stations. With the exception of a few cases, observers were allowed to observe by the time voting began. PACE worked with the UEC and State/Region sub-commissions to solve cases where observers were not allowed to observe.
- 84% of polling station facilities were accessible to all voters, including elderly and disabled voters.
- In 99% of polling stations, all required officials were present by 6:00am.
- In 89% of polling stations, the advanced ballot boxes were delivered before the station opened.
- At the time of opening, 93% of polling stations had all necessary materials, while 2% were missing ballot boxes, less than 1% missing ballot papers, 1% missing the voter



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list, 1% missing stamps, less than 1% missing indelible ink and 3% missing results forms.

- In 95% of polling stations, voting began on time, while 5% voting began after 6:30.

Voting process

- Party or candidate agents were present during the voting process in 92% of polling stations. Agents for the USDP were present in 83% of polling stations and agents from NLD in 84%, while agents from other Burman parties were present in 25% and ethnic parties 29%. Agents from independent candidates were present in 10% of polling stations.
- In 87% of polling stations, there were no unauthorized people present. Unauthorized people were present in 13% of polling stations. Those people were often community leaders and local authorities, and, in isolated cases, members of the military.
- Voters were asked to show proof of identity documents (such as a voter slip or NRC card) at 96% of polling stations.
- In 34% of polling stations, less than 10 people who came to vote were turned away because they were not on the voter list. In 4% of stations, more than 11 voters were turned away.
- In 92% of polling stations, those voters on the voter list were allowed to vote. However, in 7% of stations, less than 10 voters whose name was on the voter list were not allowed to vote.
- In 90% of stations, only people with names on the voter list were allowed to vote. However, in 10% of stations, some people with no name on the voter list were allowed to vote. PACE received incident reports of some people being allowed to vote on behalf of others, sometimes for family members and sometimes for others.
- Voters were able to cast their vote in secret in 97% of polling stations.
- In 99% of polling stations, there was no intimidation or harassment of voters inside or in the immediate vicinity of the polling station. PACE observers were only able to observe intimidation inside and near the polling station, not outside of the station.
- In 99% of stations, voters were marked with ink as they left the premises.
- Special election police were present outside 97% of polling stations.
- At 38% of polling stations, there was still a queue at the polling station at 4pm. Of those polling stations, voters still in the queue were allowed to vote in 95% of cases.
- Observers were allowed to fully observe the voting process at 95% of polling stations. At 5% of polling stations, observers were allowed to observe, but with some restrictions.

Closing and Counting

- Nearly all polling stations, observers, agents and eyewitnesses were allowed to remain in the station after it closed.
- Advanced vote ballots were counted before other ballots in 94% of polling stations.
- In 98% of polling stations, the count was conducted so that observers could see how the ballot was marked.
- In 96% of polling stations, officials declared ballots invalid in a consistent manner.
- Party or candidate agents were present during the count in 94% of polling stations. Agents for the USDP were present in 88% of polling stations and agents from NLD in 87%, while agents from other Burman parties were present in 26% and ethnic parties 28%. Agents from independent candidates were present in 11% of polling stations.



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- After the count, ballots and forms were sealed inside tamper evident bags in 99% of polling stations.
- In 93% of polling stations, results forms (Form 16) were posted for public viewing after the count was completed.
- In 97% of polling stations, there was no intimidation, harassment or interference in the counting process.
- In 79% of polling stations, no party or candidate agents raised complaints to the Polling Station Officer during the counting process. Agents for the USDP raised complaints in 17% of stations, NLD agents raised complaints in 16% of stations, other Burman party agents in 5% of stations, ethnic party agents in 6% of stations and independent agents in 2% of stations.

PACE will release a final report on its observation findings from the voter list update process, the campaign process, electoral preparations and election day in the coming weeks.

Methodology

On election day, PACE deployed more than 2000 nonpartisan observers to polling stations in every state and region. PACE is conducting a Sample-Based Observation (SBO) as part of its overall election day exercise. Sample-Based Observation (SBO) is an advanced observation methodology that employs well-established statistical principles and sophisticated information technology. SBO involves the use of a nationally representative sample to systematically assess the quality of voting and counting process on election day. SBOs provide the most timely and accurate information on the conduct of voting and counting. The SBO for the 2015 Election involved deploying citizen observers to a nationally representative random sample of 440 polling stations. PACE's citizen observers arrived to their assigned polling stations at 5:00 am. They observe the setup of polling stations, voting, counting, announcement and posting of results. Throughout the day PACE's observers call the data center at four designated times to report their observations. The SBO observers will be collecting and reporting at least 18,900 data points.

In the lead up to the 2015 elections, PACE deployed 130 LTOs for national voter list display, campaign observation and UEC preparations in the week before the elections. PACE was accredited to observe the 2015 elections by the Union Election Commission.

About PACE

The People's Alliance for Credible Elections (PACE) is an independent, non-partisan, non-government domestic election observer group based in Yangon. PACE was founded in 2013 to strengthen democratic institutions in Myanmar through safeguarding citizen rights and



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promoting public participation in the electoral process. To promote transparency, accountability and inclusiveness in the electoral process, PACE will mainly be working on civic and voter education, election observation and electoral reform.

Upholding the principles enshrined in “Universal Declaration of Human Rights”, PACE’s work will be implemented regardless of race, religion and gender. Moreover, PACE has signed “Declaration of Global Principles for “Nonpartisan Observation and Monitoring” by Citizen Organizations,” which is a document endorsed by more than 260 organization from 75 countries, and is a member of the Global Network of Domestic Election Monitors (GNDEM).

For further information, please contact:

Myat May Zin, 09787391571