



ELECTION EDUCATION AND OBSERVATION PARTNERS

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EEOP Preliminary Statement on the Polling and Counting November 9, 2015

The EEOP deployed approximately 1500 observers across the country on election day. Data from these observers is still being aggregated, and will be included in the EEOP's final report. In addition to the comprehensive reporting process, over three hundred EEOP observers reported their findings by telephone at three different times during the election day: after opening; during the polling process, and after the polling and counting. This preliminary statement is based on those reports only, so findings may be revised in the final report, after all data has been received, aggregated and analyzed.

Opening – Polling stations were set up and staff and materials were present before opening. Party agents from at least two parties were present in almost all locations. Voters began to arrive at the stations around 5:30 am. Polling stations opened peacefully with no significant problems. A few observers reported that materials arrived late, causing late opening, but none of our reports so far has mentioned a station opening later than 6:30. Some polling stations did not receive the advance voting ballot boxes before 6 am and they took few hours to arrive to designated polling stations. A few observers reported some missing materials but apart from that, opening was done in accordance with the guidelines and procedures set out by UEC.

Transparency – Party agents were present in almost all polling stations. Most agents were from NLD and USDP, but agents representing other parties and candidates were often present. Party agents were a key element in ensuring the transparency and credibility of the process and parties are to be commended for the effort they expended to deploy party agents at polling stations. Non-partisan observers, both international and domestic, were less common, but still participated in greater numbers than ever before, and the UEC should be recognized for helping ensure a transparent process.

Polling Process – Many polling stations had well over one thousand voters. Although polling officers appeared well-trained and working efficiently, observers reported that they often faced difficulty in managing the big crowd of voters waiting to cast their ballots. The weakness of managing the crowd created complications and long wait for the voters, with some stations having waiting times of over an hour even in late afternoon. Observers also mentioned about the size of polling stations which are small for the voting process to go smoothly. Some voters cast their ballots to wrong ballot boxes and some left the polling station after casting their first ballot, assuming the process was complete.

In some cases, our observers reported that local administration officers were present in polling stations for some period during polling. This is a violation of election regulation, and there was concern that their presence might influence or intimidate voters.



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For future elections the UEC should consider issuing all ballots to the voter at one time, which would decrease confusion and congestion in the polling station, and reduce the number of staff needed to administer the process. Moreover, the color of ballots for the separate Hluttaws (Houses) should be different in order for the voters to easily identify ballot boxes which already have different colors. UEC should also consider reducing the number of voters per station to less than one thousand to better manage the crowd of voters and reduce the time of counting votes. Additional training and support should be provided to ensure no unauthorized persons are present in the polling station.

Closing and Counting – Polling stations closed efficiently on schedule at 4:00 PM. Counting was the least well-defined procedure, and observers reported different stations using different procedures. There was much confusion on determining valid and invalid ballots, with many ballots where voter intent was clear being ruled invalid. Although standards for determining valid and invalid ballots varied, there were no reports of the determination process unfairly favoring any party or candidate. The UEC should improve instruction for determining ballot validity, revise standards to allow ballots where voter intention is clear.

Counting was well-monitored by party agents and voter witnesses in almost all polling stations, but most of the witnesses and party agents focused on ballots in the ballot boxes and they neglected to check the numbers of voters who voted in the list, the numbers of used ballots, the numbers of ballots in the ballot boxes and rest of unused ballots. Many polling stations counted ballots transparently, however due to lack of clear instruction, the counting process took too long and many witnesses could not wait for the entire counting process.

Overall, the polling and counting were well organized, and people were able to participate freely in many parts of the country. The process was transparent, with party agents from at least two parties in almost every polling station observed.

Conclusion – Overall, we give the election process so far a rating of “peaceful and credible”. It is important to state that this rating is based on preliminary data, and may be revised when we have all observer reports. It is also important to note that the election process is not over yet; there remains the critical aggregation phase, where polling station results will be added together, then the official results announced. We urge the UEC and other stakeholders to help ensure that the aggregation phase of the election is conducted in a fair and transparent manner.

Last, we congratulate the UEC, political parties, security forces, media, international and domestic observers for contributing to what appears to be a peaceful and credible election.



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And we also congratulate the people of Myanmar, who enthusiastically and peacefully participated in voting for a new Myanmar.

About the EEOP

Election Education and Observation Partners (EEOP) is a non-partisan independent voter education and election observation coalition with 23 members and alliances from all states and regions of Myanmar. Founded in March 2013, the EEOP's members include: New Myanmar Foundation (NMF), Democratic Force (DF), Rural Development Network (RDN), Metta Campaign, Wisdom Banner, Nwe Oo Foundation, Pwint Phyu Observer Group, Magwe Observer Network, Social Actors' Group, Youth Development Network, Paungde Observer Group, Pyay Observer Group (FPSS), Green Network, Rhododendron Indigenous Development (RID) Association, Tedim Youth Fellowship (TYF), KRDO, Cherry Image, Justice Drum, Kyaukmae Development Network, Kayan Women Organization (KyWO), Top Youth, Bilin Observer Group, Wunlark Development Foundation and Public Welfare Network.

In advance of the elections EEOP has provided civic and voter education through trainings across the country, and monitored voter registration and the campaign period. EEOP has applied for accreditation for over 1500 observers (68% male and 32% female) who will be deployed at polling stations in more than 100 townships to monitor the election on Nov. 8. While this is the first involvement in elections for some members, others participated in secretly observing the elections in 2010, and openly provided voter education for and observed the bi-elections in 2012. Regardless of experience, all members share a passion for and commitment to democracy in Myanmar, and unlike most observation groups that were founded and funded with international support, EEOP is almost entirely self-funded by its members—although it maintains a strong relationship with the Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL).

Contact Election Education and Observation Partners (EEOP)

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