

Somaliland voter registration

Preface

This paper will describe the concept for civil/voter registration which will be implemented by the National Electoral Commission (NEC).

The concept

The main features of the concept are:

- Registration takes place in registration centres that will later become polling centres. People must register where they will vote;
- The registration is concurrent civil and voter registration performed by two staff representing the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MINT), two from the National Electoral Commission (NEC) and one from the Appeals Court (AC);
- Registration takes place region by region or in two regions at a time;
- In each region registration will take place for a period of 45 days: 25 days of registration kick-off from district offices, five days of core registration in registration centres and 15 days of supplemental registration in district offices;
- A total of 380 electronic registration kits (including laptop, digital camera, fingerprint scanner and printer) will be used by up to 360 registration teams in the largest region;
- Voter card and civil ID card will be issued on the spot during core registration;
- Indelible ink will be used as immediate countermeasure against people registering more than one time;
- In addition, an Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS) will be run after registration to catch any people who might have managed to register twice.

Description of the registration process

Registration kick-off

Public information campaigns inform people about the upcoming registration, eligibility criteria, location of registration centres and in particular on what dates registration will take place in each area.

Registrants are encouraged to write down their details (name, date of birth etc.) in advance to speed up the registration process. District offices will be open for 25 days before the core registration to hand out templates for the personal information and to inform people about the process.

Core registration period

Registration takes place region by region or in two regions at a time. Registration centres in each region will be open for five days.

Registrants will attend one of 1,000 registration centres in person. They will be met by a queue controller who will check their finger for traces of indelible ink.

A MINT official will ask questions of the prospective registrant to check their eligibility. When required, the AC official will adjudicate eligibility. Assuming satisfactory replies, the MINT official will inform the NEC registration officer that the registrant is eligible.

The NEC registration officer will use an electronic registration kit to capture the registrant's data. The kit consists of a laptop computer, a digital camera, a fingerprint scanner and a colour printer. The registration officer types in the name and other details of the registrant (either from the paper the registrant has brought with him/her or by verbally querying him/her if he/she did not bring a paper), takes a digital portrait photograph of the registrant and scans the fingerprint of the registrant.

The registration officer prints out:

- A civil ID card (pre-printed with security features);
- A voter registration card (pre-printed with security features);
- A hardcopy of all data for MINT;
- A hardcopy of all data for NEC.

The second NEC official asks the registrant to check the data. If the registrant can't read the official will read it out for him/her. The registrant will confirm the accuracy of the information by signing (or marking with his/her thumb) the NEC hardcopy.

The official will shake a bottle of indelible ink. The registrant will wipe his/her finger and dip it in the indelible ink. The official will check that the ink has been applied correctly, in particular that the cuticle of the nail is covered.

The NEC official will put the voter card in a cold lamination plastic pouch and turn the card over to the registrant.

One of the MINT officials will put the civil ID card in a cold lamination pouch and turn it over to the registrant.

Between regions

At the end of registration in each region the team packs up and moves on to the next region.

MINT and NEC hardcopies are shipped to NEC headquarters together with the electronically captured registration data (including photo and biometrics) on a regular basis.

Post processing

In NEC headquarters the NEC hardcopies are filed and the data downloaded to a secure server. Quality assurance will ensure that the correct number of records has been received and that data integrity is intact.

Once all data for a region has been received, uploaded and quality assured, the AFIS is run to identify potential duplicates. A team of officials will adjudicate the potential matches identified by the AFIS by comparing the additional data of the two records, i.e. photo and alphanumeric data.

Records found to be duplicates are reported to the electoral commission for decision. The ineligible records are flagged in the database as ineligible.

The voter lists can now be printed.

Supplemental registration

After the core registration in a region, the district offices in that region will be open for another 15 days enabling people who were unable to register during the core registration period to register. They will register electronically, select their chosen polling centre and get a printed, temporary receipt. Their record will be sent to the central processing centre in Hargeisa where their fingerprint will be checked against the existing database (using AFIS) to avoid double registration. A voter card and civil ID card will be printed and sent to the district for later collection by the registrant. ■