EYE ON ELECTION

Electoral Regions	Total number of Constituencies	Selected Constituencies
Rangpur	33	22
Rajshahi	39	19
Faridpur	15	04
Khulna	36	30
Barisal	21	10
Mymensingh	38	12
Dhaka	41	21
Sylhet	19	07
Comilla	35	09
Chittagong	23	11
Total	300	145

Table 1: Coverage of constituencies under the "Eye on Election" program

ABOUT EWG

The Election Working Group (EWG), a non-partisan network of 29 leading civil society organizations in Bangladesh, was formed in 2006 with the goal of enhancing the transparency and accountability of elections and other democratic processes. Since its establishment, the EWG has observed national and local elections in collaboration with the Election Commission Bangladesh (ECB); it has provided civic / voter education; and, conducted advocacy on election-related issues, including recommendations for further improving the election process. In partnership with the ECB, the EWG played a significant role in assuring the credibility of the 2008 parliamentary election.

For the forthcoming 10th Parliamentary Elections, long term observers (LTOs) were deployed as of June 2013. LTOs currently monitor the pre-election and campaign environment in a total of 209 Upazilas / Thanas, in 145 constituencies, and 54 districts. In addition to election-related observation, areas of EWG focus, for the 10th Parliamentary election, include civic / voter education on the voting processes, tolerance, and representation; deployment of short term observers (STOs) to monitor election-day activities and processes; and, advocacy to further strengthen election processes in Bangladesh.

EWG PARTNERS

Association for Community Development (ACD)
Action on Disability and Development (ADD)
Banchte Shekha
BCDJC
Bangladesh Development Society (BDS)
Bangladesh Manobadhikar Sammonny Parishad (BMSP)
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Shariatpur Development Society (SDS)
SOLIDARITY
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Wave Foundation

IN FOCUS

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EWG's "Eye on Election" program is designed to observe election-related events and collect citizens' views on the upcoming 2014 election on a monthly basis in various constituencies across the country. To accomplish this, 118 long-term observers (LTOs) have been engaged by EWG to observe the situation in 118 constituencies since June 2013. From the month of November, EWG has added 25 more constituencies where there is a high presence of minority communities. Currently 180 LTOs are working in 145 constituencies covering all ten electoral regions in 55 of the country's 64 districts. The coverage of constituencies by the LTOs is shown in Table 1.

CONTENTS

EWG's Eye on Election report for November 2013 covers areas and issues relating to pre-election campaign, election-related violence, internal party democracy, role of local administration, and role of media.

1. Political Parties

1.1.   Pre-election campaign

There are no legal restrictions on political campaigning in the period before the declaration of the election schedule. Once the election schedule is announced, candidates are given an "official campaign period" of 21 days. This period extends from approximately three weeks prior to election day to 48 hours before election day. With election day scheduled for January 5, 2014, the legitimate campaigning period extends from December 14, 2013 to January 3, 2014.

In November, EWG long-term observers (LTOs) noticed that campaigning had already started, with many Ministers, MPs and other party stalwarts soliciting for votes in public places. Many used government facilities for the purpose. Moreover, posters, banners, gates and arches had become very noticeable in many areas. In some places these were placed in contravention of rules announced locally. Other campaigning methods were the use of feasts, and meat, clothing and cash distribution.

Use of state resources for campaigning: It is well known that state resources such as government vehicles or premises should not be used while soliciting for votes. However, this is quite common, particularly for MPs or Ministers of the ruling party who have easier access to these. In November, EWG LTOs observed 25 incidents in which an MP or a Minister had used state-owned resources in campaigning for votes. These incidents were observed in 19 (or 13.3%) of the 143 sampled constituencies. The number of observed incidents is down from 41 in October, when the incidents were observed in 22 (or 18.6%) of the 118 sampled constituencies.

Of the 25 incidents, Awami League Ministers or MPs were responsible for 24. Female MPs/Ministers were also involved in taking unfair advantage of state resources. Five of the 25 incidents were perpetrated by female MPs/Ministers; all of them belonged to the Awami League.

Typically government vehicles or premises (such as town halls, circuit houses, clubs, etc.) were used for campaign purposes. There were also cases in which MPs/Ministers solicited votes in government meetings.

In the 25 recorded incidents, 16 cases (64%) involved the use of government vehicles, 4 (16%) involved use of government clubs,

and 5 (20%) involved use of government houses and/or other government facilities.

Use of posters, leaflets, billboards, gates and arches: There are distinct rules for placement of posters and other campaign materials during a pre-election period. To stop indiscriminate placement of posters in various areas, localities sometimes specify areas that can be used for such purposes. If certain areas are declared as unauthorized for placement or display of posters and other campaign material, then it is important that all party candidates and their supporters be aware of this and the existing sanctions against wrong-doers. In the absence of any action, such rules are usually disregarded, more so as election approaches.

LTOs observed 216 events of placement of billboards, posters, banners, leaflets, gates, wall writings, etc. related to election campaign in 88 (61.5%) of the 143 constituencies sampled in November.[1] The Awami League was most active in this respect, being responsible for 102 of the 216 events (47.2%). BNP was responsible for 57 events (26.4%), Jatiya Party (Ershad) for 34 events (15.7%), and the remaining parties were responsible for 23 (10.6%).

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[1] This is down from 276 events in October.

Based on their own observation and conversations with concerned persons (printers, builders of arches and gates, makers of billboards, etc.), LTOs were able to estimate the amount spent by potential candidates on these campaign events (Table 2). For the 216 events, average spending was over Tk 40,000 per event. The Awami League events were costlier than those implemented by other parties—about 32 percent of the events implemented cost over Tk 50,000 per event, whereas comparable percentages for BNP, JP-Ershad, Jamaat-e-Islami, and other parties were 21, 26, zero and 17 percent.

Other methods of campaigning: LTOs reported 14 events of other unusual campaign methods in 10 (7%) of the 143 constituencies observed.[2] These events involved feasts (57% of the events), and unusual clothing or cash distribution (43%). These events were mainly done by the Awami League and BNP; 9 of the 14 events (64.3%) were accounted for by Awami League, 3 (21.4%) by the BNP, and 2 (14.3%) by other parties.

Based on their own observation and conversations with various knowledgeable persons, LTOs estimated the amount spent by vote-seekers of different parties on these campaign events.

For the 14 events that were observed, average spending was about Tk 74,000 per event. The Awami League events were costly, with 44.4 percent of the events involving spending of over Tk 50,000; the comparable percentage for BNP is 33.3%.

1.2. Election-related violence

Pre-election violence has been noticed in previous elections in highly contested constituencies and in minority and indigenous areas. LTOs kept an eye on occurrences of such violence in the 143 sampled constituencies. Where incidents of violence happened, LTOs obtained detailed information from eye witnesses, journalists, media persons, and political party workers.

LTOs observed the occurrence of 190 incidents of election-related violence in 71 constituencies (50% of the constituencies in the sample).[3] Events of violence were observed in all divisions except Sylhet. Violence took the form of group clashes, property damage or destruction, physical injury, murder, attempted murder, etc. Group clashes along with property damage or destruction comprised a majority he violence incidents (Table 3).

	Percentage of total number of events	Percentage of total number of events of individual parties				
		AL	BNP	JP (Ershad)	Jamaat	Other
Tk. 0 -10,000	30.1	23.5	28.1	44.1	20.0	50.0
Tk 10,001 - 20,000	18.5	17.6	22.8	14.7	20.0	16.7
Tk 20,001 - 50,000	25.0	26.5	28.1	14.7	60.0	16.7
Tk 50,001 - 1,00,000	13.9	14.7	10.5	1.6	0	16.7
Over Tk 1,00,000	12.5	17.6	10.5	8.8	0	0
Total number of events	216	102	57	34	5	18

Table2: Percentage distribution of events relating to placements of posters, banners, billboards, gates, arches etc. by estimated amounts spent by different parties

[2] In October, LTOs reported 62 events of other unusual campaign methods in 31 (26.3%) of the 118 constituencies observed.

[3] During the June-August period, 118 constituencies were sampled, and only 22 cases of violence were observed. In October 2013, occurrences of election-related violence was again low—7 incidents were observed in 7 constituencies out of 118 in the sample.

Type of violence	% of incidents (N = 190)
Murder	6.3
Physical injury	19.6
Group clash	38.4
Property damage/destruction	22.6
Other	13.2

Table 3: Election-related violence by type of violence (%)

There were 124 incidents of election-related violence in which physical injury occurred. 1,267 persons (including 27 women) were reported to be injured in these incidents. Also, 20 people (all male) died in 18 incidents of severe violence.

LTOs have reported that some legal action was taken against persons identified as perpetrators of the incidents of violence in 55 of the 71 constituencies in which election-related violence was observed. In the 190 recorded incidents of election-related violence in November 2013, it was observed that some action was taken in 94 cases (49.5%). Action consisted of filing of court cases (88 incidents, or 93.6%) or local mediation and settlement (6 cases, or 6.4%). It is not known whether these types of cases are ultimately resolved and what the outcomes are.

1.3. Internal party democracy

Internal party democracy is characterized by the presence of political party committees at the grass-roots level and at different levels up to the central committees; most of the committees are regular and not ad hoc committees, and are formed by direct voting rather than at the order of the central committees; and committee fundraising and expenditure need to be transparent, with the committees having some mechanism to account for fund inflows and outflows. LTOs observed the presence or absence of these features amongst the different parties in the 143 constituencies sampled in November.[4]

Upazila level structure

Committees at upazila/thana level: The Awami League has committees in every upazila/thana observed, while BNP covers almost 95 percent of the upazilas in the 116 constituencies observed in November. Presence of upazila/thana level committees is much less pronounced for other parties—coverage of upazilas/thanas is 64 percent for Jatiya party (Ershad), 27 percent for Jamaat-e-Islami, and 56 percent for other parties.

Type of upazila/thana committees: A majority of the committees of the different political parties are regular committees (Table 4).

Party	Total number of upazila/thana committees	Type of upazila/ thana committee	
		Regular committee (%)	Ad hoc committee (%)
Awami League	135	89.6	10.4
BNP	128	87.5	12.5
Jatiya Party (Ershad)	85	78.8	21.2
Jamaat	36	94.4	5.6
Other	75	81.3	18.7

Table 4: Percentage distribution of upazila/thana committees by party and type of committee

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[4] While 143 constituencies were sampled, November data for checklists on internal party democracy includes findings for only 116 constituencies.

Party	Upazila/ thana committee formation procedure		
	Direct voting (% of committees)	Consensus among the leaders (% of committees)	Written order by central committee (% of committees)
Awami League	60.7	29.6	9.6
BNP	54.3	41.1	4.7
Jatiya Party (Ershad)	44.2	48.8	7.0
Jamaat	65.7	25.7	8.6
Other	36.0	53.3	10.7

Table 5: Percentage distribution of upazila/thana committees by party and mode of formation

The Jamaat-e-Islami party has the lowest percentage of ad hoc committees while Jatiya Party (Ershad) has the highest.

Mode of formation of upazila/thana committees: A majority of the upazila/thana committees of the Awami League, BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami Party are constituted through direct voting (Table 5). Consensus among the leaders as a means of committee formation is more prevalent among Jatiya Party (Ershad) and other smaller parties.

Sources of funds: Sources of funds for the upazila/thana committees are membership fees, donations by party members, donations by supporters, and mass collection from the public. Donation by party members is the major source of funding for these committees for all the parties (Table 6). Membership fees and donation by supporters are also important funding sources.

Method of record-keeping: Keeping accounts of the upazila/thana committees in a register is the principal method of record keeping for all the parties. Bank accounts are practically not used by any party.

Zila level structure

Committees at zila level: The Awami League and BNP have committees in every zila observed, while Jatiya Party (Ershad) covers 79.5 percent of the zilas encompassing the observed 116 constituencies. Presence of zila level committees is much less pronounced for the Jamaat-e-Islami party (31.5% coverage).

Type of zila committees: A majority of the zila level committees for all parties are regular in nature (Table 7). Ad hoc committees are less than 10 percent of the total number of zila committees for all parties except for BNP. About 22 percent of the zila committees under BNP are ad hoc in nature.

Source of fund	AL	BNP	JP (Ershad)	Jamaat	Other
Membership fees	41.8	35.2	21.4	66.7	27.8
Donation by party members	69.1	74.1	85.7	66.7	55.6
Donation by supporters	23.6	25.9	32.1	33.3	22.2
Mass collection from public	5.5	7.4	0	0	11.1
Other	5.5	3.7	3.6	0	5.6

Table 6: Percentage distribution of sources of fund for upazila/thana committees by party

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[4] While 143 constituencies were sampled, November data for checklists on internal party democracy includes findings for only 116 constituencies.

Party	Total number of zila committees	Type of zila committee	
		Regular committee (%)	Ad hoc committee (%)
Awami League	73	97.2	2.8
BNP	73	78.1	21.9
Jatiya Party (Ershad)	58	91.4	8.6
Jamaat	23	91.3	8.7
Other	67	80.6	19.4

Table 7: Percentage distribution of upazila/thana committees by party and type of committee

Mode of formation of zila committees: A majority of the zila committees of the Awami League, BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami Party are constituted through direct voting (Table 8). Consensus among the leaders as a means of committee formation is more prevalent among Jatiya Party (Ershad) and other smaller parties.

Sources of funds: Sources of funds for the zila committees are membership fees, donations by party members, donations by supporters, and mass collection from the public. Donation by party members is the major source of funding for these committees for all the parties (Table 9). Membership fees and donation by supporters are also important funding sources.

Method of record-keeping: Keeping accounts of the zila committees in a register is the principal method of record keeping for all the parties. Bank accounts are used by approximately 20 percent of the Awami League and 112.5 percent of the Jamaatzila committees.

Other (undisclosed) methods account for 45 percent of BNP's record keeping.

1.4 No regulatory control on earning money by selling nomination forms

Bangladesh Awami League (BAL) started selling its nomination papers on 10 November 2013 and continued selling the forms up to 17 November 2013. In seven days AL sold 2,959 forms and the price of each of the form was BDT 25,000 (Daily Star, 18 November 2013). In total, the party earned BDT 739,75,000 (USD 960,715) by selling nomination forms. On the other hand, Jatiya Party sold out 1,498 nomination forms to aspirants. The price of the each form was BDT 20,000; the total money earned by JP is BDT 299,60,000 (USD 389,090).

Party	Upazila/ thana committee formation procedure		
	Direct voting (% of committees)	Consensus among the leaders (% of committees)	Written order by central committee (% of committees)
Awami League	56.9	31.9	11.1
BNP	38.4	41.1	20.5
Jatiya Party (Ershad)	43.1	48.3	8.6
Jamaat	69.6	21.7	8.7
Other	43.3	47.8	9.0

Table 8: Percentage distribution of zila committees by party and mode of formation

As there is no regulatory control on the selling of nomination papers by parties, this has become a huge income generating activity for the political parties.

2. Local Administration

2.1. Role of local administration

The local administration should maintain strict neutrality with respect to the election campaigns of the ruling party and the opposition parties. It is often alleged by the opposition parties that the local administration is used by the ruling party to serve its interests for re-election. For example, local administration may issue circulars and notices that are discriminatory in the sense of favoring ruling party protagonists. It is also alleged that government officials sometimes openly solicit for votes in favor of a particular political party.

Transfers of local officials are considered as a means by which the ruling party brings in officials who can serve its purpose better by advancing its election agenda, or takes out officials who are not likely to do so. Finally, local government officials may be biased in allowing the use of government halls or othergovernment premises for holding party executive committee meetings or party council meetings.

Circulars or notices by local administration: In November 2013, LTOs checked whether the

Source of fund	AL	BNP	JP (Ershad)	Jamaat	Other
Membership fees	42.5	42.5	20.8	57.1	58.1
Donation by party members	85.0	82.5	87.5	71.4	64.5
Donation by supporters	25.0	25.0	16.7	42.9	45.2
Mass collection from public	7.5	5.0	0	0	35.5
Other	0	7.5	8.3	0	6.5

Table 9: Percentage distribution of sources of fund for upazila/thana committees by party

offices of the DC, SP, UNO and OC had issued any discriminatory circulars and notices that could influence the neutrality of the 10th parliamentary election. They found no evidence of such circulars or notices in any of the 143 sampled constituencies.

Campaigning by government officials: In November 2013, the LTOs did not observe any incident in which the DC, SP, UNO and/or OC solicited votes in favor of any specific candidate or political party.[5]

Transfers of officials: Transfers of officials of the level of DC, SP, UNO and OC were observed in 52 (36.4%) of the 143 constituencies observed by the LTOs.[6] There were 59 incidents of transfer in those 52 constituencies—14 were DCs, 3 were SPs, 20 were UNOs, and 22 were OCs. In two of these incidents of transfer (both relating to OCs), LTOs found that the transfers were related to the election.

But in 26 of these incidents (44.1%), the transfers were considered unrelated to the election, while in the remaining 31 cases (52.5%), the reasons for the transfers were unknown.

Using government premises for hosting party meetings or councils. LTOs observed 31 cases in 12 constituencies where a political party applied for a government hall or other premises for holding a party executive committee meeting or a party council. 9 of these requests (29.0%) were from the Awami League, 20 (64.5%) from the BNP, and 2 (6.5%) from other parties. In November, the local authorities agreed to all of the requests for use of government premises regardless of the requesting party.

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[5] In October, LTOs observed only one such incident in one constituency among the 118 constituencies sampled.

[6] In October, similar transfers were observed in 21.2% of the 118 sampled constituencies. There were 28 incidents of transfer; and in 68% of the incidents, the transfers were considered unrelated to the election.

	Number of news items in favor of any candidate or party, published in two most popular local newspapers	How the news items favored or disgraced particular candidates or parties (number of news items)				
		Solicited votes on behalf of a party/candidate	A specific person was declared as the appropriate candidate	Described the development work done by a party/candidate	Maligned the character of a party/candidate	Other
Awami League	49	1	19	4	3	22
BNP	28	1	6	0	2	19
Other	8	1	0	4	0	3
Total	85	3	25	8	5	44
%	100.0	3.5	29.4	9.4	5.9	51.8

Table 10: How news items published in local newspapers favored or disfavored particular candidates or political parties

3. Role of the Media

The media can try to swing public opinion by publishing reports that are in favor of or go against any particular party or candidate. Again, there are instances where the media is prevented from publishing some report because of threats by the disadvantaged party. Such threats can inhibit accurate reporting that might damage a party or candidate. Finally, there is the likelihood of a candidate and his/her party people attacking journalists or newspaper offices when disfavored by particular newspaper reports. So far such incidents have been practically non-existent.

Local newspapers: LTOs reported that in 25 (17.5%) of the 143 constituencies, the two most popular local newspapers published 85 distinct news items that favored or disfavored any candidate or political party. Forty nine of these 85 news items (57.6%) related to the Awami League, 28 (32.9%) related to the BNP, while 8 (9.4%) favored or disfavored other parties.[7]

Approximately 30 percent of the news items (25 news items) favored a particular candidate or party by declaring a specific candidate as the appropriate candidate. Of these 25 news items, 19 (76%) were in favor of the Awami League. Only 6

percent of the news items maligned the character of a particular candidate or party (Table 10).

National newspapers: In reports from 14 of the 143 constituencies (9.8%), it was observed that some national newspaper published news/stories which favored any particular candidate or party in those constituencies. There were 44 distinct news items of this nature; of those 34 (77.3%) were in favor of the Awami League, 7 (15.9%) were in favor of BNP, and the remaining were in favor of other parties. Eight of the 34 news items favoring the Awami League solicited votes on behalf of a party/candidate, seven declared a specific person as the appropriate candidate, while the remaining 19 favored the party in other ways.

Attacks on journalists or media offices: There was only one incident in one constituency of Rangpur Division in which a candidate and his/her party people engaged in a group clash with a newspaper office when disgraced by a particular newspaper report. No injuries or deaths were reported.[8]

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[7]In October, there were only 30 such news items in 12 (10.2%) of the 118 sampled constituencies; 47% of those news items related to the Awami League while 43% related to the BNP.

[8] In October, two incidents of violence against journalists or media houses were reported in the 118 sampled constituencies.

Threats to media to stop them from publishing detrimental news: In November 2013, there was only one reported case of an election-related news report being prepared for publication by a newspaper, but subsequently cancelled because of threats or pressure by an individual or party.[9] This case, in which Awami league supporters threatened the newspaper office, occurred in Rangpur division.

4. Election Administration/Preparation at the Central Level

4.1 No steps taken to ensure the neutrality of the administration

Before declaration of election schedule, Election Commission, in the last four parliamentary election held under caretaker government (CTG), asked the government to reshuffle the administration to ensure the neutrality of the local administration as well as to bring credibility in the electoral process. There are evidence that all the CTG government reorganized the central administration even in the posts of Secretary and Additional Secretary as suggested by the Commission. Before the 2008 Parliamentary Polls the then CTG reorganized the local administration specifically in the posts of deputy commissioners (DCs), superintends of police (SP) and the upazilanirbahi officers (UNOs). The current Commission, before the declaration of election schedule, had not taken any steps to

reorganize the central or local administration whiel at the same time designating the DCs and UNOs as returning and assistant returning officers respectively.

4.2 Revision of code of conduct

Election Commission revised the code of conduct for the political parties and candidates. In addition to the 2008 code of conduct, the Commission added some provisions to 'ensure the level playing field' for all candidates and parties. The revised code of conduct contains the provisions that the Prime Minister, the leader of the opposition, ministers, lawmakers and other very important persons will not get any government facilities during their campaign for the next parliamentary polls. Besides, they will not be able to allocate money or make donations from any government, non-government or autonomous funds during the pre-election period[10]. According to the proposal, the other VIPs are the speaker of parliament, chief whip, deputy speaker, deputy leader of the opposition, whip, deputy ministers and those holding equivalent posts, and lawmakers and city corporation mayors. EWG observes the code of conduct as a good initiative but is concerned about its implementation during the pre-campaign and campaign period.

METHODOLOGY

Checklists were designed to allow the LTOs to probe the situation in the constituencies in a systematic manner. The checklists are organized by theme and sub-theme. There were five checklists used for November 2013

grouped under the following three themes. These were:

Theme: Political Parties
- Election related violence
- Pre-election campaign
- Internal party democracy

Theme: Media
- Role of media

Theme: Local Administration
- Role of local administration

LTOs conducted interviews with election officials, political party leaders and activists, local administrations, media, community leaders and voters. Questions that focused on public opinion, required interviewee pools ranging from five to 15 persons. Data sources included print media, official circulars and notices issued by local administrations, election-related documents and notices, police reports, and political party records.

For further details regarding the methodology used, please see the first issue of Eye on Elections (June-August 2013)

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[9] In October, there was no such report.
[10] "Pre-election period" is defined as the time from announcing the election schedule till the publishing of the gazette of election results.