



June 11, 2014

## **Election Working Group Preliminary Statement on Bandor Upazila Election Held on June 9, 2014**

### **SCOPE OF OBSERVATION**

In order to observe Bandor (Narayanganj) Upazila Elections held on June 9<sup>th</sup> 2014, the Election Working Group (EWG) deployed 30 observers in 30 polling stations. The location of observers in polling stations were assigned using a random sampling technique from the complete list of polling stations prepared and gazetted by the Election Commission Bangladesh (ECB), with having a statistically significant number of observers deployed. All observers received a full day's training, with many observers having previous experience in observation activities. EWG's Election Day observation activities were comprehensive, covering: (i) preparation and opening of the polling stations; (ii) voting operations and procedures; (iii) closing and counting; and (iv) voting environment inside the polling stations.

### **FINDINGS**

EWG found Election Day to be mostly peaceful with low incidences of violence and low voter participation. In general, voting was undertaken in an efficient and professional manner, with election officials adequately trained and voters able to cast their vote in an orderly manner. The mean average voter turnout in polling stations observed was 53.7%.

#### ***Opening of polling stations***

EWG observed a high level of preparedness on Election Day with almost all polling stations equipped with the necessary materials (97%) and found ready for voting at 8.00 am (100%). Sufficient security forces were deployed in all (100%) the observed polling stations. Proper processes were followed in almost all (100%) stations with the demonstration of empty ballot boxes and the fixing of security locks on the ballot boxes. At the opening of the polls, there was moderate queuing of voters with between 1-20 voters waiting in 70% of stations and 18% recording a queue of more than 40 voters.

#### ***Voting operations & violations***

EWG observers found voting operations by officials were carried out proficiently in the majority of stations, with 93% of polling personnel

#### **ABOUT EWG**

The Election Working Group (EWG) is a non-partisan network of 29 leading civil society organizations in Bangladesh that was formed in 2006 with the shared goal of enhancing transparency and accountability of elections and other democratic processes.

EWG is governed by a strict code of conduct to carry out comprehensive election observation throughout the country. Since its establishment, EWG has observed elections at the national, City Corporation and local levels, as well as conducting advocacy activities on election-related issues.

As part of its core mandate, EWG has been observing each phase of the 2014 Upazila Elections.

carrying out their work in a knowledgeable manner. The majority of stations had been laid out adequately to aid efficient voting (80%), however EWG did receive about one hundred reports of accessibility issues for disabled voters due to the station location and setup (20% polling stations). Female polling personal were found to be present in 83% of female polling booths. Indelible ink pens were considered to have been used effectively in 64% of polling stations.

There were very few reports of electoral violence and polling violations recorded throughout the day. The table below outlines the recorded violations

<b>Violations</b>	<b>No. of Reports</b>
Violent incident within station	1
Intimidation of voters	0
Suspected fraud	2
Violation of campaign law	0
Citizen denied ability to vote by other actor	0
Polling station declared closed	0
Polling agents removed from station	0
Arrest within station	1
EWG observer not allowed to observe counting procedure	5

***Counting & Closing***

96% polling stations were closed at 4.00 pm – the official closing time. However, in 18% of polling stations observed voters who reached the polling stations at or before 4.00 pm were prevented from exercising their right to vote. The counting and closing procedures were found to be carried out adequately in most stations (96%). The environment was also found peaceful during counting as no protests or objections by candidate agents were recorded, although the hanging of poll results as required by law was not undertaken in 7% of stations.

**OBSERVER INCIDENTS**

Although all 30 EWG observers were allowed to enter into the polling stations by the Presiding Officers, 2 were ousted by the local authorities. Moreover, 5 were prevented from observing the count. In accordance with electoral law, Presiding Officers and security forces do not have the authority to bar the entry of accredited observers or to prevent them from observing the count. EWG is grateful to the Election Commission for ensuring the issuance of all requested observer accreditation cards.

**Md. Abdul Alim**

Director

**THIS IS A PRELIMINARY STATEMENT. A FULL REPORT DETAILING OBSERVATION ACTIVITIES WILL BE PROVIDED AT A LATER DATE.**